

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 28 July 2015

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

Apprentices

I am pleased to report that the Council has placed a recruitment advert in the Guardian Group of newspapers advertising our 2015 Apprenticeship Scheme. A number of Housing Associations on the Council's Preferred Supplier List are contributing to a Community Fund which will allow a further four Business Administration apprentices or three Business Administration and one Construction apprentice to be recruited. This will be in addition to the five Business Administration apprentices and one Construction apprentice funded by the Council. I would like to take this opportunity to thank officers in the Communities and Resources Directorates who by working together have provided further employment opportunities for local people.

Employee Survey

Officers launched the Employee Survey on 17 July which will run for one month. Colleagues on the JCC were recently consulted on the content of the Survey and noted that it is a 'pulse survey' which only contains three sections with a total of eleven questions. This is to encourage staff to participate and therefore improve the response figure. It is proposed that a number of 'pulse surveys' take place each year rather than one large survey.

VineHR Award

Members may not be aware that the Heads of Human Resources from across Essex, including Epping, formed a not for profit limited company some years ago. This provides a supportive network of HR professionals across the county. It encourages working together with resulting joint benefits. Any contracts let in its name could result in potential income streams being eventually returned to the founding authorities.

VineHR run a number of accredited management and coaching qualifications and masterclasses for all staff across the county. Epping's Learning and Development Manager is a member of the team developing these programmes on behalf of VineHR for use by Council staff and those from other authorities.

I am very pleased to announce that this team is a finalist in the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) People Management Awards for Human Resources/Learning & Development Team of the Year – Public Sector Award. They have

already presented a submission to a judging panel and we await the outcome which is due in September.

Facilities

Service Continuity – Electricity Failure Risk

In order to address limitations in maintaining back up power to critical systems in the event of an electricity supply failure, Facilities Management has now taken delivery of a new electrical switchboard. When installation and testing is complete this will be able to fully support the two incoming supplies and the standby generator feed to priority work areas of the site. The Computer Suites and telephone equipment are already on dedicated feeds, but these will be enhanced by this provision. It is anticipated that this will be fully implemented before the onset of winter this year.

Energy Efficiency – Building Lighting Upgrades

As part of a multi-year phased project, we have completed approximately 70% conversion of all lighting to LED. This is a low energy light source, which has very little control equipment associated with it and hence provides improved efficiency and energy saving. Due to the reduced number of components, and the high reliability of the new LED light source, there is also a significant saving on maintenance costs. These savings are being diverted into other energy saving works and maintenance aspects of the building, for example a new internal lighting chassis in the staircases and improved lighting in the Committee Rooms. The project has been progressing steadily over the last three years, and we currently estimate revenue savings by the end of this year to be £4,250 in maintenance and an overall reduction of 76% of the cost of lighting the Civic Offices site.

Window Replacement

Approximately 90% of the disruptive installation work is now complete and for the most part only external trimming, mastic sealing and final snagging on each opening is outstanding. The scaffolding and protective sheeting will begin to be dropped from a number of areas around the front of the building over the next week or two. Whilst the scaffolding has been in place it has been utilised to carry out a host of other essential maintenance works at the same time to save on future access costs for safe working at height. On the main Civic building, brickwork and movement joint repairs have been carried out to walls and parapets and decorating completed to steel beams and railings. This was achieved utilising the 'in house' services of the Council's Housing Works Unit. A specialist contractor has also repaired all the defective hopper heads to the parapet walls. The scaffolding to 323 House is also being used to repair the roof at eaves level and then to decorate soffits, fascia's and rainwater goods.

Technology

Flexible working through technology presentations

ICT have now attended all Directorate Management Team meetings and demonstrated the technology available to facilitate flexible working. Directorates have been requested to submit flexible working applications for evaluation to enable ICT to present a co-ordinated corporate capital funding request.

GOOD for Members

Cllrs Philip, S Kane, H Kane, Bassett and I are all now using the GOOD email and calendar application. This application is simple and easy to use and gives Members access to their own official Epping Forest District Council email address. The [mod.gov](#) application gives access to agendas and security classified pink papers. The introduction of these systems has the potential to save a considerable amount of paper and I would encourage Members to sign up.

Any other Members requiring GOOD functionality should contact David Newton on extension 4580 and he will make the necessary arrangements. Secure access to [mod.gov](#) can be obtained via Simon Hill on extension 4249.

ICT Support Enhancements

ICT have installed and tested a new remote management product which will allow the bulk upgrade and installation of software both locally and remotely. This will save considerable time and reduce the requirement of having to return a unit to base for essential upgrades. This system will be fully deployed by the end of July.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

The procurement process for the Superfast Essex Broadband (Phase 2b) Rural Challenge Project (RCP) has now been concluded and a contract for the project has been awarded to Gigaclear, a fibre broadband provider that specialises in rural networks. The service, to be known as Ultrafast Broadband, will be offered in rural areas to the east of the District. The project represents a £7.5m investment in the district (part-funded by UK Government, Essex County Council, Epping Forest District Council and Gigaclear) and will bring ultrafast broadband capability to 100% of the 4,545 home and business premises within the RCP intervention area.

Essex County Council Cabinet agreed the award of the contract on 23 June and the contracts were signed on 29 June. With in-depth surveys of the RCP area now to be undertaken, Gigaclear plans to begin delivery work in November 2015, with the first customers expected to gain access to the new broadband services a month later. The deployment is expected to be completed by December 2016. Marketing and engagement will now be undertaken in earnest and commenced with a launch event for parish, district and county councillors for the Rural Challenge Project Area at Fyfield Village Hall on 15 July. This event was a first opportunity for Superfast Essex and Gigaclear to engage key local representatives and broadband champions in order to raise awareness of this fantastic project. Further briefings and communication events are planned to ensure as much awareness as possible. An informal Member briefing is scheduled for 4 August to give Members an update of the plans for providing service in the defined area.

The Rural Challenge Project sits alongside the ongoing Phase 1 and Phase 2a elements of the Superfast Broadband project which, in partnership with BT, are aiming to deliver 95% superfast broadband to the whole of Essex. Once this project is completed, and subject to further funding being identified, Superfast Essex will consider expanding this approach to other rural areas in Essex not yet included in current plans.