

Report to the Council

Committee: Council
Date: 15 October 2024
Subject: Transformation Portfolio
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Smruti Patel

Recommending:

That the report of the Transformation Portfolio Holder be noted.

Corporate Services

Business Support

Local Land Charges are implementing an Arcus module for November 2024. Arcus is our Planning IT System. Officers will be making changes to ways of working to consistency hit our turnaround time of 10 working days, even in busy periods. Officers are sharing knowledge and learning with Colchester City Council, and our current turnaround time is 12 working days.

We hosted a Spanish company, who provided training to Amazon drivers, weekly for 12 weeks in the Conference Suite.

Democratic Services

Officers have implemented the Report Management functionality within the Committee Management System (ModGov) and carried out training of Officers. The new functionality will launch from October 2024 onwards.

Elections

Officers are carrying out a review of our processes and lessons learnt from the All-out District and General Elections, seeking improvement. The 2024 annual canvass of elector is underway.

The Polling Station and District Review public consultation which ran from the 15 July to 2 September 2024 is complete and responses are being considered. A report will be submitted to the Local Liaison Committee in November and to Council in December 2024.

Health and Safety

An employee Health and Safety Survey was conducted August 2024 and an action plan is being developed by the team.

To assist with our Emergency Planning and Business Continuity responsibilities we are holding a Strategic Decision Making in Emergencies course for Senior Managers in September 2024. Colleagues from Councils across Essex have been invited and several have bought spaces.

Officers are providing Contingency Planning support to parish and town councils.

Digital

Rebranding from ICT to Digital, we remain committed to delivering excellent digital services that enhance the experiences of our customers and residents in Epping Forest District. Our goal is to ensure efficient, user-friendly technology solutions that meet the needs of our diverse community, fostering connectivity, convenience, and innovation. Close collaboration with Colchester City Council and Braintree District Council helps develop our future strategy of aligning services across the North Essex partnership. Scoping our projects and digital platforms jointly, enhances our customer focus for the generations of residents to come.

Digital Projects

Priorities for Digital to deliver in the next few months continues:

- Fit for the Future Digital Strategy – we are about to embark on refreshing our digital strategy, with a renewed focus on customer outcomes and working closely with Shared Services
- TVS Waste Project – we are supporting the move to new premises at North Weald, as well as implementing a new computer system to aid routing and collections
- Shared Services – we are working with Essex County Council on Service Design for a future Digital Team that works across and for Epping Forest and Colchester City Councils, providing resilience and increasing opportunities to work closer together
- Service Plans for 2025/2026 - working with colleagues across our Councils, we are readying service and support plans for the forthcoming financial year, aligning with finance and procurement
- Microsoft O365 Defender – we are consolidating legacy tools into our Microsoft infrastructure, to make use of market-leading tools our subscription grants us
- New website platform which can be used by EFDC and Colchester City Council – following the passing of the Digital Customer paper through the cabinets of EFDC and CCC, we are commencing the project to start delivery
- Device Refresh – working with CCC, we are putting into place plans to update ageing and legacy laptops to provide fit-for-purpose durable devices to serve our staff for the next five years

PMO Corporate Update

The Project Management Office (PMO) provides governance, assurance, project management resources and support to the business.

The PMO continues to work with service areas and the Senior Management Team (SMT) to review, assure, align and agree key projects for EFDC's corporate objectives so that time, effort, and money can be directed and supported on the right projects.

Through the collaborative work that is underway, the following are noted as EFDC's 'Programme Portfolio' which are strategically aligned to EFDC's Corporate Objectives. Not all projects are governed through the PMO and may have governance arrangements agreed elsewhere within the business. A selected number of programmes and projects are reported on a quarterly basis through Overview and Scrutiny.

1. Fit For the Future Programme **(Reported at Overview and Scrutiny)**
2. Waste Services Programme **(Reported at Overview and Scrutiny)**
 - a. a. Workstream 1: Future Waste Services Delivery
 - b. b. Workstream 2: Environment Operations Hub
 - c. c. Workstream 3: Procurement of Waste Fleet Vehicles
3. Epping Leisure Centre Project **(Reported at Overview and Scrutiny)**
4. Housing and Asset Management Project (HAM's)
5. Public Protection Project (Formally known as M3PP)
6. Finance Systems Replacement Project
7. Local Land Charges to Arcus
8. Work Management Solution

The programme management office continues to work to align resources with all projects to ensure correct prioritisation and the appropriate allocation of resources.

The PMO is currently exploring a Work Management Solution as a Proof of Concept that will provide EFDC with a platform where all our processes, tools, and teams work together to boost teams' alignment, efficiency, and productivity. This is being managed as a shared project across EFDC, and Colchester City Council. The Business Case is expected in October 2024.

Customer

Customer Service Contact Centre

- Contact centre officers have demonstrated exceptional resilience whilst experiencing higher than anticipated absence due to summer annual leave coupled with Bereavement related absence. Wait times have continued to be a challenge for this reason.
- Officers are collaborating with colleagues at Colchester Borough Council ("Colchester") and working with Cirrus the contact centre telephony provider to trial a Customer Satisfaction Survey following a telephone interaction with the contact centre. Colchester already have this process in place and EFDC officers are looking to utilise the learnings and experience.

Civic Offices Community Hub

- The Hub continues to see a significant number of residents visiting each month. Voluntary Action Epping Forest Digital Support has returned and has started to see a steady increase in footfall. Essex Sexual Health Service, Essex Hearing Help and Integration Support have all expressed interests in partnering with us.
- Officers are working with Epping Town Council to enhance visibility and accessibility, ensuring that residents are aware of the hub's offerings. It has been agreed for EFDC Officers to use the Community Stall on Monday Market Day to promote Hub services at intervals throughout the year.

Complaints Team

- The Council is now in full compliance with the Ombudsman's Complaint Handling Code 2024. This has passed the initial submission assessment conducted by the Housing Ombudsman.
- To improve Customer Experience, Complaints Performance is now a regular agenda item at the Senior Leadership Team meeting. The complaints performance and insights are shared by the Complaints Officer as well as the opportunity to answer any questions.
- Senior Officers are currently recruiting for a Complaints Officer. The post became vacant Monday 9th September 2024. Senior Officers in collaboration with Business Support will be managing complaints the day to day of complaints until the post is filled which is anticipated to be mid-October.

Digital Inclusion

- Officers across Customer & Communities have worked together and commissioned Voluntary Action Epping Forest (VAEF) to implement a digital inclusion programme across the district using UK Shared Prosperity Fund government funding. The programme branded 'Power Up!' focuses on the three key pillars of digital inclusion: digital skills, connectivity, and hardware.
- The programme will run from 1 August 2024 until 31 March 2025 with the goal of positively impacting at least 500 residents in our communities.