

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 4 November 2014
Subject: Technology and Support Services
Portfolio Holder: Cllr A Lion

Recommending:

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

Support Services

Equality Report

Our aim is to ensure that the Council remains committed towards being an equal opportunities employer and to ensure that every day working life is non-discriminatory and harassment free.

The Equality Monitoring Report demonstrates our commitment towards this aim. We report on our workforce profile and examine a collection of equality and diversity data within this report. For monitoring to be truly effective it needs to be seen not as an administrative exercise but as one of the key factors that drive policy development and process change.

Statistical monitoring is an integral part of ensuring that everyday working life is non-discriminatory and harassment free and can provide evidence of how we achieve our aim of offering real equality of opportunity to all our employees. This report is the first to be generated under the action plan to implement the Council's Equality Objectives 2012-2016.

The purpose of this report is to provide a snapshot of the extent to which we are meeting that plan, and gives us a benchmarking system to see how we perform each year in terms of how effective we are in relation to our Equality and Diversity related policies and procedures.

Members on the Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel will receive a comprehensive report providing equality and diversity analysis of the Council's workforce at their November meeting.

In summary, I can report that women are well represented in the Council workforce (56.02%), and there is evidence that they are accessing training opportunities and achieving promotion. As are employees with a disability with 11.14% of the Council's workforce stating they have a disability compared with 10.17% for the district. There is also evidence that this group is accessing training opportunities and achieving promotion.

The Council workforce is older on average than the local population, with a particular concentration in the 45-59 age range (34.06%).

Employees of black and minority ethnic communities represent 4.16% of the Council workforce compared to 9.5% employed in other jobs within for the district.

52.97% of staff did not wish to disclose their religion or belief. Statistics for the staff that did provide this information show that non-Christian groups are under-represented with 3.05% for the Council and 8.1% compared to the district.

This report is the first to be provided to Members with others to follow, providing on-going analysis of the equality and diversity Council's workforce.

Joint Consultative Committee (JCC)

The JCC will have met by the time of this Council meeting and I can report that the following are due to be considered;

a) Christmas and New Year Arrangements

Following the request by Cabinet in March of this year to undertake consultation with the public and Members regarding the Christmas and New Year arrangements, a report regarding the outcomes of this is to be considered by the Committee.

I can report that 209 of our residents completed the on-line survey, which was publicised in the Forester, to which 99.8% stated that they had not been inconvenienced by the closure of the Civic Offices during this period. Three members responded to our survey which was publicised in the Member's Bulletin. The results indicated that one member had received a complaint regarding the Civic Offices closure, but it is not clear as to whether this is a recent or older complaint.

The JCC will consider the detailed results of both surveys and make recommendations to Cabinet.

b) Consultation Exercise – Staff Budget (Communication Mast)

Members may be aware that the Council receives money from leasing space on the Civic Offices roof for a communications mast. We agreed that any money from this lease could be allocated to projects which would benefit staff. Previous projects have included the refurbishment of the staff canteen, shower facilities and funding the bike pool.

Money has accrued in this budget and JCC felt that staff should be consulted on how the money is spent. A consultation exercise was carried out in September and a range of ideas from new kitchen facilities at the Civic Offices to a staff Christmas bonus/vouchers have been proposed.

The JCC will consider the staff suggestions and agree which are to be taken forward.

Facilities Management

Operational Issues at Civic Offices

The heavy rain on 13th and 14th October caused flooding problems in the Member's Room, due to debris blocking guttering and in the ground floor of the Conder building, caused by a blocked drain. These problems also disrupted power supplies in certain areas of the building but all issues were rectified very quickly by Facilities

Management staff, with minimal disruption. Remedial cosmetic repair work is ongoing.

Civic Offices Roof Works

Tenders have been received for works to the Civic Offices roof. This project is intrinsically linked with the Solar Panel project, which when completed will save approximately £10,000 per annum in energy costs.

Technology

GIS System

The new ESRI mapping system is now installed. This product will be used to create interactive maps for use on the website for planning applications, resident information and reporting, Councillor information maps, Office and Polling Station locations etc. The system will ultimately collate all information from the various systems within the Council and provide a single source to obtain all the information held concerning a specific property or piece of land.

Host Servers

In my previous report I had informed Council that a procurement exercise was underway for the host servers. Servers are the hardware on which all of the Council's computerised systems run. In 2010, ICT undertook a server virtualisation program, which effectively reduced 140 physical servers to 6 powerful host servers. These host servers run all the core systems for the authority and now require replacement.

The tenders have been returned and evaluated. The successful supplier is a company called Stone, who will be supplying Fujitsu hardware. This marks a departure from the current infrastructure which is predominantly Hewlett Packard hardware. The Fujitsu solution matched the specification required at a very competitive price and has an excellent reputation within the IT industry.

Waste Systems Interface

A key requirement of the new waste management contract with BIFFA was using technology to enhance service delivery and performance. Our ICT section has identified a supplier who can develop an interface between the Council's Northgate system and Biffa's system, which is essential for management information. ICT will continue to have involvement in the development and maintenance of this interface.

Wi-Fi

Corporate wireless connectivity has been extended to our satellite offices at Hemnall Street and North Weald Airfield. The Broadway Office will follow shortly. ICT have also been instrumental in the installation of wireless connectivity for tenants at Norway House, in partnership with the Communities Directorate.

Telephone System

Following training on the OAK reporting system, initial attempts to produce reports have been disappointing. Whilst it is possible to extract the information required, it is not currently possible to present it in an acceptable format. The information is spread over numerous reports, rather than a collated simple view. The suppliers have

agreed to install an additional enhanced workgroup reports module which should improve the quality of the output. Unfortunately this has caused a significant delay and consequently, it will not be possible to report back to the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel in November.

Superfast Broadband

As reported at the last full Council meeting, Cabinet agreed to include in the capital budget 2015/16 a bid of £84,000 to contribute to the Essex County Council investment to extend the Superfast Broadband Programme. This is to increase coverage in those areas not served by commercial rollout. Nominations have been received for the formation of a cross party Portfolio Holder Advisory Group to determine preferred locations and priorities for providing Superfast broadband to rural communities across the Epping Forest District.