

AGENDA ITEM NO. 6

Minutes of the meeting of the Transformation Programme Sub-Committee
held in Committee Room 2, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely on Monday
12th May 2016 at 4:30pm

PRESENT

Councillor Anna Bailey (Chairman)
Councillor Mike Bradley
Councillor Lorna Dupré
Councillor Lisa Stubbs
Councillor Jo Webber

OTHERS PRESENT

Jo Brooks – Director, Operations
Mark Chadwick – Principal ICT Officer
Andy Radford – Director, Resources
Adrian Scaites-Stokes – Democratic Services Officer
Annette Wade – Customer Services Manager
Mr Brian Cox – Foresight Consultants

The Chairman advised the Sub-Committee that as Councillor Sue Austen was unable to attend the meeting Councillor Lorna Dupré was attending in her place. Apologies were offered to Councillor Austen and attempts would be made to accommodate her attendance in the future.

22. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

There were no questions received from members of the public.

23. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Sue Austen.

24. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

25. MINUTES

It was resolved:

That the Minutes of the meeting held on 8th February 2016 be confirmed as a correct record and be signed by the Chairman.

26. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman made no announcements.

27. **REVIEW OF THE TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME AND ICT SERVICE**

The Sub-Committee received a report, reference Q263 previously circulated, that reviewed the Transformation Programme so that it was resourced, deliverable, with outcomes defined.

The Director, Resources advised the Sub-Committee that he had only been asked to take on the Transformation Programme a month ago, so needed to understand it and whether it could be delivered, as it appeared ambitious. Therefore, independent consultants had been asked to review the situation. They had met the Information Communication Technology (ICT) team, had considered the service across all services and had reported back. This information was in the papers provided in the agenda. A decision was needed on where the Council went from this point. The main concerns drawn from the report related to staff resources, as the identified projects could not be all delivered at the same time. The ICT Service had also gone through a review, as it needed to be able to support the Programme.

The Principal ICT Officer explained about the 'customer journey' when they contacted the Council using technology. The technology infrastructure was included within the Transformation Programme. Customer access was through website applications, and improvements for customers were being considered. It had to be simplified for users and be able to deliver efficiencies.

Mr Brian Cox noted that there were a large number of services and connections provided, so any failings on the part of the ICT would affect services.

Councillor Lisa Stubbs joined the meeting at this point, 4:38pm.

Mr Cox continued by highlighting the key findings. The Programme consisted of a loose collection of mixed projects that had been drawn up, but it should focus on the outcomes, rather than adding new ideas as they came up. These projects were neither costed nor the resources assessed to see if they would be deliverable either internally or through bought in services. With the budget becoming tighter there was a need to focus on the Council's objectives and identify which projects addressed them. The ICT team had not been engaged in this process to see whether it could provide the extra service needed for these projects on top of their everyday tasks. More resources would be needed to make this work and there were risks involved in taking on this additional work. The ICT team could not deliver these projects given its current level of resources and had to make do within the existing limited budget. It did continue to give a good service within those constraints but could not take a strategic approach. This all led to a number of questions being asked about what direction the Council wanted to take, which projects it wished to support, what investment should be made and to what the timescale.

A number of recommendations had come out of the review:

- Re-focus the Programme. More people were now working online so a 'Channel Shift' was needed using appropriate technology. This would

help free up resources for people who wanted or needed face-to-face contact or access to self-service. This would also help reduce costs.

- Introduce new ways of working. This could include 'hot-desking' and remote or home working.
- Infrastructure Refresh. This would support the wider ambitions, though this would need investment. This could be provided by external service providers. There were risks attached to this, as a contract would have to be negotiated but any changes could result in additional service charges and could work out more costly. Therefore, this option was rejected and ICT should be kept in-house under the Council's control. However, extra resources would be required and would have to be obtained in a coherent manner.

The Director, Resources, revealed that officers and the Management Team had looked at the report. Appendix 1 headlined the recommendations and looked at deliverability by staff and whether the projects were cost viable. This would only be Phase 1, over a six month period, and progress would be reported back to the Sub-Committee in November. The cost of this Phase would be around £410,000 with funding being drawn from the reserve budget. Phase 2 would need extra money. To maximise the success of the Programme, programme management would be needed with Foresight engaged in that role. Any re-structure of the ICT department would be deferred for six months, while the first phase was implemented. A whole raft of other projects had already started. These would continue but would not be part of this Programme.

Councillor Jo Webber wanted to know where the internal savings would come from and whether there would be longer-term savings. The Director, Resources, noted that the year ending March 2016 had resulted in an underspend, so there was capacity for funding there. The figures for longer-term savings would be included in future.

Councillor Mike Bradley acknowledged that there was quite a bit of funding available in the budget. The process for this Programme had started a year ago, so the problems and what had to be done were understood.

Councillor Lorna Dupré queried the actual reserve balance figure stated in paragraph 6.1 and whether the Council had that money. There was also some confusion on how the consultants had become involved and why they had been employed for the future as other options had not been looked at. Was there any competition or challenge to their use? They had produced a lot of data but it was difficult to make sense of it all. However, there were no details about comparisons or anything about the particular savings expected. Members were being asked to put a large amount of money into the Programme but with no clear sense of what savings would result. So there was nothing to persuade agreement to the recommendations.

There were deep concerns about the 'pragmatic' approach taken as big sums of money were involved and without any competition this was not a good situation. It was accepted that some matters were urgent, however, other bigger projects that were not urgent should be opened up to further competition and alternatives needed to be looked at.

The Director, Resources, stated that a lot of work had gone on in the background but something had to be done quickly. So no tender process had been gone through due to the urgency of the situation. Other local authorities had used Foresight so they were known. The benefits of the Programme had not been fully explained but there was some analysis on some and others had to be progressed now. There was concern about delaying the Programme, which was a risk, though it was urgent.

Mr Brian Cox said the number of transactions, when shifted to website transactions, would make significant savings but a collection of projects was needed to achieve that. Some projects had to be built in, such as for disaster recovery, whilst other projects would build foundations. Ultimately the website would be used to do this but it would take time. Savings would come, as other local authorities had seen this. If the process was not started now then the savings might not be made.

Councillor Mike Bradley reiterated that the project had started a year ago and a lot of information had been accrued. Basically the Council's hardware and software needed replacing. This would provide the building blocks so the Council could move forward. Flexible working for officers was also being considered with the website being used as a 'shop' to provide services. All the work was expected to be provided internally.

Foresight had offered to manage the programme and provide technical advice. They had already provided some good advice so the Council could be comfortable with its capabilities.

Councillor Anna Bailey commented that several organisations had been invited to provide proposals which had been considered, but they had only related to delivering the status quo. Potentially they would be cheaper initially but would not move the Council forward as they had no strategy to do that. An interlinked approach was needed so 'farming off' other parts of the programme would cause problems and potential delays.

Although the Council needed to understand its requirements for the future, and replace relevant equipment when needed, within the Programme the other projects that had started should continue. The Regulatory & Support Services Committee could instruct which projects it considered were important, on a case-by-case basis, even though they were not part of the Programme. There would be a hefty contingency budget set aside but what governance was there in place to control its use?

With regard to any exemptions from the Standing Orders, these should also be agreed with the Chairman of this Sub-Committee and then reported back to the Sub-Committee.

The Director, Resources, stated that the intention was for officers and Mr Cox to meet monthly to manage the budget and report back to the Sub-Committee.

It was resolved to RECOMMEND TO REGULATORY & SUPPORT SERVICES COMMITTEE:

- The Review of the Transformational Programme and the ICT Service;
- The priority projects described in section 4 of the report;
- The Programme Management and reporting arrangements as set out in section 5 of the report;
- The release of the funding in the ICT reserve.

28. **FORWARD AGENDA PLAN**

The Sub-Committee received a copy of its forward agenda plan, previously circulated. The key date would be the meeting of 21st November, where the Sub-Committee would receive an update on the Programme.

Councillor Lorna Dupré wanted the dates of the future meetings to be reviewed so that Councillor Sue Austen could manage to attend.

The Forward Agenda Plan was noted.

The meeting closed at 5:21pm.