

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 17 February 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

Mast Lease Money - Staff Budget

Members may be aware that the Council leases roof space to one of the mobile network operators for a communications mast. Members agreed for the money from this lease to be used to contribute to projects for the benefit of staff. Any suggestions and the allocation of funding need to be considered and agreed through The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC). So far these have included refurbishment of the staff canteen, the provision a pool of loan bikes and staff shower facilities. The Joint Consultative Committee (JCC) agreed last year that some of this money be used to purchase £20 Marks and Spencer vouchers for all staff for Christmas. The Assistant Director (HR) has informed me that there had been a number of appreciative emails and notes from staff across the organisation, thanking the Council for the vouchers. For most staff it was a pleasant surprise.

There is still money available to spend from this budget and staff have been asked to submit suggestions for projects. The Committee has set up a Working Group, consisting of both staff and Member representatives, to look at the suggestions in more detail and the first meeting took place in January. The intention is that staff will be consulted further on what projects should be taken forward. A further meeting of the Working Group will be arranged for mid-February.

Apprentices

The Council's Corporate Apprentices gave an informative presentation to the JCC regarding their experience of the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme. The Members of this Committee have requested that they also present to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in the near future.

Since the presentation to JCC one of the Apprentices, applied for and has been appointed to a part-time Clerical Assistant post in the Business Support Team within Resources. She will continue on the Apprenticeship Programme for the other half of her time. She joins Louis Walton as the other apprentice who has gained employment with the Council.

HR will be looking to recruit at least 5 more apprentices this year and initial publicity for the Council's scheme will coincide with National Apprentice Week which starts on 9th March. The Council will also be working with the County's Employment and Skills team to search for suitable candidates.

Members may wish to know that the Council took part in the annual Careersfest that took place at Epping College in January. The Council's stand was organised and led by our

current Apprentices. The aim of the Careersfest is to discuss the Council's Apprenticeship Scheme with year 11 to 13 students.

Energy Savings

Smith Bellerby, an energy cost reduction company, have been engaged to identify potential savings, streamline the processing of invoices and verify the accuracy of energy data held. The Council's annual energy costs are approximately £750,000. The company are already working with a number of other Essex Local Authorities and have made savings of between 3 and 8%. This contract commences in February and will initially be for 1 year.

Solar Panels and roof works to the main & Conder buildings

The installation of the solar panels is dependent on roofing works being completed. Roofing repair and strengthening work will begin 16th February. The solar panel installation will start early in the new financial year and should be completed by June.

Window replacement works to the main building

Work to replace the windows in the main building is due to commence on the 30th March. Scaffolding will be erected initially at the back of the building before transferring to the front. It is anticipated that the works will be completed by July.

Technology

ICT Showcase

During the year ICT present showcases, highlighting examples of new technology and how it can improve the way we work. Following on from last year's successful events, the first ICT Showcase for 2015 will be held in the ICT training room on 10th February.

Areas that will be covered include;

- Flexible and Mobile working technology - overview and solutions including the Corporate Wireless network
- ShoreTel Phones – how to get the most out of the new phone system.
- Good – demonstrating new applications.
- ArcGIS Mapping – project update
- Windows 8.1- open workshop

These facilities have benefits to Members as well as staff, and all Members are encouraged to visit the showcase and discuss show technology is improving the way we work.

Host Servers

The servers have been installed and configured, with testing currently underway. The migration process will be commencing shortly and the major systems such as telephony and email will be completed out of hours to avoid any impact on frontline services. However, weekend work and potential system downtime is a possibility for other systems although ICT will do everything possible to minimise any disruption. It is anticipated that this exercise will conclude by the end of February and will contribute to a more robust and reliable infrastructure.

Building Control mobile working trial

ICT have been working with a local company called 'Swivel', to develop an Android mobile Phone based application to capture Building Control data to be used by officers whilst working on site. This is an initial pilot trial and feedback from staff will be used to further enhance this application and if successful will be introduced across building control.

Calling Line Identity

A feature of the new telephony system is the sending of calling line identity. This means that extension phone numbers can now be sent on most outgoing calls from the Council and displayed or recalled by recipients dialing 1471. Previously concerns had been expressed that some people might not pick up calls from the Council if the caller number was withheld, believing the calls to be unsolicited. Feedback received so far has been very positive.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

Epping Forest has been selected by Essex County Council to partner for Phase 2b of Superfast deployment called The Rural Challenge Project. This has the potential of providing Superfast services to rural communities where it is not possible to offer directly connected fibre. In conjunction with ECC and the Portfolio Advisory Group an area around Ongar and North Weald has been identified for initial deployment. A supply plan has been developed by ECC with an initial request for solutions put out to the industry. A supplier workshop has been held by Essex to assess the market to develop a service.