CORPORATE AFFAIRS & LOCAL ECOMONY OVERVIEW & SCRUTINTY PANEL - 23 SEPTEMBER 2021

NEW OPERATIONAL SERVICES ICT SYSTEM

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

1.1 That it be a recommendation to the Cabinet that funding for improvements to the ICT system(s) supporting Operations be approved.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 The operations, grounds and street scene services require investment in ICT to improve customer services, and to allow better reporting of issues resulting in smoother response and communication back to customers. The new system will also improve the efficiency of back-office tasks and processes. In addition, improved ICT will set down firm foundations for wider service improvement in the coming years.

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 As part of the council's current ICT strategy, we have developed an approach of simplifying and standardising applications and systems, in line with industry best practice and for ease of integration with other Council systems. The operations service is out of line with the strategy for ICT, using dated bespoke stand-alone systems that need replacing to ensure services are delivered in the most efficient and effective way.

3.2 The current use of dated, inefficient systems and processes causes daily issues for customers and staff, who deal with delays, duplications, and a lack of joined up information. This is especially apparent in areas such as missed bins, tackling recycling contamination and responding to reports of fly-tipping. There is an over-reliance on "local knowledge" rather than accurate and mobile technology which would improve service accuracy and reduce negative customer contact.

3.3 A continued lack of suitable technology will be a substantial barrier to improving service delivery, to making effective service changes in future, and it will undermine efforts to improve the digital customer experience.

4. KEY OUTCOMES SOUGHT

4.1 A reduction in the use of inefficient paper-based planning and management tools.

4.2 Automation of repetitive, time consuming or unnecessary manual tasks.

4.3 Smoother workflows across teams, making routine processes more effective and adding accountability. For instance, in future a customer could easily report a fly tip online, and the new system would assign the task to the nearest team in real time – all of which would be visible to customer services and the customer would be notified (by email or text) when the issue had been resolved. We can also use the system to reduce the number of duplicate reports of the same incident.

4.4 Real time reporting of service status information, to aid resource deployment and customer services, who currently deal with high volumes of avoidable customer complaints that could be reduced with access to real time information.

4.5 The ability to draw on joined up and accurate data to measure service performance and to use the reports to drive service improvement. For instance, being able to use

the system to identify areas with high levels of recycling bin contamination would allow us to target our communications more effectively at problem areas and to reduce the number of contaminated bins.

4.6 Being able to create rotas and rounds information via an improved system will help to optimise our management of all resources including staff and vehicles. The New Forest rounds are different and varied, with many rural rounds, the system would enable up to date information to be shared easily with new staff in a timely manner, which in turn will reduce the number of customer issues due to failed service (especially missed bins).

4.7 Many customer queries relate to our partner organisations (e.g., NPA, HCC). A new system would easily signpost customers to the right organisation.

4.8 We will be unable to realise the improvements planned in the draft waste strategy (and other strategies within Operations) without a new system(s). The technology provides the necessary foundations to enable new processes and practices.

5. PROGRESS MADE

5.1 Engagement with teams from across Operations and ICT to identify requirements for new system(s).

5.2 Key service team members have attended system demos and calls with other local authorities, to refine understanding of requirements, system capabilities, lessons learnt and process implications.

5.3 Budget reviews have taken place to estimate costs of implementation and on-going maintenance of relevant system(s).

5.4 New technology goes together with process change. Process mapping of core tasks was carried out in 2018 and will be reviewed and updated to support implementation of new system(s), using resources from Business Improvement.

6. TIMESCALES

6.1 High level timescales are:

- October to December 2021/January 22 – Procurement of preferred provider
- January to March 2022 – discovery, prioritisation of modules and early build work with supplier
- April 2022 onwards – roll out of modules according to priority in tandem with implementation planning for the new waste service
- April 2023 – review of project-level work remaining or handover to BAU teams for completion/management.

7. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

7.1 Ensuring that the system is well planned and thoroughly tested is vital and will require large amounts of time from key existing staff.

7.2 The system also relies on accurate data, which will take time to identify, cleanse and migrate.

7.3 We will be utilising as far as possible existing resources, but to enable a focus on the project as well as Business As usual activities, funding has been assumed within the overall project cost to provide some additional staffing resources.

8. GOVERNANCE

8.1 The Project will be overseen by a project board who will be accountable to EMT for the success of the project. It will have the delegated authority to direct the project within the remit agreed by the Smarter Working Board and EMT. The Project Board will be responsible for communication with Members and EMT about the project. Key Members for this project will be the PH's for Finance, Investment & Corporate Services, Environment & Coastal Services and People & Places. The Smarter Working member board met on the 4th August to consider this project and supported its development and implementation.

9. CONCLUSIONS

9.1 It is evident that operations, grounds, and street scene teams, as well as customer services and our customers, are not equipped with the right technology to deliver current, nor future expectations.

9.2 In line with the Council's ICT strategy, continuous investment in back-office systems is essential to ensure front line services continue to deliver. The operations system will be key to delivering service improvements in waste, transport, grounds, and street scene.

9.3 Progress in digital customer services relies in part on modern supporting ICT systems, such as the ones being implemented elsewhere. Investment in a similar level of system(s) for Operations will support ambitions for our digital future.

9.4 The time is therefore right to invest in appropriate ICT to allow Operations services to grow and improve, and for the benefit of wider digital customer services.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The estimated capital costs to implement the system(s) is £237,000 (21/22 & 22/23). This will be funded from the existing ICT strategy utilising funds identified within the 'Better digital services for residents and business' facet.

10.2 Four year estimated revenue costs to implement the system(s) and allow for the ongoing costs total a net £250,000. This net figure includes savings on the decommissioning of existing software and includes cashable resource savings of £50,000 in both 2023/24 and 2024/25 (once the system has been fully implemented). The steady state revenue position is an increase in cost of £40,000 PA.

10.3 The Council's current Medium Term Financial Plan makes an assumption for increased revenue costs when new systems are introduced, in line with the Council's ICT strategy of 'Cloud first'.

11. CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

11.1 A new system will help to support enforcement teams in response to reports of issues and gathering evidence for further action.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Inefficient routes raise pollution levels. Route planning software will allow for more efficient and environmentally friendly deployment of vehicles.

13. EQUALITY & DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 The Operations ICT system will improve ease of access for all our residents.

14. DATA PROTECTION IMPLICATIONS

14.1 All new system implementations undergo a DPIA assessment as standard.

15. PORTFOLIO HOLDER COMMENTS

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Background Papers: