

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 3 December 2015

Present:-

Councillors Bialyk, Raybould, Dewhirst, Haines, Prowse, Dent and Jung

Also Present

Chief Operating Officer, Manager Programmes and Resources, Strategic Lead, Finance, Director with Responsibility for Finance, Director and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

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APOLOGIES

These were received from Councillor Chapman and Councillor Nicholas (substitute for Councillor Chapman).

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 22 October 2015 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

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DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

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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

The Chief Operating Officer gave a verbal update on the progress of the Implementation plan.

The overall plan for the infrastructure build was close to the original timetable. The new global desktop roll out had commenced for Exeter and was progressing well with a high level of satisfaction from users, the roll out to continue through January to March. Problems encountered were being resolved. Roll out to East Devon would occur between March and July and from July onwards for Teignbridge.

He explained the benefits that the new system would bring and that there was a supply of spare PC's.

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

STRATA PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

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 October.

He explained that incidents were individual events which required fixing and that outages covered longer periods when users were unable to use PC's and access systems, the latter being higher for Teignbridge than for the other two Councils.

The customer satisfaction figures were a cross section of all three Councils. There had been 410 positive responses out of a total of 1,349 completed jobs, achieving just over 95% positive feedback. Some of the neutral and negative responses were down to the poor performance of the Teignbridge citrix and the time taken to complete jobs. The Customer Service Manager followed up on the latter.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee approved the report.

HUMAN RESOURCES REPORT

Simon Davey presented the report of the Strata Lead for Human Resources outlining the Human Resource and cost implications provided to the Strata Board in respect of restructuring and offering staff new Strata terms and conditions by 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.

Some restructuring and new appointments had already been made producing a saving of £200,000, which was on target. Restructuring would create additional ongoing costs and potentially one off costs. These were £108,000 per year in increased salary costs plus some potential one off redundancy costs of up to £58,000.

Normal personnel issues, to be expected from a 70 strong workforce, were occurring and it was noted that a resignation would take effect in 2016 in respect of an individual.

Discussion took place on the transfer of staff to new contracts. Staff were keen for a quick transfer but this had not been implemented yet until the full cost of implementation in relation to the Business Case was clear. The majority of jobs to be transferred were like for like, with a small number potentially involving differences in responsibilities. Regarding redundancy policy, staff terms and conditions from the transferring Council would be honoured but that this would not apply to staff joining from outside.

Redundancy terms for Strata staff who had tupe'd to the new company had been agreed with UNISON and a collective agreement has been drawn up to reflect this. Staff who tupe from a council would be entitled to the redundancy payment terms of that council (including any revisions made) until such time as the collective agreement is further reviewed. UNISON had agreed with the proposal that new staff would be entitled to a reduced redundancy package which is still greater than the statutory amounts. It had also been agreed with UNISON that the phasing for restructuring the teams would be agreed with them in advance prior to consultation commencing.

Members noted that the report had already been agreed by the Strata Joint Executive Committee at its meeting on 24 November 2015 and that they had not therefore had the opportunity to discuss the report first. They agreed that, logically, the scrutiny process should come before Executive decision making in order for any views and comments to be passed on to Executive and they asked that the scheduling of both meetings be reviewed.

The Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee - Community:-

- (1) noted the report and the approach proposed in relation to restructuring terms and offering Strata terms and conditions which, subject to costs, was scheduled to take place in the first quarter of 2016;
- (2) noted the agreements made at the Staff Joint Forum with UNISON; and;
- (3) asked that the timetable and regularity of Strata Joint Executive Committee and Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee meetings for the remainder of 2015/16 and 2016/17 be reviewed for new dates to be identified to ensure that Scrutiny Committees come before Executives meetings.

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ADOPTION OF IDOX UNIFORM IN EXETER

The report of the Chief Operating Officer was submitted seeking approval for funding to deliver Idox Uniform in Exeter City Council, which would replace numerous lines of business systems with a common platform used across all partners.

The capital costs would be £203,000 over three years for the installation of a system into Exeter City Council and upgrading and adding functionality to the systems at East Devon and Teignbridge. Anticipated cost savings shared between the three Councils would be approximately £368,000 revenue and about £432,000 capital avoidance.

Teignbridge and East Devon both used the Uniform application from Idox which possessed numerous modules covering most services dealing with land and property but Exeter, as part of the Systems Thinking review, had adopted an in-house strategy for Planning, Building Control and Land Charges systems. Following extensive negotiation with Idox, Strata had secured a very good deal allowing Exeter to use all the Uniform modules for no additional annual revenue costs over and above that already being paid by Teignbridge and East Devon. Uniform would not only replace Exeter's in-house system for Planning, Building Control and Land Charges, but also replace the other council systems in the wider list of services set out in the report. This was a three year project and Exeter City Council would also need to improve its data and therefore may need to spend a further £100,000 to clean old and inaccurate data and ensure correct formatting.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

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LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1987 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 for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part I, Schedule 12A of the Act.

ADOPTION OF COMMON HR SYSTEMS

The report of the Chief Operating Officer was submitted to provide Members with an update on the Human Resource Business Case with preliminary costs so that a budget could be secured for the financial year 2016/17.

Members were advised that this was the second shared project covering four areas of functionality of HR, payroll, time and attendance (T&A) for flexitime and door entry. The cost savings were anticipated to be £204,000 over 10 years.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

STRATA BUSINESS CASE UPDATE

The report of the Chief Operating Officer was submitted to advise Members of the progress that Strata had made in the Implementation Plan since its establishment on 1 November 2014 and to seek approval for changes to the Business Case. The report covered vision, finances, technology, the convergence plan and the organisation and compared the current situation with the Business Case finalised in May 2014.

Although there had been a number of cost savings it was likely that the first year revenue savings would be lower than the Business Case although the full capital expenditure savings with the three Councils had been achieved. There were timing issues turning off old contracts with security products, networks, servers and storage. This delay would cause the first year revenue savings to be lower by around £50,000 but this would be made up in the following two years and the overall ten year target would still be realised.

The large build programme with the installation of a completely new set of technology had been on target and it was noted that because of the number of issues arising from the User Acceptance Testing phase the end of the roll out programme had been extended from April to October.

Staff had TUPE'd across to Strata in November 2014. As well as the £200,000 per year saved from the management re-organisation further savings were identified from staff turnover. However, the new organisation structure with Strata grading and job evaluation would increase the salary bill higher than planned if offered to staff across the board. Increased savings from new contracts could help offset this.

The Chief Operating Officer advised that the revised software Convergence Plan had yet to be incorporated into the Business Plan and therefore further work was required to be able to give a definite figure of the additions that the three Councils would need to approve to their capital programme for 2016/17.

The Business Case was revised on an annual basis in response to the requirements of the three Councils. He emphasised however that the Council's needs were fluid in response to outside factors and changing priorities within the authorities. In this respect, the transformation process was of particular relevance, with each Council seeking to identify more efficiencies and cost effective ways of operating and looking to Strata to help implement.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

BUDGET MONITORING REPORT TO 31 OCTOBER 2015

The report of the Director with responsibility for Finance was submitted to advise Members on the financial progress of Strata during the first six months of 2015/16, including a project outturn assessment against the savings set out in the Business Plan.

At the six month stage the Board was projecting a saving of £212,830 against the target of £262,098.

Members were advised that the Government had required a commitment to spend the TCA grant of £975,000 and that they had been advised that this had been substantially committed. A total of £745,840 had been carried forward into this financial year of which £498,388 has been spent. It was anticipated that the remainder would be used in this financial year and be sufficient to meet the anticipated expenditure.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting would be advised following the review of the meeting timetable.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 6.53 pm)

Chair