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Subject to approval at the next Corporate Support Committee meeting

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CORPORATE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

24 March 2022 at 6.00 pm

Present: Councillors Dendle (Chair), Roberts (Vice-Chair), Bennett, Clayden, Mrs Cooper, Huntley, Madeley, Oppler and Warr

Councillor Pendleton was also in attendance for all or part of the meeting.

768. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

769. MINUTES

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 18 January 2022 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair.

770. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

The Chair confirmed that there were no urgent matters for this meeting to consider.

771. PUBLIC QUESTION TIME

The Chair confirmed that no public questions had been submitted for this meeting.

772. REPLACEMENT OF THE CORPORATE TELEPHONY SYSTEM AND INTEGRATED CONTACT CENTRE SOLUTION

The ICT Manager advised members that the report provided to them explained that the telephony product, the current Mitel system had been in place since 2016 and had seen two contract extensions previously. He advised that he hoped to choose a product based on cost, quality and that would work alongside Microsoft Teams but also that could be used on its own. This was to enable it to support the council's disaster recovery and business continuity plans.

In summing up he advised that a Capital Fund of £200,000 had been approved by Full Council and the contract would be let through a UK complaint procurement process for a minimum of 4 years. Due to the nature of procurement, he also requested that the Committee give approval for delegated authority to be given to the Section Officer to enter into and sign/seal the new contract.

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Members were then invited by the Chair to ask any questions. From the comments made members had it clarified that the new system would be one that would evolve and assist the council over the next 4 years. It was also confirmed that there would be no additional fees expected for a system that was compatible with Microsoft Teams, the costs detailed in the report were inclusive of this. It was also commented by one member that given the uncertain financial economy at the current time, was there not an option to extend the current contract with Mitel again. It was confirmed that the current contract had already been extended to its maximum period, as well as the current system nearing its end of life and so the ICT Manager advised that he believed there was no other choice but to upgrade to a new system at this current time.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Clayden and seconded by Councillor Cooper.

The Committee

RESOLVED - That

- (1) the Council should proceed with the procurement of a replacement corporate telephony system and that an integrated contact centre solution be approved; and
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Section 151 Officer to authorise, enter into and sign / seal a contract for a replacement corporate telephony system and integrated contact centre solution.

773. ANNUAL CANVASS 2021

The Electoral Services Manager advised members that the annual canvass process had changed in 2020 and that this was the second year the canvass had been run in line with the new process. She explained that responses from route 1 properties had been increased by 1.13% which equated to just over 2000 properties in total. She went on to explain that the number of letters that were sent out for route 1 properties had been reduced by 9534 and that this had been achieved by sending emails for those properties where an email address was available. Further manual data matching checks were undertaken against other council departments in order to reduce the number of route 2 properties that would have needed a personal visit and/or a reminder form. Having carried out this work it had resulted in approximately a £10,000 saving on printing and postage costs. She also advised that the team planned to increase the number of e-mails and manual checks completed by extending the canvass timetable slightly for the annual canvass in 2022. This would allow for more cost savings and a more accurate register. The Electoral Services Manager outlined that the team would also be using SMS messaging for the first time.

In summing up it was explained that as the route 1 properties only required one communication during the canvass, it was planned that these communications would be sent later in the canvass timetable as this would allow for more accurate data due to it being received closer to the publication date of the Electoral Register on 1 December 2022. The information was therefore less likely to change before the May 2023 local elections. It was also confirmed that unlike 2020, where face to face canvassing was unable to be completed due to the pandemic, the team were able to undertake this exercise in 2021 but were still restricted as they were unable to train staff face to face. As restrictions had now been removed, this would be a further improvement for 2022 as face-to-face training would resume.

The Electoral Services Manager wished to put on record her thanks to the Council's external staff and staff from across other departments for their continued assistance in ensuring that an accurate and up to date electoral register could be achieved.

The Group Head of Policy then expressed her thanks to the elections team and all the staff who worked alongside them, in particular the canvassers and the Customer Services Team. She stated that although the elections team lead on the canvass, it was very much a joint effort from everybody involved.

The Chair then invited questions from members. As there were no questions, he queried with the Electoral Services Manager why the data that was collected by the team during canvassing could not be used elsewhere across the business. She confirmed that the data was protected and could only be additionally used for fraud investigations that the council may be investigating. The Chair then asked if there was any way that for the next canvass a question could be included that specified that the data collected could be shared for all council purposes. The Group Head of Policy explained that under the GDPR regulations that was not possible. Further discussion on this topic was had where it was clarified that the owner of the data collected during the canvass process was not the council, but the Electoral Registration Officer and therefore the council was not entitled to use the data in any way.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Bennett and seconded by Councillor Cooper.

The Committee

RESOLVED - That

- (1) The report be noted; and
- (2) It be agreed that the Electoral Registration Officer continues to implement change as necessary to the 2022 Canvass process.

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774. PROVISION OF INTERNAL AUDIT FROM 2022/23

The Interim Group Head of Corporate Support and Section 151 Officer advised members that the future of the provision of internal audit service had been considered by the Audit & Governance Committee at its meeting held on 22 February 2022. She confirmed that the report before members today sought the approval of the appointment of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) as the Council's Internal Audit Service from 1 April 2022.

An update was provided to members highlighting that the Head of Internal Audit for SIAP had attended a meeting of the Corporate Management Team last week, where he presented the draft internal audit plan for the next three years. It was confirmed that the plan was comprehensive, provided the council with some degree of flexibility and SIAP were ready to start on 1 April 2022.

The Interim Group Head of Corporate Support and Section 151 Officer outlined that she was happy to agree the plan and a copy of the plan would be provided to the Audit & Governance Committee at its next meeting on 28 July 2022 together with the first audit update report subject to this Committee's approval.

Members were then invited to ask any questions or make statements on the report and the update provided. The officer provided answers for all questions asked. Questions were asked regarding the 12-month notice period required in the contract and what had happened to the council's internal audit team that used to complete this work. The Chair of the Audit & Governance Committee was also invited to make comment where he stated that this new contract would provide the council with a more robust process, and he advised the Committee to approve the recommendations before them.

The recommendations were then proposed by Councillor Clayden and seconded by Councillor Bennett.

The Committee

RESOLVED

- (1) that the appointment of the Southern Internal Audit Partnership (SIAP) as the Council's Internal Audit Service from 1 April 2022 be approved; and
- (2) the consequential changes in staffing arrangements to provide the Council with a suitably resourced Internal Audit service with effect from 1 April 2022 (see recommendation from the Audit & Governance Committee held on 22 February 2022 – Minute 666) be approved.

775. WORK PROGRAMME

In presenting the committee's work programme for 2022/23 the Chief Executive stated that it was reasonable to say that change was expected over the coming months based on the conversations he had had with members during the last week. These changes would generate a new stream of work that would be presented to this Committee as the council brought these changes forward.

It was suggested that a Customer Services update would be beneficial and should be added to the work programme. The Chair also agreed that resident contact points with the council was also important for the committee to review.

The Head of Technology and Digital confirmed that there would be two additional items for the work programme for the 15 September 2022 meeting which would see a report the Technology and Digital Annual update and for 10 November 2022 meeting a report on the review of the mobile phone contract.

The Committee then noted the work programme presented.

(The meeting concluded at 18.24 pm)

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