

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 24 September 2018

Present:-

Councillor Haines (Chair)
Councillors Dewhurst, Haines, Lyons, Prowse, Dent and Pierce

Also Present

Strata IT Director, Compliance and Security Manager, Business Systems Manager, Infrastructure and Support Manager, Director with responsibility for Finance, Strategic Lead Finance (East Devon District Council) Teignbridge Strata Director, Document Processing Manager and Democratic Services Officer (Committees) (HB)

14

APOLOGIES

These were received from Councillors Foale, Jung and D Nicholas.

Councillor C Nicholas was substituting for Councillor D Nicholas.

15

MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 May 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

16

DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were made.

17

QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

None.

UNDER SECTION 100A (4) OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 THE COMMITTEE RESOLVED TO MOVE INTO PART II AND TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FOR THE FOLLOWING QUESTION ONLY AS IT RELATED TO THE REPORT ON TRAINING NEEDS WHICH WAS TO BE CONSIDERED IN PART II OF THIS AGENDA.

18

QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES

The following question was put by Councillor Clarence in relation to IT issues at Teignbridge District Council:-

Following the meeting of this Committee on 31 May, does this Scrutiny Committee

consider the actions taken at a subsequent Strata Joint Executive Committee sufficient to embrace the IT help needed for some Members, including what will be many new Members, to be sufficient to fulfil their role as Councillors after the May 2019 elections? Does the Scrutiny Committee feel that, with all Councillors on three authorities, having new tablets is sufficient, whilst the prospect of having any help IT with personal lap tops remains doubtful, if at all?

THE MEETING RETURNED TO PART I

The following question was put by Councillor Dewhirst in relation to IT issues at Teignbridge District Council:-

Teignbridge Councillors used to have access to interrogate the Spar.net Risk evaluation register - this has now been removed. Officers have offered to print off the register but this does not give Members the ability to interrogate the underlying issues that make up the register.

Please can this access be restored for Members use?

A copy of the questions and replies are appended to the minutes.

19

STRATA IT DIRECTORS REPORT - OVERVIEW OF STRATA PERFORMANCE

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 Updates, Strata Service Performance Indicators, Global Desktop Environment, Customer Satisfaction Statistics and Training Needs.

He highlighted the following key areas:-

- Strata had moved to the Transformational phase of its organisational development and with the Phase II programme of improvements to the Global Desktop introduced in July;
- the Global Communications project at East Devon had now been completed with the old telephony platforms switched off and work commenced at Exeter City Council which was likely to be more complex due to the age of the current system;
- on line and real time access to Strata performance statistics, BCR requests and incidents were proving very beneficial;
- the Strata 'Out of Hours' service delivering good value for money with potentially serious issues picked up and resolved;
- the security situation was under control but attacks sustained at a high level;
- the new Business Change Request process now fully deployed with work prioritisation in the hands of the three authorities;
- through the IT Requirement Boards, Project Review meetings and the quarterly Joint IT Steering group, Strata is better informed on workload priorities;
- the new Supplier Manager is delivering tighter control of third party spend;
- Privacy Impact Assessment and GDPR implemented;
- Strata continuing to monitor financial performance and on track to deliver the £383,000 level of savings;
- staff morale high with regular social functions and vacancies rapidly filled and a 45% drop in sickness levels;

- report of Dr Tim Gibson on Strata@4, outlining the development of the Strata organisation over the last four years to be circulated at the end of October;
- monthly customer satisfaction survey results higher than 97%; and
- Strata developing the local digital declaration with all three authorities signed up with Teignbridge the lead authority.

The Strata IT Director advised that the new Strata Business Plan would be released in Quarter 3 with a move away from a focus on cost savings to align with the priorities of the three authorities. He detailed the following fundamental principles of the new Plan as part of the company's goal to become an "Agent for Change":-

- resetting the key objectives by reducing risk and costs and developing capability and capacity;
- transitioning from "Business As Usual" to "Transformational Value" - currently a 85%/15% split;
- revising the Governance Framework to better empower the authorities;
- adapting the funding model;
- commercialising the operation; and
- creating a longer term agreement.

The Director with responsibility for Finance explained the challenges in moving from the current model of cost reduction to predictable and committed upfront annual cost savings. Rather than the three authorities providing the same revenue at the beginning of the year with Strata refunding at the year end, Strata would identify cost savings at the beginning and request a lower amount from the Councils.

The Strata IT Director put forward the following seven recommendations in respect of Governance arrangements:-

- reduce Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee and Strata Joint Executive Committee meetings to once every six months;
- introduce an annual Strata/Executive forum to discuss authority strategy and transformational initiatives;
- empower the JITSG and IRB to prioritise Strata workload;
- empower the JITSG and IRB to inform Strata on authority transformation strategy;
- continue to provide monthly Strata service indicator reports;
- produce an annual Strata report for circulation to Councillors and staff; and
- recruit an experienced IT non-Executive Director to sit on the Strata Board and to inform and guide the Board in IT issues.

The Strata IT Director set out a vision of increased commercialisation as part of the transformational approach with design, innovation, business intelligence, new service creation and web site re-engineering as some of the key elements of such change and which could ultimately provide a zero cost organisation for the authorities.

As an important step in the transformation journey, the need to agree a longer term contract had been identified. The current 18 month rolling contract hampered negotiations of leasing arrangements and could also hinder staff recruitment. It was proposed that the contract should align with the original Strata Business Plan and be extended to 2024/25.

The following responses were given to Members' queries:-

- all servers were to migrate to Oakwood House with the last stage of the East Devon server moves to Exeter nearing completion with physical decommissioning of the East Devon site to commence. Only three of the 100 Teignbridge servers remained - the deadline for migration being the beginning of October;
- Granicus, formally Gov Delivery, had been recommenced as a tool for communicating with residents through letters/questionnaires;
- Power BI was being introduced as a training manual for data analysis and report writing;
- four outages had occurred in the last three months classed as major incidents with maximum Strata response, notwithstanding the commitment to transformational change;
- the role of Councillors in supporting their constituents communicate with the Council and the growing technological options was recognised and it was suggested that voicemail was likely to be the preferred method in coming years;
- a number of options for supporting Councillors with their IT needs and to be progressed as part of any new training programme would be examined including through the service desk such as use of training videos and inviting training requests; and
- Members were welcome to put forward ideas/innovation suggestions such as through an innovation forum, half yearly workshops etc.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee:-

- (1) noted the report;
- (2) recommended to the Strata Joint Executive Committee the adoption of the seven proposals for changing the Governance arrangements including reducing the Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee and the Strata Joint Executive Committee meetings to once every six months; and
- (3) recommended to the Strata Joint Executive Committee that the Strata contract be changed from an 18 month rolling contract to a contract expiring in line with the original Strata Business Plan in 2024/25

20

STRATA @4 UPDATE

The Strata IT Director reported that Dr Tim Gibson had met with the Leaders and Chief Executives of the three authorities in preparing his report which set out a holistic view of the Strata organisation. His report would be emailed to the Councillors and officers of the three authorities at the end of October. It would be released to coincide with the launch of the new Strata Business Plan.

21

STRATA BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER I : 2018/19

The Director responsible for Finance reported that Strata had been given a total of £6,504,000 to run the IT Services in 2018/19 along with funding for various capital projects. The Company also maintained an account for additional purchases

throughout the year.

The Strata budget was on track to deliver around £420,000 of revenue savings for the three Councils in 2018/19. At the three month stage, the Board was projecting savings of £421,903 against the total original target of £381,960.

The report also set out variations in the capital budget.

The report also set out the final, audited Statement of accounts for Strata Service Solutions. The Strata Board had been satisfied that the refund provided to the three owners during May 2018 was appropriate at £565,000.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the report.

22 **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 items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 1 and 3 of Part I, Schedule 12A of the Act.

23 **PEOPLE DATA REPORT - 2017 TO 2018**

The Strata IT Director presented the report setting out key people information for 2017/18. The report covered headcount, turnover, absence, recruitment, apprentices and age profiles. Strata had recruited three apprentices for each of the three councils for 2017/18, two of whom had been retained. Four apprentices had been recruited in 2018/19. He also referred to attendance of Strata staff at local job fairs.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the report.

24 **TRAINING NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT**

The Strata IT Director presented the report on the training needs analysis investigation performed by 'Degrees of Separation' recommending investment to improve the level of IT skills. It covered a basic ICT skills deficiency in all three authorities as there was currently no dedicated support mechanism in place to support Councillors at either Teignbridge or East Devon.

The report set out a raft of recommendations for the training of staff and recommending an increase in the overall training budget or a dedicated support allocation to Strata for a high level of support to be afforded to Councillors.

It was proposed that budgets be amalgamated and provided to Strata as the connecting hub. A two year term was proposed initially at a cost of £42,000 per annum, broken down as:-

- Exeter City Council : £15,9091.60;
- East Devon District Council :£15,411.64; and
- Teignbridge District Council : £11,496.74

Members fully supported the training proposals emphasising the added value this would bring to the work of Councillors.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee welcomed the report and supported the recommendation that the Strata Joint Executive Committee confirm the budget spend and delivery of a Strata provided IT training service for end users, including Councillors and officers across the three authorities.

(The meeting commenced at 4.00 pm and closed at 6.00 pm)

Chair