

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 22 February 2018**

**Subject: Technology and Support Services**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor A Lion**

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**Recommending:**

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

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## **Support Services**

### **Apprentices**

The apprentices organised and ran the annual Careerfest, which took place at Epping Forest College on the 25 January 2018. This current cohort has been with the Council for 4 months and they are doing well in their placements. All 9 apprentices are on target to successfully complete their qualification and their second placements start at the beginning of March.

The Government provides a bonus payment to employers for each apprentice that remains in employment. The first milestone of 90 days retention has been met by all 9 apprentices for whom the Council received £500 per apprentice, which will offset some of the salary costs.

### **People Strategy**

Officers organised a Managers Conference on 11 January, a first for the Council. Over 70 managers attended 1 of 2 half day sessions, led by Management Board, giving the latest updates on the People Strategy, Accommodation Review and the recently agreed ICT Strategy. Managers also participated in 2 workshops looking at change and the skills needed for the future.

Cabinet Members and Management Board are currently discussing options for how the Common Operating Model is implemented for the top 3 tiers in the Council. A formal report will be submitted to Cabinet in April and any appropriate decisions to Council on 24 April.

### **i-Trent**

The development and implementation of the Council's Payroll system using i-Trent is going well. Officers continue to work in partnership with colleagues in Colchester and Braintree. Currently officer groups are mapping, building and testing the following modules:

- Recruitment
- Health and Safety
- Learning and Development
- Performance
- Time and Expenses

In addition, Members are now receiving electronic pay slips via i-Trent and the computer in the Members Room has been updated with a direct link on to the system. This will minimise any connection difficulties that Members are having in their homes.

The People Team, previously known as Human Resources (HR) are currently piloting the electronic requesting and recording of annual leave using the Employee Self-Service and People Manager modules on i-Trent. A review will take place in mid-February of the pilot and it is planned that electronic annual leave requests for all employees will be live from the 1 April 2018.

## **Facilities**

Works are progressing well to complete the remaining Year 1 Projects from the 5 Year Planned Maintenance Programme for operational and commercial properties.

Orders have been placed for the jetting of landlord's foul and surface water drainage systems at numerous Councils shopping parades, Industrial Estates and General Improvement Areas.

Quotations are being sought for the external redecoration of The Limes Centre in Chigwell and the public walkway adjacent to 42 The Broadway in Loughton. New Security roller shutters and LED lighting were installed at this location recently too.

A letter of intent has been sent to Essex Lift Services Ltd for the refurbishment of 9 passengers lifts on the Limes Farm Housing Estate in Chigwell.

The tender for the replacement of dilapidated single glazed timber windows, doors and roof-lights with new thermally efficient double glazed aluminum units at the Gatehouse at North Weald Airfield has been issued via the Essex Procurement Hub. Submissions are due back by the end of January.

Health and safety improvement works are almost complete at the Townmead depot. Structural strengthening of the perimeter wall has finished and the last section of new security fencing has been fabricated and installation is imminent.

Asbestos containing materials were safely removed by a specialist contractor from the roof space of the Epping Forest Museum over the Christmas closure period. Facilities Management Surveyors, Building Control and the Senior Conservation Officer are all meeting shortly to agree a way forward on insulation products so that the roof overhaul project can progress to tender stage.

## **Legal**

The majority of the Council's title deeds to its land holdings have been registered at the Land Registry and these pre-registration title deeds are no longer required by the Council.

Some of these deeds are historic, whilst others tell the social history of the development of an area. The Legal service has therefore arranged for the pre-registration deeds to be sent to Essex Archives who will review the documents and retain those deeds which it considers are of interest.

Geographical Information System (GIS) Team has prepared a digital Land Terrier which is available to all staff which shows the extent of the Council's land holdings. However, as dealings with land take place each week, it is necessary for members of staff to apply to the Land Registry for office copies which give details of the title and boundaries of the land.

Not all documents affecting land are registered at the Land Registry and the Council's Legal service should be asked to assist if an enquiry is not routine.

### **Corporate Fraud Team**

We have a 6 day Crown Court Trial coming up which is due begin on the 22 January at Chelmsford Crown Court. This trial involves a number of charges relating to social housing fraud including the suspected fraudulent obtaining of a Home Ownership Grant. At least 2 members of the Corporate Fraud Team are being called to give evidence on behalf of EFDC. The Council has already successfully prosecuted the defendant's sister for housing fraud offences.

### **Technology**

ICT have continued the work on putting in place the Project and Programme governance arrangements that will ensure the smooth delivery of the ICT Strategy. Work continues on key projects that have been identified as critical for commencement or completion prior to April 2018 and a full report on these will be taken to the next Resources Select Committee. The most critical of these are the full review of ICT security restrictions and the future security model adopted for laptops. Work is in progress on both of these areas and the future configuration of our laptop provision is now becoming clearer. In tandem with this work we are developing our laptop procurement, which will facilitate home and flexible working, as well the implementation of tools for efficient remote management of these devices. To complete the work on remote working, we are implementing a new remote access solution which is progressing well, we anticipate going live prior to the laptop rollout commencing.

The new members of the team are working well amongst the different sections of ICT. The 2 new posts created in the Technology Strategy, are still in the process of being filled to ensure that the positions are occupied for April 2018.

Agreement has been reached on the extension of 'on-call' arrangement for out-of-hours issues affecting critical systems and this will commence from April. Similarly, the extension of ICT Service Desk provision has been agreed with the team, but final details remain to be confirmed. As part of the enhancement of the Service Desk operation a new feedback system is being implemented to ensure they deliver the best possible service to our internal customers, alongside this our new Service Level Agreements are being put in place.

All existing online forms were successfully migrated before Christmas. We are now in the process of developing new forms for Grounds Maintenance and Building Control to allow for online payments for some of their services, and are working with Community Safety, Communities, Neighbourhoods and Customer Services to develop new forms and processes and enhance existing forms by adding processes and integrations.

The Spatial Information team have been providing support to Forward Planning, aiding and assisting in the production of an interactive public map for the local plan which is now complete and available. Work is now underway to improve the mapping in our online forms using our GIS solution. Following initial testing of our mobile working solution for the Neighbourhoods team, we have been working through the suggested improvements and will begin a second round of testing in the next couple of weeks.

The recent transfer of the control of the Street Naming and Numbering database to the Spatial Information team has gone smoothly. The GIS team is not responsible for naming or numbering properties, their responsibility is to manage the software to record the relevant information.

The new web based application form for inputting names and numbers has been well received by residents and developers, whilst also improving our efficiency in dealing with requests. Testing of a new version of the Gazetteer and Street Naming and Number software is about to begin, once live we will be reviewing processes and procedures to reflect the new functionality to improve efficiency and the customer experience. This will be for both for internal departments that rely on the gazetteer and residents that use services connected to the gazetteer.

### **Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet**

As at January 2018 the network build had reached just over 3,900 premises, this equates to approximately 92% of the planned programme with approximately 84% ready for the service. Work to install the final 2 cabinet areas of the network in Hastingwood and Ongar has now commenced. Wayleave negotiations to facilitate Gigaclear to build part of its network across North Weald Airfield are ongoing. A number of issues that the contractor has faced have impacted on the completion schedule and whilst the majority of the network remains scheduled for completion by 31 March 2018, it is possible that a small number of premises will remain to be connected beyond that date. Gigaclear, in conjunction with the Superfast Essex team, are communicating with residents and Parish Councils to ensure they are kept up-to-date on the completion dates.

Funding for Phase 4 of Superfast Essex's broadband programme was added to the Capital Review programme that Cabinet approved on 7 December. The tender process for this is already underway through Superfast Essex / Essex County Council (ECC) with the bidders' proposals likely to be evaluated in January / February 2018. Economic Development and Finance Officers from the Council will take part in the tender evaluation process. At the point of awarding the contract, the Council will be required to enter into a written agreement with ECC to confirm the £350,000 funding and prior to signing this, a further report will be taken to Cabinet outlining the outcome of the tender process and seeking its confirmation to proceed.

### **Digital Innovation Programme**

Economic Development Officers in conjunction with One Epping Forest, Princess Alexandra Hospital, Essex Partnership University NHS Trust and West Essex Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCG) submitted an application in November to the LGA / Design Council 'Design in the Public Sector' programme. The application was put together as a Digital Innovation Zone (DIZ) project to address the level of A&E incidents amongst the over-75 population of the Epping and Ongar neighbourhood. The team attended a Panel Interview at The Design Council on 12 December and has subsequently been informed that they have been successful. Participation in the programme will begin in February 2018.

A third Smart Places Seminar focusing on Digital Skills for future jobs is planned to take place on 9 February 2018 at Haileybury College in Broxbourne Borough. It is planned that external speakers from business and academic perspectives will bring forward their thoughts on what is coming down the line in terms of digital opportunities and threats, but crucially also to focus back on what businesses, colleges etc. need to do now to prepare themselves and their workforces for an increasingly digital future.

The DIZ Board chaired by myself and Councillor Mohindra as Vice-Chairman, continues to meet on a monthly basis. This cross-border grouping, originally formed of Epping Forest DC, Uttlesford DC, Harlow, East Herts and Broxbourne Councils, Essex County Council, the London Stansted Cambridge Consortium, Princess Alexandra Hospital, West Essex CCG and KAOData has now welcomed representatives of Further and Higher Education and the voluntary sector. The Board has agreed to co-fund and co-commission a digital innovation

strategy for the DIZ. The tender process for the strategy was due to be completed in mid-January with the work to begin immediately upon appointment of the successful bidder.