

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Thursday 31 May 2018

Present:-

Councillors Dewhirst, Haines, Lyons, Prowse, Dent, Jung and Pierce

Also Present

Strata IT Director, Head of Strata Business Systems, Head of Compliance and Security, Manager Document Processing, the Strategic Lead Finance and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

1

ELECTION OF CHAIR

Councillor Haines of Teignbridge District Council was confirmed as Chair for the next 12 months.

2

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2017 were approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

3

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

4

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

None

5

QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES

None

6

STRATA IT DIRECTOR'S REPORT

The Strata IT Director presented the report on the last five months of activity at Strata, 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 covered Financial Management, BCR's and Projects, Service Desk, Global Desktop Environment and Supplier Management to which changes had been made as Strata moved from the Adopt/Adapt phase into the Transformation phase. Key performance indicators were also provided covering incidents, service requirements, security, problems, maintenance and business change requests.

He highlighted the following key areas:-

- better financial management had enabled Strata to deliver savings in excess of target. Savings of £575,000 had been delivered back to the three authorities against a target of £262,000, representing 215%, achieved through more proactive engagement between each of the Strata service lines and the City Council finance team. Staffing costs remained stable and costs associated with temporary contracts had reduced;

- a new post of a Supplier Manager - Andrew Woodhouse - had been created to better negotiate renewal of contracts to ensure Strata delivered against the 2018/19 savings target and a Project Manager - Chris Cook - had also been recruited working under the Manager Business Systems;
- the Global Desktop Improvement Programme (GDIP) had improved the overall performance of the Desktop environment and, during the period of adverse weather, had enabled the three authorities to continue to deliver services even with each HQ closed;
- the Global Desktop environment investment programme enabled progress with the Business Continuity programme and ensured that, in the event of a major incident, Strata could fail over the key/core applications required by the three authorities to the secondary Data Centre facility;
- a Joint IT Steering Group had been created to help prioritise project and business change request work across all three authorities;
- customer satisfaction remained high with all service incidents logged through a centralised service desk function in Exeter. In April, 432 responses had been received, comprising 430 positive responses, 11 neutral responses and 11 negative responses i.e. 94 % satisfaction. Neutral or negative replies had been followed up to identify areas of improvement;
- introduction of the Out of Hours service had been very successful now formalised for a 12 month period;
- high staff morale with Strata attracting and retaining high calibre staff;
- a business intelligence unit had been established which would enable the development of a data analysis capability to support the trend in 'Big Data';
- GDPR had increased and there was a high demand on Strata time to support the three authorities to ensure compliance;
- three new apprentices joined in September and it was the intention to recruit three more from South Devon College; and
- Strata continued to deliver a good level of service to the three authorities as identified by the Devon Audit Partnership and the level of savings delivered back to the three authorities was well in excess of that originally predicted with customer satisfaction scores high.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- the lead in time to appoint the Supplier Manager was because of a number of factors including the resolution of a Human Resources matter and the first successful applicant having previously accepted the position then turning it down, Strata felt it important to take time to recruit the right person into the role given the key nature of the role and the need to find somebody whom would fit with the culture that Strata is building;
- to mitigate against the overall failure of Global Comms greater flexibility in the use of alternative and diverse systems was being built in, which enabled calls to be routed over the internet to diverse locations rather than to one specific location. BT were also moving away from traditional ISDN based telephony over to IP telephony by 2025 so the migration was essential; and
- results from the recently introduced East Devon green bin system were to be discussed with the teams at Teignbridge.

Also highlighted were the following key pressures:-

- Business System Finance - supporting the demands of the finance teams across the three authorities;
- ensuring Strata is supporting the GDPR requirements of the three authorities;
- service desk to keep pace with the service and support demands and also to

- support the needs of Councillors where there is a high demand for Strata support;
- develop business intelligence capability to gain better insight and value from data; and
- need for more IT training.

Goals for the next six months were:-

- improve the BCR and projects process;
- better financial monitoring for 2018/19;
- successful transition to the Honiton office with a December 2018 opening;
- Global Comms. roll-out in Exeter which was a significant challenge;
- GDPR support to the three authorities; and
- Improve Strata's public image through attendance at Job fairs, talks to businesses etc.

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

Infrastructure Projects - Adrian Smith

The Head of Infrastructure and Support detailed the infrastructure investment programme, highlighted the following:-

- new faster storage, AppVolumes live and working in Exeter and East Devon, with Teignbridge District Council in the final stages of testing and faster desktops rolled out to staff;
- Vmware software environment upgraded and delivering further product enhancements;
- following feedback from Strata users after each stage of the improvement programme, a review of the UEM software would occur with view to upgrade;
- the last stage of the East Devon Server move to Exeter was near completion in advance of the move to the new Honiton Office;
- Global Desk Top Rolled Out successfully to 300 East Devon District Council staff with 100 staff remaining to migrate to the new telephony platform;
- progress had been made with Virgin Media Business (VMB) on the Teignbridge SIP Migration project now awaiting a confirmed migration date in order for testing with Skype for Business. Exeter's migration was more complex;
- report to be prepared on options for core network infrastructure for Exeter; and
- upgrade on secondary data centre location being examined as the current location on the Marsh Barton estate is not ideal, options being examined including private company to host, share with another body such as the RD&E or identify a new location.

Business Systems Team - David Sercombe

The Head of Strata Business Systems detailed the end to end review of the Business Change Requests (BCR) and Project process undertaken to align it more to the needs of the three authorities with a focus on delivering the value BCR's and Projects identified by each authority. To date, Strata had been inundated with work, with little knowledge of the overall benefit to each authority. A much clearer process was now being implemented to enable more accurate mapping of Strata work and allow councils to see the business benefits of each request and enable each piece of work to be added to a Strata work plan.

There would be close working with the client leads of the three authorities and workshops had been held at East Devon and Teignbridge to classify requests with a further workshop to be held at Exeter. Once all workshops were completed, the Priority BCRs would then be added to a work plan and shared with Client Leads via the Internal Review Board for review as well as the Joint IT Steering Group.

The Head of Business Systems also commented on the BCR Performance indicators, new BCR demand by month, the total number of BCR's and total number of closed BCR's during the month. Also reported were the performance indicators of projects including:-

- Firmstep in Exeter - several updates had been made;
- Firmstep in Teignbridge - progressing well;
- New HR and Payroll system continued in Teignbridge and Exeter; and
- planning, building control and land charges systems.

The Head of Business Systems also updated Members on progress with the review of the existing convergence programme which mapped progress with regard to the requirements of the three authorities.

It was also noted that the Street Naming and Numbering and GIS team has been rebranded as the Business Intelligence Unit to better reflect the work the team provide and to develop a capability much more in line with the three authorities need to make decisions based on data.

Compliance and Security - Robin Barlow

The report of the Head of Compliance and Security highlighted that there had been no evidence that the Salisbury nerve agent incident had impacted on recent security events and that a weekly update was being provided from the Cabinet office about how secure email will now be delivered after an announcement that their accreditation scheme had been cancelled. It was noted that the preparation for PSNO Coco was underway with pre-emptive scanning by the Security team and completion of actions from the previous CoCo.

Document Centres - Martin Millmow

The report of the Manager Document Processing highlighted the move of the existing Copy Centre in the Civic Centre to be closer to the main Strata office and, resulting from a general push by departments and the raised awareness of GDPR, there had been an increased officer focus on the handling and storage of both physical and digital documents.

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

The letter of the Devon Audit Partnership issued to the three authorities had reported good progress against each of the core business objectives of Strata of Cost, Risk and Change. Aspects covered by the letter included risk and performance management, business continuity plan, cyber security, key operational functions and service design.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

IT TRAINING NEEDS PROPOSAL

The Strata IT Director presented the report proposing the introduction of a roving IT training resource to enable authorities to deliver a more professional approach to IT and enabling skills shortages to be identified and addressed. It would be an effective way of bringing in a training resource without one single authority having to carry the full cost. Using the existing defined processes for recruitment, it was intended to identify and shortlist suitable candidates for this role. The intention was for a suitable resource to be in place by 1 September 2018.

Members emphasised the vital need for this resource to also be made available to Councillors of all three authorities.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee supported the report.

SUPPORT OF COUNCILLOR IT PROGRAMME

The Strata IT Director reported that there was currently no formal agreement for the support of Councillor IT equipment at either East Devon or Teignbridge with Councillors providing their own IT out of their allocated budget and the authorities providing access to Office 365 to enable emails to be sent and received. Hence, Strata did not support the individual IT equipment (desktops, laptops, printers, tablets) used by each Councillor. IT equipment was not provided by either East Devon or Teignbridge to Councillors to enable them to perform their function.

At Exeter, Councillors were provided with devices to enable them to access both email and various IT systems. As these devices were authority owned, they were supported by Strata, and Councillors regularly contacting Strata to ask for support. The devices were built and provisioned by Strata and Microsoft Outlook was provided as the email platform.

Three options were set out for the support of the Councillors privately owned IT equipment as follows:-

Option 1 - basic service provided by Strata at each location to be paid for by each authority and included in the annual Strata service charge. This would be charged at a rate of £250 per Councillor per annum. Hence for a Council of 50 councillors, the charge would be £12,500 per annum.

Option 2 - basic service provided by Strata at each Head Office location to be paid for by each Councillor on an annual basis to be charged at a rate of £250 per councillor per annum to be deducted from the Councillor's expenses payments.

Option 3 – A voucher scheme to enable an authority to buy a number of vouchers which could then be traded for Strata Service Desk support time. The initial minimum number of vouchers per authority would be 20, and each voucher would be worth an hour of Strata level 1 or level 2 time. A pack of 20 vouchers would be charged at a rate of £1,000, equivalent to £50 per hour. The voucher scheme would be administered by Democratic Services department of each authority.

A further option - **Option 4** – would involve Councils providing hardware (tablet device) to enable a councillors to perform their role comprising an iPad similar to those provided to Exeter City Council Members. The devices would be loaded with the relevant Strata supported councillor required applications, e.g. email. The estimated cost of providing the iPad device plus support in the first year would be circa £800 per councillor. In subsequent years, there would be an annual support cost of £150 per device. This service did not cover the cost of printing hardware or a home Broadband Service.

On the invitation of the Chair, Councillor Clarence of Teignbridge District Council addressed the Committee. He detailed the ongoing difficulties he was experiencing with IT generally as a result of the Teignbridge District Council policy whereby Councillors purchased equipment from their allowances and because Strata could not offer the necessary support. Crucially, he stated that this hindered his ability to function effectively as a Councillor.

Teignbridge and East Devon Members of the Committee re-iterated the problems being encountered. Although there was no direct support for IT equipment at Teignbridge, the Strata Service Desk had provided limited advice and guidance on IT issues but because of the divergence in personal equipment a comprehensive support was not viable. Similarly, at East Devon, Councillors had obtained limited assistance from Strata with privately owned IT hardware related issues. Some Councillors referred to the specific problems they had encountered with their Council work.

An Exeter City Councillor highly commended the Exeter option where tablets were issued to Councillors on election and where problems could be quickly resolved by the Strata Service Desk. She also commented that the equipment was passed on to new Council Members once a Councillor stood down from office.

Because of the above commendation, it was recognised that the most favourable long term solution was to adopt the Exeter system. However, short term, Members asked that either option 2 or option 3 should be chosen as an immediate resolution to the problems in order for a basic level service to be made available to allow for Councillors to contact the Strata Service Desk to request assistance, with one Member favouring the issue of vouchers as offered in the third option.

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CUSTOMER SERVICE PLAN

The Strata IT Director presented the report advising Members of the purpose of the Customer Service Plan, created to improve the level of service for the three authorities currently served by Strata. The Desk was responsible for supporting and logging incidents and technical support queries and ensuring that all telephony, email and portal queries are resolved. It provided a system generated interaction number which used to track the call from initial log to closure.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee note the report.

11

JOINT IT STEERING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Strata IT Director presented the report setting out the role, mission statement, terms of reference and reporting lines of the newly created Joint IT Steering Group explaining how it fitted within Strata's overall governance framework.

Following a review of the governance structure of Strata it had been concluded that there was no one body overseeing the prioritisation of projects and programmes of work across the three authorities. This had led to Strata setting project priorities but with staff within each authority not understanding how the prioritisation works.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the creation of a Joint IT Steering Group and its terms of reference.

12

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.

13

STRATA FINAL ACCOUNTS - 2017/18

The Strategic Lead Finance reported that Strata had been given a total of £6.277 million 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 Case over the initial ten year period of the Company with savings split into cashable revenue savings and savings to the Councils from not having to implement specific capital projects individually.

Strata had delivered £575,804 of revenue savings in 2017/18 and had refunded £565,000, the key variation being the former comparing well against the original target of £252,836. The three authorities would be considering future policy in respect of potential savings levels with regard to risk, the transition agenda and future objectives of the authorities.

The Councils had received capital funds to finance projects along with £150,000 a year towards improvements to the main network. At the end of 2017/18 the only aspect of the original infrastructure project outstanding was the telecoms project and there was £99,000 remaining to fund the completion of this work. In addition, Strata had spent £360,000 enhancing the capacity and stability of the datacentre and added a new customer contact centre. This has been funded via the annual capital contributions.

The report set out the draft Statement of Accounts showing the true financial position of the Company. Members were advised that the pension fund deficit was backed by the three authorities through the local government pension scheme. However, the figure had resulted in a private company questioning the ability to enter into lease agreements with Strata. This issue was being examined by the Director responsible for Finance.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report including the Pension Fund deficit.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 8.03 pm)

Chair