Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet   **Date: 3 November 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

Members may be interested to note that HR have carried out a number of consultation exercises with staff, over and since the summer. These exercises have included the on-line employee survey, employee engagement workshops and smarter working sessions.

The employee survey asked employees questions on a range of subjects from the culture of the organisation, to what they thought of their managers, to asking for ideas for using the money generated from leasing the roof space for the communications mast.

The employee engagement workshops were run by Gareth Nicholas the Council's National Graduate Trainee, following feedback from employees he has produced an Engagement Strategy and accompanying action plan to deliver this.

Lastly, consultation took place with employees regarding their thoughts, suggestions and concerns regarding different ways of working that the Council has or may wish to introduce.

The outcomes from all of these exercises will be reported to Members on the Joint Consultative Committee, the Resources Select Committee or Cabinet as appropriate, later in the year.

I am pleased to report that we had 26 applicants for the Head of Transformation position, from which 6 candidates were selected to attend an interview. David Bailey was the successful candidate and has been appointed as the new Head of Transformation. Subject to the normal HR checks, David will hopefully be starting with the Council in November. David has gained a wealth of knowledge throughout his career in transformation consultancy and was previously a service manager for the London Borough of Hillingdon.

Technology

Recommendations were put forward to Cabinet on the 8 October for ICT projects which form a part of the Capital Programme for 2016/17.

The Council currently uses BACS (Banker Automated Clearing Service) to process electronic payments such as direct debts. However, the secure device used to authenticate these payments, will no longer be supported by our current supplier after December 2016. Therefore, a new system will be introduced making it easier to make payments to suppliers and residents.

An upgrade to the accountancy e-financial general ledger system is required, as the current version is unsupported and requires a chargeable upgrade to get the Council onto the latest

supported version. The new system offers greater functionality making it easier to access the ledger.

Additional storage is required for the public facing servers due to the increase in remote working and system integration with external partners. This project will add capacity and improve performance and resilience.

Other projects to be included in the Capital Programme relate to integration, additional storage on servers and enhancements to a number of security devices to protect the Council from external threats. There is a need to upgrade current systems to bring them in line with the latest supported version, making them more compatible with newer devices.

Facilities

Civic Offices – Roof Repairs and Solar Panels

Roof repairs have been completed to The 323 House and works are now well underway to the roofs of the main civic building and the conder building. The coating system is being applied to the front elevation of the civic roof and the old roof finish has been removed from the conder building and the new one is being installed. Once the roof works are complete the solar panels will be installed.

The electrical infrastructure has already been installed and cable routes have been prepared. All works are programmed to be complete in early November.

Civic Offices – Heating Control Improvements

During the summer months, the heating pipework and controls have been split to provide better temperature control of the civic offices, as the initial design linked the second and ground floors on one circuit. The 323 House was also linked onto this same circuit and this has also been separated so that we can provide individual control here. The pipework modifications are at a testing stage and will be ready for the commencement of the heating season. We are currently working on the construction of a new control panel to provide full control and better energy efficiency whilst improving comfort conditions to all building users.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

Following the award of the Superfast Broadband Rural Challenge Project (RCP) Contract, high speed internet to rural communities in Epping Forest, by Essex County Council to Gigaclear, preparatory work has been taking place ahead of the commencement of the delivery phase and a detailed delivery plan is being prepared by Gigaclear. The building of the network will now begin in November 2015 and the first community engagement event was held on the evening of 15 October in Moreton Village Hall, to cover those who live and work in Moreton, Bobbingworth and Bovinger. These community events are intended to help everyone understand what they are doing, how they are doing it and what difference it will make to the community and Gigaclear will be hosting a series of similar community events throughout the district as the rollout progresses over the course of the next 12-18 months. Dates and times of these questions and answers community events will be released nearer the time and published using local advertising and postcards, as well as online on the Gigaclear / Superfast Essex events page.

The Rural Challenge Project (Phase 2b) 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. Delivery under these programmes

is continuing and residents and businesses outside of the RCP intervention area can also find out the latest on when these phases are likely to reach their locations by visiting the postcode checker map on the Superfast Essex website.

Articles detailing some of the progress of these projects as well as providing links to further information online was included in the recently published autumn edition of One Business Briefing, our magazine for businesses.