

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 16 December 2014

Subject: Technology and Support Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Lion

Recommending:

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

Support Services

Pay Settlement

Agreement has been reached on this year's local government national pay award. This is to be implemented locally from the 1 January 2015 and equates to an average of 2.20% and will cover the period 2014 – 2016. This settlement is unusual in that there is no back dating element, instead a one-off payment will be paid to eligible staff in their December 2014 and April 2015 salaries.

The Directors and the Chief Executive are not covered by this agreement as they have different negotiating bodies.

Road Safety Week

The Council participated in Road Safety Week, held on 17 – 21 November. The Council's Safety Officer arranged for a member of the Fleet Operations Team to undertake inspections of employee's cars at the Civic Offices in readiness for winter. A total of 19 inspections took place, a valuable check as just over half the vehicles inspected needed attention!

In addition to the inspections, free fuel efficiency driving sessions for staff were arranged through Tusker, our Green Car Salary Sacrifice providers. A total of 14 employees participated in test driving sessions before and after which advice was given on how to reduce fuel consumption. Several employees achieved reductions of between 16 and 17%, resulting in a possible saving of £150 a year.

HR/Payroll IT System

Following Cabinet's agreement to allocate £80,000 to procure a new HR/Payroll system, officers are in exploratory discussions with Chelmsford City Council about how we might work together to share their system rather than buy our own. Officers are currently putting together a specification to enable Chelmsford to understand our requirements. Colchester Borough Council has also been contacted to investigate the potential for a joint sharing arrangement with EFDC.

Enveloping Machine

Officers have been able to fund the purchase of an Enveloping Machine from within existing resources. The anticipated 12 week lead-in period previously advised to the Cabinet has been significantly reduced. The machine has already been delivered, installed and the

Reprographics Team trained. This means that the service will be up and running well in advance of the busy period which will start in February next year.

Energy Management

The Council has approximately 550 gas and electricity separate connections and an annual energy spend of approximately £750,000. The management and payment of these energy supplies is spread across a number of Directorates and over time, records held have become fragmented. Although improvements have been made, specialist assistance is now required in auditing for data accuracy, managing the contracts and in selecting an appropriate tariff. Discussions have taken place with a firm of energy saving specialists, who have a proven track record within Essex, having carried out similar exercises at Braintree, Uttlesford, and Colchester. Savings identified in the first year of these contracts have usually exceeded costs. This exercise will span all Directorates and will upon completion, produce a consolidated corporate database for managing energy usage. This exercise will also offer the opportunity to overhaul and improve working practices and efficiency.

Solar Panels and roof works and replacement of windows in the main building

Tenders have been received and checked for both projects and these are within the allocated budgets. Work will commence in the New Year and no significant disruption to normal activities is anticipated, although Members will see scaffolding erected to the outside of the Civic Offices while the works are being undertaken.

Survey of Leisure Centres

A firm of surveyors has been appointed and building, electrical and mechanical surveys of all our leisure facilities will be underway shortly. The work will start on 8 December 2014, at Waltham Abbey Pool. This audit is required in preparation for the placement of a new leisure contract. They will report on the general condition of the buildings, mechanical and electrical equipment and external areas, including any works required and cost of correcting any defects identified. They will also report on any likely areas of work and costs that can be foreseen over the next 20 years.

Technology

Superfast Broadband and the GIS system

The newly purchased ESRI mapping system has been used to support Members working with Essex County Council (ECC) on the Superfast Broadband project. The GIS team has brought together known data of the EFDC area from the Gazetteer along with acquired broadband coverage data from an additional three sources. This has been overlaid onto maps of the District, identifying areas of commercial coverage (outside the scope of the project) and those areas with low broadband speed.

Further analysis of property density and potential populations, for both residential and commercial customers has identified areas where speed improvements would provide the most benefit. This analysis is being presented to the Portfolio Holders Advisory Group on 9 December to begin to determine locations and priorities for Superfast broadband coverage within the scope of the EFDC funding to ECC.

ICT Strategy

The work program element linked to the ICT Strategy has now been updated and will be presented at the Finance and Performance Management Scrutiny Panel in March.