

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
FINANCE, INNOVATION and PROPERTY ADVISORY BOARD

22 July 2015

Report of the Director of Finance & Transformation

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 IT STRATEGY UPDATE

An update for Members on the various strands of IT work in progress within the IT Strategy. A short powerpoint presentation will be made at the meeting.

1.1 Introduction

1.1.1 Members will appreciate that technological support is the foundation for the majority of our services. The IT Strategy was agreed by the Finance, Innovation and Property Advisory Board in September 2014 and consisted of four themes;

- Service Modernisation
- Communications
- Self-Service
- Website.

1.1.2 Progress is being made in all areas and the updates are detailed below.

1.2 Service Modernisation

1.2.1 eForms have been developed to replace the Lagan CRM system which was used by Waste Services. This has enabled one set of forms to be used by staff and the public via the website. Further improvement of the forms will be incorporated based on feedback.

1.2.2 A new complaint handling system has been developed and is currently in the final stages of testing. New procedure notes and training for staff will be provided when testing has been concluded.

1.2.3 A new storage system has been purchased, installed and integrated with our virtual servers. The majority of systems and servers have been moved onto the new system, with the remainder being planned for the next few months.

- 1.2.4 It had been hoped that the Council would be able to progress with a Corporate Document Management (CMS) solution but, regrettably, it has not been possible using the solution we already have in place in pockets within the organisation. Revenue & Benefits document management will now be based upon the Northgate Information@Work product (minute CB 15/24 of Cabinet on 12 February 2015 refers) and a project plan for installation has now been agreed with the supplier. It is intended to roll this out to the Housing team in the near future, with the potential for other services to be brought on board in due course.
- 1.2.5 Laptops are being considered as the default computing device when we replace the current desktop computers at the end of their life to enable more flexible and resilient working for staff, and full costings are being drawn up for submission to Management Team. Testing has also been conducted of hybrid tablet / laptop devices, although their remains a problem of our business system suppliers supporting the latest devices and Windows 8 that must be overcome.
- 1.2.6 Several IT Staff have been trained on “Agile” project methods to better enable the rapid delivery and changes required in IT projects.
- 1.2.7 Digital competency and skills gap assessments are being planned to enable targeted training to be provided to staff in order to assist with the transition to digital online services.
- 1.2.8 Microsoft's new cloud licensing options are being explored for software procurement.
- 1.2.9 An upgrade of WiFi within the Gibson Building is scheduled for August which will introduce newer equipment capable of operating at the higher frequencies required for increased capacity and speed. Some enabling work is required beforehand with other network equipment and this is currently being planned with the supplier.

1.3 Communications

- 1.3.1 The replacement telephone system project (Microsoft Lync) is progressing well and has now moved from “pilot” to a live service. Additional users are now being added onto the system and a second round of training is taking place for staff. The contact centre module will be implemented shortly.
- 1.3.2 An email archiving system is in place and all GroupWise messages up to a certain date have been archived. New and ongoing message archiving will be set up as we move off GroupWise and onto Microsoft Outlook \ Exchange.
- 1.3.3 IT staff have attended the Microsoft Exchange technical training for the new email system.
- 1.3.4 The new Microsoft Exchange email servers have been designed and are in the process of being built on the new storage.

1.3.5 Training for staff on Microsoft Outlook and the deployment of the new software is currently scheduled for October 2015.

1.4 Self-Service

1.4.1 Development of My Account on the website continues, with new features such as automatic population of address fields on forms and online council tax balance lookup being added.

1.4.2 Integration with some back office systems represents a challenge due to suppliers not providing programming interfaces that we can use. However, this is being pursued where the connectors are available, and we will soon be embarking on a project to integrate the forms used by Licensing directly into the back office system.

1.4.3 Online council tax and e-billing options are being reviewed in light of the evaluation of a software package being offered by the revenue and benefits system supplier. Minute CB 15/24 of Cabinet on 12 February 2015 refers.

1.5 Website

1.5.1 The upgrade to the Squiz content management system (used to publish information onto the website) was completed bringing improvements to the software.

1.5.2 The Social Sign-In service has been deployed and staff trained for social media

1.5.3 We are working with a design agency on our website redesign which was demonstrated at the last meeting of this Advisory Board and have conducted accessibility workshops with the Kent Association of the Blind. The new website is due to launch on 28th July.

1.5.4 Live chat has been installed on the website to assist customers with finding information. Feedback from customers and our customer service team is positive.

1.5.5 We are looking to improve the search facility of the website so we can include search results for other systems (such as Planning Public Access and modern.gov, for committee reports etc.) within the main search facility.

1.5.6 Changes are being made to the Website navigation to make information easier to find.

1.5.7 In a review of all council websites called "Better Connected" we have improved from a 2 star website to a 3 star website (with 4 being the best). We also are one of seventeen sites in the country recommended for working well on mobile devices.

1.5.8 The Tonbridge Castle website has been redesigned and can be viewed easily on mobile devices.

1.6 Legal Implications

1.6.1 There are currently no implications.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 Items set out within this report are being progressed within existing budgets. The evaluation of software set out within paragraph 1.4.3 will be reported to Members in due course, and if appropriate, proposals regarding funding will be put forward for consideration.

1.8 Risk Assessment

1.8.1 Downtime as a result of failure of IT systems is a risk when so many services rely on technological support. New installations are tested in advance of implementation into a live environment to minimise disruption.

1.8.2 Disaster Recovery plans are reviewed and updated regularly.

1.9 Policy Considerations

1.9.1 The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no perceived impact on end users. As stated at paragraph 1.5.3, the website re-design has been shared with the Kent Association for the Blind.

Background papers:

contact: Darren Everden

Nil

Sharon Shelton
Director of Finance and Transformation