

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL Wednesday 13th January 2021

DECISIONS

The following papers went to Executive on 22nd December:

Calculation of Council Tax Base for 2021/2022

STRATEGIC

Commissioning and Procurement

1. Middlesbrough Council Corporate Procurement Strategy 2020 – 2023 has been approved this month. As a result of COVID 19 and Brexit the revised strategy is covering a shorter period, and this is a simple refresh. The proposal is to undertake a re-design of the strategy next year when the true impacts of COVID 19 and the Brexit impact may be clearer. Both Brexit and COVID 19 is going to impact both financially and economically and ensuring that our procurement strategy is focused on directing as much funding locally as possible will help to elevate that impact. Therefore, to undertake a more radical review and re-design of the strategy in 2021/22 will be beneficial.

PERFORMANCE

ICT

2. ICT Service Desk Statistics November 2020
 - 2854 telephone calls this month in total (up by 20 calls from Oct 20 and up 777 calls from the same month last year)
 - 1584 emails to the desk (down by 148 from Oct 20 and up by 284 from Nov last year)
 - 1234 self-serve requests (up 15 from Oct 20 and up 294 from Nov last year)
 - 205 self-serve incidents (1 down from Oct 20 and up 41 from Nov last year)
3. Overall Demand:
49% of all customer interaction via phone
51% of all customer interaction by digital
4. The ICT First Line Support team continue to maintain an onsite presence, as they have since the 23rd of March, rolling out new devices to those migrating to home working, setting up new starters and providing onsite support and guidance not possible over the phone.
5. As a direct result of the ongoing Pandemic response. First Line and the Service Desk teams continue to deal with unprecedented levels of demand. Statistics

show that we are dealing with, on average, 1000 additional requests for help and support, compared to the same time period, last year.

6. Our Infrastructure Team have been busy reviewing the renewal of our Cisco Enterprise Agreement. This licence underpins the access to the Council's telephony system. The new agreement will cover the next three years. As part of our due diligence efforts user numbers have been checked and cleansed to ensure we only purchase the licences we need.
7. Work has progressed on the construction of Boho 8, this involves installing underground fibre cables between the new Boho building and our data centre to ensure that when new tenants arrive, they can enjoy quality ICT Services.
8. Amendments have been made to our 2nd Data Centre to reduce the potential for dirt and contamination. This has involved the creation of an "entry pod" designed to keep out dust and dirt, which could potentially damage sensitive equipment.
9. Again, due to current demand and in order to ensure the Council continues to communicate effectively Video Conferencing licencing (WebEx) has been increased to ensure services such as Adult and Children's Social Care can work collaboratively, wherever they are.
10. PSN – Following our last update on the efforts to achieve the annual Public Sector Network accreditation, I can confirm we have been approved by a Cabinet Office appointed assessor to access the Government's network for a further 12 months. This will ensure we maintain access to data and systems hosted by the Department of Work and Pensions. Vital in the day-to-day delivery of Council services.
11. The implementation of CDPSoft is a new innovative case management system that effectively manages victims, perpetrators and locations involved in crime and antisocial behaviour. This system is due to go live April 2021, this date is challenging but still possible. Middlesbrough's Community Safety Team currently uses Flare as a case management system, since 2003. When Flare was acquired Community Safety was under the same umbrella as Public Protection/Environment and it was beneficial to use the same system.
12. The team is now more closely aligned to Youth Offending Service, Early Help and Troubled Families, and works with the same individuals. CDP will be utilised by Middlesbrough council and our partner agencies. (Police, Cleveland Fire Brigade, Probation Service etc.) CDPSoft allows us to better extract data, we can deploy our own and partner resources more effectively which will support us to reduce crime and ASB, in accordance with our statutory duty and support the Mayor's '2025 vision' to create safer communities and further reduce the impact of crime and ASB. The CDP project has made good progress recently, overcoming an issue with Form Building in the system. Following the recent recruitment of a Form Builder the main Referral Forms have been built and added to the CDP System. We now have the Client Journey Process agreed and completed. Training in Administration and Form Building has been completed. The User Roles have been agreed and added to the System. Since the last update work has commenced on the components and forms for the Screening Process which allows the Core Triage team to determine which specialist service(s) the Service User needs. Work has also commenced on the assessment

forms for the Specialist Services e.g. Substance Abuse, Domestic Abuse and Homelessness. The data migration effort has also been initiated with familiarisation of CDP's Mercury Tool and engagement with current Software Suppliers to extract data for testing. April 1st still remains a challenging date which we are doing everything to meet.

13. The replacement of the current planning solution IDOX is in the planning stage, all contracts have been agreed and the new provider that has been selected is Agile. We have had numerous conversations with Agile and IDOX to discuss how the data migration will work and when this can take place including costings etc. It has now been agreed that Agile will now progress with the data migration from IDOX to Agile and this will avoid additional costs. The Agile server has been configured to the recommended specification and Agile are in the process of signing the required forms to gain system access. Once we have timescales and agreed date for the data migration, Agile will supply us with their project plan which we can sign off and then start the switch over, this is likely to start after Christmas.
14. ICT Services have provided the ICT work stream for a solution called VoiceScape and on 14th December 2020 Revenues and Benefits went live with a 6 month trial of a telephony solution provided by an external partner. This solution is designed to contact the service's customers (particularly those who owe council tax and business rates and are at an advanced recovery stage) and put them through to a dedicated phone line where staff will support them so that they can hopefully repay any outstanding Council Tax, make an arrangement or set up an affordable direct debit. The solution contacts customers on the council's behalf (which will use less manpower and time, releasing this time to work on other parts of the busy service – such as paying some of the new Covid grants). This has worked extremely well in neighbouring services such as Thirteen Housing Group for Rental Arrears, however Middlesbrough Council is the first Revs & Bens service in the country to use this solution. Rotherham, and West Lancs Borough Council use the solution for other services they deliver. This is an exciting project and we are very hopeful of a successful result. Council Tax and Business rates are an essential part of the council's income streams and the cost of collecting is often very high with numerous contacts made to those with an outstanding balance. The solution itself will make calls, leave voice messages and send text messages, before putting the customer directly through to a call handler, with no queue once they consent to the call. All calls are made from a local number (01642 843027).

INVOLVEMENT AND PROMOTION

Commissioning and Procurement

15. The PPE warehouse has recently been relocated following a successful lease of the unit they were occupying. The team are now in a slightly downsized space. PPE continues to be provided to social care providers who require top up PPE in addition to that received through the Government portal. In addition the commissioning team are also providing PPE to education settings, and more recently have taken on the responsibility for supplying emergency PPE to primary care. The team will be on call through the Christmas period to ensure access to PPE will be available to all providers that require it.