

APPENDIX A

Finance and Procedures Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 23 March 2004

144 IT CONTRACTOR – PROGRESS REPORT

The Chairman welcomed representatives from Vivista, the Council's IT contractor to the meeting.

Members of the Committee received a presentation from Vivista which focussed on the following key areas:-

Previous Resolutions

Following a meeting of this Committee on 14 October 2003, when it was resolved that evidence of progress in certain key areas be reported back to this meeting, Vivista advised as follows:-

- Development of communication between Vivista/officers – Vivista's Managed Services Director, David Williams, had agreed to attend Operational management team meetings, thus ensuring regular dialogue with the Chief Executive, Corporate Directors, and Heads of Service. Key projects had been identified for 2004-2005.
- A better understanding of the Council's strategic aims and ambitions had been achieved and a technical strategy was being developed in partnership to improve the Council's Information and Communication Technology.
- Maximum use had been made of minimum resources. Reliability and user productivity had been increased by replacing legacy systems.
- A pro-active approach had been adopted in reviewing the benefits to the Council of migrating to the Windows 2003 operating system.
- Work was in progress around identifying objectives over a 3 to 5 year period, which fitted the strategic aims of the Council.
- The results of the Customer Perception Survey had been delivered.

Members were provided with the following progress update:-

Progress on 3 month plan

- Standardisation of Microsoft Desktop Operating Systems – 60 desktops had migrated from Windows 95 to the Windows 2000 operating system. It was anticipated that full migration to the latter operating system would be complete by the end of this calendar year.
- The first phase of replacing key servers had been completed.
- A trial around remote connection to the network from sheltered housing had been completed and roll out was currently in progress and should be complete by the end of May 2004.

- E-government strategy had been reviewed and programmes had been identified. These would underpin the developing technical strategy.

Day to Day Service Delivery

- Call statistics had reduced over the last 3 months, but more time was needed for development and project work.

Technology Status

- At 1 March 2004 there were a total of 12 servers.
- At 1 April 2004 it was projected there would be a total of 225 desktops, made up of a mix of Windows 98 and Window 2000 operating systems.

Customer Survey

A customer survey held in March 2004 had resulted in a 7% response to the questionnaires. Consideration was being given as to how this level of return could be improved upon. Vivista were particularly disappointed at the results in terms of the question around “keeping users informed”, where 44% expressed their level of satisfaction as being “good”. However, 50% had responded as “very good”.

Strategic Projects

- Vivista were assisting in the procurement and installation of a Document Image Processing system.
- The CAPS Uniform Spatial 7 public access planning module would be installed by June 2004 providing full public access to planning information.
- Improved website software and design was scheduled for completion by April 2004
- Public access to committee minutes on line was scheduled for completion by the end of March 2004.
- A housing rents/repairs system upgrade was currently being installed.
- Server upgrades were being implemented.
- Remote connection to the Council via terminals in sheltered housing schemes was being implemented.

In response to Member questions, the following was noted:-

- Officers would arrange for a demonstration to be made available to Members around the on-line planning application system.
- Council data is backed up each night and stored away from Rochford.
- As a premium Microsoft solution provider, Vivista were confident in their ability to troubleshoot any problems experienced with the Windows operating systems.
- They would work at reducing the level of negative responses to customer surveys and confirmed that a target would be put in place.
- This would involve analysing the types of calls received.

- Targets would be reported back to this Committee in 6 months' time as part of their objectives for the next 3-5 year period.
- Vivista agreed to provide a clearer presentation of statistics at that time.
- Following a management buy-out (MBO) during this financial year, Vivista were ending the year as a new organisation.
- Accountants were happy with their figures and delivery targets were running according to plan for the first year of the MBO.
- It was intended to provide an on-going customer survey via the Council's Intranet and to continue to sample customers on their level of satisfaction in response to calls.

Members agreed that whilst they had seen some improvements in figures since Vivista's last report to the Committee, they would be looking for further improvements in six months' time.

Resolved

That a demonstration of the on-line planning process be made available to Members. (CD(LPA))