

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 1 November 2016

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

Transformation Projects

I would like to inform Members that under transformation, a fundamental review of the Reprographics function is being carried out considering the reduction of printed documents. The Reprographics Review has already proposed changes to its budget process and will take effect from the new financial year. The changes will place the budget in the same position as other support budgets and reduce inefficiencies due to paperwork and recording lists. In addition to this change Officers are undertaking a wide ranging review looking at service requirements, staffing structures, equipment and will explore all internal and external options for service delivery.

A group of Officers from across the Council, led by the Resources Directorate, are reviewing the authority's post handling and scanning process. One of the aims of the project is to recognise and reduce areas of duplication and inefficiency. One of the benefits of the project is to support and enable flexible and home working by enabling staff to access their correspondence electronically.

A project has been started to consider scanning post at the first point of entry into the Council to reduce the need for paper storage and enable access via our electronic records document management system.

Much work is still required on progressing both projects and I will update Members on progress as appropriate.

Sickness Absence

I am pleased to report that there has been an improvement in the average number of days taken by Officers due to sickness absence. Comparing this year's Q1 and Q2 figures with last year, there has been an improvement of an average of just under 1 day per employee (0.9 days). The cumulative totals are 2.98 average days (2016/17) against 3.88 days (2015/16).

Facilities

We are pleased to report that the PV Solar panels that were installed on the roof of the Civic Offices are on target for not only saving the environment, but in the first eight months has generated an income of £3,897.87.

Cleaning has been carried out to the front of the Civic Offices, which has removed all the dirt and moss from the stonework, making the area more presentable and safer to walk on in the wet.

A number of initial proposals are being drawn up for the new Reception area at the Civic Offices. The preferred layout including costs will be put forward for Members consideration.

The new electrical control panel is currently being installed. It allows selected areas such as the Computer Suite 2, the Conder Building and the Main Building to be isolated independently. This work requires electrical shutdowns, which are being carried out at weekends for minimum disruption to staff.

Technology

The Networks section within ICT will start process mapping the implementation stage of the SIP (Session Initiation Protocol) project on 13 November 2016 in conjunction with our telecommunications partners, Solar Communications. SIP enables voice services over the internet and through our telephone system. This project will give the Council the ability to route inbound and outbound calls over the Internet and improve flexibility and resilience compared to our current connections.

Works have started in the replacement programme of obsolete PCs. The new service use lower costs Thin Client Terminals, this conversion costs £50 compared to £150 to purchase a new terminal. The conversion project has reduced the amount of funding requested for terminal replacement in the 2017 ICT Capital Requirements.

The Multi-Functional Devices (MFD) to replace individual printers, are undergoing software installation and initial testing, with a view to rollout in November.

Installation has begun of the software for the Planning Mobile working system. The initial go live is planned to give Building Control the capacity to access key data and record site inspections while on site using Android Tablets. Later releases will add access to documents, with a similar capability for Development Management to follow in the future.

We have successfully recruited to the vacant Network Analyst post, which means the Networks section is now fully staffed. However, there is now a resultant vacancy in the Gazetteer Team.

GIS & Gazetteer

We are currently liaising with the Principal Landscape Officer on a public engagement project around the Green Infrastructure Framework using our mapping solutions. This project would include interactive maps for residents to commit to Green projects and monitor progress.

The Councils UAV (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) Operations Manual has been signed off by the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority). This is a comprehensive 40 page document that covers all aspects of our use and safety of the UAV. Our Lead Officers, Andrew Gardener and Dan Chapman, deserve credit for the production of the manual to CAA standards.

The team are aiming (weather permitting) to complete the practical exam by Friday 28 October. Following that staff will be fully qualified and will just need to apply for a CAA Permission for Commercial Operations license.

The Councils internal web mapping systems (Intranet Mapping Systems) have allowed us to quickly and easily disseminate and analyse contractor data related to the Local Plan. This is

a direct benefit of our ESRI mapping solutions, and something that would have taken considerable time in our previous systems now takes minutes.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

The Rural Challenge Project continues to make progress across the district. In excess of 140km of ultrafast fibre broadband network has now been built with over 1800 customer pots installed at the edge of premises. Cabinets in Bobbingworth, Fyfield, Norton Heath, Abbess Roding and Toot Hill are now live with a further four cabinets in the build phase.

A successful Broadband Business Breakfast was held in September at Mulberry House, High Ongar which attracted a number of businesses from across the district and introduced them to a number of key internet service providers. Businesses were encouraged to explore opportunities to utilise the fibre broadband networks to grow their business. Positive feedback was received from both attending businesses and attending speakers and it is hoped that a number of useful introductions were made and productive business engagements took place.

Officers are working with Essex County Council on a Smart Place initiative. As part of the wider Smart Essex programme we will be seeking to transform how internet based services are offered across the district. In conjunction with Economic Development a Smart Place workshop involving companies across the district is being planned for December.