

Recommendations of the ICT (Information & Communication Technology) Task and Finish Group

Contents

1. Executive Summary

- What is the Commission being asked to do?
- Summary of the recommendations of the ICT (Information & Communication Technology) Task and Finish Group

2. Purpose of the ICT Task and Finish Group

3. Evidence gathering and analysis

4. Recommendations, and informatives

5. Next Steps

6. Group membership and meeting dates

1. Executive Summary

Following the completion of the ICT Task and Finish Group's evidence gathering and analysis, the Commission is now asked to:

- i) Consider the recommendations of the ICT Task and Finish Group as outlined in this report;
- ii) Decide whether to accept, amend or reject these recommendations for referral onto the Cabinet Meeting of 11 July 2016; and
- iii) Note that the ICT Task and Finish Group has now completed its work.

Summary of Recommendations

The ICT Task and Finish Group suggests that Cabinet be recommended:

- 1. To resolve the legacy issues following the handover from Northgate to Capita:**
- 2. To standardise, streamline and progress the operating systems, processes and tools in use:**
- 3. To implement a formal monitoring and review process for the ICT provision and incorporation of technology into work flow at Wycombe District Council (WDC):**

2. Purpose of the ICT Task and Finish Group

The ICT Task and Finish Group was established by the Improvement & Review Commission on 9 March 2016 with the following Terms of Reference:

1. To undertake a review of ICT provided to both Members and Officers at WDC;
2. To consider the current provision of ICT across the Council under the Capita contract; and
3. To identify any measures that can be taken to improve ICT available in order to assist Members and Officers to fulfil their roles.

The need for a review of ICT provision was prompted following a series of system failures and operational issues with the IT infrastructure, software and portable devices in use, preventing Members and Officers from working efficiently and effectively.

It was felt at the time that many of these issues were caused by poor service and support from Capita, and by a lack of functionality on Members' portable devices, which were extraordinarily expensive devices for the sole purpose of reading e-mails.

With this in mind, the Improvement & Review Commission established a Task and Finish Group to analyse the current state of ICT provision at WDC, identify barriers to engagement and productivity, and develop recommendations to overcome any barriers discerned from the evidence gathered.

3. Evidence Gathering and Analysis

Following discussions with both the Leader and the Chief Executive of WDC, the group determined that the general aim for ICT provision, for Members and Officers, was to provide:

- **Accessibility and Efficiency**

The ability for Members and Officers to access emails, files, and software quickly and with the minimum login time, whether they are working from WDC offices, home or site visits.

- **Functionality**

The software in use by the Members and Officers should have a wide range of functionality to facilitate accessibility and efficiency. It was also recognised that open functionality could lead to innovative practices, encouraging both Members and Officers to greater productivity through the use of tools not previously at their disposal.

- **Versatility**

The hardware provided to Members and Officers should be suitably adaptable to allow each device to be used across a wide range of settings for multiple purposes. This could also lead to innovative practices.

- **Digital by default**

It has long been established that WDC is aiming to move away from a reliance on paper and printing and move to fully digital operating practices. Any advances in this direction should be welcomed.

With a clear vision for ICT established, the group discussed what areas our review should look at when determining issues and possible solutions. After much debate, the group settled on six themes for their work:

- Accessibility & Efficiency
- Versatility & Functionality
- Security
- Infrastructure
- Economic Value
- Monitoring

Following visits and submissions from:

- The Leader of Wycombe District Council;
- Cabinet Member for HR, ICT & Customer Service;
- Members;
- The Chief Executive of Wycombe District Council;
- WDC HR, ICT & Shared Support Services Officers;
- WDC Democratic, Legal & Policy Services Officers;
- WDC Environment Officers; and
- WDC Planning Officers

The group agreed that the current ICT provision at WDC is not fit for purpose. The group also agreed that without serious and immediate action, the situation would rapidly deteriorate.

Whilst a plethora of problems were identified in the submissions of Members and Officers, the key issues highlighted by the evidence were:

- Constant server and kit failures are preventing staff from working efficiently. This is also leading to severe stress and the loss of outstanding response standards. In some cases work has been delayed by ten days, and one employee was without a dedicated laptop for three weeks;
- There is a lack of accessible and knowledgeable support from Capita in relation to specialised software;
- Capita have repeatedly failed to honour action plans and post-contract agreements;
- The age and variance of operating systems in use is causing and aggravating a wide variety of issues;
- Problems are being patched rather than fixed. Where problems are patched, the workaround is not communicated to other teams creating multiple different responses to each issue;
- Internal wireless networks are slow and not able to handle peak traffic periods, leaving some Members unable to download important documents during Council meetings;

- Multiple logins required for a variety of software, slows down the workflow of Members and Officers;
- Air apps and simple office tools (e.g. Polaris) prevent Members from fully engaging with their work, are not intuitive, and lack functionality;
- Calendar functions for Members are totally inadequate;
- iPads and Samsung J5s lack vital and expected functionality;
- Current webmail completely outdated and not user friendly for those who have upgraded to Windows 10;
- Hardware security token extremely frustrating as yet another piece of kit to carry around;
- iPads only download in Wi-Fi zones, making them useless as a portable device unless carried with phone to tether;
- Members have no access to the shared drive from their devices, only available in group rooms;
- Members don't always receive all staff emails, meaning they miss out on vital information;

Based on the evidence provided, the group also discerned several key points for consideration when making recommendations:

1. We are not entirely bound by the Capita contract and can set our own pace of development, although there would be a cost implication for any suggested development;
2. Capita have failed to achieve against a number of commitments made since signing the contract.
3. We are bound in terms of security by our connection to the Public Services Network (PSN) which has a draconian security standard, but is vital for many of our services;
4. It would be extremely inefficient overall to provide support for Members to use their own wide range of devices, even though this would improve individual Member's efficiency;
5. Any move away from paper documentation would require a functional, versatile, intuitive and efficient digital system to be in place first, along with appropriate training;
6. To operate at peak efficiency with technology, WDC should standardise operating systems and digital tools for both Members and Officers together;
7. The varying levels of digital literacy amongst Members, and the lack of take up at training opportunities, makes it extremely difficult to find single solutions to problems. Either multiple solutions must be found to each issue, or

Members must be expected to undertake training and operate with a certain level of digital literacy;

4. Recommendations and informatives

1. To resolve the legacy issues following the handover from Northgate to Capita:

- 1.1. To immediately clarify and resolve, potentially through third party expert review, the nature of the stability issues either caused or aggravated by 'File Server 1';

Reason: To resolve stability issues leading to server failures and excessive downtime.

- 1.2. To ensure that suitable server power is provided to prevent logon issues during busy periods;

Reason: To resolve failures related to heavy traffic during busy periods at WDC offices.

- 1.3. That adequate and knowledgeable support is available from Capita, both remotely and on-site, for specialist programmes and systems;

Reason: In order to provide IT support that maintains 99.9% operational efficiency.

- 1.4. To require Capita to provide an action plan for fixing issues that have been identified;

Reason: To tackle the culture of patching.

- 1.5. To ensure that where short term patches are used, they are communicated to all staff;

Reason: To resolve problem of repetitive issues across departments.

- 1.6. That the possibility of implementing financial penalties against Capita for failures be explored.

Reason: To hold Capita to account for failures and ensure implementation of action plans.

- 1.7. To scope out, develop and implement a modern IT infrastructure of servers and systems that will support continual growth and development in WDC's use of technology;

Reason: To end issues relating to current infrastructure and prepare WDC ICT for ongoing development as the nature and functionality of technological innovations improve our operational capabilities.

- 1.8. To devise, schedule and implement a single sign-on process for Members and Officers.

Reason: To reduce inefficiencies related to constant logging in and out of software.

2. To standardise, streamline and progress the operating systems, processes and tools in use:

- 2.1. To immediately devise, schedule and implement a plan to upgrade all council devices running on Windows to Windows 10;

Reason: To resolve issues relating to age and variance of operating systems, and to improve efficiency and consistency within the work flow.

- 2.2. To immediately devise, schedule and implement a plan to upgrade all Members and Officers to Office 365;

Reason: To standardise digital tools in use by Members and Officers to improve efficiency and consistency within the work flow.

- 2.3. To work with RSA or competitors to move away from hardware security tokens and introduce software based security tokens, or tokenless authentication;

Reason: To modernise and streamline the necessary 2-stage authentication process.

- 2.4. To implement a new Members ICT Scheme whose core elements should include:

- 2.4.1. An end to the provision by WDC of printed documentation for meetings;

Reason: To continue our move towards 'digital by design'.

- 2.4.2. The introduction of a £25 per month Members ICT allocation;

Reason: To cover the costs of digital and remote working.

- 2.4.3. The mandatory issue to all members of a combined notebook & tablet, and a smartphone, which operate on Windows 10 and are compatible with Office 365, particularly the current version of Microsoft Outlook.

These devices will be designated as the Members property and paid for using the £25 Members ICT allocation, so that the Members will fully own the devices at the end of their term in office;

Reason: To resolve issues relating to the variance of operating systems and devices in use, to standardise Members equipment to improve efficiency, to increase

functionality and versatility of members equipment, to resolve issues with webmail and calendars. Generally, to provide Members with effective ICT tools.

2.4.4. The new devices should also provide Members with access to the shared drive, and must allow sharing of calendars with third parties;

Reason: To improve work flow efficiency, capabilities and organisation.

2.4.5. To design and implement a mandatory training programme and set of training tools for Members on how to use their new devices. This training is to be repeated following every District Council election and all members must complete it;

Reason: To ensure that all Members have the same level of digital literacy and are familiar with new equipment and innovations within supplied software.

2.4.6. To allow Officers to purchase the same devices as Members on a monthly payment scheme for work and/or private use;

Reason: To provide parity and standardisation between Members and Officers to improve efficiency and consistency.

2.4.7. To develop a process for offering disused technology (e.g. iPads) for purchase by Members and Officers.

Reason: To recoup as much funding as possible from disused devices to roll into budgets for acquiring new equipment.

2.4.8. For members of the ICT Task and Finish Group to be included in any trial of new equipment as they will be able to provide an informed review.

Reason: To ensure that any trial is viewed from the wider perspective of the needs of WDC as a whole as outlined in this report, not just personal preference.

2.5. To include Members on the 'All Staff' mailing list, and to close the Members' Extranet and transfer them to the Staff Intranet;

Reason: To ensure that Members do not miss vital or useful communications.

2.6. To ensure that the highest possible Wi-Fi and Internet speeds are available throughout the Council buildings at Queen Victoria Road site;

Reason: To resolve issues around internet traffic at peak meeting times.

- 2.7. To install such hardware or software as may be necessary to cast presentations to Members' portable devices, ending any reliance on (but not necessarily the use of) projector screens, particularly in the Council Chamber;

Reason: To resolve issues around poorly placed projector screens, and to improve functionality and versatility.

- 2.8. To provide Members' payslips and certificates online;

Reason: To continue our move towards 'digital by design'.

- 2.9. To provide USB charging sockets in the Council Chamber and at desks in meeting rooms;

Reason: To reduce the amount of equipment Members and Officers have to carry.

- 2.10. Explore the possibility of using electronic voting in the Council Chamber, and having Councillors names displayed on public screens when speaking.

Reason: To improve the efficiency of meetings and the experience for the public.

3. To implement a formal monitoring and review process for the ICT provision and incorporation of technology into work flow at WDC:

- 3.1. The Cabinet Member for HR, ICT & Customer Services is requested to give an annual presentation to the Improvement & Review Commission on the state of the ICT provision at WDC, and the progress made with the recommendations of the Commission;

- 3.2. The HR, ICT & Customer Services Policy Advisory Group to monitor progress of ICT development in the interim;

- 3.3. A full assessment of the ICT provision to be undertaken by a Task and Finish Group once in each four year Council Term.

Reason for these recommendations: To ensure the implementation of recommendations and timely future adaptation of ICT provision across the organisation, continuing to drive efficiency, consistency, versatility, functionality, high quality service provision and good value.

The Task and Finish Group consider the above recommendations to be featured in a general order of priority.

5. Next Steps

Subject to Cabinet approval and funding, it is the opinion of the Task and Finish Group that these recommendations should be scheduled for implementation immediately, with a view to complete implementation within one year, except for recommendations 1.7 and 1.8.

6. Group membership and meeting dates

Membership

Councillor L Wood (Chairman)

Councillor H Bull (Vice-Chairman)

Councillor M Davy

Councillor T Green

Councillor D Knights

Councillor K Ahmed

Meeting dates

- **30 March 2016**
Scoping meeting and update from Leader and Chief Executive on ICT Vision.
- **5 April 2016**
Visit from Cabinet Member HR, ICT & Customer Service, and the Head of HR, ICT & Shared Services.
- **15 April 2016**
Submissions from Members.
- **25 April 2016**
Submissions from Officers – Heads of Democratic, Legal and Policy Services, Environment, and Planning & Sustainability visited to present and discuss submissions from their teams.
- **9 May 2016**
Meeting to discuss evidence and formulate draft recommendations.
- **17 May**
Meeting to review and finalise report
- **13 June 2016**
Formal presentation of report to Improvement & Review Commission