

# ***Report to the Council***

**Committee: Cabinet**

**Date: 21 February 2019**

**Subject: Business Support Services**

**Portfolio Holder: Councillor G Mohindra**

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**Recommending:**

**That the report of the Business Support Services Portfolio Holder be noted**

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## **Accountancy**

This meeting will receive the Budget and Council Tax setting report for 2019/20. The Budget has been considered by The Finance and Performance Management Cabinet Committee and Cabinet prior to coming to this meeting. The settlement has now been confirmed and the Government has honoured its commitment to remove negative Revenue Support Grant. Other highlights include the decision not to increase the baseline for New Homes Bonus which has meant the Council being awarded more than originally thought and a one-off windfall returning some of the levy collected from authorities who have seen business rate growth.

The Settlement has also issued two consultation papers one relating to the Fair Funding Review (FFR) and the other to Business Rates retention. The first will look at the relative needs and resources formula that is used in arriving at the settlement and the second will look at how 75% Business rates retention might work in practice. The papers have been considered by the Resources Select Committee and a response submitted. The deadline is today.

As soon as the budget is set Accountancy will be turning their attention to the final accounts for 2018/19 and we have new Auditors this time round. Their initial planning and systems audit work have already commenced. The deadline for accounts closure and audit remain the same as last year 31<sup>st</sup> May for the Accounts to be presented for Audit and 31<sup>st</sup> July for approval.

As regards the Corporate Risk Register this is due to be reviewed over the coming months as it will need to be aligned with the new structure at the very least.

## **ICT Strategy**

### **Desktop & Mobile Support**

The rollout of laptops to staff at the Civic Offices, Hemnall Street, Oakwood Hill and St John's Road is now complete, and all staff across those sites with roles that permit flexible working are now suitably equipped. Work is underway to upgrade the version of MicroSoft Office on remaining laptops which were not replaced to ensure commonality with the new hardware.

To further support flexible working, the current priority is to configure and rollout our new Mobile Device Management (MDM) System. This system will simplify rollout of

devices, and enhance the security of those devices. As part of this we are planning to migrate our mobile email solution to make use of Office 365. The implementation of our new MDM will enable two planned further large scale rollouts of mobile phones and tablets.

### **Application Support**

Following the successful upgrade of our document management system (Information@work) late last year, we are now working on the staged rollout of this system to Housing as a full workflow system, and the first teams have now gone live.

Following useful discussions with the Leadership team we have agreed our immediate priorities for Office 365, as part of this work continues on the configuration of SharePoint ahead of a planned go live for the Intranet in February. We are also working on the design of the file structure for SharePoint to replace our shared drives, but the high level structure cannot be implemented until the new Corporate structure has been designed.

The technical work in continuing to support the old website has provided some challenges, but the site remained operational long past its planned retirement date owing to delays with the website replacement project. Work is now focussing on reskinning our other web platforms to match the new site, but as this involves several suppliers it will be a gradual process.

ICT has also been involved in the Beta test of a replacement app for the [Modern.gov](#) committee management system which addresses the limitations of the current app. We anticipate a live release for this app in the Spring.

### **People Strategy**

The People Strategy target of £647,000 set for 2018/19 this has now been achieved and indeed exceeded which has meant some progress has already been made toward the 2019/20 target. Following the Common Operating Model (COM), eleven support teams have come together from across the organisation to build the Corporate Business Support Team and another team is due to go into consultation shortly.

Officers are consulting with Trade Unions on proposed changes to pay, grading and related terms and conditions. Three meetings have been held with a further arranged for 8 February. The objective of the negotiations is for the Council and Trade Unions to reach a Collective Agreement.

We are currently advertising for two corporate Management Trainees which has generated a lot of interest. It is hoped to make appointments by the end of March and the training programme will include attending a Degree course in management at Anglia Ruskin University and several projects sponsored by Leadership Team.

In addition to the Management Trainees officers are recruiting a number of specialist apprentices for example in Economic Development, Council Tax, PR and Project Management in addition to our usual cohort of business administration/customer service apprentices.