

**IT WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN on 14 OCTOBER 2009 at 7.30 pm**

Present: Councillor S Howell (Chairman).
Councillor J E Hudson.

Officers in attendance: P Evans (Business Improvement and Performance Manager), P Snow (Democratic and Electoral Services Manager), A Webb (Director of Central Services) and N Wittman (ICT Manager).

ITWG30 APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Artus and Lemon.

ITWG31 MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2009 were received, confirmed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ITWG32 BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT TEAM

The Business Improvement and Performance Manager gave a brief summary of the recent work carried out by the Business Improvement Team. The Chairman said that he found the format of the report produced fortnightly for the SMB to be helpful and informative.

There was a brief discussion about the best means to identify efficiency gains from the service transition reviews undertaken. Generally speaking, it was not possible to identify efficiencies until the transition plans became embedded.

ITWG33 ICT WORKLOAD AND STAFFING

Members considered the report of the ICT Manager. Interviews for the post of technical support analyst would take place next week. New blackberry devices had been delivered and a number were being trialled within the authority. A discussion took place about the cost efficiency of blackberry devices and the most effective way to utilise them within the Council. It was intended to carry out monthly monitoring to assess the levels of usage.

The meeting discussed the licensing audit carried out by Microsoft. The Chairman remarked that the response to this difficult exercise reflected credit on the organisation. Members remarked also on the difficulties brought about by the decision to relocate the Customer Services Centre at Dunmow to the new Library. It was noted that there was no written agreement in place for the installation of cabling to the area allocated to Uttlesford.

The Director of Central Services and the ICT Manager reported on their visit to Chelmsford Borough Council today to view a new service desk facility. This system was ITIL (Information Technology Infrastructure Library) compliant and would enable the Council to meet the industry standard.

In response to a question, the Director of Central Services explained that he was currently spending a great deal of his time on ICT as there were many issues of a corporate nature to resolve. He reiterated the extensive unremunerated extra hours being worked by members of staff to ensure that systems remained in operation. The Chairman was concerned to ensure that ICT services remained as an in-house operation. He wished to place on record the appreciation of Members for the hard work and commitment being shown, and asked that their appreciation again be passed on to those concerned.

ITWG34 **WELWYN HATFIELD PARTNERSHIP**

Members received a report setting out details about the recent partnership discussions with Welwyn Hatfield (Steria Ltd). These discussions had now been concluded and it was likely the Council would now take a different route but it was felt the Working Group would appreciate knowledge of the background detail.

The Chairman said he was happy with the outcome of the Steria partnership discussions as this retained control of the ICT systems within the organisation. The ICT Manager said it was inevitable that the Council would have to re-examine a partnership arrangement at some point in the future. However, there were more acceptable ways of achieving this than had been envisaged by Steria. There was a present requirement to save £80,000 from the ICT budget once the proposed partnership hub was established.

The period during which the Steria discussions had been undertaken had been stressful for all concerned. It was hoped that any future proposals for changes to the way that ICT was managed by the authority would take place on the basis of the Council taking more of a leading role.

ITWG35 **ELECTRONIC DOCUMENT AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT (EDRM)**

The Director of Central Services reported further on the proposals for a new system infrastructure. It was intended to install EDRM in the housing office in November and to begin the backscanning of more than 3,000 files. In time it was intended to extend EDRM to planning. This would ease the pressure on the availability of physical storage space within the building and introduce more efficiency into the interrogation of old records.

Members noted the progress made with this proposal.

ITWG36 **BLADE SERVER PROJECT**

The ICT Manager reported on progress towards the provision of blade servers. Officers were in discussion with Chelmsford Borough Council with a view to the housing of a number of blades there.

It was noted that the cost of this project had now been amended from £130,000 to £70,000.

ITWG37

GOVERNMENT CONNECT

The Working Group was updated on the Government Connect (GC) project and it was noted that the code of connection (CoCo) 3.2 had been approved in April. However, the new version 4.1 had just been released and it was expected that Siemens would arrange to carry out their assessments in the near future.

The Council faced a particular problem with implementing GC as there were as many as 130 officers with the capability of working either from home or remotely. Uttlesford was unusual in having such a high proportion of its staff able to work in this way.

Members again discussed the onerous nature of the CoCo project and the officers explained the difficulties involved in providing for the necessary assessments. It would be necessary for the ICT section to reschedule its projects to ensure full compliance.

ITWG38

DATA AND SYSTEM BACKUPS AND DISASTER RECOVERY

The Director of Central Services reported on the outcome of the Finance and Administration Committee meeting on 12 October at which approval had been given for funding to provide for system backups and disaster recovery. He explained in detail the three methods being examined to achieve this objective.

The first method involved the intention to move to a disk to disk backup rather than the current tape solution. This involved the possible use of the sheltered housing unit at Walden Place in Saffron Walden to locate the backup facility and the possibility of housing an ICT recovery suite there. The second method involved a reciprocal arrangement with Chelmsford Borough Council to provide for a number of blade servers to be located at their offices. Method three involved the possibility of an agreement with Microsoft for them to host Exchange (Outlook).

Members were impressed with the actions taken and asked for further details of the proposed agreement with Chelmsford BC. It was also noted that the funding provision made by the Finance and Administration Committee left the details of the backups and recovery systems to be decided by officers, in consultation with the Working Group. Accordingly, Members agreed to endorse, in principle, the proposals outlined in each of the three methods presented at the meeting.

The Director of Central Services said that no other council was near to the level of resilience envisaged in method one. As part of the proposals, it would be necessary to move towards the early upgrading of Outlook 2003 to Outlook 2007. Councillor Hudson cautioned against a move to Outlook 2007 but officers advised there was no alternative solution available.

The Chairman asked officers to document the steps they were taking towards the objectives laid out and to report back on a quarterly basis.

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE TELEPHONY

Following a presentation from the Head of Customer Support and Revenue Services last October, a further report was submitted proposing automation of the telephone system used in the Customer Service Centre (CSC). Members had reluctantly accepted at that time that there was a need to increase the number of automated options available to the public, provided there were only a small number of options and a maximum of two levels.

The proposed solution had only three automated options and was based on one level only. These options were based around existing and proposed working practices with the options as set out below:

- Option 1: Revenues and Benefits
- Option 2: Housing repairs (now operating from Newport Depot)
- Option 3 would then be everything that remained after the first two options were filtered out

Members asked a number of questions about the detailed operation of the revised system and expressed satisfaction with the arrangements made. It was expected that the new system would be introduced in the January/February period.

RECOMMENDED to the Finance and Administration Committee that proposed revisions to the telephone system in the CSC be approved as set out in the appendix to this meeting.

CAPITAL PROGRAMME 2010/11

Members were advised as to the recommended capital programme for ICT items in 2010/11. The programme included the following three new projects:

- An upgrade from Microsoft Office 2003 to Office 2007 (£80,000)
- A replacement Revenues and Benefits system in conjunction with the Strategic Solutions agenda (£300,000)
- The establishment of a working environment and disaster recovery centre at Walden Place (£30,000 HRA)

There was also a delayed 2009/10 project to install a new network (including VOIP) at the London Road offices at a cost of £140,000. Two other projects already approved remained in the programme. These were for two minor projects yet to be identified (£20,000) and Corporate Workflow (part of the EDRM project) at a cost of £70,000.

It was accepted that this was a very challenging capital work programme and the officers expressed confidence that there was sufficient capacity available to undertake the programme in full.

RECOMMENDED to the Finance and Administration Committee that the capital programme for 2010/11 listed below be approved:

- Microsoft Office 2007 upgrade
- A replacement Revenues and Benefits system

- Creation of an office environment at Walden Place
- A new network for the Saffron Walden offices
- Minor projects yet to be identified
- Corporate workflow

ITWG41 **FUTURE WORKING GROUP ARRANGEMENTS**

The previous meeting had agreed that the Working Group should continue on a quarterly schedule. It was agreed that further meetings should be held in January and April 2009 and that the Annual Council meeting should then determine the future of the Group. One option was to continue but with meetings held biannually.

It was agreed that this Group was not the appropriate vehicle to consider the work of the Business Improvement Team as this did not fit well with the ICT remit of the Working Group.

This change, and any others thought appropriate by the time of the Annual meeting, would be recommended to that meeting accordingly.

The meeting ended at 9.00pm