

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 31 July 2018

Subject: Technology and Support Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A. Lion

Recommending:

That the report of the Support Services and Technology Portfolio Holder be noted

Support Services

The Council has recently appointed to one of the two Strategic Director roles and Georgina Blakemore is due to start on 17 September. Work is continuing with Solace in Business to appoint to the other role. Internal applications have been requested for the new Service Director roles with interviews scheduled for week commencing 3 August. Posts not filled by internal candidates will be advertised externally.

The new Service Directors will work with the People Team and Transformation to develop the structures for their service areas. In the first instance, teams will be shifted into their respective areas. Process mapping, customer journeys and interfaces with the Customer and Business Support Teams will be considered before any proposals for the new structures are put forward. In line with our normal practices, staff and the trade unions will be consulted.

Those staff whose annual leave starts in April, are now able to use iTrent the electronic booking system to manage and record their annual leave. Remaining employees whose leave year starts in October will be able to use the new facility from from 1 October 2018.

A pilot is currently running for direct input of absence recording into iTrent by managers. If all goes well the process will be rolled out to all managers over the summer.

The recruitment module will begin to be built over summer in conjunction with Colchester. Training for staff developing the learning and development module is scheduled for October and November with development of the module starting shortly thereafter. Go live dates for the modules are yet to be determined, but the learning and development module is likely to be April 2019 and it is planned that as soon as the recruitment module is developed and managers are trained this will go live.

A further iTrent drop in session for new Members will take place before Council on the 31 July in Committee Room 1.

There was a good response to the staff skills audit of 62%. As reported last time this will help target management development and ICT skills training for the organisation.

Members will be aware that for a number of years we have run a successful Apprenticeship Programme with the aim of developing local young people for careers at the Council. As part of their development, all apprentices support council colleagues in Communities, Health & Wellbeing through our Crucial Crew event. Our apprentices have helped develop a drug awareness session which they presented. This cohort will move to their next placements

from September and they are also assisting with testing our new website and with the launch of our new Community Safety Hub.

A current apprentice has been successful in achieving their Maths GCSE and two apprentices from the previous cohort have passed their Level 3 qualifications, in Customer Service and the other in Business Administration, both have substantive roles with us. The Council is looking to fund Level 4 management qualifications for both of them through the Apprenticeship Levy.

For the third year we have been able to fund an intern role under the Change100 Programme run by Leonard Cheshire Disability. The role is a paid summer work placement lasting approximately 100 days, including mentoring, for disabled students and recent graduates.

A new Recruitment Strategy has been developed to support the hiring of the right people, with the right behaviours, at the right time, in the right place, with the right skills. This is being considered by officers and will be presented to Cabinet colleagues in the near future.

Facilities

The team is currently rewiring and refurbishing Homefield House to provide a new training room, meeting spaces and “touch down” office accommodation. The Housing Works Unit are providing much of the contractor resources by supplying plasterers, carpenters and decorators to assist.

The refurbishment of the Community Safety offices was completed at the start of June, all to the new corporate accommodation standards, with Facilities Management (FM) providing electrical and data points, carpets, decorative finishes, welfare facilities and logistical support for removals.

Design work has also begun to provide accommodation at Townmead depot for the Nursery Team who are due to relocate there soon. Existing buildings are to be reused and renovated to accommodate the nursery’s requirements and FM will be planning and implementing the required construction works over the next couple of months.

The refurbishment of nine passenger lifts at the Limes Farm Estate is currently underway and progressing well. The first lift, which is in Red Block B, has been completed and the whole project is due to finish in April 2019.

Works to renew the boiler room at Hemnall House has also just commenced and this will greatly improve the provision of heating and hot water for residents.

The tender has now been issued for the re-roofing of the Museum in Waltham Abbey along with external redecoration works and repairs to chimney stacks. Works are programmed to commence in August.

The replacement of dilapidated single glazed timber windows, doors and roof lights with new thermally efficient double glazed aluminum units at North Weald Airfield Gatehouse is due to commence later this month.

Although a lot of planned maintenance works are on hold at the Civic Offices because of the Accommodation Review, some essential Health and Safety works are and will be taking place. An order has been issued for the replacement of life expired fire alarm speakers throughout parts of the complex and smoke detection is being installed in some areas of the main building where there currently is none. Life expired electrical breakers and fuses in

some electrical risers are also being replaced in order to keep essential installations operational.

The FM electrical team have also been working closely with officers from the Neighbourhoods Directorate on the feasibility of installing electric vehicle charging points in the public car park at the Civic Offices.

Technology

From April until September the Helpdesk will be piloting an extension of its opening hours, between 8am-6pm. Monitoring will be carried out for the duration of the pilot.

In September a Customer Survey will be carried out, giving all ICT users an opportunity to provide feedback on the service they currently receive. This will provide a benchmarking platform to work from on making improvements to the current service and opportunity to look at alternative ideas for flexible/mobile working and the tools needed to operate a smarter working environment. Results of the survey will follow in due course.

Communities Safety Hub have piloted the new flexible working arrangements under the Accommodation Review and partnership working with Essex Police, with the three new Police Officers working from and being based at the Civic Offices. ICT infrastructure has been designed with a minimal look on the new white desks and grey partitions allow hot desking for the Safer Communities Team and the Essex Police Officers. Specific furniture has been purchased from the Orange Box design to safely store Police uniform/equipment, plus lockers for the staff to put their equipment away when leaving the office. The minimal look is very affective making hot desking easy to manage and the video conferencing booth allowing staff to have a joint discussion even when they are not on site, providing good agile working for all colleagues. The ICT element (including new hardware) was delivered on time, and included laptops, conferencing screens, conference webcams and desktop hardware as well the core infrastructure. An opening day for Members will be on the 3 August, with dignitaries from Essex Police and Dame Eleanor Laing MP in attendance.

The first 10 laptops from the main batch of 400 have been deployed to staff across the Council to meet immediate needs ahead of the full rollout which commences in Communities in July. A detailed rollout plan has been developed, and staff are being training on their new devices as they have issued them to make sure they are able to make use of the capabilities of the new hardware. A separate rollout will issue staff members who have identified an immediate need for mobile/home working. The new laptops have all been issued with Office 2016 installed, upgrading from our previous standard of Office 2010.

Implementation of Office 365 has begun, starting with a pilot in ICT covering a range of aspects, and in the broader Council with Safer Communities piloting Skype for Business ahead of a corporate rollout in the Autumn. Future pilots will cover the replacement of the Intranet and our file storage. As part of the training programme ICT are working with external providers to deliver a full online training and support package called eLearning o365, for Office 365 to allow staff to develop their skills and make full use of the extensive capabilities of Office 365.

The new corporate Gazetteer system is now live, and our address management and street naming and numbering processes have been migrated into this new system, radically streamlining our processes and improving the service we offer both internally and externally. We are now starting work on integrating more systems to the Gazetteer, which will improve corporate address management, which may lead to additional income if properties are identified which are not in systems, such as Council Tax.

The Engineering, Drainage and Water Team now have a number of staff testing mobile working solutions using the Environmental Systems Research Institute (ESRI), mapping products, and Housing Repairs are also testing mobile working solutions using our Firmstep form products. Mobile working solutions already being used by Waste Management are also being redesigned and updated to support new functionality offering smarter and more efficient ways of working. One of these solutions is their street cleansing KPI, which they are able to collect using mobile technologies and is calculated by an automatic report based on the data supplied, saving hours of officer time collating manual information.

Owing to delays externally with the mobile working solution for Building Control and Development Management, we have reprioritised and focused work on the mobile working system for Food Hygiene which has now been installed and is undergoing acceptance testing.

The ICT Networking Team is liaising closely with the Head of Customer Service, Council Tax and Benefits to configure the telephony system to provide telephone call surveying ability. Management of the Council's main incoming lines is being transferred to a system called 'Myriad' in the Cloud, so that out-of-hours telephone call routing is independent of the Shoretel system and gives more options in the case of a catastrophic failure of telephone lines coming into the Civic Offices or the Shoretel System.

The Firmstep, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is now live and the Electronic Forms section are working on migrating and enhancing numerous workflows and processes into the CRM system with as much automatic integration as possible.

They have also been working on a number of The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) workflows to manage requests under this new legislation, and are working with the Contingency Planning and Council Safety officer and Community Safety in developing processes and solutions to manage the Councils Accompanied Attendance/Cautionary Contact database.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

A successful symposium to discuss the development of the Digital Innovation Strategy for the West Essex and Eastern Hertfordshire Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) was held on 15 June at Harlow College. The symposium examined the opportunities for the DIZ that consultants Arup Consulting have identified as part of its strategy development. It also broke down into a number of workshops where the delegates examined in detail subjects such as how to digitally future-proof our local economic prosperity, how to ensure digital inclusion and participation, and how to ensure digital technology and approaches are built in to new developments and communities from the beginning. Arup will now take away the feedback from the workshops and main symposium and use this insight in developing the draft Digital Innovation Strategy. It is hoped to launch the strategy at a major event in September.

A team lead by the Council on behalf of the DIZ Board and in conjunction with Princess Alexandra Hospital, West Essex CCG and Essex Partnership University Trust has previously been successful in gaining a place on the LGA / The Design Council programme 'Design in the Public Sector' and have been examining options to use digital approaches to reduce A&E attendance amongst Over-75s. That programme has concluded but the work continues and the team is currently prototyping laptop technology for ambulance crews to improve the flow of patient information. The LGA have approached the Council to feature the project in 'first' magazine and the article should be published in late July.

The DIZ Board was represented at the recent London Stansted Cambridge Consortium 2018 Conference and the Team led a lunch-time pop-up session to discuss the formation of the

DIZ, its aspirations and the wider picture for the Smart Place agenda beyond the usual city locations.

The Rural Challenge Project to deliver ultrafast broadband was completed in early July. The project has seen in excess of 4,300 properties connected up to the fibre broadband network installed by Gigaclear and more than 235km of physical infrastructure installed in the ground across the district. This network can deliver world class speeds to the areas served and attention will now focus on encouraging take-up of the service.

Following agreement by Cabinet to contribute a further £350,000 of the Council funding towards further broadband infrastructure, the contract for the rollout of fibre broadband to a further 2,188 properties has been signed by Superfast Essex and the installation of these connections will bring the district's level of superfast broadband coverage up to 99.67% by December 2019. This will leave just 207 properties without superfast broadband in the district, however, the team is actively exploring options to bring coverage to these few remaining properties.

Legal / Corporate Fraud Team

GDPR forms part of the data protection regime in the UK, together with the new Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA 2018). The main provisions came into effect in May this year. The regulations require that all contracts comply with the regulations. This has meant that all of the Council's existing contracts need to be updated to include new GDPR provisions.

On 28 June 2018 the Council obtained a Closure Order (the "Order") for three months duration on premises in Loughton (the "Premises") in order to prevent the exploitation of a vulnerable older man in his 70s who suffered from dementia (the "Occupant") by a group of around 10 or so known drug addicts in their 30s (the "Visitors"). It was difficult to obtain the Order as there was a lack evidence of severe Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) in the form of loud music, shouting or swearing. However, our ASB investigator was able to obtain evidence showing the required "serious nuisance" to a member of the public/the Occupant in the form of notes discovered on the Premises showing the Visitors were borrowing money from the Occupant and also Housing Officer witness statements which showed on two occasions where the Occupant was locked out of the Property only for the Housing Officer to let the Occupant back in and find one of the Visitors in the Property. The Council also collected evidence that the Visitors were using drugs on the Premises. The hard work of Safer Communities and Housing in collecting evidence and the case management and advocacy skills of Legal came together to obtain an Order offering protection to the otherwise vulnerable and exploited Occupant.

There are usually a number of prosecution cases each month. There have been two notably successful cases this month. These have also been reported in the Members Bulletin on 6 July 2018:

- Breach of Planning Enforcement Notice Requirements of Mr. Levi Smith, joint owner of Moor Hall Lodge, Moor Hall Road, Matching, Essex.
- Prosecution of Mr. Raymond Sturgess for failing to comply with a Notice requiring the tidying up of former Royal Observer Corps Bunker Site Roding Valley Nature Reserve, Chigwell.

The joint working initiative with the Corporate Fraud Team and Brentwood Borough Council is continuing to work well with more positive outcomes being achieved. The first criminal prosecution brought as a result of the initiative is currently being prepared for proceedings.

The Corporate Fraud Team is continuing to make significant strides in combatting Social Housing Fraud and continues to work closely with colleagues in Housing. They recently have obtained the issue of two Notices to Quit as a result of fraud investigations into the Councils tenants.