

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

09 February 2022

COUNCILLOR LUCY SHIRES - CABINET MEMBER FOR ORGANISATIONAL RESOURCES

December 2021 to January 2022

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Information Communications Technology

Changes and enhancements to the IT infrastructure to support the move to the cloud for Microsoft software continues

The migration of all users to Microsoft O365 has now been completed.

Works are continuing to deliver significant improvements to the Disaster Recovery/Business Continuity IT arrangements. These works include improvements to both telephony and data infrastructure. When the changes have been implemented extensive testing will be required to ensure they are effective if required.

In the reporting period a significant number of new and changed user requests have been completed.

As a result of the significant changes arising from moving to Office 365, the continued home/office working patterns and new user enquiries the IT service desk has seen an increase in user support requests.

New server environments have been provided for the cash receipting system upgrade.

The IT security policy has been updated published. All users will shortly be required to familiarize themselves with the changes and electronically indicate the understanding and acceptance of the policy.

Work has been completed to reconfigure the telephony systems in preparation for the change to present the Councils telephone number to customers we call rather than an anonymous call. It is expected that this will increase our success when trying to initiate contacts with our customers who might not readily answer anonymous calls. The change will be going live by the end of February 2022.

Multiple new forms have been developed and deployed to allow local

businesses to apply for Omicron related business grants. This has also included making the data from the forms available for assessment and payment to be made.

Work to prepare for a significant version update to the web forms system has been ongoing project to update online forms code estate – this is required to enable an update to the live forms server, without which we would be out of support with the supplier and potentially open to security risks. Also being used as an opportunity for “housekeeping” activity making maintenance more efficient in the future. Currently scheduled to complete mid-February.

Planning has started to enable automatic updating of online Tree Protection Orders in a similar method to Online Licencing Registers. This will enable customers to identify which trees are protected using online self-serve via the Council’s website.

Significant online content creation and publication for the Coastal team is in progress

Significant online content creation and publication in support of the Council’s work to address the issue of domestic abuse is in progress.

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

Work has started on a major upgrade to the Cash Receipting system from Capita. This will be built on new servers and upgrade the software to the latest supported release. Target Go Live June 2022

Revenues & Benefits Year-End

Preparations and testing in progress for upcoming Annual Billing and Benefits Notifications year-end process

Live Processing is scheduled for the end-February 2022

Work has commenced to update the HR and Payroll system software to the latest legislative release

Go live is planned for February 2022

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

Environmental Health - Online Licence Registers

Work continues to ensure all statutory registers are published online and automatically updated as they are agreed and signed off by the licensing team

Work is commencing to undertake a significant systems replacement project

to provide a new financial management system. The current system is approaching 12 years old and does not meet the Authority's needs. The project has started to procure and implement a replacement system

Go-live is planned for April 2023

Work is progressing to procure and implement an online recruitment management system to improve the process for applicants and staff involved in the recruitment process.

Go live is planned for march 2022.

Customer Services

An internal audit report on Customer Services has achieved a Substantial Assurance rating. This reflects the ongoing service improvements and the continued performance and flexibility of the team.

In line with the 'One Front Door' concept from within the CS strategy, on the 6th December 2021 we went live and successfully incorporated all incoming Housing Benefit calls to the Customer Services department. 3 months of work took place prior to this with both departments working together to ensure the smooth transition and establish best working practices to ensure an improved customer experience.

This significant change has resulted a slight dip in our resolution rate from 91% to 85%. However, we are confident that with regular scheduled meetings to monitor performance and further training arranged, we will see this increase once again.

Despite the 9.5% increase in calls received in December as a result of taking Housing Benefit calls, we have maintained an average call wait time of 1 minute 33 seconds for the month of December. This is well within our CS standards target of 2 minutes 30 seconds. Customer feedback has continued to highlight that the changes to the automated menu and the significant reduction in wait time before speaking to an advisor has been received positively.

Aside from telephony, we have successfully launched the option for customers to contact us via video appointment. This has further broadening our customer's options to access our services. The first few appointments have proven to be very successful.

Reprographics

There have been many departments requiring outside signage to notify the Public of their safety (printing safety signs) or notifying them of Council consultations.

Support is still being provided from the Reprographics team to produce the signage and documentation for the Covid marshal's.

Additionally, the Reprographics team has just produced the Local Plan consultation document and a number of supporting documents. These are now located across the district for the public to consult on.

Property Services

Cedars North Walsham the tender for the works have been reissued following the outcome of the previous tender where it was not possible to award the contract. Two tenders have now been received and have been assessed. The evaluation of the tenders is expected to be completed early in February.

Public convenience refurbishment works at Wells and Fakenham: Offsite construction of the new facilities continues. Initial on-site works have identified additional works to bring utilities supplies up to modern standards to support the new facilities. The target for completion is now May 2022.

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.

This along with the general surplus of construction work availability makes maintain a project schedule practically impossible.

Estates and Property have agreed a proposal for Public Convenience facilities in North Walsham and this will be presented for approval in early February. .

Cromer offices LED programme: A site meeting with consultants is scheduled for early February and following the visit a scope for procurement will be produced.

Beach Huts and Chalet programme of works continues at Sheringham. Completion. These works have not been immune to the general construction issues highlighted above and it is likely there will be a small overrun in project timelines..

The Lushers Passage temporary accommodation works have commenced and are progressing well.

Electric Vehicle Charge Points at Bank Loke car park North Walsham: are live and in use. This concludes the current project for EVCP implementation in North Norfolk.

The work to commission additional Temporary Accommodation units and repair and maintenance of existing provision is ongoing and is a significant resourcing issue.

Whilst some urgent works are being progressed the scoping and evaluation of the entirety of the works required continues at North Walsham Town Football Club.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Information Technology

Further improvements and testing of Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity scenarios.

Design and specification of the Councils internal network will continue in preparation for the delivery phase of the project in April 2022. The existing hardware which supports the network is approaching the end of its operational life.

E-mail will be integrated with the contact centre system C3 to improve the handling of customer enquiries.

The outgoing telephone number changes will be implemented.

Customer Services

In the coming months Customer Services will be busy assisting our local business customers apply for the recently announced government Omicron Hospitality & Leisure Grant.

We will also be assisting our vulnerable customers apply for the Household Support Fund to help those struggling financially with high energy bills and other essentials this winter.

The council's new Local Plan consultation period begins in January 2022 along with the Public Space Protection Order review which we will be assisting our customers with making their views known.

We will also be preparing for the new financial year which brings with it the usual peak of customer contacts regarding new council tax bills and benefit notification letters. This will be an ideal opportunity to promote other council services and access channels for our customers.

We are continuing to further internally promote the 'one front door' concept and are in discussions with Planning around improving the customer experience. Early discussion have proved positive.

The Corporate Complaints policy has been reviewed by the management team and a new process utilising workbench will be introduced in the near future. The updated policy will enable managers to provide an earlier resolution to complaints, aiming to reduce the need for complaints to be further escalated.

Additional improvements include an auditable trail for all complaints, speedier response times and a system for reporting so we can analyse this data and initiate service improvements. Training will be arranged for all staff and Members throughout February.

The digital mailroom will be initiating the scanning of Building Control applications/documents in the near future. This change in process will enable Building Control officers to work in a more efficient way and improve the service for the customer.

Property Services

The significant programme of out of season repair and maintenance works in Public Conveniences and other Council assets will continue.

Work on the significant number of property related projects will continue to be progressed.

Work will commence with our current partners "About With Friends" on the long term arrangements for the provision of catering facilities at the Council offices

3 Meetings attended

Business Planning
Finance Briefing

Portfolio

Institute of Customer Service & Customer Services
Organisational Resources

Mental Health Champion

Citizens Advice

