

IT Section and workload update

IT Working Group

Committee: IT Working Group

Date: 4 June 2008

Title: IT Section and workload update

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Agenda Item

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Summary

This report provides an update on the structure of the ICT team and also progress on current projects.

Recommendations

Progress be noted.

Background Papers

None

Impact

Communication/Consultation	SMB and ICT staff.
Community Safety	None.
Equalities	None.
Finance	No financial impact beyond the established budget
Human Rights	None.
Legal implications	None.
Sustainability	Blade servers or similar will reduce energy use
Ward-specific impacts	None.
Workforce/Workplace	None

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Structure of the ICT Division

Since November 2007 there have been a significant number of changes within the ICT Division both through staff leaving and through the vacant post reduction exercise:

Job Title	Responsibility	Post
Systems Analyst	Server infrastructure	Deleted
Support Desk Officer	1 st line support	Retained but required to hold vacant until April 2008
Geographical Information System Officer	Mapping system	Deleted
Principal EGov and Access to Services	Day to day management of half of the ICT division, responsible for partnership development and infrastructure review	Retained
Senior Developer	Document Imaging and database development	Retained
Support Analyst	2 nd line support	Deleted

All of the above has necessitated a significant restructuring exercise. Attached as Appendix One is the new ICT Division staff structure showing current vacancies. The team has been bolstered by the recruitment of Oliver Crook into the post of Support Desk Officer from the beginning of May. The team is at present 5.8 FTE strong with 3.0 FTE vacancies. In addition, the team currently has one member of staff on long term sick leave.

Current Projects

Finance

The ICT team have introduced direct credit payment for creditors which means over the coming few months almost all creditors will be paid direct to their bank account rather than by cheque. This will result in significant efficiencies and actual cost savings.

Direct Credit payment for benefit claimants is currently being worked on but does involve a significant interface re-write between the Finance and Benefits systems.

Invoice scanning is being introduced which will free up significant office space and provide better service to end users. The system is due to go live in mid June.

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Commitment accounting via a new ordering system is also in test but the project has been delayed by the loss of key staff. This is planned to go live later in the summer.

Internet Connection

The Council has always been with BT as the line provider. This cost in the region of £28,000 per annum. Following an Essex wide partnership drive the council has switched to Virgin Media as the provider at a cost of £18,000 per annum with a faster connection (8mb instead of 2mb).

Blade Server Project

The trial has finished and a feedback meeting is scheduled for 3 June. A verbal update will be given to Members at the meeting. The project itself will be delayed pending recruitment of the infrastructure team as both the officers identified to work on the project have left the authority.

HR System

There has been a complete overhaul and relaunch of the HR system – Snowdrop. The suppliers, acknowledging significant failures with the product, gave us free of charge their new system which seems to meet the vast majority of our needs. There has been significant ICT involvement in migrating data and building the new system which is much more advanced than its predecessor. Initial feedback from staff and managers is that the new system is a significant improvement and will aid them in their day to day work life.

Issues

The Revenues and Benefits system is an outsourced managed service with ICT only responsible for backups and some day to day management of the actual system. In mid April the server died. After two days of intense work involving 20 hour days the system returned only to collapse again 24 hours later. This time the problem was much more significant and involved instigation of the support company's disaster recovery, an entire system rebuild and restore from backup. This process took three working days plus a whole weekend, working 18 hour days, to complete. There have been some significant lessons learnt from this and the way in which different teams pulled together demonstrates how well this type of partnership can work. The main participants were:

Digica – the outsourcing partner
ICM – Digica's disaster recovery provider
Sun Systems – the operating system provider
2E2 – UDC's backup storage partner
UDC ICT Team

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A feedback and learning session is planned with our partners on 2 June to ensure lessons are learnt and processes improved. Members will also recall that included in the 2008/09 Capital Programme was funding to replace this server. This project has also commenced.

Risk Analysis


Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Loss of anymore key staff.	2	3	The new teams allow for additional cross training
Revenues and benefits server fails	2	4	New server project is underway and previous experience would help with any future failure

* scale 1-4, with 1 being the lowest likelihood/impact

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Appendix One – New ICT Division Staff Structure

 = Vacant

