

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 21 February 2017

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 delighted to report that all the Council's Business Administration Apprentices have now completed and successfully passed their qualifications. This means we have a 100% success rate for this cohort of our Business Administration Apprenticeship Programme, something we should be extremely proud of. Members may be interested to note that the national average success rate for apprenticeship passes is around 68% and falling. Additionally, it means that those in the cohort who left school without either a Mathematics or an English Grade C GCSE (or both) have had the opportunity to work towards this.

I can also inform Members that a number of apprentices have been successful finding employment with the Council which include a 6 month contract on the ICT Service Desk and hopefully a position leading to a permanent role, a Finance Assistant in Accounts Payable and a Council Tax Assistant following a recent placement within this service area.

Officers will be looking at recruiting 9 Business Administration and 1 Construction apprentices for the new cohort in the Spring, with a view to starting in September 2017. We already have a list of names to contact following the success of the Careersfest evening organised by the apprentices.

The Careersfest is an annual event organised by Epping Forest College, who invite local and national employers, other colleges and apprenticeship providers to provide information to students from the six secondary schools in Epping Forest together with the College's students.

Members may be aware that, unfortunately Epping Forest College received a Grade 4 which is classed as 'inadequate' during their recent Ofsted Inspection and are not able to provide apprenticeships under the new Levy changes starting this April 2017. We will be working with Havering College to provide training and support for our new cohort.

HR/Payroll System

Officers of the Payroll section have now successfully produced two months staff payroll runs from the new I-Trent system. The changeover has been made with minimum disruption and has operated very smoothly. This has been achieved with significant investment in planning the implementation, they have worked extremely hard to put this part of the system together and I would personally like to thank them for their contribution.

Work is on-going to ensure that all necessary data is on the system before implementing Phase 3 which will involve self-service for staff, managers and Members.

Facilities

Redecoration of common and public areas is currently ongoing around the Civic Offices by the Works Unit decorators.

A programme of planned maintenance on underground drainage systems is now well underway which includes jetting pipes, emptying road gullies, catch pits and petrol interceptors. This work has been completed at the Civic Offices and is taking place around various other operational and commercial assets over the next couple of months.

FM services engineers have written and issued tender documents for a range of essential maintenance contracts including water hygiene, lift servicing and heating and hot water installations at sheltered housing complexes. These works were included in the updated maintenance programme approved by Cabinet in November 2016.

Technology

The rollout of Multi-Function Devices Printers (MFD) to remote sites is now complete except for the Broadway, which is subject to a further site survey. Usage of the MFDs to date is in excess of 100,000 printed sides and they have proven to be reliable and very capable already. Member training on the use of MFDs for copying will be offered shortly.

ICT have ordered a Corporate Project, Program and Performance Management system. This system will streamline how we manage projects and performance and support the Transformation team. Implementation of the prototype is planned for February for a prospective April go live.

Orders have also been placed for a new Corporate Bookings system, initially supporting Community Services, but for later extension to other areas of the Council. The rollout of the system is proposed to begin in March to allow bookings to be taken for Children's Easter Holiday activities, however the full capability of the system will not be realised until the autumn dependent on an upgrade of the Council's Cash receipting system.

Work is in progress on the Prototype corporate Customer Relationship Management system and also on the migration of our corporate online forms solution (Achieve Forms) to the latest version to integrate fully into this platform. Handover of the prototype to the Customer Service Manager is planned for early March.

The Geographical Information System (GIS) team are currently completing the final steps of the Council's migration from MapInfo to the ESRI ArcGIS Platform. MapInfo and ArcGIS are GIS software solutions for editing, viewing, printing and sharing maps. From the 1 April all GIS systems in the Council will be viewed, edited and shared in the ArcGIS platform. This move will allow them to utilize the full potential of the ESRI Platform to support the gazetteer, data analysis, automation, mobile working and sharing with contractors/partners. Savings will be made on licensing MapInfo and reduced hardware requirements for light users.

In November 2016 our GIS Officer became the Council's first Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) qualified Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) pilot. Following this qualification we were able to apply for a CAA Permission for Commercial Operations licence, which we received in January 2017. They have been in discussions with major stakeholders in Planning Enforcement and Housing and flights are due to begin week commencing 6 February, weather permitting.

Advice has been published on the Councils website for residents regarding the UAV.
<http://www.eppingforestdc.gov.uk/index.php/residents/crime-and-safety/unmanned-aerial-vehicle-uav>

Internal information regarding the booking process, will be published on the Council intranet this week.

Superfast Broadband High Speed Internet

The Rural Challenge Project to deliver ultrafast broadband to rural parts of the district continues to make progress. Over 195km of network has now been built with in excess of 2,800 connection pots installed at the property edges, of which approximately 2,000 are live and ready for service. Five cabinet areas in the district are now completely built out and live with a further five cabinet areas in the process of being built. This will leave two further cabinet areas to be built and the entire network is due to be completed by October 2017.

Smart Place Agenda

An inaugural meeting of the Epping Forest Smart Places steering group has recently taken place involving Officers from Epping Forest District Council and Essex County Council. A number of potential smart initiatives addressing new ways of delivering services, and opportunities to exploit existing infrastructure were discussed. Applications included intelligent streets using lamppost technology, older people living well and independently in their homes, facilities for our own staff and businesses. It is planned that these and other initiatives, potentially involving both private and public sector partner will be explored at an Epping Forest District Smart Places Summit early in 2017. I am pleased to report that Economic Development and Partnership Manager (Interim) one of our key Officers has been asked to jointly lead a session with Microsoft at the forthcoming Essex County Council, Smart Essex Summit at the BT Tower in London.