

**IT WORKING GROUP held at COUNCIL OFFICES LONDON ROAD
SAFFRON WALDEN at 5.00 pm on 21 SEPTEMBER 2006**

Present: Councillor R F Freeman - Chairman
Councillors R M Lemon and A R Thawley.

Officers in attendance: M Brean, V Harvey, A Webb and N Wittman.

ITWG9 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

An apology for absence was received from Councillor K R Artus.

ITWG10 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2006 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

ITWG11 SAFFIRE WEBSITE

Since the last meeting the applicant had withdrawn the application for funding.

ITWG12 COUNCILLOR ITC SUPPLY CATALOGUE

The Working Group viewed a report providing a discussion document relating to Member's ICT equipment beyond the 2007 local election. Member feedback was required to aid in the development of the Member ICT delivery package for 2007 and to inform the requirements of the 2007/08 IT Capital Programme bid.

The equipment would suit the needs of each Member, such available items would include duplex colour printers, wireless routers and Skype telephony.

It was envisaged that for this catalogue to become reality a capital programme item of £70,000 with £10,000 per annum on-going revenue consequences would need to be established.

Members viewed this as a potentially useful catalogue. However they held concerns that some Members may ask for the most up to date technology without having the need for it. Officers said it would be likely that each Member would be assessed on their needs and offered items that would best suit the individual.

If the group felt the catalogue was worth developing the Head of IT would then present the proposal to EMT, and it would then go forward as part of the 2007/08 draft Capital Programme for consideration by the Operations Committee.

AGREED that the IT Working Group wished to develop the Members ICT catalogue.

ITWG13

FUTURE ADMINISTRATION ARRANGEMENTS FOR COUNCIL WEBSITE AND INTRANET

The administration of the council's website and intranet was the responsibility of the IT section within the Customer Services Executive Unit. With the appointment of the Council's Communications Manager, Richard Auty, this area of work would now be the responsibility of the Strategy and Performance Executive Unit.

All changes to the website would fall under the Communications Manager and the new Webmaster post had been filled by Michael Frost.

Members were pleased that a full time post had been dedicated to the website maintenance and improvement.

ITWG14

INTEGRATED CUSTOMER MANAGEMENT (ICM) - UPDATE

Members viewed a report providing details of the progress of the Integrated Customer Management (ICM) project. It focused on developments within key aspects of the project.

Customer Relationship Management (CRM)

Members viewed a demonstration of the CRM integration working with Ocella. For example when details of a pest control service were entered onto the CRM software the details were then directly linked with Ocella. With this, only one form would need to be filled in and the job would then be raised.

Council Tax were set up and ready to go live and the work within benefits was half way through.

New Ways to Pay

Around 4,500 plastic payment cards were issued on 22 August. The majority of users had welcomed the facility to pay at Post Offices, who in turn had welcomed the increase in trade. Customer reference details were stored on the magnetic strip and payment could be made by cash, cheque or card. These cards did not incorporate a microchip.

Allpay were the company supplying the cards, and UDC were the first council to use the 'Big Card' which held council tax and housing rents details. Typically, separate payment cards would normally be issued for each debt. If lost, the cards were cheap to replace at around 78 pence per card.

Premises Alterations

Phase one of the alterations at Saffron Walden Offices had been completed and phase two had started. All building and associated work for the customer service centre was due to be completed by early November 2006. A decision on the partition in the reception area was to be made shortly, however this may need to be checked with English Heritage. There was lots of work to be

undertaken with the electrics and this was due for completion at Saffron Walden and Dunmow by 4 November.

Building work would commence at the Dunmow Offices on 7 October 2006 and was scheduled to be completed by early November 2006.

Negotiations were taking place with the Citizen's Advice Bureau to jointly procure public access kiosks for the above offices.

Communication, consultation and community/user involvement

The Communications Manager, when in post, would start plans for the launch of the Customer Service Centre. A soft launch would be operational from 27 November, and the official launch was estimated for the end of January or early February. This was hoped to coincide with a conference to promote best practice service initiatives at the Council.

Business Process Re-engineering (BPR)

Phase one of the programme in revenues, benefits, anti-fraud and cashiering was nearly completed. A report with recommendations would be considered and a transition plan produced to implement the changes. Phase two of the OR programme would start in housing services in mid September 2006.

Human Resources

Staff briefings took place in July 2006 and further meetings had taken place with smaller groups of staff and individuals to talk through the proposed changes.

The job descriptions for the staff in the customer service centre had been written and job evaluated. Staff affected by phase one of the OR programme, plus community information centre staff, were to attend a development centre. Following this, staff would undergo an extensive programme of training during October and November 2006 on customer service skills, use of the new telephone and CRM systems.

The maximum number of customer service advisors posts with the Customer Service Centre would be 22.

ITWG15

TELEPHONY

The Principal Technical Officer reported that a cable survey was being carried out. Lots of work had to be undertaken, including bringing up cables from the basement, going under floorboards and working within the reception area. Three contractors would be carrying out this work.

Saffron Walden Officers were due to go live with the new telephony system on 9 October, Dunmow on 10 or 11 October and Newport would go live on 13 October.

There was still uncertainty over the telephony at the Museum.

Next week Global Crossing would be coming into the Council to write a case study, as UDC were the first Local Authority to use the system outside of central government.

Members were pleased with the telephony system as it was a modern system and was being provided at no additional revenue cost.

ITWG16 **POSITION STATEMENT 3 – NETWORK**

Members viewed a report which provided a summary of an independent assessment of the council's computer network. It also included details of changes made to date and planned future changes.

The existing network was installed in 1997 and in the last 12 months it had become apparent that significant network performance issues were starting to develop.

In March of this year Astro Communication Ltd were employed to undertake a network review project for the Council, and in doing so had identified a number of bottlenecks. The initial work had now resolved all bottlenecks and provided additional resilience to key corporate servers. Phase two would review the wireless network, implement and train IT staff on the use of network monitoring tools and the replacement of two key switches. Phase Two was shortly due to commence.

The problems identified with room 116 were to be discussed with the building manager as a matter of urgency. It should be noted that if the cabinet in 116 did overheat and fail network availability would be lost in all floors of the new wing of the Saffron Walden offices.

Members wished to be kept informed with the progress of room 116 and asked that Architect and Property Advisor/consultant, David Demery kept Members of the ITWG updated on this matter and for the matter to be included on the agenda for the next meeting of the group. David Demery to attend as necessary.

Members expressed the view that room 116 was the wrong location for the server unit, and that a better location should be identified as a matter of urgency.

ITWG17 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Members wished to invite another Councillor onto the IT Working Group; this member should be agreed at the next meeting of Full Council on 17 October.

Councillor Artus, who had given his apologies asked if the time of the meeting could be changed to 7.30pm to allow time to get to the meeting after work. The members who were present all agreed that 5pm suited the majority of Members and officers, and would remain at 5pm for the time being.

The meeting ended at 6.25pm. Page 4