

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date 20 December 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

Apprenticeship Scheme

I am really delighted to inform colleagues that Becky Linford, who joined our Corporate Apprenticeship Programme in September 2015 has won this year's 'YES Investors in Young People' Award for Apprentice of the Year 2016 at a ceremony held at the Marriott Hotel on 10 November. The Award recognises a young person of exceptional talent and achievement who is under 25 years of age.

Becky was the first apprentice in the current cohort to complete and pass her Business Administration qualification, she has worked very hard in her placements, plus she has been coaching other apprentices in the cohort to pass their qualifications. This summer she also stepped in to run presentations at Crucial Crew on behalf of other providers. I am sure that Members will join me in congratulating Becky on her success.

The current cohort of 7 corporate apprentices are developing well, 3 of whom are now employed by the Council in full-time roles. 3 have achieved their full Business Administration qualification and the remaining 4 are on target to pass before the end of December.

Following the successful completion of this qualification the apprentices will participate in higher level Customer Service or Business Administration qualifications. They are all gaining excellent feedback in their third work placements. To support the apprentices to apply for jobs at the Council, the mentoring they receive from internal coaches helps them focus on career opportunities, job applications and interview skills.

On behalf of the Council, the apprentices successfully organised a promotional stand at the Careers Festival held at St Johns School. They spoke to other young people about our excellent Apprenticeship Programme and how they can benefit from what the scheme has to offer in developing their career.

HR/Payroll IT System

The new HR and Payroll System has moved from the development stage to a live system. Staff details are being updated and parallel running of Payroll has been taking place over October and November. October's pay-run has now been balanced against the existing system and it is looking positive for the November balance. The system is still on track for a live payroll run in December.

Facilities

Civic Offices Complex

I am pleased to report that the new electrical control panel has now been installed and commissioned. This allows for much greater control of the electrical system. When electrical shutdowns become necessary we can now independently isolate certain critical areas, such as computer suites, as well as individual buildings around the Civic Offices complex without losing power everywhere. As part of this project, all switchgear throughout the complex has been serviced for the first time. A specialist condition report is now awaited and the findings will enable Facilities to have a better understanding of where to target future resources to maximise electrical performance.

The main mechanical control panel in plant room 1 which controls the heating system around the Civic Office complex has also now been installed and is currently being commissioned. The old original panel was well beyond its serviceable life and we will soon be able to operate the heating system more efficiently and with greater control.

Works have also been taking place to upgrade the fire alarm system to include a number of designated escape routes not previously covered by fire detection equipment. Commissioning of this essential safety system is imminent.

The installation of LED lighting throughout the site has been continuing and we have already been noting the benefits. The new lighting is helping to reduce our energy consumption, additional benefits include a reduction in maintenance expenditure on lighting faults. This has helped our "in-house" Facilities Electricians to be refocused on delivering other capital electrical projects.

Works to reline the splitting lead valley gutter around the perimeter of the Council Chamber's roof with a coating system is now nearing completion. This will ensure these areas remain water tight for the future.

Other Sites

Resurfacing of the access yard to the rear of the Council's shopping parade at Limes Avenue in Chigwell has recently been completed, together with redecoration of the undercover public walkway. This painting was completed by the EFDC Works Unit instead of an external contractor. The Works Unit also made an excellent job of some external redecoration and timber repair works at our shops in Parklands, Coopersale. These projects help to ensure our landlord responsibilities are fulfilled and our leasehold assets are kept in a good condition.

Facilities Management is also currently investigating and planning the implementation of some urgent security and safety works at Townmead Depot in Waltham Abbey. This includes the provision of new fencing, hard surfacing and toilet facilities. These improvements will enable services provided by the Neighbourhoods Directorate at this location to be more effectively provided.

Technology

The voice service over internet and out telephone system project is progressing well in conjunction with our telecommunications partners, Solar Communications. This project will give the Council the ability to route inbound and outbound calls over the Internet reducing cost and improving flexibility and resilience compared to our current connections.

Increased security is provided by a DMZ (Demilitarised Zone). This is an additional layer separating the Councils internal infrastructure and the Internet and where the Councils public facing capabilities reside. The storage technology in this area has been upgraded and the capacity of storage increased.

During the afternoon of Friday 18 November KCO Group, a contractor working on behalf of BT on fibre-optic cables on Epping High Street, accidentally damaged 3 cables used by the Council. The services affected were the connections to Epping Depot, Parsonage Court and the Councils main Internet connection also affecting external email and the Councils website. The outage was reported immediately to BT who in turn responded quickly by sending emergency crews to assist in rectifying the fault. 840m of new fibre was installed along the length of the High Street taking 12 hours to re-establish connectivity. Recognition of Mark Giddy from the Network team is warranted for his commitment in managing this incident on behalf of the Council. ICT will be discussing the matter with BT to minimise the risk of this incident re-occurring.

PCI DSS (Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard) is a means of assurance for the appropriate handling of card payment data. The standard has been through a number of iterations and NTA Monitor Consultants were employed to assist with the optimum infrastructure configuration to minimise security risks in relation to card payment data. ICT is implementing the recommendations of the report by installing devices providing protection from internal authorised access (firewalls) between the PC's taking card payments and the rest of the Councils network.

The rollout of the multifunction printers (MFD's) part of the printer migration project is nearing completion. This has significantly reduced the number of individual printers and replaced them with a much smaller number devices capable of printing, copying and scanning. These have been placed in key areas to ensure efficient usage. Member training will follow shortly.

EFDC have been subject to 3 serious virus attacks in the last month. Our firewalls and anti-virus software isolated all of them before they could damage any of our systems or data. These incidents highlight the increase in attacks across the spectrum of local and central government. Although staff continue to be vigilant, additional financial resources may well be required to maintain the high level of security required.

Andrew Gardner has now acquired a license from the CAA (Civil Aviation Authority) to fly the Council's drones. Flights will commence in approximately 3 weeks' time. The website will be updated to advise the times and areas our drones will be operating across the district.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

The Rural Challenge Project to deliver ultrafast broadband to rural parts of the district continues to make progress. Almost 175km of network has now been built with in excess of 2,400 connection pots installed at the property edges. 7 cabinet areas in the district are now live with 5 areas completely built.

Broadband development is moving toward a Smart Place agenda, enabling applications which will improve services to residents, our own activities and looking at enabling street services.