

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 14th October 2020

1. DECISIONS

The following papers went to Executive on 29th September:

Estates Strategy

Medium Term Financial Plan Update

2. STRATEGIC

Revenues and Benefits - Covid 19 - Grant Payments

From 23 September 2020, our Revenues and Benefits Services will be running a 6 week scheme designed to offer financial support of up to £100.00 for small businesses/self-employed etc to help them with purchases that will keep them Covid Secure.

Following the success of the business grants, it seemed like a natural step for the Service to administer this scheme as well. They have designed the solution and put in place a simple way for businesses to claim this much needed support.

The grants are for businesses with between 0-9 members of staff, who trade in Middlesbrough or for self-employed who live in Middlesbrough claims will be paid within 7 days of the application.

In addition in joint collaboration with Taxi Licensing the Services have also introduced a solution that will allow our licensed vehicles to be fitted with screen partitioning, fitted by 4 approved local businesses, the drivers will also receive face coverings.

Funding from Test and Trace of £150k has been set aside to support these two 'keeping customers and business safe' initiatives.

3. PERFORMANCE

ICT – Ofsted Inspection

The ICT Applications Support & Development Team and the First Line Desktop Teams have been focused heavily on the recent Children's Services, Ofsted visit. As part of the overall improvement plan for Children's a targeted two day inspection (September 23rd & 24th) was recently undertaken. Unlike previous inspections and due to restrictions caused by the pandemic, this visit was conducted remotely rather than onsite. This involved the building, testing and shipping of Council laptops to the inspector's homes. Previously inspectors would attend ICT Services in person, be issued with a device and be taken through the connection and logon process. To attempt this for such a critical and time limited task meant that we had to be certain the devices would work first time.

Through careful planning, rigorous testing and working closely with colleagues in Children's, the devices were couriered to the inspector's homes and they were supported in the connection and logon process with no issues.

ICT - COVID-19 Response

ICT Services continue to meet the challenge of supporting almost 2,000 ICT users who continue to work primarily from home. We also continue to support the wider efforts in the design and implementation of future office based working solutions. Recent updates in this area include:

- WebEx. An additional 150 licences for the corporate video conferencing solution have now been made available to Heads of Services and their teams across the Directorates. This hosted solution continues to evolve and deliver additional benefits, keeping Managers teams communicating and supporting staff in feeling connected and informed. ICT have recently introduced classroom style "Break out Areas" to the WebEx platform which will support the delivery of virtual training courses in areas such as Education, allowing course attendees to break out into individual groups for task based work. In addition our colleges in HR and Communications have developed a series of corporate backgrounds which can now be used during conferences and meetings. The backgrounds are available on the Councils Intranet Page.
- As part of the national effort to combat COVID-19, the Government have recently launched the NHS Track and Trace App. In order to ensure Council employees issues with smart phones, have access to this app. ICT Services "Fast Tracked" the testing of this app and its security, making it available to our corporate smart phone users the day after launch. Again this work ties into the wider issuing of QR codes by colleagues in Property Services.

ICT – PSN (Public Sector Network Audit)

As part of our ongoing security efforts ICT have recently undertaken the annual ICT PSN (Public Sector Network) health check. This audit involves the testing of our security posture by an externally appointed assessor. The assessor tests the security of our network (both internal and external) against the standards set out by the Cabinet Office. In order for the Council to connect and share information with Central Government e.g. DWP, we must demonstrate that we continue to maintain a keen focus on ICT Security. Following the onsite audit we await the assessors report. After which we will make our compliance renewal submission to the Cabinet Office in mid-October.

ICT - Security

ICT Services, continue to bolster our already strong security posture. Along with the recent upgrades to the MBC Firewall Infrastructure and additional security monitoring we have recently joined two key national initiatives:

NCSC Early Warning – We have provided the NCSC (National Cyber Security Centre) with details of our external MBC domain and our internet facing IP addresses. They will now, at no additional charge, provide an additional layer of monitoring which covers:

- **Incident Notifications** - Activity that suggests an active compromise of our system. Example: Our IP address has been involved in a DDOS (Distributed Denial of Service attack).
- **Network Abuse Events** - Indicators that our assets have been associated with malicious activity. Example: A client on our network is a part of a Botnet.
- **Vulnerability Alerts** - Indications of vulnerable services running on our assets. Example: We have a vulnerable port open.

Should the NCSC detect that one of our assets has been associated with malware communications, vulnerabilities or network abuse, we'll be contacted with details of the vulnerability which we will in turn close.

Police CyberAlarm – Similar to the NCSC Early Warning service. This is a free tool to help members understand and monitor malicious cyber activity. This service is made up of two parts; monitoring and vulnerability scanning.

The Police describe CyberAlarm as a “CCTV camera” monitoring the traffic seen by a member’s connection to the internet. It will detect and provide regular reports of suspected malicious activity, enabling organisations to minimize their vulnerabilities. The data collected by the system does not contain any content of the traffic. The system is designed to protect personal data, trade secrets and intellectual property.

As members of Police CyberAlarm we effectively become part of the wider UK cyber defence network, sharing collected data with Police for analysis at local, regional and national levels to identify trends, react to emerging threats and identify, pursue and prosecute cyber criminals. The more organisations that sign up to be members, the better the threat intelligence will be.

Revenues and Benefits - Food and Essentials Funding

On 10 June 2020, Central Government announced an emergency fund for Middlesbrough of £244k, which was to be distributed to those who were struggling to afford food and other essentials due to Covid 19. It was a big ask as one of the conditions was that ‘in the main’ the funds needed to be distributed within 12 weeks.

A number of authorities opted for a relatively straight forward allocation such as just giving customers a one off payment, our Revenues and Benefits team, who were responsible for designing and administering the solution opted for something that would provide short, medium and longer term support, a solution designed to support the hunger free pledge for Middlesbrough.

For those who haven’t seen this, this article was published by BBC Look North.

4. INVOLVEMENT AND PROMOTION

Human Resources – Flu Vaccinations

The government have extended the remit for people able to receive a Flu vaccination including the over 50’s. Work has started on the Flu Vaccination Programme within the Council with the aim to assist employees to have access to a vaccination if they don’t qualify under the government guidelines, helping to support staff and keep pressure away from the NHS.