

## **STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

Thursday 12 March 2015

### **Present:-**

Councillors Baldwin, Bialyk, Sheldon, Dewhurst, Haines, Prowse and Gammell

### **Also Present**

Strata Chief Operating Officer, Strata Business Systems Manager, Strata Document Processing Manager, Assistant Director Finance and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

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### **APOLOGIES**

These were received from Councillors Dent and Wood.

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### **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR**

It was noted that, in accordance with Standing Orders, the Chair could not be an Exeter City Councillor, as a City Councillor chaired the Strata Executive Committee. The position of Chair was on a rotational basis with the Chair appointed for 12 months.

Councillor Prowse of Teignbridge District Council was elected Chair.

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### **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

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### **STRATA - AN ORIENTATION**

The Chief Operating Officer set out the background to the creation of Strata Service Solutions Ltd., established by the three Councils in order to achieve reductions in costs and risks and to meet growing IT challenges and the increasingly complex needs of local authorities. He explained the governance arrangements and it was noted that estimated savings over a ten year period would be in the region of £8.3 million. The company had "gone live" on 1 November 2014.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

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### **STRATA IMPLEMENTATION PROGRESS**

The Chief Operating Officer provided an update on the progress with the implementation plan. The main elements of the plan were on schedule with the following having slipped slightly:-

- construction of data centre facility at the Civic Centre with a Disaster Recovery facility at Oakwood House, Marsh Barton three weeks behind schedule;
- design of the Active Directory (network) and email design nearing completion;
- Strata time and attendance system incomplete; and
- Councils yet to be asked to begin process of file and email clean up.

The creation of a common service desk across the sites had produced early benefit with instances of mutual support being provided across sites.

Redundancy costs were expected to be higher than anticipated but the extra costs would be met by the Technology Challenge Award grant. Some suppliers had agreed to hold contract costs with others reducing costs.

He responded as follows to Members' queries:-

- the original assessment of anticipated redundancy costs had been based on Human Resources formula but many of the volunteers were from long serving staff. The £135,000 cost would be a one-off;
- the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA) of £970,000, which would cover the redundancy costs, had been awarded in October;
- to assist with migration to the new technology staff would be encouraged to reduce their email and file storage by wherever possible;
- staff morale was very high and opportunities to transfer to one of the two other Councils, for example to reduce travel to work time, would be sympathetically examined but subject to the interest of the business; and
- briefing for new Councillors after the May elections on the raison d'être and operation of Strata would be incorporated into the induction programmes of the three councils.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the progress of the implementation plan.

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### **STRATA ANNUAL BUSINESS PLAN**

The Chief Operating Officer updated Members on the Annual Business Plan for 2015/16 for Strata Business Solutions Ltd. The complete Strata business case and implementation plan had been signed off in July 2014 with Strata going live in November 2014 and, consequently, the 2015/16 annual business plan was a close match to the original plan with few exceptions and was presented as a summary only.

Members were advised that accounts would be provided for the first four months of operation up to 31 March 2015 and for 2015/16. Elements of the TCA Award would be carried over into 2015/16.

The Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the Annual Business Plan for 2015/16 as agreed by the Strata Joint Executive Committee.

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### **NEW TECHNOLOGY - WHAT IS A CUSTOMER PORTAL**

David Sercombe, Business Solutions Manager, spoke to a presentation explaining the operation of a Council Citizen's Portal using that of Oxford City Council as an example.

The portal would sit alongside the Council's web site providing one place for interaction and a history of contacts. It would be used for applying, reporting, paying, responding to consultations etc. with public access possible at the following three levels:-

- basic level for consultation, reporting issues such as graffiti, for which personal information would not be required;
- further detail such as name/email address for location based information such as bin emptying days or local planning permissions; and

- highest level requiring proof of birth, account number e.g. for Council tax, Housing Benefits etc.

Responding to a Member, he advised that each Council's data would be secure and that it would not be possible to access data held by one of the two other Councils following contact by the public.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee thanked the Manager Business Systems.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.25 pm)

Chair