

STRATA - JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MONDAY, 17 FEBRUARY 2025

Present:

Councillors Olive, Levine, Westerman, Knott, Mitchell, Radford (Chair), Smith and Swain

Apologies:

Councillors Patrick

Officers in Attendance:

David Sercombe, Head of Business Systems & Business Intelligence
Suzanne Edwards, Strata Finance Manager
Neil Blaney, Director of Place
Steve Mawn, Director of IT and Digital Transformation
Christopher Morgan, Trainee Democratic Services Officer

These decisions will take effect from 10.00 a.m. on Tuesday 24 February unless called-in or identified as urgent in the minute

35. MINUTES

It was proposed by Councillor Knott and seconded by Councillor Mitchell that the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

A vote was taken. All were in favour.

Resolved

That the minutes of the previous meeting be agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

37. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES

None.

38. QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE

RULES

The questions and answers are attached to the agenda. There were no supplementary questions.

39. STRATA BUSINESS PLAN 2025-26

The Director of IT and Digital Transformation introduced the item to the Committee. He highlighted the continuing improvements to IT and systems across the partner councils that were identified in the previously adopted business plan. Improvements in 2025/26 would include enabling a move to the cloud-based systems, which would replace the need for physical server rooms across the council estate. The Business Plan also included the Customer Relationship Management system which would provide significant savings, upgraded laptops for Officers, and the telephony replacement for Skype and contact centre.

In response to Members' comments, the Director of IT and Digital Transformation confirmed that the Business Plan was effectively split between the core demands of the Councils and optional extras. The optional projects would only be implemented if the Councils request them, and funding was secured. He also spoke on the move of over 300 servers to the cloud, which would be a massive undertaking and require significant resources.

In response to a question about the audit of Strata, the Director of IT and Digital Transformation informed the Committee that the audit considered how the Councils would be affected if the IT failed and how business would continue. During discussion of this item it was noted that the new laptops and move to the cloud would improve business continuity and that in the case of Wi-Fi failure, Officers would still be able to work from the laptops.

In response to other questions the Director of IT and Digital Transformation advised the following

- While there would be downtime during the digital transformation, this would be limited where possible and there would be significant cost to do this work outside of the working week.
- Councils have 3 choices of devices: iPads, laptops, and 'super laptops'.
- The CEF essentials framework set out how to combat cybersecurity threats
- The copper wire running underneath Exeter would be replaced with new fibre wire controlled and maintained by the Council only, and this would be an improvement.
- The Waste and Recycling phone application had been a success and Strata would look to implement it in the other authorities. The ECC Councillors endorsed the app.
- The Architecture Board was made up of representatives from all three Councils.

It was proposed by Councillor Olive and seconded by Councillor Mitchell that the Strata Business Plan be noted.

A vote was taken. All were in favour.

Resolved

that the Strata Business Plan be noted.

40. STRATA BUDGET MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE OCTOBER 2024-25

The Strata Finance Manager introduced the item to the Committee. It was highlighted that an underspend of £305,000 was forecast for the year and that these funds would be used to resource the partner councils' move to a cloud-based system.

It was noted that Strata had limited control over its spending of the budget, instead the partner councils decided where the money should be used. Impact of inflation had been limited to 3.5 percent which was below the national level.

It was also noted that the agreed Service Level Agreement performance had dropped from 96 percent to 92.5 percent, however this was above the target of 85% and it was considered that the drop can be explained by the amount of change currently being undertaken to implement new ways of working such as the new End User Computing model, new telephony system and several other major projects. If the partner councils sought to raise performance, a discussion on pausing projects would be available. The missed deadline peaks on the graph in the agenda report were when projects occurred, and so resources were focused elsewhere.

The Director for IT and Digital Transformation advised that the security team was strong and remained on alert, recounting that Exeter City Council had been targeted by a DDOS attack. Access to the partner councils' websites had been restricted abroad to help prevent against attacks. Other threats to security were user errors and phishing attempts.

It was proposed by Councillor Knott and seconded by Councillor Levine that the Strata Budget Monitoring and Performance report be noted.

A vote was taken. All were in favour.

Resolved

That the report be noted.

The meeting started at 3.00 pm and finished at 4.11 pm.

Chair
Cllr John Radford