

STRATA - JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, 6 SEPTEMBER 2022

Present:

Councillors Twiss, Hookway, Millar, Oliver, Clarence and Nuttall

Members Attendance:

Councillors Wrigley

Apologies:

Councillors Knott, Newby and J Petherick

Officers in Attendance:

Mark Davies, Strata Director of IT & Digital Transformation

Simon Davey, Strata Board Director

Sarah Jenkins, Democratic Services Officer

19. ELECTION OF CHAIR 2022/23

In accordance with the existing annual rotation for the position of Chair, Councillor Millar proposed that Councillor Hookway, representing East Devon District Council, be elected Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year. This was seconded by Councillor Oliver and was resolved.

RESOLVED

Councillor Hookway be elected Chair for the 2022/23 Municipal Year.

20. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2021 were approved as a correct record and signed by the chair.

21. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

22. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

None.

23. QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES

None.

24. STRATA PERFORMANCE REPORT - STRATA IT DIRECTOR

The Strata IT Director attended the meeting remotely via Zoom. The report had been circulated with the agenda and noted that the existing IT Director had left in April. Mark Davies had taken over as interim Director of IT and Digital Transformation and had been in post for five months.

Overall Strata had performed well during the past twelve months, with a good staff culture and level of retention. The Agilisys report had highlighted various issues, including stagnation around technology. It was noted that, due to the primary focus being on saving money, Strata had not invested in upgrading and maintaining technology. Over the past few months Strata had started to upgrade some key technology such as a new resilient storage system and new servers, although there is still much to do.

Strata is looking to engage a technology architect in order to set a clear strategy for technology solutions and systems life-cycles. The report also highlighted the need for the three Councils to work more closely together which would enable greater savings on delivery.

Regarding staff, the role of Head of Infrastructure has now been filled, with the post holder taking up the role on 1 November. Vacancies on the Service Desk have now been filled and this is now at full complement.

The report outlined various projects which have been or are being delivered during the period. These include:

- Financial Management System replacement
- Migration to Microsoft 365
- Storage Area Network (SAN) upgrade
- Public Switched Telephone Network (PSTN – copper phone lines) in Exeter
- Street cleaning app
- St Sidwells Point leisure complex
- Trade waste system

Over the next few weeks, the project engagement and delivery process will change and Strata will be adopting a more Agile method of project delivery where that approach is suitable.

The report also highlighted the incidents and performance data since 1 January 2022 showing the work Strata has done or is doing in the Service Desk, Business Systems and Projects.

Strata now needs to go through an improvement plan and ensure that all staff operate within that governance and that everyone is aware of protocols.

In response to questions from Councillors, the following points were made:

- Mr Davies does not consider that Strata is top heavy in terms of staff or costs. Mr Davies would try to find comparable data from other authorities to ensure that Strata is delivering value for money.
- Mr Davies outlined his background in IT and advised that he is working on a consultancy basis with a contract in place to February/March 2023. The vacancy for a replacement would be advertised in the next 6 to 8 weeks.
- Regarding possible future working with other Councils' leisure services, it was noted that there is a need for more resources before looking to add value by working elsewhere.
- An example of software not allowing a certain type of parking permit was discussed. Mr Davies would look into this and follow up with Councillor Oliver.
- With regard to using different methodologies such as Agile or Waterfall as approaches to delivering projects, Mr Davies advised that the nature of working in councils is often necessarily a Waterfall approach due to the monolithic timeline based procurement process. However, within that, there could be modules where an Agile approach to delivery could be used. Changes to delivery approaches would be decided depending on the nature of the project. An Agile coach has been engaged and this would enable a common understanding of methodologies across Strata and the three councils.
- Business analysis will be needed in both the client councils and Strata and, moving forward, Strata will be looking to give 25% of its time to each client, with 25% given to work within Strata itself in order to avoid technology falling behind.

The report was accepted and noted.

25. STRATA FINANCE REPORT, BUDGET MONITORING AT JULY 2022/23 - STRATA FINANCE DIRECTOR

The report was presented by the Director of Finance.

There were no questions from Councillors.

The report was accepted and noted.

26. STRATA FINANCE REPORT BUDGET MONITORING OUTTURN 2021/22 - STRATA FINANCE DIRECTOR

The report was presented by the Director of Finance.

There were no questions from Councillors.

The report was accepted and noted.

CLLR N HOOKWAY
Chairman

The meeting started at 4pm and finished at 5.13pm