

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

December 2022

COUNCILLOR LUCY SHIRES

For the period November to December 2022

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Information Technology

The project to replace the legacy Finance system is in the implementation phase, cutting over to the new system: Civica Financials. The existing system has been “frozen” and access to it will be retained for 7 years to allow for completion of audits and as a historical reference, all future transactions will be carried out on the new system from 14/12/22. This has been a high pressure, resource-intensive process for the Finance and IT teams. Even after go-live there will still be significant works to complete the project which will require updates to a number of other systems including the asset management system and environment health management system.

The latest version of Idox, the Planning management system, has been installed in the test environment for user testing.

Preparation is continuing for the implementation of a number of additional modules which have been procured to improve the digital support for the planning application process. These include: a Land Charges system upgrade, an online plan dimension measuring tool, planning enforcement mobile working and improved integration with the planning portal. Testing of a new process for online self-serve and payment for land charge searches has also commenced.

The corporate performance reporting tool “InPhase” has been updated to current software release.

The Environment Health management system “Assure” has been updated to current software release as a part of the rolling conversion from the previous system “M3”.

The Council's cheque and cash receipting system from Capita has been updated to current supported version.

A proof of concept for the use of Microsoft Power BI as a dashboard is in progress. This will improve the quality and timeliness of management information.

The Council's cyber security certificates have been renewed and the security systems updated accordingly.

IT have provided support to the Legal team to extract and export BKLWN data to enable the end of contract processes.

IT continue to liaise with the central government who have provided significant funding to improve and extend the cyber security arrangements of the Council. They are positive about the initiatives deployed so far and the future planned improvements which will deliver a more secure and robust IT infrastructure. These include:

- Implementing additional backups to ensure data in the cloud is protected.
- Works to make IT infrastructure Team more resilient following staff loss eg outsourcing firewall management as an interim measure.
- Cyber security training and certification.
- Upgrading data encryption to address findings from 3rd party assessment cyber security infrastructure.
- Supporting applications team with system upgrades including building servers and deploying new card reader hardware.
- Reallocation of critical tasks previously undertaken by lost staff to remaining team members and building skills and understanding of them. e.g. Training and familiarisation with security event logging software
- Further user hardware and software rollout for new users and business processes eg Purchase and commissioning of tablets for Property Services to allow offsite task progress recording and allocation.

As we are now in December, we are implementing a development freeze on the existing web systems to ensure website availability and security over the holiday period.

Work on new and enhanced forms and website systems will continue but changes will not be rolled out until the new year.

Workbench user enquiry case management tool rollout completed. Feedback received and further improvements developed and deployed.

Parish Council online Register of Interests initial development completed and made available for user testing and feedback.

In preparation for the rebilling of Garden waste accounts in April 2023 data

extracts and cleansing work has commenced.

Website development to support Civica Financials and Gov.UK Payments.

Development of What3Words inclusion for Fly Tipping location reports. This will also be added to all appropriate webforms.

Website and Intranet content creation and maintenance has continued to aid improving the usability of the website, including:

- North Norfolk Sustainable communities fund
- Community connectors updates
- Ongoing work to Rewilding pages
- Glaven Valley consultation
- Significant new content for People Services new initiatives eg Financial Inclusion
- News articles
- Addition of Twitter to intranet home page
- Training pages for HR
- Social Hub

IT Staffing:

The infrastructure team remains at 3 FTE below establishment. First recruitment failed to appoint a suitable candidate. Now out to second attempt.

1 Application Support Analyst has returned from maternity leave on a revised 3x8hr contract.

The long standing junior vacancy in the GIS team has been recruited to and is currently in the onboarding process.

Vacant Junior Apps role has been offered following recruitment process.

Resignation in the Business Support Team has been filled permanently by staff who had been undertaking the role temporarily to cover maternity leave.

Customer Services

Following recruitment arising from resignations and internal secondments

Customer Services welcomed another new member to our team who is currently completing their induction programme and developing their knowledge ready to assist all our customers. December will also see another new member join the team as a result of an internal secondment to the Planning department.

Customer Services is proud to develop our staff and encourage career progression opportunities within the council. However, at present one third of the customer services team have now been with us for less than 12 months. This is impacting on operational efficiency. Future secondments will need to be subject to stronger consideration to address the challenge of balancing secondment requests against maintaining service delivery. Therefore new requests for internal secondments will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, weighing up the benefit to the organisation against the impact on Customer Service delivery.

During November, Customer Services supported the Housing Benefits department in implementing the new process which enables our vulnerable residents to apply over the telephone for Energy Rebate payments before the deadline expired in early November. This resulted in both an increase in the volume and significantly the duration of telephony traffic during the first couple of weeks. Overall, in November we saw the total volume of customer contacts across all channels slightly rise from October (9,106 in comparison to 8,940) however we delivered a slight reduction in our average wait time.

The average wait time for November was just over 9 minutes, which is still some way off the 2 minute 30 seconds target.

We are confident once our new starters are trained up and in place we will start to see a significant reduction in wait times.

Additionally, as a proactive action to reduce wait times we have taken the decision to re-align the resources within the wider Customer Service team. This has resulted in a vacancy held within the Digital Mail Unit being transferred to the customer contact team.

This will not be without negative outcomes for the Digital Mail Unit service but the need is greater in the contact handling side at the moment.

Digital Mailroom

The Digital Mailroom has had to adapt its working patterns and processes because of the ongoing Royal Mail strikes.

The increasingly complex and technical nature of the work has resulted in the most recent recruit deciding the role was not suitable for them. We are therefore out to recruit again and adapting the interview to provide any potential applicants with a clear understanding of the nature of the role. The perception of the work within what was the Postal and Scanning team is somewhat different to the actual demands of a modern technology-based

Digital Mail Unit.

As a result of realignment of resource, the impact in the Digital Mailroom will be monitored. Work will be prioritised to ensure service delivery is maintained for the most important transactions. We will explore processes to enable working more efficiently, keeping the impact at a minimum.

The North Norfolk Visitor Centre continues to see an increase in visitors now the main restrictions of Covid have been lifted. The Visitor Centre is actively expanding its use of social media and other customer contact systems

Property Services

Cromer pier substructure works are in progress with no significant unforeseen issues. Works remain to be expected to complete in the summer of 2023.

Tenders for improvements to the Pier bar servery, WC's, Lantern and other minor works has been completed and awarded. Works will commence in early January 2023 and are expected to be completed in 6 weeks.

The PC re-provision in Fakenham have recommenced following the resolution of the undocumented UK Power Networks Cables issue. Works are now ongoing with expected completion in the spring of 2023.

A number of delays in the supply chain have also delayed the completion of the Stearmans yard PC re-provisioning during its construction. Works are all now completed and the new facility has been relaunched and opened to the public as of the 13th of December.

The Vicarage Street, North Walsham PC replacement tender has been let and the contract awarded. Works are commencing in the second week of January.

Property Services have been tasked with completing the Cedars element of the HAZ project and works are now in progress. Staff are now based on site and will remain so. There remains a significant volume of works to be completed and this will form a significant project for the wider property team.

The LED lighting improvement programme is progressing well. Planning and Reception areas are now complete. Work in the Benefits, Revenues, Finance & HR will commence immediately after the New Year and will be complete before the end of January 2023. Planning has started so that the remaining areas works can be continued following these works. Lower level works commencing shortly afterwards.

Additionally a number of small repairs and improvements to the Public Conveniences are underway or planned during the winter and early spring season. This includes a number of energy and water efficiency measures to reduce the environmental impact and costs of the Public Conveniences the

Council Provides.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Customer Services

Our colleagues in Environmental Services are currently preparing to send annual Garden Bin renewal letters to our residents that choose not to pay via direct debit. This will produce another peak in customer contact which our new team members are busy preparing for.

Testing of the new automated Customer Satisfaction Survey system should commence this month after a slight delay from our developers. We are excited to get this up and running to give us continuous feedback from our residents.

As we head into the Christmas break we also traditionally see an increase in customer contact before the council close for Christmas. This tends to unfortunately be customers seeking food bank vouchers and this year we expect more requests for Energy Bank referrals. Customer Services is working closely with our colleagues in the Early Help and Prevention team to ensure everyone can have a good Christmas during these difficult times.

The Digital Mailroom will be involved in some of the planning challenge toolkit changes as we work through how this can impact on both our and the service area workload. An article will be going onto the intranet about the journey from a post room to a digital mailroom and would encourage all members to read when available.

Customer Services will continue to work with other services to identify and implement changes designed to mitigate the effect of increased customer contacts on customer wait times.

Working with our contact centre developers we are about to begin testing our new customer satisfaction survey module. This will enable customers to provide us with their feedback on our services, allow them to rate our performance and give them the opportunity to put forward suggestions. This will enable us to design and deliver improvements that will make a difference to the customer.

Additionally, we will be able to capture how individual staff members are performing against our customer's expectations. This will highlight training and development opportunities.

In the coming weeks we will also be asking our colleagues around the council to help us help them by letting us know if they intend to contact our residents. Improved communications will enable us to improve the customer experience, be better prepared, and provide us the ability to realign resources to meet anticipated customer demand.

Information Technology

“Intune” mobile device management software consultancy to ensure robustness of work done so far to switch from Mobile Iron to Intunes.

Continue recruitment of vacant posts in the infrastructure team.

Continue addressing Cyber Treatment plan as specified by DLUHCP

Complete the installation of the core switches and associated cabling works at Cromer offices as a part of the network technology refresh.

Investigate options for putting voice routing in the cloud to overcome obsolete equipment in the current arrangements.

Prepare for Revenues/Benefits end of year uprating. Substantial piece of work with implications if handled poorly.

Support post go-live activities to deliver efficiencies with the newly introduced Civica Finance system.

Property Services

Works on the Cedars and wider HAZ project will continue to be actively managed to ensure completion of the project.

The Pier works will be managed to ensure completion within the expected timescales, cost and quality.

Play equipment repairs and maintenance programme will be progressed.

Winter PC Repair and maintenance programme will continue.

Vicarage Street PC replacement will be commenced and proactively managed.

A condition survey of the Car Park surfaces, height barriers and associated infrastructure will be completed and any urgent and necessary works planned and implemented.

3 Meetings attended

17/11 Disabled Councillors Leadership Programme
21/11 Happisburgh Lighthouse Trust
22/11 Cabinet Pre-Agenda & Business Planning
24/11 Organisational Resources Portfolio

25/11 Meeting with North Walsham Businesses, Cllr Kershaw and MP
29/11 NNHWP Mental Health Workshop
30/11 Poverty Truth Network
1/12 Healthier North Walsham & Property Services Portfolio
5/12 Pre-Cabinet & Cabinet
8/12 CTAP & Disabled Councillors Leadership Programme