

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

April 2022

**COUNCILLOR LUCY SHIRES - CABINET MEMBER FOR ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES**

March 2022 to April 2022

### **1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.**

#### **Information Communications Technology**

Migration of the anti-spam system to Microsoft cloud based infrastructure as the next element of project to retire 3<sup>rd</sup> party software and use products and features available from Microsoft which are included in our Enterprise E5 license.

A significant upgrade to the Council's firewall to maintain the protections of the network and data has been completed.

We have subscribed to the National Cyber Security Centre early threat warning system. This has been implemented to maintain and improve the Council's Cyber defence arrangements.

The cyber security Incident Response Policy has been revised and updated.

The project to replace the obsolete networking equipment within the Council's Offices has started.

The changes to the telephony system to include the callers telephone number have been completed. This is designed to contribute to improved telephone communications with customers of the Council.

A new hybrid meeting and training facility has been commissioned within the Benefits area.

IT support has been provided to a number of personnel changes including the pilot flexible working in the Place Directorate and a significant number of new starter provisions.

Tree Preservation Orders are now available online with an interactive map linked to the preservation order documents

A webform has been developed to support the new customer complaints policy and process, awaiting further reporting work before going live

New webforms have been developed and made live to allow customers to update their Council Tax status online.

Web forms to assist with Planning consultation have been developed and made live.

The Council's mandatory Accessibility policy has been reviewed and published

The work to update and improve service information content on the website continues.

The "Gov.Notify" system has been integrated with the Council's infrastructure. Individual SMS service is now available and the bulk SMS and email intergration work will continue.

Work continues to update all web forms to ensure they remain consistent with central government best practice guidance for web forms "look and feel".

There has been significant work to support data extraction and transformation to support the use of the Ascendant Energy Grant Rebate solution.

The Capita software used to manage Cash receipting is currently being upgraded and it is currently being tested.

Work continues in support of the migration of the EH system to "Assure"

The implantation of the replacement Finance system has commenced. New servers have been created and passed to Civica to configure. This is a significant project to replace the current obsolete system and it will continue until March 2023

The End Of Year processes were supported by the IT team and concluded successfully on time.

The Online recruitment system is currently being implemented to improve the processes and outcomes of the Council's recruitment of new staff.

Work continues to implement the Mobile Building Control App which will allow Building control activities to be processed whilst on site.

Go Live is planned for March/April 2022

### **Customer Services**

Customer Services has again seen a significant increase in our call volumes from previous months. With a 29% increase in call volumes for March in comparison to February our customer's average wait time increased from

previous months to just over 3 minutes.

Outbound correspondence across the district for the following highlights the reasoning behind the increase in customer contact:

- Annual Council Tax billing.
- Annual Benefit notification letters.
- Housing Benefit Review letters.
- Garden Bin renewal letters.

This has been a challenging time for the Customer Services team members who have worked diligently to maintain the best possible service levels for our customers.

With certain processes all taking place in line with the financial year-end it is inevitable that we receive higher volumes of customer contact. Whilst certain measures are in place to maintain a positive customer experience and we work reactively to minimize the impact, further analysis of our processes will be undertaken. We will proactively work closer with our colleagues in other areas of the council in the future to prevent or reduce this reoccurring.

The Building Control scanning workload has been incorporated within the Digital Mailroom. This went live on the 1<sup>st</sup> February. Both teams have been working closely to ensure a smooth and successful transition.

### **Property Services**

Construction inflation continues to be a significant issue for all live and future works. The cost estimation process will be amended to allow for a contingency to deal with this issue. Construction supply chain problems also continue to add unexpected delays to project progress.

Cedars North Walsham works continue to be supported by the property team.

Public convenience refurbishment works at Wells and Fakenham are continuing. Demolition has taken place at both sites. The discovery of an undocumented UK Power Networks Cable and reportable asbestos have caused delays at the Fakenham site. The work At Wells-Next-The-Sea are continuing on schedule.

Works to commission the electric vehicle charger points at the Reef in Sheringham are ongoing.

The tenders for replacement PC facilities at New Road, North Walsham and The Lea's in Sheringham have been advertised and are awaiting responses.

The Vicarage Street, North Walsham PC replacement plans are currently in discussion with the Architect. This facility will incorporate a full Changing Places Toilet provision.

Cromer offices LED programme: A phased plan of works has been developed which will see mandatory safety lighting improvements works completed in April. The Council Chamber will then be upgraded to fully energy efficient lighting. Following this future phases will include all working areas in the Council Offices.

The Beach Huts and Chalet programme of improvement works at Sheringham have been completed.

The Lushers Passage temporary accommodation works have completed and are being handed over for occupation. Further temporary accommodation works to bring in to service a number of additional units continue.

## **2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

### **Information Technology**

Significant external funding has been secured to improve our Cyber Security Arrangements

The first element of activity to be funded from this is an additional facility to improve logging and detection of anomalies on the Councils centralized logging platform.

Further improvements in the infrastructure which manages our Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity functionality to provide a seamless transition to working from our Fakenham backup systems.

Additional cyber security protections will be implemented on the Council's servers.

Ongoing new and improvement content work including content specific to the Ukraine Situation

The text messaging batch service will be developed and deployed

The Web form server upgrade work will continue.

### **Customer Services**

In the coming weeks NNDC residents will receive notification about the Energy Rebate scheme therefore, we anticipate a further increase in the volume of contacts through our main line.

Additionally, some of our customers will receive notification regarding Norfolk

Warm Homes' grants, which Customer Services will be prepared to assist customers.

With the school holidays over Easter and Early May Bank Holiday, we also traditionally see an increase in customer contact. Combined with the Energy Rebate contacts to North Norfolk residents we anticipate call volumes to the council to remain at increased levels.

We are currently in the process of recruitment within the Customer Services and Digital Mailroom teams. This is part of our zero based budgeting proposal and will enable us to successfully deliver our Customer Service Strategy.

### **Property Services**

The second phase of Pier maintenance works will commence.

The tender for the Vicarage Street PC reprovision will be let.

### **3 Meetings attended**