Barrie Cooper

EXECUTIVE MEMBER REPORT TO COUNCIL
Wednesday 22nd September 2021

DECISIONS

1. **Transporter Bridge**:
   Rapid Consulting are preparing all necessary design and tender documents to enable us to appoint Contractors to carry out the initial work required to make the bridge safe and then to plan the remainder of the works to enable the bridge to either re-open as a fully functioning bridge or to be used as a visitor attraction. Works are currently underway to drill and bolt the upper angles of the bridge.

STRATEGIC

2. **Bridges and Structures**:
   Capital have completed the design for jacking up of A66 and concrete repair works required to Column 20b on A66. We expect the tender documents to be published on the NEPO portal within the next 2 week with works to begin thereafter. Capita have been appointed as consultant/contractor to carry out Principal and general inspections on the remainder of the Council's bridge and structure asset stock to inform us of current condition and identify and maintenance works required. Inspections are currently underway.

3. **Street Lighting:**
   We have awarded the tender to have all of the Councils street lighting assets tested for both structural integrity and electrical compliance. Inspections are expected to commence in October and have the testing complete and reports submitted, by July 2022.

4. **Streetworks:**
   Works are ongoing with City Fibre to manage the planned 38 month project to install a fibre to home network across Middlesbrough as part of a works programme to create a third national fibre network. The national scope of the project is to connect 8m premises, which is 30% of UK households with investment planned at £4bn. Middlesbrough is included in the 3rd wave of the project with major works planned to start in May 2021 with the plan to provide fibre connectivity to 83,000 homes.

5. **Traffic Signals/UTMC**:
   The new UTMC and UTC system development is progressing well with Siemens carrying out the works to have the new system in place soon. TCF funding is available to expand our UTMC assets across the Tees Valley, with the UTMC manager currently working with Fore Consulting to develop an asset plan for hardware type and location (VMS, CCTV, ANPR, Air Quality, Traffic Counting, Weather monitoring etc.)

TVCA/Joint Authorities have been awarded £500k for traffic signals improvements following a successful bid to DfT. Funding will be awarded by the end of September with improvement works to be carried out before the end of the financial year.

6. **Highways Projects:**
The planned highways team are underway with the 2020/21 works programme and are working towards having all of the scheme works complete prior to April 2022. We are currently out to tender for the carriageway-resurfacing programme of works and expect to appoint a main contractor within the next 4 weeks, with all of the planned carriageway surfacing works being completed prior to April 2022.

7. **Surveillance:**
On 10 August, I approved a revised Surveillance Policy for the Council to ensure that our surveillance activity is lawful and that due regard is given to human rights and to data protection rights. The policy covers CCTV, covert surveillance (both under the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 and otherwise) and the surveillance of employees. An officer group is now in place to implement the policy, with initial work focusing on developing a central register of CCTV cameras by end September 2021.

INVOLVEMENT AND PROMOTION

8. **Recycling**:
Waste services have had 4 vehicles fully wrapped in a bid to promote recycling and the wider environmental message. The vehicles have been wrapped in designs including:

- Turtle
- Seal
- Water Vole
- Wildflower Scene - Bee

As the vehicles are seen right across the town on a daily basis it is hoped they will promote recycling and remind residents of the impact they have on their local environment.

Alongside this the team have also began a wider communications campaign via social media to remind residents of what can and cannot be placed in the blue lidded bin , this will also be supplemented by an article in the Love Middlesbrough campaign in the Autumn edition.

Work has started on developing an education programme for all schools in Middlesbrough regarding Recycling – this will include information on the benefits of recycling, why we should all recycle and how people can recycle in Middlesbrough.

9. **Green Waste Tonnages:**
Since the Green Waste collections resumed on 24 August following the suspension at the beginning of August due to Covid related resource issues, the crews have collected in excess of 880 tonnes in a two week period, in comparison the crews normally collect on average approx.900 tonnes per month.

10. **Waste:**
Collections were suspended at the beginning of August due to the resource issues in relation to Covid self-isolation. However, the collections have now resumed a week earlier than planned as the Covid cases have reduced. The tonnage is very high and the crews are working hard to ensure all green waste is collected.

11. **Hedges/Shrubs:**
Area Care are planning to commence with the winter hedge/shrub pruning work in September 2021.

12. **Bedding Plants**:
    Area Care are placing 3 tier planters and tubs with seasonal bedding plants around all accessible shopping parades around the town.

13. **Keep Boro Tidy**:
    The Keep Boro tidy campaign is progressing with many volunteer litter picks around the town.

Performance

14. **APSE Service Awards 2021**:

On Thursday evening (9th September 2021) Middlesbrough Borough Councils Area Care were announced as winners in the "Best Service Team: Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service (Public Realm)" category of * APSE (Association of Public Service Excellence) Annual Awards.

The awards are an annual event, held by APSE, to recognise the best in public services and to share that best practice with all local authorities. APSE received an overwhelming 320 submissions for the Awards this year, with each one demonstrating a clear commitment to the goals of continuous improvement and the delivery of excellence in public services. The APSE Awards are specific to frontline services provided by UK local authorities. This year, the Awards included 22 categories, covering the vast majority of local services. Middlesbrough Borough Councils Environment Services Dept submitted Area Care for the Street Cleansing and Streetscene Service category, to recognise the fantastic work they have provided, despite the challenges of the Covid pandemic. MBC were one of five Local Authorities shortlisted for the finals of the Best Service Team Category. All five shortlisted candidates' submissions were judged by an expert panel and Middlesbrough was the chosen winner.

The Award winners were announced at the APSE Annual Charity Awards Dinner, in aid of Parkinson's UK, in Birmingham. MBC submission demonstrated how we deliver the best service possible, deliver in the spirit of continuous improvement and work as a team with other services and partners. The awards were hosted by Sameena Ali-Khan, a British media personality who is known as a television presenter, journalist and newsreader. She is also a published author.

*APSE (Association for Public Service Excellence) is a not for profit unincorporated association working with over 300 councils throughout the UK. Promoting excellence

in public services, APSE is the foremost specialist in local authority frontline services, hosting a network for frontline service providers in areas such as waste and refuse collection, parks and environmental services, cemeteries and crematorium, environmental health, leisure, school meals, cleaning, housing and building maintenance.

This award is great recognition for the work that Area Care within the town.

15. **Institute of Revenues, Rating and Valuation – Performance Awards:**
Revenues and Benefits Service have been shortlisted for an IRRV award - 'Excellence in Innovation: Operational' category for their use and development of the Voicescape product which is brand new to the Revenues and Benefits world. The inspection took place last week from senior officials from the IRRV, 3 of the team took part in the 1 hour inspection, supported by members of Voicescape. The Service provided a 40 mins presentation on all aspects required by the inspection team, and then gave the IRRV president and Vice president a demo of the software, which was ably handled by one of our front line caseworkers.

There were a number of follow up questions which were answered, and the inspectors were really keen to hear about what staff and customers thought of the product. Testimonials were provided from staff and customers who had engaged with the product. It was a very productive and positive session. The winner of this category will be announced at the awards ceremony on Thursday 7 October 2021 where 4 of our team members will be in attendance.

16. **Resident and Business Support – Centralisation of Debt Cross Directorate Initiative:**
To support residents who have multiple debts across the council, an initiative was launched in February – which would result in the centralisation of all debts within the council into one business area – which is now formally known as Resident and Business Support. This has been very successful and has resulted in a number of policies being designed to support this initiative. A number of improvement plans have been created which has seen areas of work with the same resident and business base, being aligned, so that interaction is coordinated, meaning rather than multiple contacts with different officers across the council for different debts, this is now coordinated with one officer engaging with the resident or business at any given time. Improvements are delivered on a large scale across all areas where debt exist, which has avoided duplication in effort and time. Practices and opportunities are shared across all areas and also now aligned to a comprehensive collection strategy.

The most recent work to transfer across is the collection of Public Space Protection Orders – joint working with the team and the introduction of a collection solution has resulted in some positive changes being made to support improved outcomes.

Early indications – are extremely positive – with more good news stories to follow.

17. **Resident and Business Support - Supporting Children:**
Resident and Business Support in conjunction with Children Services have recently launched an initiative to support families who have children. Alongside administering emergency payments for children the service are also supporting families with the following:-
- Benefit Take Up
- Referral to Routes to Work
- Review of all Debt and provide support and solutions to respond to payment problems.
- Provide Discretionary Housing Payments if there is a shortfall in rent and free up disposable income.
- Providing support with food – so that no child goes hungry within the town.
- Provide welfare support funding if required.

The joined up approach to the delivery of this solution has been extremely beneficial to our families with children and some extremely positive feedback has been received from both families and officers. The service have been able to maximise benefit, sort payment problems out, help with access to food and clothing, whilst supporting the families in a number of other ways.

Resident and Business Support and our colleagues in Children Services are making positive changes to the way we respond to those in need. This approach has had a positive impact on the lives of some of our most vulnerable residents.

ICT

18. **Implementation of Microsoft 365:**
ICT Services have now migrated to the Microsoft 365 cloud based service. The migration of email is complete along with Teams successfully deployed to all ICT users at the beginning of August – Teams is a new platform that will improve collaboration, messaging, presence services and video conferencing for all users.
Phase 2 planning for additional email and Teams functionality is underway to further enhance and improve communication and collaboration.

19. **Applications:**
The Social Care Support team continues to focus on developing and implementing the changes identified as part of the overall improvement plan for Children's Services:
The Children's and Adults Social Care applications LCS and LAS have undergone a major upgrade to implement security and functionality improvements in line with the supplier's application roadmap.
Community Safety Data Recording System – CDPSoft went Live in April 2021 and the newly created support and development role has been embedded into the Applications Social Care team. Work continues to implement solutions and assessment forms across the specialist services for Substance Abuse, Domestic Abuse, Homelessness etc.
The Applications team responds to the pressures placed on Directorates, to deliver not only BAU activity but also new solutions. There are numerous application upgrades ongoing and some examples of new developments are:
Firmstep online forms amendments to support business changes to Refuse & Bulky Waste collections and Fly Tipping processes.
Ongoing development of online forms for Bereavement Services.
Implementation of Firmstep mobile working solution for Environment Services to improve business processes and customer experience.

20. **ESRi:**
Following the implementation of ESRi the Councils corporate GIS (Geospatial Information System) in 2018 ICT continue to work with Directorates to leverage the power of the application and find new ways in which it can support the work of the Council and the services delivered to the citizens of Middlesbrough. Recent developments include:

21. **FieldMaps:**
Mobile working solutions created to allow staff out in the field to quickly capture asset information. This data is captured and stored in the Esri platform and is shared with other team members and displayed in maps/dashboards etc. Several applications now setup including tree surveys, bins and urban meadows allowing Environment staff to be even more responsive to issues raised.

22. **Integration with other applications:**
ICT are working to integrate ESRi with other corporate systems in order to ensure data is consistent accurate and easily shared. Examples of this are Land Ownership, CCTV information and the Flare issue reporting system.

23. **Infrastructure:**
As part of the wider project team, ICT are working to define and develop the network infrastructure that will underpin the new ways of working, required within the Councils New HQ, Fountain Court. Now there is an understanding of the services and numbers of staff that may occupy the building, ICT are working to define the IT infrastructure within the building and software and systems that will be required by staff working both remotely and in the office.

24. **Website Review:**
An outline business case to redevelop the Councils Website & Intranet was approved by the Councils Project Management Office and the project Sponsor Charlotte Benjamin, Director of Legal & Governance. Next steps will involve ICT refining the model, timescales and approach. Whilst Marketing & Comms undertake a consultation process with key stakeholders.

25. **Security:**
During August and timed to compliment the deployment of Microsoft Teams, ICT have begun the upgrade and improvement of our Anti-Virus protection solution (Sophos) on all end-user laptop and desktop devices. This improved protection now guards against Ransomware, malicious software that once in a device can isolate and encrypt critical business data and systems. The Ransomware attack suffered by Redcar and Cleveland Council cost in excess of £11m to rectify so it is vital we maintain a strong security posture against an ever evolving threat.

26. ICT also received the findings of a recent internal Cyber Security Audit. The assessment was conducted in partnership with Veritau and considered policies, procedures and training in relation to Cyber Security. It also simulated a "phishing attack" where staff were tested on their ability to identify suspicions emails. The report issued ICT Services the highest rating "Substantial Assurance" with a number f minor actions around the ongoing promotion of policies and staff awareness.
Planning is well underway for this year's PSN submission, an annual security accreditation that all Local Authorities must achieve in order to access Central Government services such as the Cabinet Office services and the DWP. Assessment will involve an accredited auditor attempt a controlled attack on our security system in order to assess existing controls and recommend revisions where appropriate.

ICT Abbreviations:
ICT
(Information Communication & Technology)
SIRO
(Senior Risk and Information Officer) A statutory role held by Paul Stephen's – responsible for managing the Councils risks in relation to information security.
GCSX
(Government Connect Secure Extranet) A network that allows officials at local public-sector organizations to interact and share data privately and securely with central government departments, such as Department of Work & Pensions, the National Health Service, the Criminal Justice and the police.
PSN
(Public Sector Network) A security accreditation all Local Authorities must meet in order to access secure services across GCSX, a good example is Revenues and Benefits data.

LCS
(Liquid Logic Children's) The corporate ICT application that manages case management in relation to Children supported in Middlesbrough.

VPN
(Virtual Private Network) A way of creating a secure connection between two separate networks in order to share information or use applications. A VPN is used to connect your tablet (at home on your own broadband) to the Councils network to access Email, Egenda, etc.

NCSC
(National Cyber Security Centre) A government department tasked with ensuring the security of the Governments IT network and for setting standards, policy advice and guidance for all local authorities.

Microsoft Windows 10
The standard operating system used on all desktop, tablet and laptop devices across the authority.

Microsoft Windows 7
A previous version of the Councils preferred device operating system due to be unsupported in January 2020. Currently being replaced with Windows 10.

Microsoft Azure
A server and data hosting platform offered by Microsoft

GIS
(Geographical Information System) A software application that utilises maps to interpret data relating to many different subjects such as housing, population, schools, ward boundaries, traffic and deprivation.

ESRi – the new GIS application currently being rolled out by ICT Services. Replacing the older MapInfo and Cartology applications.

ArcGIS – The name of the applications that will be loaded onto the desktop of key GIS users, other lighter users will access a web version.

Slido – One of a number of survey tools used by the authority I order to gather feedback an opinion, currently being sued extensively in the Chief Execs Employee Engagement sessions.

DC
(Data Centre) A building or location, out of which the Council operates key ICT services (such as networking, applications and data storage) for the Directorates across the authority. There are two of these centres for the purpose of resilience

Call Manager – the software application's which underpins the Councils Phone system. This also includes, voicemail, and the Jabber messaging tools.

CRM
(Customer Relationship Management) An application, or suite of applications that underpin the way in which the Council interacts with members of the public and supports the request for services and help. Allowing calls to be tracked and monitored as they are assigned to different departments across the authority. Our CRM is also called Firmstep (the actual name of the product). It used primarily the Contact Centre staff in the ground floor Civic and Middlesbrough House.

Hacking
A term used to describe a method of gaining access or control of an IT system by utilising gaps or loopholes in the design of either the software or hardware.

Central Campus (Local Area Network)
The Council buildings located in the Town Centre such as Civic Centre, Town Hall, Middlesbrough House, which benefit from a super-fast private Fibre Network.

WAN
Wide Area Network
Those remote buildings that access Council resources via the Virgin Media network.

Ransomware/Malware
A type of malicious software designed to block access to a computer system until a sum of money is paid.

Firewall Cluster

A security appliance that protects the Councils ICT network from malicious attack**.**

4G Device

A portable device (similar to a mobile phone) that allows flexible access to the Internet.

Unix

An alternate server and operating system platform to Microsoft Windows