

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Wednesday 6 September 2017

Present:-

Councillors Leadbetter, Wood, Prowse, Dent, Jung, Nicholas and Sheldon

Also Present

Strata IT Director, The Teignbridge Strata Director, Compliance and Security Manager, Programme & Resource Manager, Chief Finance Officer, Strata Lead for Human Resources, Document Centre Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

40

CHAIR

In the absence of Councillor Lyons, the meeting was chaired by Councillor Leadbetter of Exeter City Council.

41

APOLOGIES

These were received from Councillors Dewhirst, Haines and Lyons.

Councillor Sheldon was substituting for Councillor Lyons.

42

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2017 were taken as read and signed by the Chair as correct.

43

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of pecuniary interest were made.

44

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

None.

45

QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES

None.

46

STRATA IT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Strata IT Director presented the quarterly report on the functioning of the Strata organisation, the aim being to provide background to the core areas of specialisation within Strata and identifying key activities, successes and areas for improvement. The report included a SWOT analysis. He highlighted the following key areas:-

- the Global Desktop Improvement Programme (GDIP) was in place to improve the overall end user experience of the Global Desktop environment with regular updates issued. Action plans had been drawn up to address issues experienced and Strata was working closely with technology partners;

- in respect of Global Communications, the Strata Service Desk had been moved to the Anywhere365 solution to manage workload across the service desk which was giving better visibility of call patterns and had helped effective management;
- the number of cyber threats identified by Strata remained high and effective protection of the three authorities IT environments was in place, the Strata Compliance and Security team continuing to manage on a daily basis phishing attacks. This was a significant challenge and had increased the workload in the team. Trends in attacks had been identified and there were excellent tools in place to add layers of protection;
- the number of Business Change Requests (BCR's) had reduced through proactive monitoring and management and good progress was being made in reducing workload in a number of areas;
- recruitment of new staff had proved effective enabling members of the Strata management to free up time to enable them to better manage their teams, and to be less operational. There were some 1,800 users and 67 Strata staff;
- Strata was in a position to attract high quality staff with regular approaches from both individuals and from agencies interested in working for Strata, with the East Devon Human Resources team highly supportive. Two new team members had been recruited into the Business Systems discipline and three new apprentices had commenced work on 5 September on a structured two-year apprenticeship programme. Exeter College delivered a programme of work experience, well received by both students and college staff. During a week in June, seven 'IT' students worked alongside Strata teams and the same exercise would be repeated in 2018;
- it was noticeable that Strata was being successful in staff recruitment despite private sector competition as the overall Strata package which included pension rights and sick pay was an attraction;
- monthly town meetings were held with all Strata staff;
- a new Strata web site had been launched; and
- the Multi-Function printer Devices had been launched across the three authorities, Ricoh having won the tender.

The IT Director's report also included a table of project resources and capacity. It showed a drop in project utilisation (which had been over 70% for the majority of the last 15 months) would lead to more time available to work on BCRs. Ideally, Strata project utilisation would be at approximately 50% of available resource time. It was predicted that, by November 2017, project utilisation would be in the region of 55% of available resource time. The Director also presented a Key Performance Indicator table showing improvements in all areas - incidents, service requests, security, problems, maintenance and BCR's. He also reported reductions in the spend analysis, highlighting for example a reduction in overtime from £6,000 to £1,500 largely due to the completion of the global desktop rollout.

Referring to the transfer of the telephony system to the integrated Skype Business System, a Member asked whether Members would receive any benefit from the migration to the new platform, and whether, for example the cost of calls into the authority could be included or reduced. It was agreed that Strata would look at the possibility of deploying the new platform to Members and hence offering a more attractive call tariff for calls into the authorities.

With regard to work experience and apprentice recruitment, the need to include all Colleges of Further Education across the three authorities was recognised and hence engagement should ideally be extended beyond Exeter College. Strata would therefore look to engage other such educational establishments during 2017/18 and explore ways of potentially working together.

Individual managers presented their respective areas as set out below:-

Compliance and Security – Robin Barlow

There had been a consistent improvement in line with that seen over the last four months although issues with Lagan at East Devon continued to cause outages even with support from the supplier. The annual Public Service Network CoCo submissions for each council had not been accepted by the Government PSN assessment team who were taking a zero tolerance approach to Windows 2003 servers, of which there were currently five between the three Councils.

The migration of the PSN network connections was behind target due to the supplier (Vodafone). Dates to migrate email services had been confirmed for early September allowing the East Devon and Teignbridge connections to be terminated.

There was additional focus on the security position which remained high with additional measures in place to bolster the current position. This level reflected the volume of security threats being seen generally even though there has been a success in identifying the recent email campaign through some advice in a Government security forum.

Infrastructure Projects – Robin Barlow for Adrian Smith

Speed of the Global Desktop Improvement Programme (GDIP) had improved but there were still issues to resolve including Outlook failing with external specialists brought in to review performance. Fortnightly updates were being provided to users. A detailed breakdown of the programme was provided.

The Global Telecoms project was progressing well and Exmouth staff had been retrained following re-fit of new building. Strata remained involved in the Honiton build. The relocation of IT equipment to facilitate the building works at Forde House had provided positive feedback

The service desk was performing well in supporting the Business as Usual activities of the three authorities. In July 2017, out of the 285 feedback responses, 265 were positive, 12 neutral and 8 negative, representing a 93% positive feedback performance. Devon County Council had increased the Wide Area Network costs and Strata was therefore exploring with KCOM the transfer of the service. Because of increasing emails a further 20TB's of Storage Area Network disk capacity had been installed.

Councillor Prowse left the meeting at this point leaving the meeting inquorate.

Document Centres - Martin Millmow

The new Ricoh printers had been installed at Exeter City Council Civic Centre allowing printing to be collected from any printer using a council ID card. Benefits of 'Follow Me printing' technology was that prints could be retrieved from any printer and the system also provided increased data protection. Installation at remote offices would follow. Four printers were being installed at East Devon including one at the refurbished Town Council office with Teignbridge installation to follow later in September, the whole project to be completed by December.

The graphic design team had recruited a part time graduate designer based at Teignbridge.

Programme and Resources – Steve Gammon

The Programme and Resources Manager detailed the 16 systems convergence projects being undertaken as requested by Council service managers and as agreed by the partner Councils and set out in the annual Strata Business Plan together with 60 service projects.

50% was the guideline resource allocation for project work, leaving the remaining 50% for all other tasks such as support, BCRs and all other activities. The current high demand for projects, seen to run until October was impacting capacity for delivery of BCR's.

The Programmes and Resource Manager met regularly with departmental heads to ensure Strata understood the needs of each authority and action plans drawn up to address reported problems. It was planned to provide the Draft Business Plan to the Councils' earlier this year.

Overall governance would be examined with the authorities to agree a potential new governance model for 2018 and beyond.

Business Systems – Dave Sercombe

The Business Systems Manager reported that the BCR queue continued to reduce as BCR's were completed with the need of others being re-assessed to provide a more accurate picture. Project work was continuing with several major projects due to go live in the next couple of months. The Uniform project in Exeter had gone live helping harmonise software across the authorities. In Exeter also, Planning, Building Control, Housing Grants and Land Charges were live with the new Uniform system, now used across all three partners. All three authorities were entering into a project scoping exercise to explore the deployment of a common Street Scene as part of a review of Asset Management requirements.

The Firmstep project had been updated and agreed with the project board to manage all customer enquiries from all sources and was expected to go live at the fourth quarter of 2017/18.

Teignbridge had gone live with the Garden Waste renewals scheme and East Devon's new Waste system across their refuse service was fully operational. This involved Waste Management, Customer Services, the external contractor Suez, and Strata.

Other major projects progressing well included iTrent payroll and core Human Resources in Teignbridge which were expected go live in October 2017, the Digital Platform in Teignbridge and Updates to Website and Intranet in East Devon.

Strata recognised the importance of meeting users' expectations whilst, at the same time, retaining appropriate project work balance.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report and thanked the Strata staff for their hard work and the significant progress made.

The Director responsible for Finance reported that Strata had been given a total of £6,104,000 to run the IT Services in 2017/18 along with funding for various capital projects. The 2017/18 Business Plan had revised the savings profile set out in the original Business Cases over the initial ten year period of the Company.

The Strata budget was on track to deliver around £255,000 of revenue savings for the Councils in 2017/18. Strata had asked for £210,000 for specific service improvements but this had not yet been approved by the three Councils. At the three month stage the Board was projecting a savings of £255,520 against the total original target of £252,836.

The report set out variations in the capital budget.

The Board was satisfied that the refund provided to the three owners during May 2017 was appropriate, subject to final approval at Teignbridge of the company being allowed to keep the additional £210,000.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the report.

48

PEOPLE DATA REPORT - 2016/17

The Alternate Director with Lead Responsibility for Human Resources presented the report setting out key people information for 2016/17. The report covered headcount, turnover, absence, recruitment, apprentices and age profiles. Strata had recruited three apprentices for each of the three councils.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the report.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.02 pm)

Chair