

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 15 September 2016

Present:-

Councillor Dent (Chair)
Councillors Dewhirst, Howe, Jung, Lyons, Musgrave, Prowse and Jung

Also Present

Chief Operating Officer, Assistant Director Finance Teignbridge Strata Director, Manager Compliance and Security, Manager Programme and Resources, Manager Business Systems, Service Desk Team Leader and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

29

APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors, Haines, Leadbetter and Sheldon (Substitute Councillor Musgrave)

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MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2016 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

31

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of pecuniary 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.

34

ACCESS TO BOARD MINUTES

Following requests made at a previous Scrutiny meeting, the Board had given consideration to making minutes of its meetings available to Scrutiny Committee Members. Whilst understanding the need for Scrutiny Members to have sufficient information to undertake their representative role on behalf of the public, the Board had felt that it was important for confidentiality to be maintained. The level of information in Board minutes was operational and related to the day to day management of the company and, as such, was not appropriate for general release. This view had been endorsed by Strata Joint Executive Committee.

One Member of this Scrutiny Committee had asked for a copy of the Board minutes through a Freedom of Information request and these had been provided for him, appropriately redacted. He stated that the amount of redaction was minimal and that the minutes themselves were very brief and that, as such, he could not see how much, if any, of the commercial element of the Board's debate would be revealed within the minutes. Circulation of these minutes, he suggested, would provide Scrutiny Members with a sufficient idea of matters under consideration by the Board without revealing confidential commercial and staffing issues.

It was reported that the Board fully understood Members desire to fulfil their scrutiny role and the Teignbridge Strata Director undertook to circulate the redacted minutes provided to the one Councillor to the other Members of the Committee.

The Board would give further consideration to this issue and whether the circulation of redacted minutes would be the appropriate way forward.

35 **STRATA GLOBAL DESKTOP - PROGRESS REPORT INCLUDING CHANGES TO GLOBAL DESKTOP PLAN**

The Chief Operating Officer updated Members on progress with the roll-out of the Global Desktop (GD). Following initial problems with two or three software glitches at Exeter, roll-out there had been delayed until April of this year but more major difficulties had been experienced at Sidmouth relating to the link between Exeter and Sidmouth which comprised three stretches with different providers. As a result the management teams had changed the priority of migration. It was now anticipated that completion would occur by April 2017. The change of plan for the roll out of the GD meant that Teignbridge would migrate to the GD by the end of year with East Devon following. 600 staff had been transferred to GD with the total number to be 1,800.

Responding to Members, he advised that there were no concern regarding the East Devon roll out process to the new offices at Honiton and Exmouth. Regarding contractual arrangements with the suppliers, he advised that the priority was to ensure that VMWare were focused on resolution of Strata issues. Any compensation issues would be discussed with them once the systems were working.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

36 **CAPACITY AND CONVERGENCE PLAN**

The Chief Operating Officer presented the Capacity and Convergence Plan.

Amongst the 40 projects, the following were aimed at achieving business software convergence:-

- **The Uniform system from IDOX** - including the delivery of Planning, Building Control and Land Charges in Exeter;
- **HR, Payroll, Time and Attendance, Door Access** - all three councils possess a common suite of software to manage the HR, and payroll services along with a common door access system;
- **Exacom** - a software application for managing the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), being introduced across the three authorities;
- **Corporate Websites** - successfully introduced with all three websites built in a common way;
- **Car Parks software** - project just about to start with presentations arranged with suppliers;
- **GovDelivery** - GovDelivery, a communication tool allowing customers to sign up to newsletters for different services introduced earlier this year in Exeter, now being taken up by East Devon;
- **Bacs** - work well underway on the BACS software convergence project; and
- **Numerous Desktop applications** following rolling out the Global Desktop.

In response to Members' queries, the Chief Operating Officer and Directors advised that although there had not been a radical increase in the speed of the various applications the number of incidents had halved since the introduction of Global Desktop and that, with staff reduction anticipated by the end of year four, planning for necessary resources would begin well before the end of year three. A key element of the Business Case and Delivery team was the split between project and other work and project work was split between high and low intensity. It was noted that, at this stage, the Board was not in a position to provide additional resources. As convergence continued the Business Plan would be updated.

The Manager Programmes and Resources advised that assessment of timing and delivery of project planning was based on staff resources.

37

GLOBAL DESKTOP - PRESENTATION

The Service Desk Team Leader presented the main features of the new Global Desktop focusing on the Outlook and Skype facilities, demonstrating the latter through contacting a colleague elsewhere in the building.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

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STRATA BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER 1 : 2016/17

The Director responsible for Finance presented the final audited Statement of Accounts for 2015/16 for Strata Service Solutions as well as the financial progress of Strata during the first three months of 2016/17, including a projected outturn assessment against the savings set out in the Business Plan.

The original business case for Strata had set out a savings profile over the initial 10 year period of the company, with savings of £254,000 budgeted for 2016/17. The projected saving at the beginning of 2016/17 as a result of additional costs from the transfer of staff to new Strata terms and conditions had been £26,964. It was now anticipated that the savings would be £97,000.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report including the Final Statement of Accounts for 2015/16.

39

HUMAN RESOURCES PROGRESS REPORT 19 AUGUST 2016

The Strata HR Lead for Human Resources presented the Human Resources update report setting out continued progress on key HR work during the restructure period.

The Board had approved additional restructure costs of £108,000 plus up to £31,000 redundancy costs. Flexibility between sites had been important and 72% of those offered Strata conditions had accepted, apart from the document processing team based at East Devon.

Notwithstanding delivery requirements, a focus on people issues were important including staff engagement, communication and training. The results of the staff engagement survey had been published and were available on the Strata internet. It had been recommended that the Strata management team draw up an action plan on feedback received from the survey which would help the attainment of Investors in People.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- three apprentices had been recruited, one for each site, with one having been taken on permanently. An IT recruitment firm was engaged with view to the recruitment of further apprentices wherever possible;
- project delivery pressures on Strata management as well as those on Council managers were recognised and were monitored through the appropriate indicators. If necessary, timing of project delivery would be subject to negotiation with the three Councils;
- training was of particular importance with various training opportunities on offer through the Learning Development Partnership including on line training, one to one courses and training led course - for example a forthcoming data base course would be attended by half of one of the Strata teams who would subsequently train other team members; and
- staff turnover was monitored in terms of Business Plan commitments to ensure the availability of staff resources and to achieve savings as far as possible.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the progress of the Human Resources report.

40 **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 for the consideration of the following item on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraphs 1, 2, 3 and 4 of Part I, Schedule 12A of the Act.

41 **INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT ON STRATA'S SYSTEMS**

The Director responsible for Finance presented the Strata Internal Audit Report 2015/16 produced by the Devon Audit Partnership following its successful tender bid for a three year contract.

The Audit opinion was that the systems and controls generally mitigated the risk identified but a few weaknesses had been identified and/or mitigating controls had not been fully applied. There were no significant matters arising from the audit and the recommendations made served to strengthen what were mainly reliable procedures.

“Good standard” levels of assurance had been given for each of the following areas covered during the audit:-

- ICT Strategy;
- Change Management;
- Incident and Problem solving; and
- Key operational functions.

With regard to the risk to business continuity with ageing network assets, the Chief Operating Officer advised that many of the main network switches would have been replaced by March 2018 (East Devon District Council building moves) advised that external equipment was of the highest standard and that the Global

Desktop project would make maximum use of PC's that are even 10 years old. Moreover, new network cabling and switches had been installed at Teignbridge with East Devon to benefit from modern equipment on the office move.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report and commended staff on maintaining such high standards of control during a challenging period.

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SCRUTINY WORK

The Chair proposed to Members that they report back to the next meeting of this Scrutiny Committee on 1 December on possible areas within Strata Service Solutions which could be the subject of scrutiny through the task and finish group process. He recommended that this be informed by Members discussing issues with staff within their respective authorities.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted that Members would provide written reports two weeks before the December meeting for inclusion on the agenda.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.24 pm)

Chair