

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 21 April 2015

Subject: Technology and Support Services

Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Lion

Item:

Recommending:

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

Support Services

Envelope Machine

Colleagues may remember I previously reported that Cabinet had agreed a reallocation of budgets to facilitate the purchase of an envelope machine, managed by the Council's Reprographics section. Primarily it provides an envelope 'stuffing' service for Revenues, Benefits and Elections. The machine is used extensively between February and April each year, enveloping benefit claims, Council Tax and non-domestic rate bills and postal vote inserts.

I am pleased to report that the Leaseholder Team in Communities has also used the service this year to notify leaseholders of the estimated charges relating to their property along with all the associated documentation. This work has helped reduce the notional 'deficit' in the Reprographics budget and also saved time and money for Communities. Further publicity to promote the service will be on-going.

Apprentices

I can report that the Council has begun publicising its Apprenticeship Scheme for 2015. The County's Employment and Skills Team have visited three schools within the district to promote apprenticeships and inform students about the Council's scheme.

Our apprentices took part in putting together a number of adverts with the Loughton Youth Project for broadcast during Apprenticeship Week, which took place early in March.

We have also publicised the Scheme on our website which allows local young people to register an interest. To fit with the school timetable we will start the formal recruitment process by advertising the Scheme at the beginning of June. The aim is to start the next group of apprentices on 3 August 2015.

Accompanied Attendance List

Members will recall the article in the Council Bulletin in February regarding the Council's Accompanied Attendance list. The Accompanied Attendance (AA) List is a list of persons that Officers or Members of the Council, or persons working on their behalf may meet in the course of their work of whom we have information indicating it is inadvisable, for reasons of safety, to meet with alone.

The reasons for inclusion for those on the AA List are specific. The entries are based on factual evidence such as criminal convictions or information from Council Officers, Police Officers, Health Care professionals or other similar officials.

The information contained in the list is highly confidential and subject to the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA). A requirement of the DPA is that we write to those on the list and inform them of the information held about them. There are exemptions that allow the Council to withhold this information from some of those listed. Exemptions include information that is owned by other organisations (such as the police) which we do not have the right to disclose; and information that, if it were revealed to the listed person, may increase the risk to those meeting with them.

Following an extensive review of the list, letters have been sent to those who are required to receive them. Thirteen letters have been sent to twelve recipients (one person is listed at two addresses). Some recipients have challenged their inclusion on the list and these challenges are being dealt with. There has been no adverse publicity resulting from the letters being sent.

There are currently 64 entries on the list. It is planned to make the listed addresses in each ward available electronically to Members after the election. In the meantime you may still enquire about addresses in your ward by contacting any of the following officers:

Wendy Gains, Safety Officer (x4084), Simon Hill, Assistant Director of Governance and Performance Management (x4249), and Steve Tautz, Democratic Services Manager (x4180)

Facilities

Solar Panels and roof works to the main & Conder buildings

The installation of the solar panels is dependent on the prior completion of roofing works. The roofing repair and strengthening tender was withdrawn, as the contractor failed to meet their contractual obligations. A new tender is due to be sent out imminently, with a start date in July after the completion of the window replacement contract. The solar panel installation can then follow on from the roof works.

Window replacement works to the main building

Work to replace the windows in the main building has commenced with the scaffolding at the back of the building. It is anticipated that the works will be completed by July.

New Front Entrance Door

New automatic front doors have been installed, including some minor alterations to the entrance and the provision of a new Chairman's notice board. These were available for use by the public on the 2 April 2015. These works were agreed at Cabinet in 2013 as the doors no longer met either security or Disability Discrimination Act requirements.

The Kitchen in the Members Area

Work on the refurbishment of the kitchen, has now been completed. The majority of the work, was carried out by in-house staff and local contractors.

Technology

Waste Management Integration

There has been a collaborative effort between the Council, Biffa and Merlin to integrate the Council's waste management IT system (M3) with the system used by Biffa. The integration of the two systems will lead to greater efficiencies and real-time information being given to our residents leading to an improved resident experience when dealing with the Council regarding waste management. For example, a missed bin could be reported by either phone or website form and this information would be verified and instructions sent directly back to the cab. It is anticipated that integration will start to go live by the end of April.

Resilient Internet Connection

Internet Connectivity is now a necessary part of the ICT provision for Council systems and staff. ICT has begun to implement a secondary Internet connection for back up and resiliency purposes. Once the installation is complete the hard work of adapting our internal infrastructure to take advantage of the resilient connection begins. The Council should be able to take advantage of the resilient connection by the end of this calendar year.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

As the priority areas identified by this Council for the rollout of superfast broadband were largely in the original phase of the Superfast Essex program, the Council has been asked to suggest alternative priority areas for the Rural Challenge initiative. The Portfolio Holder Advisory Group has decided that it would be best to wait for the tender responses from potential infrastructure suppliers before making any selections. The County Council is expecting tenders back during April and when these have been analysed another meeting of the Advisory Group will be arranged to progress the initiative.