

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 22 October 2015

Present:-

Councillors Prowse, Bialyk, Dewhirst, Jung, Haines, Nicholas (sub for Chapman) Prowse and Dent

Also Present

The Chief Operating Officer Chris Powell, Director of Finance Dave Hodgson, Director Neil Aggett, Teignbridge District Council.

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APOLOGIES

These were received from Councillors Chapman and Raybould, and the Strata Human Resources Lead.

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 July 2015 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

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QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

None.

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QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES

None.

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PROGRESS REPORT ON STRATA IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

The Chief Operating Officer presented the report providing an update on the progress with the Implementation Plan.

- Overall Plan for the infrastructure build was close to original timetable and meeting quality targets. The roll out to users is being re-planned to ensure sufficient time is available to train users; Set up costs are on budget;
- Organisational progress including first end of year accounts completed and audited;
- Infrastructure: data network being supplied by Virgin to connect all sites still has performance issues still under investigation, which has delayed providing faster internet connection for East Devon and Teignbridge.
- Software applications: user acceptance testing of the new Virtual Desktop applications started in September in Exeter. Roll out of the Virtual Desktop will now be scaled down to cover fewer people being transferred each day

so that more attention and time can be given to each user to ensure they can transfer smoothly to the new desktop.

- A new plan is currently being prepared for the roll out of technology across the three councils, to take into account the feedback from the user acceptance testing and fewer people being transferred per day. This approach will impact on current software use, with systems being utilised (and therefore requiring support) for longer than anticipated because of the transfer to a virtual desktop being extended

He responded as follows to Members' queries:-

- It was worth exploring replacing Office 365 with a virtual desktop solution in the future if that better suits the needs of elected members. In the meantime, refresher training and clinics would be helpful for members at Teignbridge and EDDC;
- Virgin data network issue related to transfer capacity varying, with testing to date operating a suboptimal connection. Virgin were testing why there was a difference between data capacity travel to and from the sites;
- IDOX was explained as a proprietary software platform called Uniform, on which a number of applications sat, already in use for a number of applications for Teignbridge and EDDC. Exeter had agreed that Uniform should be implemented as a solution for them instead of an in-house built platform. A business case on that option would go before the respective Councils.

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

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STRATA PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - MONTH ENDING 30 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Chief Operating Officer presented the updated suite of performance indicators that Strata was using to manage its business and to show stakeholders how Strata is performing. The report covered the month of September.

Although definitions were set out at the end of the report, the Committee felt that it would be more helpful to have explanations throughout the report.

Incidents were explained as an event where a problem had occurred and needed to be fixed; a request was explained as an event where an improvement or change was needed but the software/hardware was still fully operational.

There was a link between the higher level of incidents recorded for Exeter and the desktops used at Exeter – the machines themselves were of a number of variations in build, whereas machines at Teignbridge and EDDC were much more uniform with a small number of models of computers used.

Service end-to-end times were highlighted and investigated to reveal that capacity had diminished as staff were diverted to undertake STRATA projects. System outages for Teignbridge were highlighted, where staff resource was then diverted away from projects to deal with fixing the issues there, the Teignbridge system being described as having a level of fragility. The Board were looking at better management of the infrastructure to help manage the outages level at Teignbridge, looking for a balance to fix issues whilst keeping projects on track.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee approved the report.

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2015

The Director responsible for Finance presented the Final audited Statement of Accounts for 2014/15 as well as the Strata Budget Monitoring to 30 September 2015 advising Members of the financial progress of Strata during the first six months of 2015/16.

Referring to both the profit and loss and balance sheet statements, he highlighted that:

- The company made a loss in the year of £3.476m, as a result of taking on the pension liabilities for staff that have transferred to the company from the Councils.
- Taking out the pension element, the company broke even during 2014/15
- The three owner Councils have provided a guarantee to the pension fund that they will cover all liabilities on the fund in the event that Strata was unable to fulfil its commitments

The Committee discussed the tax implications for STRATA in relation to the capital invested from the three authorities.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report including the Final Statement of Accounts for 2014/15.

SMARTPHONE ISSUES IN EAST DEVON

The Chief Operating Officer updated the Committee on the roll out of smartphones across the Streetscene service at East Devon. This amounted to approximately 80 phones, supplied with applications for reporting on work required. Teams were already working with existing android phones, which will be replaced with iPhones over time. Although there had been some issues with smartphones, the STRATA staff were working closely with the team to help resolve issues.

Councillor Jung illustrated an example of the use of the smartphone app, where a resident of East Devon had reported an incident of fly tipping. The smartphone allowed the Streetscene operative to see the rubbish tipped, locate it and start to clear it away before the individual reporting the problem had left the site.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1, 2 and 3 of Part I, Schedule 12A of the Act.

HUMAN RESOURCES UPDATE REPORT

The Chief Operating Officer presented the report on behalf of the Strata Human Resources Lead. The report outlined the Human Resources advice provided to the Strata Board in respect of offering staff new Strata terms and conditions and adopting a phased strategy based on affordability and business need. The report also provided an update on recent meetings with the Strata Staff Joint Forum and Employee Representatives as well as agreements made with the Board in relation to annual appraisals, learning and development and staff engagement.

Councillor Bialyk sought assurances that the STRATA employee contracts were not in any way inferior to council staff contracts. The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that he would ask the Strata Human Resources Lead to contact the councillor directly to make clear that no Strata staff were now at a disadvantage in moving from council employment to a new contract.

Scrutiny Committee - Community noted the report and recommended Executive to approve:-

- (1) noted the report and supported the approach proposed in relation to terms and conditions; and
- (2) noted the agreements made at the Staff Joint Forum (point 4) with UNISON.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.41 pm)

Chair