

REPORT TO

Date of Meeting: Executive 6th December: Council 13th December 2016

Report of: Assistant Director Public Realm

Title: Agile Working in Public Realm

Is this a Key Decision?

No

Is this an Executive or Council Function?

Council

1 What is the report about?

- 1.1 To seek approval for the purchase of smart mobile technology to support the transformation of and deliver service efficiencies in the Public Realm Directorate.

2 Recommendations:

That Executive Committee supports and recommends that Council approves:

- 2.1 That further transformation of the services in the Public Realm Directorate be supported by the introduction of smart mobile technology to improve service response and efficiency;
- 2.2 That a sum of £60,000 be added to the 2016/17 Capital Programme for the purchase of smart mobile devices for the Public and Green Spaces, Asset Maintenance, Waterways, Car Parking and HomeCall services;
- 2.2 That a sum of £20,000 be added to the Public Realm annual revenue budget to support the ongoing costs of the smart mobile devices.

3 Reasons for the recommendations:

- 3.1 To enable the implementation of mobile working across Public Realm, delivering service improvements and efficiencies.

4 What are the resource implications including non-financial resources.

- 4.1 The purchase of around 125 smart mobile devices and associated cases at an estimated capital cost of around £57,144 and additional ongoing revenue cost of £18,168. A contingency has been built into the recommendations to allow for any price increases and potential additional costs associated with repair, loss or damage. The additional revenue costs will be funded from the surplus returned to the Council by Strata when the new approach to funding mobile working was proposed by Strata and approved by the Councils.
- 4.2 All the purchasing and set-up activities will be undertaken by Strata. There will be a considerable amount of training required, in the use of both the devices and the Firmstep application. Training will be delivered by Strata initially and cascaded through the teams by managers and supervisors.

5 Section 151 Officer comments:

- 5.1 The additional financial costs are noted. In this instance, there is some surplus funding from the new arrangements for charging for mobile working, which will cover much of the additional revenue funding. If approved the remainder will be funded via General Fund Balances and added to next year's budget. The Capital will be added to this year's programme.

6 What are the legal aspects?

- 6.1 The Corporate Manager Legal has no concerns regarding this report.

7 Monitoring Officer's comments:

- 7.1 The Monitoring Officer has no concerns regarding this report

8 Agile Working in Public Realm

- 8.1 Members will be aware that the Public Realm directorate underwent a complete reorganisation in 2015. The reorganisation was designed to deliver transformation in the services: providing the flexibility in the staff structure to more easily introduce new ways of working and directing resources to different areas of work to reflect the Council's priorities and responsibilities. The new staff structure was informed by the principles of systems thinking, with the outdoor teams working differently with operational decision-making placed on the frontline and support, service development, maintenance and logistics provided "on pull" from the operational teams in the back office. It also provided for improved customer fulfilment, transactional and problem solving services.
- 8.2 Thus the effectiveness of new structure was predicated on the ability for operational staff to receive, log, request and communicate about work from their outdoor workplace. It has taken some time to resolve a technical solution to this and in the meantime these reactive services have been working with old technologies, by and large using the same working practices. In short, while the restructure prepared the workforce for transformation, transformation has not been possible without the technology to underpin it.
- 8.3 Currently, only a limited number of staff are using mobile-enabled devices. Predominately these are supervisors and technical officers who have been mobile-enabled on a trial basis to test the potential for a comprehensive system of agile working, specifically what devices were considered most appropriate. However, these are not the necessarily the officers who have most to gain from being provided with remote access to their work requests and applications. The vast majority of the workforce currently have no mobile technology beyond call-only Nokia mobile phones, despite the fact they spend their working week away from an office base. As a result, most of the current work requests are phoned through in an emergency, or printed out on paper and handed to the staff at the beginning of the working day. Consequently, there are few records of the work they have completed and, where records are required, there are manual processes such as re-keying into back office systems by administrative staff.
- 8.4 The attached proposals overcome these issues and will allow us to deliver true transformation in our outdoor responsive services, such as street cleaning, graffiti,

litter, dog fouling and grounds maintenance, waterways, parking and HomeCall as well as efficiencies in our back office asset maintenance services.

Infrastructure to support mobile working

- 8.5 At the time of the Public Realm reorganisation, the technological infrastructure was not in place to support mobile working. Over the last 18 months, Strata has identified specific mobile devices and network providers and all office-based staff have been moved onto the global desktop. Thus, given network coverage and a suitable mobile device, staff can now access their work from any location as if they are at work. In addition, all officers will be able to view council map layers such as land ownership, access internally published websites and view/edit network documents. A result, for example, with relatively simple devices, the Assets team can now undertake inspections and record them onto the system in real time on site, without the need to return to the office and enter the information from notes.
- 8.6 In addition, and of particular use to the vast majority of Public Realm staff who should be reactive but are hampered by the technology, is the implementation of the Firmstep customer relationship management system mobile app. Delivered as part of the Digital Delivery Platform project, this will enable the staff working in our streets and parks, initially, to automatically receive and process reactive work requests either from the website or from calls into the customer service centre. It will also enable these staff to generate new forms/work requests themselves if required and facilitate near real-time updating of back office systems (instead of the current re-keying of information from paper work sheets) and the new customer portal. The Firmstep App in conjunction with a suitable mobile device provides, for the first time, the ability for staff to receive, log, request and communicate about work from their outdoor workplace in real time.
- 8.7 With transformation in Public Realm such a key objective for the Council and with old working practices still prevalent despite the new structure, the Digital Delivery Platform project plan has been amended to prioritise the delivery of most of the key Public Realm work demands. The project is in several phases with Phases 1 & 2 delivering the majority of Public Realm activities from January to June 2017 and from them it will be possible to transform our working practices and deliver much more responsive services.
- 8.8 Now the software systems are in place to deliver agile working, the staff require smart mobile devices in order to be able to use them. A great deal of analysis has been done to understand for each individual member of the team what their current levels of mobility and remote working are and how this could improve, what existing devices they had and their requirements for access to applications. The analysis also shows the extent of the potential benefit of introducing mobile working in Public Realm, as set out below.

The Proposals

Public and Green Spaces Operations

- 8.9 Of the 100 members of staff in this team, 90 already spend their entire week working remotely across the city, and nine of the remaining ten staff would be able to work 60-80% remotely were they to be provided with appropriate technology. Currently, 89 of the 100% remote working officers have Nokia non-smart phones

and one has a smart phone on trial. All seven Team Leaders have been provided with iPads in recent months, as has the Operations Co-ordinator. This has improved mobile working for the supervisors and demonstrated the suitability of the devices.

- 8.10 At present all reactive work requests are processed on paper or verbally over the phone. As a consequence not all enquires are logged in any back office system, and if they are then this is once the officers have returned paper sheets to the office for manual re-keying. As a result, reactive services can be slow, instructions and locations unclear, records lost and customers and supervisors unaware when, or if, the work has been done.
- 8.11 It is proposed that the 89 officers currently without mobile technology who spend their entire week working in remote locations be provided with iPhones. This will enable them to receive and process emails, take photos, access council mapped data to confirm ownership and crucially receive, process, reallocate and generate new reactive work requests via the new Firmstep mobile website and customer service centre. It is also proposed that all eight of the Team Leaders now be provided with iPhones which will enable them to receive and monitor reactive work requests using the new Firmstep solution.

Asset Maintenance

- 8.12 All eight of the Asset Maintenance and Development Teams spend a limited amount of their time working remotely at present, but have indicated that this could more than double to 60% if they were to be provided with mobile enabling technology. As a service they are already well served for existing mobile devices, with three of the four Technical Officers already having iPads and iPhones as well as the one of the two Development Officers. It is proposed that the remaining Technical Officer without an iPad be provided with one. This will enable him to extend his mobile working from around 20% to around 60% in line with the other members of the team who have been piloting the benefits of iPad devices for a couple of months.

Waterways

- 8.13 All five members of the Waterways team spend 100% of the time working remotely and would benefit from the provision of new mobile devices. At present the team has only two Nokia non-smart phones. It is proposed that all five officers are provided with i phones and one tablet or tablet/laptop hybrid device The devices will be touch-screen enabled, this will enable them to capture signatures electronically too, providing the potential to digitise the moorings service.

HomeCall

- 8.14 All three of the Home Call Assistants spend 90% of their week working remotely and could increase this mobility to 95% (a further 2 hours a week each) with the provision of new mobile devices. At present, they have four Nokia non-smartphones. It is recommended that all four officers be provided with new mobile enabled iPads. These devices will enable them to access and complete their template MS Word alarm request forms on site with new customers who might need assistance. It will also allow them to receive and respond to their emails and schedule calendar appointments whilst working remotely.

Parking and Enforcement

- 8.15 The Car Park Revenue Officers, Civil Enforcement Officers (Parking), Civil Enforcement Officers (Response) and Senior Civil Enforcement Officers all spend 90% of their week working remotely. Recently, they have been provided with two iPads for tracking parking machine faults accessing a remote portal and a shared iPhone for viewing parking payments another portal. An iPad is also shared by the two Car Park Revenue Officers for monitoring of cash box levels on the Caleweb portal. The remaining staff have a non-smart Nokia phone. It is proposed that the two Car Park Revenue Officers, 11 Civil Enforcement Officers (Parking), four Civil Enforcement Officers (Response) and Parking & Enforcement Team Manager all be provided with iPhones. This will enable all the staff to have access to the 'pay by phone' web portal to view active parking payments, as well as receive and respond to emails. In the future it will also enable them to receive, process and generate new reactive work requests via the new Firmstep mobile web app.
- 8.16 In addition to the efficiency and transformation benefits, these proposals for mobile working will also enable Public Realm staff to be supported by the proposed new Lone Worker system. There are other immediate health and safety benefits, such as the ability to upload dynamic risk assessments and record essential spot checks.

Resources Required

- 8.17 The above proposals require the purchase of around 125 smart mobile devices and associated cases at a capital cost of £57,144 and additional ongoing revenue costs of £18,168. These costs are based on the assumption that the iPhone 6S and iPad Air 2 are provided to the relevant officers at the same costs as listed in the O2 pricing guide for November 2016. A contingency has been built into the recommendation to allow for any price increases.
- 8.18 All existing phone users will remain on the O2 network. This avoids contract cancellation fees. O2 is deemed to have appropriate network coverage in the city. Access to Firmstep will be gained remotely using the web app version without offline capability given that mobile data coverage in the City is adequate. The offline version of the App would cost a further £19,000 per year.
- 8.19 All devices are covered for parts and labour under the manufacturer's standard 12 month warranty but they will not be insured because costs are prohibitive. Any associated repair cost outside of this period, or replacement costs as a result of loss or damage of a device will need to be resourced for in addition to the £17,844 above. A contingency has been built into the recommendation to allow for these potential additional costs.

Implementation

- 8.20 The devices will be purchased and rolled out in this current financial year. Much of the functionality will be immediate and the Firmstep application will be available for all prioritised Public and Green Spaces operations by June 2017.

9 How does the decision contribute to the Council's Corporate Plan?

- 9.1 The Corporate Plan sets out the need to do things differently to save money by redesigning services to provide services that customers need and reduce operating costs. It also proposes to improve cleansing of the city centre and implement new ways of keeping the city looking good.

10 What risks are there and how can they be reduced?

- 10.1 There are no significant foreseeable risks to these proposals. The devices to be issued are more valuable and less robust than the previous non-smart Nokia devices and there is a risk of loss and damage leading to more frequent replacements. We will seek to manage this by offering clothing with adequate and secure pockets and phone cases, as well as ensuring that staff use them responsibly. Report of devices used by similar users in East Devon do not highlight a significant problem in this respect.

11 What is the impact of the decision on equality and diversity; health and wellbeing; safeguarding children, young people and vulnerable adults, community safety and the environment?

- 11.1 These proposals have no significant impact on any of the above.

Sarah Ward
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Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1972 (as amended)

Background papers used in compiling this report:-

None

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