

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 15 December 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

Apprentice Programme Update

I am pleased to inform Members that the seven business administration and one construction apprentice have settled well into their work placements. The business administration apprentices have been placed into ICT, Resources Support/Invoices, Council Tax, Benefits and both administration teams for Neighbourhoods and Housing Repairs.

They are all progressing well with their college work and are working towards gaining a qualification for all their studies. A careers fair was held at St Johns School in which the apprentices were involved in organising and attending the event.

Discussions are moving forward with the Housing Associations partnerships that are keen to sponsorship two apprentices. One of the partners, B3Living had invited all the apprentices to their Community Day at the Lea Valley White Water Rafting Centre in October.

National Management Graduate

After completing the Staff Engagement Project for Resources, the Council's National Management Graduate, Gareth Nicholas has now moved onto the Communities Directorate. Gareth's new project is researching the impact of an ageing population on the Council and partner services, resulting in a final report planned for February 2016.

Corporate Procurement Training

A number of changes have recently happened in how local authorities must run an EU procurement process. The consequences of not following the correct process are high with providers of goods or services being able to challenge the conduct and decisions of a tender process.

To ensure all key staff were trained cost effectively across the Directorates, Legal Services, Procurement and HR organised a one day course in the Council Chamber. A partner from the leading law firm Bevan Brittan ran the seminar for the 43 staff attending.

Appraisal (PDR) Process

The Council's annual appraisal process will be launched in December to ensure all staff and managers have the appropriate paperwork and guidance for the next cycle for appraisals

which will be held from January to April 2016. The expectation again this year will be that 100% of staff will have an appraisal completed with their line manager.

Sickness Absence

Members may already be aware that the Council's sickness absence figures increased last year, in part due to an increase in the number of days taken regarding mental health issues. An action included in the associated improvement plan was to provide training to our managers on mental health issues. I am pleased to inform you that the Council's HR team is working with other Essex authorities, through VineHR, to provide this training, which is due to start in December.

Mast Money

Members may remember that the Council receives money from leasing the space on the civic offices roof for a communications mast. We agreed that any money from the lease would be allocated to projects which would benefit staff.

Following consultation with staff and the agreement of the Council's management board and the Joint Consultative Committee, all our staff will receive a Christmas £20 One4All gift voucher. Staff also wished the Council to provide a 'rewards portal' this is where a range of goods and services can be purchased online at discounted prices. In addition, staff suggested the money funds a regular programme of health checks, so officers will work with SLM to provide them, probably as part of a health and wellbeing week in January/February 2016.

Facilities

Civic Offices - Roof Repairs and Solar Panels

Roof works to the main civic building and the conder building are now complete and the solar panels have been installed to the south side of the conder roof. The solar panels are being installed to the front elevation of the main building in the week commencing 23 November. The removal of the scaffolding around the conder building will follow and it is hoped that the scaffolding to the front elevation will be removed week commencing 30 November.

Office Moves

A part of the facilities team role involves arranging and implementing office moves. Neighbourhood's administration office has just been completed and a reconfiguration of the Resources, Council Tax office is underway at the moment.

A request has been received from the Neighbourhood's Directorate to carry out an additional office moves after Christmas. As a part of the Langston Road redevelopment scheme, the Neighbourhood's waste management group must be moved to the civic offices early in the New Year.

Technology

Waltham Abbey Museum

ICT have been assisting the Communities Directorate with the Museum refurbishment project. Data connectivity between the civic offices and the museum has been installed by BT and the internal network cabling is due for completion in the near future. ICT have

procured all of the required networking devices to create the network and have allocated resources to facilitate Communities' intention of moving staff back in to the museum week commencing 21 December.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

The construction phase of the Rural Challenge Project (RCP) (Phase 2b of the Superfast Essex Rollout) has now begun. The first cabinet has been built in the Bobbingworth and Bovingering area and work is ongoing to build the network connections from that cabinet to the Customer that it will serve. The overall schedule of works for the RCP has also been published via the Gigaclear website and made available to Members through the Bulletin. Information to residents is accessed through the Council's news website. This will enable residents covered by the RCP to gain a better understanding of when work will commence in their areas.

Community questions and answers events have been held in Moreton, Fyfield, Willingale and the Rodings and have been warmly received by those attending. Rollout of the project is keenly anticipated by residents and businesses. These events will continue throughout the rollout programme and local district Members for the relevant areas will be advised as and when the events are organised.

With rollout is progressing well on both the RCP and through the wider BDUK SuperfastEssex programme. Focus will now move towards the promotion of the capability that is being put in place and encouraging take-up of the Superfast and Ultrafast broadband services that will progressively become available to our residents.

BT visit

As part of the Council's drive to ensure the districts Broadband infrastructure is enabled and fit for purpose to meet future business requirements, and support the Councils own transformation programme, a delegation of senior Members attended the BT Research Centre in Ipswich to meet with those leading the BT research programmes.

Members and officers received presentations on the how the superfast system was being rolled out by BT and others, how other public bodies were addressing the use and adoption of new systems to integrate delivery, and support greater cost efficiency and were able see at first hand the next generation of devices, platforms and applications that are/will be coming available. Some key concerns were raised on the security of data and approaches and systems for managing risk and Members will be attending a follow up session at the BT site which oversees this process.

Transformation

David Bailey joined us as our new Head of Transformation in November. Originally from Norfolk, David now lives in London and before joining EFDC he worked in a mix of private and public sector organisations including Norfolk and Oxfordshire County Councils and the London Borough of Hillingdon. More recently he has worked as a business consultant in organisational development and transformation.

David will be working with and to the Chief Executive and the Management Board to help to identify ways to improve how the council works to meet the needs of our customers, whilst providing the best level of service when and however they choose to contact us. This will mean doing things differently and developing new ways of working.

David has been busy learning about how the Council delivers its services by meeting staff, members of the leadership team, the Leader, Cabinet and Elected Members. This service discovery will give David a solid understanding as well as an early opportunity to build his network within the organisation. David has also started visiting our outstations, to better understand the ways in which we deliver services to our customers.

An initial scoping paper is to be taken to Cabinet in December which sets the scene for the transformation programme. The plan is to present a second cabinet paper in the New Year that will identify work streams, key projects and governance arrangements.