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Tendring
District Council

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

AGENDA

DATE:	**Thursday, 3 December 2020**
TIME:	**7.30 pm**
VENUE:	**Meeting will be held in accordance with Statutory Instrument 2020/392. Link to live stream will be available via https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/livemeetings**

MEMBERSHIP:

Councillor M Stephenson Chairman
Councillor Scott Vice Chairman
Councillor Allen
Councillor Barry
Councillor Bray

Councillor Codling
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor Harris
Councillor Morrison

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Meeting papers can be provided, on request, in large print, in Braille, or on disc, tape, or in other languages.

For further details and general enquiries about this meeting, contact Keith Durrran on 01255 686585

AGENDA

1   Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

The Committee is asked to note any apologies for absence and substitutions received from Members.

2   Minutes of the Last Meeting (Pages 1 - 10)

To confirm and sign as a correct record, the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee, held on the 16th of November.

3   Declarations of Interest

Councillors are invited to declare any Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Personal Interest, and the nature of it, in relation to any item on the agenda.

4   Questions on Notice pursuant to Council Procedure Rule 38

Subject to providing two working days' notice, a Member of the Committee may ask the Chairman of the Committee a question on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties which affect the Tendring District and which falls within the terms of reference of the Committee.

5   Report of the Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance. - A.1 - Update on the Transformation of Digital Services (Pages 11 - 18)

The purpose of the report is to update the Committee on the transformation progress specifically from an IT/ digital perspective. Namely;

   1. The '*My Tendring'* customer self-service portal.
   2. Cloud Migration, Business Continuity And Flexible Working
   3. The council's Leisure and Tourism App.
   4. Re-Design of the Council's Data (and voice) Network
   5. The Five9s contact centre application
   6. Councillors' IT

6   Report of the Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance. - A.2 - Update on the Transformation of Digital Customer Services (Pages 19 - 26)

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the progress made towards the digitising of Customer Services.

7   **Report of the Deputy Leader, Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance. - A.3 - Transformation Agenda of the Council - Staffing. (Pages 27 - 48)**

The purpose of this report was to give the Committee and overview into the Transformation Agenda of the Council – and delivery against it regarding staffing (flexible working, home working and productivity).

8   **Exclusion of Press and Public**

To pass the following resolution:-

"That under Schedule 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the items of business to be considered below on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 1 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act:

(a) Exempt minutes of the Resource and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 16 November 2020".

9   **Exempt Minutes of the resource and Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee (Pages 49 - 50)**

To approve as a correct record, the exempt minutes of the Committee held on 16 November 2020.

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW
AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE,
HELD ON MONDAY, 16TH NOVEMBER, 2020 AT 7.30 PM**

Present:	Councillors M Stephenson (Chairman), Scott (Vice-Chairman), Allen, Barry, Bray, Codling, Griffiths, Harris and Morrison.
Also Present:	Councillors C Guglielmi and Amos
In Attendance:	Ian Davidson (Chief Executive),Paul Price (deputy Chief Executive & Corporate Director (Place and Economy)) Richard Barrett (Assistant Director (Finance and IT) & Section 151 Officer), Keith Simmons (Head of Democratic Services and Elections), Michael Carran (Assistant Director (Economic Growth and Leisure))Keith Durran (Democratic Services Officer), Emma Haward (Leadership Support Assistant) and Karen Hardes (IT Training Officer))

90. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

There were no absences or substitutions.

91. **MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING**

The Minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on Monday 21 September 2020 were approved as a correct record and were then signed by the Chairman.

92. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor Bray declared an interest for the public record in regards to Housing as he was a Council tenant.

Councillors Stephenson, Allen, Scott and Barry all declared an interest for the public record in regards to Business Grants as they were all involved in organisations that had received them.

93. **QUESTIONS ON NOTICE PURSUANT TO COUNCIL PROCEDURE RULE 38**

On this occasion no Councillor had submitted notice of a question.

94. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER, (PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE) - A.1 - UPDATE ON THE PROGRESS OF THE OFFICE TRANSFORMATION.**

It was reported to the Committee that in December 2016 Cabinet had approved a proposal to make major changes to the Council's office services and accommodation. In September 2017 the Chief Executive (Ian Davidson) had subsequently signed off a detailed business case for a package of measures aimed at four main areas of modernisation:
    1. Customer Services
    2. Information Technology

3. Working methods and staff wellbeing
4. Office buildings.

The report focussed on the progress of works to office buildings. Complimentary reports would be made in relation to IT, customer service and human resources initiatives within the programme.

Progress on office facilities is as follows:

Clay Hall	Freehold disposal	Fully complete
Westleigh House	Demolition and creation of car park	Fully Complete
Barnes House	Additional floor and link	Fully Complete
Pier Avenue Offices	Refurbishment	Fully Complete
Northbourne Rd Depot	Additional part floor	Fully Complete
Town Hall	Refurbishment/remodelling	Around 50% Complete
Alexandra Gardens	Repair storage building	Not commenced
Mill Lane Depot	Convert former business units	Not commenced
Weeley site	Freehold disposal	Negotiations ongoing

The Committee was then asked to consider passing the following resolution:

"That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of an element of agenda item number 5 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act".

The Chairman read out the following statement for the benefit of the press and public:

"It is unusual to discuss items to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee without the press and public being able to sit in and observe. However, there are rare occasions when we deal with a restricted number of items, when it is necessary to exclude the press and public. Councillors will be looking at those items here. For instance, what the council be expected to receive in payment for a plot of land it owns. We want the council to get the best price and we do not want to jeopardise this by discussing the price in public so that the best offers that are potentially provided aren't raised up or down.

Once we have discussed these points we will readmit the press and public for the remainder of the meeting. For this meeting, this means the live stream will be temporarily paused until we reconvene in public.

Thank you for your understanding".

It was then moved by Councillor Bray, seconded by Councillor Scott and:-

RESOLVED that under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of part of Agenda Item 5 on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A, as amended, of the Act.

Following the discussions in private referred to above the press and public were re-admitted to the meeting.

Following further discussions of the report it was **RESOLVED** that the contents of the report be noted.

95. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER, (PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE) - A.2 - TRANSFORMATION AGENDA OF THE COUNCIL - STAFFING**

The Chairman informed the Committee that he had deferred consideration of this item until a special meeting of the Resource and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee to be held on the 3rd December 2020.

96. **REPORT OF CHAIRMAN (RESOURCE AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE) - A.3 - REVIEW OF RESERVES AND PROVISIONS**

The Chairman gave an oral update in relation to the Review of Reserves and Provisions.

The Committee heard the Chairman had held a meeting with Councillor C Guglielmi (Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance) to discuss the Council's reserves, provisions and one off carry forwards, though at the time of that meeting the list was still pending. The Chairman also told the Committee that the Council's External Auditors had asked questions about the value of money for holding in reserves and provisions, as well as one off carry forwards, with defined delivery utilisation of those sums.

The Chairman informed the Committee that there would be another meeting with the Portfolio Holder, to be scheduled before the Budget meeting in January, where this list would be discussed, and that this list would be forwarded to the Committee on the 17th of November 2020.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the contents of the update.

97. **REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER, (PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE) - A.4 - FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE REPORT - IN YEAR PERFORMANCE AGAINST THE BUDGET AT END OF THE SECOND QUARTER 2020/21 AND LONG TERM FINANCIAL FORECAST UPDATE.**

The Committee considered a report, given to Cabinet on the 13th of November 2020 (minute 87 referred), in relation to an overview of the Council's financial position against the budget as at the end of September 2020 and to present an updated long term forecast.

The report was split over two distinct sections as follows:

1) *The Council's in-year financial position against the budget at the end of September 2020*

2) An updated long term financial forecast

In respect of the in-year financial position at the end of September 2020:

- That report was the first detailed financial performance report for 2020/21 but built on the report presented to Cabinet in May, which provided a timely assessment of the impact of COVID 19 on the Council's financial position.

- Although that report continued to be in the same format as previous regular finance reports, the issues raised in the report back in May were either revisited specifically or formed part of the overall review at the end of the second quarter.

- The position to the end of September 2020, was set out in more detail within the appendices, and showed that overall the General Fund Revenue Account was underspent against the profiled budget by **£6.858m (£4.137m** of which related to the timing of expenditure from COVID funding received from the Government). It was acknowledged that other expenditure or income trends may still have emerged with the position also largely having reflected the timing of other general expenditure and/or income budgets. However any significant issues that arose had been highlighted and comments provided as necessary.

- In respect of other areas of the budget such as the Housing Revenue Account, capital programme, collection performance and treasury activity, apart from additional details set out later on in the report, there were no major issues that had been identified to date.

- Any emerging issues would be monitored and updates provided in future reports which would include their consideration was part of updating the long term financial forecast.

- Some necessary changes to the 2020/21 budget had been identified which were set out in **Appendix H,** with an associated recommendation also included within the report. The same appendix also set out the necessary changes to the budget that reflected the impact of COVID 19, the costs of which had to date been met by the general financial support provided by the Government.

- The net impact of the budget adjustments would be moved to or from the Forecast Risk Fund. At the end of the second quarter, it had been possible to make a small contribution to the fund of **£41k,** which supported the requirement set out in the long term forecast of identifying in-year savings of **£500k** each year.

- A half year treasury management review had been carried out with a summary set out later in the report along with an associated recommendation to temporarily increase the aggregate limit of funds that could be placed overnight with the Council's bankers for the period that the offices would be closed over the Christmas break.

- It was proposed to continue to be a member of the Essex Business Rates Pool if it remained advantageous to do so and if the opportunity was still made available by the Government in 2021/22.

- The recommendations in the Portfolio Holder's report to Cabinet also responded to the phased reintroduction of membership fees and charges across the various leisure facilities that coincided with the phased reopening up of facilities over the reminder of the year.

In respect of the updated long term financial forecast:

- The forecast had been reviewed and updated at the end of September 2020 and reflected an early assessment of the impact of COVID 19. The updated forecast was set out in **Appendix I.**

- The savings target for 2021/22 had been removed from the forecast with work resuming on that line of the budget as part of the medium / longer term recovery in response to COVID 19.

- Work remained on-going in consultation with the various Services across the Council to identify unavoidable cost pressures, which would be assessed for inclusion or otherwise in the detailed budget report that would be presented to Cabinet in December.

- Overall the revised forecast could still provide an effective method of managing financial risk but the annual deficit or surplus position for each year of the forecast had been amended. However, the medium to long term impact from the COVID 19 crisis remained unclear and it was therefore important to highlight that the money set aside in the Forecast Risk fund should not be seen as overly cautious as sensitivity testing indicated that the fund could be deleted within as little as 3 years if a number of factors arose during the same period.

  - A detailed review of risks associated with the long term forecast was subject to on-going review and was separately reported within **Appendix J.**

  - As mentioned during the development of the longer term approach to the budget over recent years, it was important to continue to deliver against this plan as it continued to provide a credible alternative to the more traditional short term approach, which would require significant savings to be identified in 2021/22.

  - In terms of delivering against the forecast for 2021/22 and beyond, work remained on-going across the various strands set out in **Appendix I.**

After some discussion the Committee **RECOMMENDED TO CABINET**:

1. That Cabinet record the Committee's sincere appreciation for the sterling work of the revenues and benefits team and the Section 151 Officer in rapidly developing and deploying grant schemes for businesses to help maintain the economic fabric of the District in these difficult times for those businesses.

2. That consideration be given when reporting on the in year position on the budget to include reference to the comparable position from the previous year.

98.   **REPORT OF THE LEADER OF THE COUNCIL. - A.5 - BACK TO BUSINESS**

The Committee considered a report, given to Cabinet on the 13th of November 2020 (minute 86 referred) in relation to Back to Business for Cabinet to adopt a Council wide plan to support the District's recovery from the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and agree a number of short term actions in advance of a wider delivery plan being adopted. That report highlighted that:-

- Covid-19 had significantly changed the way we work and live our lives, as well as impacting on the national and local Tendring economy. In its role as a community leader, the Council was committed to supporting the District's recovery towards a brighter future;

- This Back to Business process would be targeted at improvements to the environment/quality of life and support for residents, businesses and wider local economy to recover from the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic. The plan would also focus on the Council and its services adapting to the challenges of the pandemic and long term planning for how services would operate moving forward.

- Following Greater Essex moving into Tier 2 'High Alert' level for Covid and the subsequent announcement of a national lockdown, this plan and impending delivery plan, ~~is~~ was intended to complement the business support schemes provided through Government and Essex County Council. It would be a continually evolving agenda which would adapt to the challenges faced by businesses and residents alike;

- This Back to Business plan set out the Council's approach to supporting the District's recovery from Covid-19 and included a number of short term projects, in advance of a wider action plan being brought forward to Cabinet. This agenda and the subsequent actions and projects brought forward were underpinned by the Council's Corporate Plan;

- It ~~is~~ was recognised that a successful recovery would only be achieved through a collective approach, both within the Council's range of portfolios and with local businesses, partners and stakeholders;

- To ensure the Council had sufficient resources to support the delivery of its range of Back to Business actions and projects, it was proposed that a dedicated resource would be provided to deliver this plan. This resource would be tasked with bringing forward a wider Back to Business delivery plan, with a number of deliverable projects and actions. This would reflect feedback from the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the responses from Members following the associated All Member Briefing and subsequent requests from the Portfolio Holder for Corporate Finance and Governance.

After a short discussion it was **RESOLVED** that the Committee both notes that the development of a cost action plan is progressing and re-states the Committee's intention to work with Cabinet to secure delivery of that action plan.

99. **REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE NEGC LTD JOINT SCRUTINY PANEL - A.6 -
     SCRUTINY OF NEGC LTD AND GOVERNANCE OF FUTURE COUNCIL
     CONTROLLED COMPANIES**

It was reported to Members that the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at their respective meetings held on 29 July 2019 (Minute 15 referred) and 5 August 2019 had both approved that a joint scrutiny panel be established in order to scrutinise the work of the North Essex Garden Communities Limited (NEGC) and, in particular, its interim business plan and future business plans.

The membership of the Joint Scrutiny Panel had been delegated to the Chairmen of the two Overview and Scrutiny Committees to determine, subject to ratification by those two Overview and Scrutiny Committees. The following Members had been appointed to the Joint Scrutiny Panel:

Councillor M Stephenson (Chairman)
Councillor Bush
Councillor Griffiths
Councillor Steady
Councillor Turner

The Resource and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) had endorsed the above membership at its meeting on 14 October 2019 (Minute 28 referred). The Community Leadership OSC had also endorsed that Membership on 7 October 2019.

The Joint Scrutiny Panel had met three times as follows:

16 October 2019
12 February 2020
17 September 2020

The Committee heard that the Joint Scrutiny Panel had looked at the various responsibilities of the Council as community leader, shareholder of NEGC Ltd and having a Director of the Board of that Company. The inherent conflicts and the management of those conflict points were also mentioned.

The absolute importance of Part 1 of the Local Plan in the critical path for Garden Communities and NEGC Ltd (and any future delivery vehicle for the Communities) was referenced at the meetings. NEGC Ltd had been commissioned by the partner Councils (Braintree, Colchester, Essex and Tendring) to undertake work for those partner Councils to secure approval of Part 1 of their Local Plans.

While the process of adoption of the Local Plan was underway, the NEGC Ltd had developed interim business plans only. The Interim Business Plans for NEGC Ltd from 2018/19 and 2019/20 had been submitted to the Panel for its consideration.

It was reported to the Committee that the work of the Council's Monitoring Officer and Section 151 Officer with their colleagues in the other partner Councils in respect of

protecting the interests of this Council in relation to NEGC Ltd and the governance arrangements had been reflected upon.

The Panel had also looked briefly at possible future delivery vehicles for the Garden Communities.

Members were informed that across all meetings of the Joint Scrutiny Panel there was reference to best practice models for governance arrangements for Council controlled companies such as NEGC Ltd. In part that discussion was about what might be appropriate for the future development of governance around NEGC Ltd, but, also around future companies that the Council may have established or participated in where the Company was a Council controlled company.

At the Joint Scrutiny panel's last meeting, it noted the decision of the North Essex Garden Communities Ltd Board on 6th July 2020 to take all the necessary steps to wind up its three Local Delivery Vehicles. The three Councils concerned had also all approved that NEGC Ltd itself cease trading on 31 August 2020 and that the necessary winding up procedures for it be undertaken, subject to the Leader of the Council, in consultation with the Section 151 Officer and the Monitoring Officer, being satisfied around the final accounting processes.

The Committee was informed that the panel had been advised that NEGC Ltd had been solvent and that, after settling any outstanding liabilities, the remaining assets of the company would be apportioned to the shareholders entirely as it should have been.

On the basis that the NEGC Ltd was being wound up the Joint Scrutiny Panel had concluded its work based on the approved scope and terms of reference for the Panel.

Following discussions it was moved by Councillor Stephenson**,** seconded by Councillor Scott and **RESOLVED** that the Committee**:**

(1)   notes that the winding up of NEGC Ltd means that the rationale for establishing the Joint Scrutiny Panel, and the approved scope of the Panel, has also ended and requests that Cabinet notes that this Committee and the Community Leadership Overview and Scrutiny Committee will formally note that the Panel is being dissolved.

(2)   That this Committee notes the following recommendations from the Joint Scrutiny Panel and formally submits (a), (b) and (d) below to the Cabinet for its consideration:

   (a)   To record and applaud the hard work of officers in respect of the development of the Tendring-Colchester Borders Garden Community that resulted in the proposals for the Garden Community being accepted by the Local Plan Inspector in his enquiry into the draft Local Plan.
   (b)   To note that there is important work being undertaken on various work streams to secure an exemplar development through the Tendring-Colchester Borders Garden Community.

(c)   To establish a further Joint Scrutiny Panel at an appropriate time in the future to monitor, examine and review arrangements for delivery of the Tendring-Colchester Borders Garden Community (and particularly the commitments and financial expose of the Council to any external body established by the Council to lead on the development of that Garden Community).

(d)   To endorse the principle that where the Council establishes a company limited by shares (on its own or with other bodies) that it also establishes a Shareholder Group (either solely or with the other public bodies where the company established jointly) and that, the terms of reference similar to those set out at Appendix A to this report should form the terms of reference for that Shareholder Group, adjusted as necessary to the particular circumstances, business of the Company and consideration of such matters as:

(i) How any co-opted members are used and how they are defined in the terms of reference;

(ii) The Chairman of the relevant overview and scrutiny committee and the Chairman of the Audit Committee being appointed to the Shareholder Group as non-voting members; and

(iii) Ensuring that any "invitations to attend" issued to councillors or officers etc. must be provided to such persons at least five working days in advance of the meeting.

100.   **RECOMMENDATIONS MONITORING REPORT**

The Committee had before it the current Recommendations Monitoring Report. The Committee was aware that this report outlined any recommendations it had made to the Cabinet, the Cabinet's responses thereto and any relevant updates.

The Committee heard that the recommendations from the Reference Report from the NEGC Ltd Joint Scrutiny Panel on the 16 November 2020 (Minute 99 referred) would be heard at Cabinet on the 18th of December 2020 and so following that meeting their response would be reported back to the Committee.

101.   **SCRUTINY OF PROPOSED DECISIONS**

The Committee heard that there were 4 items which all related to Housing and it was advised that these issues would be addressed at the Committee's meeting on the 1st of February 2020 as the focus of this meeting would be on Housing matters.

The proposed decisions in question related to:-

1. Future booking of a temporary accommodation hostel in Clacton

2. Recharge Policy for Council Tenants and Leaseholders

3. Decant Policy

4. Alterations and Improvements Policy for Council Tenants and Leaseholders

It was **RESOLVED** that the Committee noted the foregoing.

102. **REVIEW OF THE WORK PROGRAMME**

The Committee had before it the Work Programme 2019/20 that outlined the scrutiny to be undertaken by this Committee in the remainder of that Municipal Year.

After some deliberation it was **RESOLVED** that:

1. The Committee would hold a special meeting on the 3rd of December to look at the Transformation items in relation to IT, Customer Services and Staffing.

The meeting was declared closed at 10.15 pm

Chairman

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF DEPUTY LEADER, PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR COPRPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A.1   **UPDATE ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF DIGITAL SERVICES**
         (Report prepared by John Higgins)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the transformation progress specifically from an IT/ digital perspective. Namely;

1. **The '*My Tendring'* customer self-service portal.**
2. **Cloud Migration, Business Continuity And Flexible Working**
3. **The council's Leisure and Tourism App.**
4. **Re-Design of the Council's Data (and voice) Network**
5. **The Five9s contact centre application**
6. **Councillors' IT**.

BACKGROUND

The Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested on 25th August 2020 that members of the Transformation Project Board should provide the committee with an update of the progress made.

The council's single greatest asset is its people - councillors and staff. Council operations are complex and offer 198 separate services. Like all modern organisations, the council is fundamentally reliant upon IT to deliver those services to residents, customers, visitors, councillors and staff. Consequently, IT and the council's Digital journey is a key strand running through our transformation modernisation agenda.

This report details the developments and improvements that have been achieved in the delivery of digital services, namely;

➢ Digital Transformation .
➢ Building modernisation – digital access.
➢ Councillors' IT.

Cabinet approved the Digital Transformation report 16 February 2018. The programme of adopted works over a two year period comprised three key project development strands, as follows;

1. **A new '*My Tendring'* customer self-service portal.**
2. **Cloud Migration, Business Continuity And Flexible Working**
3. **A new Tendring Leisure and Tourism App.**

Following adoption of the Council's Office transformation programme, a fourth digital strand intrinsically linked to the programme was added, as follows;

4. **Re-Design of the Council's Data (and voice) Network** to support operations throughout, and on completion of, the Office Transformation programme.

The council's converged communications strategy is based upon Microsoft Outlook (email and calendar) fully integrated with Microsoft Skype telephony, instant messaging and video calling. The councils' contact centre technology was provided by MITEL. However, once MITEL announced a strategic shift to stop supporting integration between their technology and Microsoft Skype it became a corporate priority to add a fifth digital strand, as follows;

5. **Deliver a new contact centre application** based upon the customer service team's functional requirements that fitted the council's strategies of Cloud Migration and Microsoft Skype compatibility.

6. **Councillors' IT**. The committee chairman has asked for an update on Members' IT which is discussed in section 6 of this briefing report.

DETAILED INFORMATION

1. *'My Tendring'* Customer Self-Service Portal

The application (App) purchased to provision and deliver the council's My Tendring self-service offering was the Firmstep product. During 2019 the Firmstep product was purchased by international application providers Grannicus.

The My Tendring portal works have been jointly developed and delivered through digital consultants Intergence and Amido working side-by-side with the council's customer services team and 5 fte council IT team members - a mix of system support and website support IT specialists.

From the outset of the Digital Transformation programme the adopted ethos has been one of external consultants working alongside and 'up-skilling' in-house IT specialists. However, as the programme has developed and evolved over time, likewise, the council's in-house application developer skills have matured.

The council's in-house Developer Team continues to go from strength to strength. In part due to hands-on engagement with the programme and direct consultant experience learning. And in part due to benefiting from formal academic training through collaboration between the Head of IT & Resilience IT and the Human Resources Development Manager.

Through utilising the government's Modern Apprenticeship scheme: 1 fte IT Systems Specialist has achieved a part-time IT under graduate degree (with honours), 2 fte are in their final year studying for a part-time IT under graduate degree (completion in 2020) and 1 fte has just commenced an Open University programming under graduate degree.

Utilising this new in-house Developer resource and new 'low code' Microsoft Power Applications the ongoing *My Tendring Portal* works ethos has evolved to further optimise transformation efficiency and best use of resources, as follows;

1. Works being undertaken solely by in-house council App Developers and customer service experts working with relevant council service experts.
2. Works, as above, but with limited external consultant's support utilising Intergence experts.
3. Works being delivered predominantly through Intergence consultants based upon a 'lift and shift then documented hand-over' ethos.

The Head of Customer and Commercial Services has written a separate report outlining the progress of the *My Tendring* Customer Access Portal from a customer services perspective.

The committee should be aware that the council has some 198 difference services to re-engineer and implement as fully self-service *My Tendring* portal solutions. This work is anticipated to be ongoing for the next 3-4 years.

However, the digital transformation work has already started to fundamentally change the way the council delivers services and is already starting to change council service structures internally.

Online self-service is increasingly the service choice for residents and customers with online digital capabilities. For those who chose to contact the council using more traditional methods telephony is their primary contact method.

The Covid-19 pandemic is a major factor for change with respect to how our residents and customers (and councillors and staff) engage with the council and our online and telephony contact volumes reflect this 'channel-shift'. It is not unreasonable to claim that the council would have struggled to provide the level of services that it has continued to deliver throughout the COVID-19 pandemic had it not undertaken its Digital Transformation programme.

The Digital Transformation resultant in-house Developer Team and their key digital contributions to council transformation and COVID-19 business continuity warrants a separate section, as follows;

1a) In-House IT Developer Team
As their technical capabilities, knowledge and confidence has grown the in-house IT Developer Team are increasingly demonstrating their abilities in applying technology to transform council services. Our reputation for quickly providing in-house solutions to existing and newly emerging problems is growing.

Based around the Digital Transformation suite of services and related applications, our Developer Team's digital transformational work includes;

✓ Working with HR to quickly develop COVID-19 databases to record and manage staff redeployment and staff shielding/ self-isolating – estimated cost avoidance £12,000.
✓ Working with the council COVID-19 shielding team to quickly creating new applications to contact, record and manage (CRM) resident shielding support and connection with local volunteer services – estimated cost avoidance £8,000.
✓ Developing a COVID-19 vulnerable persons mapping tool – estimated cost avoidance £17,500.
✓ Creation of a new council enforcement application to better record and manage enforcement case actions and provide a 'single council view' of enforcement – estimated cost avoidance £1,100 per on boarded service.

- ✓ Developing a Northgate compatible replacement electronic document records management system - Northgate quoted £110,650 capital and £34,500 revenue costs.
- ✓ Following the above we are developing an IDOX replacement corporate electronic document records management system that will reduce our corporate costs by £24,000 per annum.
- ✓ Developing a new application for scanning/ stock taking for engineering services - estimated cost avoidance of £17,500.
- ✓ Developing a new Tree Preservation application – estimated cost avoidance £8,000.
- ✓ Memorial bench and Play Areas fault management application – estimated cost avoidance £6,000.

2. Cloud Migration

Throughout each of the two council's Digital Transformation programmes of works (2013 – 2017 and the current 2017 – 2020 programme) a key strategic digital design thematic has been that of delivering/ further enhancing council digital business continuity.

A key strand of this work has been the migration of council applications from aging on-site hardware to 'pay as you go' hardware in a Microsoft data centre(s) called the Microsoft Azure Platform.

The Azure Platform is the platform of choice for a range of government sectors and partners, including the Ministry of Defence, a number of NHS bodies and at a more local level all of the Essex local authorities.

We have evolved our systems architecture to reflect staff and councillors accessing Apps and data 'in the Cloud'. The Cloud also gives significant additional cyber security functionality which has further strengthened our cyber security defences.

This was first put to the test when Tendring was snowbound for 48 hours during the *'Beast from the East'* in March 2018 when around 290 officers were working remotely from home during the two day period.

Obviously nobody could have predicted COVID-19 nor the effective closure of all council offices and shift from *"work flexibly from home or office"* to UK lock-down and *"Work from home if you can"*. It is undeniable that the Digital Transformation Cloud-first and Cloud-migration strategy has significantly enhanced the council's business continuity and enabled us to deliver services throughout COVID-19 without any significant IT service outages.

Our Cloud migration programme was predicted to take 2 years and over the period our plans had extended by around 10-12 weeks with an estimated completion date of June 2020. However, COVID-19 demands required an urgent and sustained re-prioritisation of resources resulting in migration delays to the final 10% of our applications.

Therefore, whilst the programme is on track from a budget perspective it is significantly behind schedule from a final completion perspective. We are unlikely to complete the migration of the last few applications until early in 2021.

This delay has not caused any operational issues of note with the last 10% of applications and we are benefiting significantly from having 90% of our applications in the Cloud, including;

- ✓ Enhanced business continuity, resilience and data backup e.g. seamlessly moving from supporting office-based staff to staff operating effectively and efficiently from home during the pandemic.

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- ✓ Using cloud-based Microsoft Skype and Teams to maintain operations and quickly introduce new ones e.g. virtual video staff meetings, committee and full council meetings.
- ✓ A move from periodic large capital IT server hardware outlay to more manageable 'pay as you go' monthly hardware revenue rental charges.
- ✓ A significant 'carbon neutral' reduction in on-site IT hardware power usage.
- ✓ The real-time ability to flexibly and quickly 'spin-up' additional Cloud hardware to deliver new services e.g. a new server for the council's COVID-19 activities; HR databases, Shielding databases and reactively in-house developed applications.
- ✓ Cloud efficiencies estimated at between 1 and 1.5fte with these resources re-deployed in supporting Members' IT related works, additional remote worker support requirements and in Developer Team activities.

3. Tendring Leisure and Tourism App

The Leisure and Tourism App was delivered in 2019 slightly under budget and with both Prince's Theatre and wider Tendring activities being promoted. The App had only just started to positively benefit our leisure and tourism industry (Theatre income was up and growing) before COVI-19 hit.

Picking up on the council's 'Back to Business' priority, the in-house IT Developer Team are re-using the existing application code whilst re-engineering the App in readiness for the 2021 season to not only promote leisure events but to create a more holistic suite of Tendring visitor information linked to digital mapping functionality, including;

- ✓ Car Park locations.
- ✓ Public toilet locations.
- ✓ Hospitals and public service delivery points.
- ✓ Linking real-time council Beach Patrol visitor advice reference beach crowd numbers and to generate a COVID-19 RAG beach visitor number status.
- ✓ As the App evolves further we are looking at the potential to add an area for businesses to advertise and promote themselves and any special offers etc.

This information has been shared and well received by both the Resources and Services Committee and with the Clacton Coastal Forum.

The App will be supported in-house by the council's IT Developer Team.

4. Re-Design of the Council's Data (and voice) Network

The committee will be aware that office transformation works are well advanced. From a digital perspective, we have taken the opportunity to completely re-cable the council's offices and further improve our office network resilience by creating a 'fibre ring' around the Town Hall (as opposed to areas served by separate cables.

At the same time we have further optimised our WiFi network and adopted a 'staff working wirelessly at all times' strategy. This enables staff (and councillors) to seamlessly move between locations with their devices. It further enhances staff and councillors having access to digital information at all times and a step-change reduction in reliance upon paper and printing.

The council has also worked through an Essex Online Partnership (EOLP) joint initiative to roll-out GovRoam to each of our offices. This means that as and when things return to a more normal working situation, officers and councillors will be able to use their Tendring user ID and password to log into any participating GovRoam partner's WiFi network just as if they were working at home or at a Tendring office location. Almost all of the EOLP

partners intend to roll-out GovRoam and it is already available at Essex County Council offices, Thurrock, Maldon and Basildon.

5. New Contact Centre Application (Five9s Application)

As briefly outlined previously, Mitel's strategically decided to stop supporting their contact centre's integration with Microsoft Skype (& Teams) telephony. With the council's unified communications strategy (voice & voice recording/ video calling & virtual meetings/ email, instant messaging/ calendar/ availability & presence) firmly embedded and mature around Microsoft products the council had to replace our Mitel contact centre.

Based upon the council's customer service team's functionality specifications, available budget and Cloud-first strategy, the FIVE9s product was selected and purchased. The product has an excellent reputation for service, reliability and value for money and is completely Cloud-based.

The product is a relatively new one from a council perspective and it is fair to say that we are still learning about its functionality and architecture. Shortly after it became operational (February 2020) the COVID-19 pandemic situation gripped the UK with resultant IT and information governance resourcing pressures across a whole range of existing, new, emergency and urgent council activities.

The council's contact centre has experienced a significant increase in call volumes that resulted an uncharacteristic drop in our levels of customer service. This was caused by call congestion e.g. insufficient telephone lines to cope with escalating demand together with insufficient staff resources. Reactive remedial action as now been taken and the situation has been resolved. Additionally, we are gaining a better understanding of the Five9s infrastructure and reporting and are moving from a position of reactive to pro-active reporting/ understanding.

It is worth noting that Essex County Council have just committed to migrating from their Mitel contact centre to emulate the same FIVE9s technology as Tendring. We are assisting them through our lessons learned.

It is additionally worth mentioning that the council currently has a hybrid application mix whereby the majority of officers and all councillors are using Microsoft Skype and a minority of officers are using (or testing) Microsoft Teams.
This hybrid mix is making fault-resolution extremely complex and we have reports of some calls not properly transferring to/ from the contact centre. It is therefore imperative that we move from this hybrid situation and migrate fully to Microsoft Teams as quickly as can be achieved and in any event by late January to avoid a large and unnecessary license renewal cost.

6. Members' IT

With Councillors having varying degrees of IT expertise the council identified an emerging picture where;

- ✘ Some councillors were increasingly becoming disengaged - losing the ability to fully/ effectively engage with the range of digital information and services that the council operates.
- ✘ Some councillors were struggling with their IT and asking council officers to fix their personal equipment – potentially creating an insurance liability issue.
- ✘ The diversity of different councillor applications, all at different versions, was causing councillors to experience different IT problems causing unnecessary stress

and pressures for all concerned.

The emerging digital picture was perceived as an opportunity to assist councillors in their community leadership role. Through providing each councillor with a standard, managed device backed up by IT training and supported via the council's IT service desk our intended benefits and improvements were, and remain, as follows;

✓ To assisting councillors to improve their efficiency and access to stored digital information.
✓ Strengthen cybersecurity (and cybersecurity awareness) and further reduce any possibility of a data breach and Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) data loss.
✓ Enhance councillors' digital engagement.
✓ Enhance mobile working and flexible working capabilities and thereby work/ life balance
✓ Further reduce reliance (and the costs) of printed information.
✓ Councillor IT equipment standardisation will in turn enable officers council-wide to standardise the range services that we provide which will achieve efficiency savings for both councillors and officers.

Our strategy was to purchase high quality Microsoft Surface Go tablets during 2019 and at the beginning of 2020 for councillors to undertake their council-relate duties. With some councillors struggling with the tablet screen size we now additionally offer councillors: hubs connection hubs, full size keyboards, 24" screens, cabled mouse. This gives councillors a blend of home-based digital access with the mobility of being able to go mobile with their tablets when required.

As a result of COVID-19 and emerging understanding as to its longevity, officers evolve and became conversant with new face-to-face restrictive working arrangements and the use of virtual Microsoft Skype meetings become a key 'new working norm'. Likewise, it became apparent that virtual meeting MS Skype capabilities would need to be extended to councillors to enable them to perform their duties. This was not an intended original use of the previously purchased tablets.

We now have a pressing financial, technological and support need to migrate fully from Microsoft Skype to Microsoft Teams. Teams offers a range of additional meeting business functionality benefits over Skype but it is far more demanding in terms of computing processing power. As such, it is close to the limit and is very likely to become beyond the processing capabilities of councillor tablets as Microsoft invest in further enhancing Teams functionaility.

With a view to giving councillors the very best experience possible during multi-party video conference calls, the decision has now been taken to allocate funding to quickly replace councillors' tablets with the same Lenovo laptops that officers use. These laptops are tried and tested, high specification devices that enable officers to perform the full range of council business demands.

In addition, and based upon approaches from several senior councillors, we recognise and acknowledge that providing them with a council tablet was unintentionally seen as an 'imposition' to some councillors, despite our best intentions. Likewise, we should have acknowledged councillors desire to be increasingly involved in their use of digital technology and how they work/ engage with council business.

With engagement firmly in mind but reflecting the need to standardise equipment across officers and councillors as far as is possible, councillors will be asked on an individual

basis whether they would benefit more from having a smaller, lighter more portable 13" council laptop, or a larger 15" laptop with a bigger screen and near full-size keyboard. Council provided ancillary devices – keyboards, screens, mice, hubs – will continue to be offered to councillors who'd like them and those who already have them will be able to connect and continue to use them plugged into the replacement laptops just as the tablets do.

With the Cabinet budgetary decision now taken, it is the intention to engage with councillors and roll-out new laptops during December and early January. Following a period of Microsoft Teams training virtual meetings we will all be migrating to Microsoft Teams around January 18th 2020.

6a. Members' Tablets and *'Laptops For Children'* Re-use

Once returned to the council, the tablets will be donated to the 'Laptops For Children' re-use programme to benefit local Tendring school children without access to IT.

Essex County Council have recently established an IT re-use scheme with the proceeds being converted into laptops for local school children. The scheme additionally protects the council with the data destruction certification that it needs to ensure the safety of our data.

Rather than 're-invent the wheel' and cognisance to both resources and budget we have negotiated that, as a minimum, the reseller value of all of our Tendring tablets (plus some 50+ additional older laptops) will be converted through the ECC scheme into the standard Google Chrome laptop offering - specifically allocated to local Tendring school children.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward to the relevant Portfolio Holder or to Cabinet.

APPENDICES

N/A

RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF DEPUTY LEADER, PORTFOLIOHOLDER FOR CORPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A.2   UPDATE ON THE TRANSFORMATION OF DIGITAL CUSTOMER SERVICES
(Report prepared by Mark Westall)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

The purpose of this report is to update the committee on the progress made towards the digitising of Customer Services.

BACKGROUND

The Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee requested on 25th August 2020 that members of the Transformation Project Board should provide the committee with an update of the progress made.

This report details the developments and improvements that have been achieved in the delivery of customer services, paying particular attention to digital progress and technology use.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Service provision at Tendring District Council has undergone significant change in the last two years. Three sets of people from different services have been brought together to create the physical customer service team and a new reception area has been created at Pier Avenue to give residents a welcoming place to visit. The reception area includes a number of digital kiosks where our customers can self-serve if they choose.

The digital offering for our customers has also seen significant changes. Originally online services were delivered through forms that then needed massive intervention from our back office staff. They were only useful for gathering information and were not a true end-to-end digital solution. Now our customers have just one place they need to visit online, 'My Tendring', where the aim is to allow customers to complete transactions at the time of their choosing from the comfort of their own homes, without the need for any intervention from our teams. It is the very fact that we had made such progress in this direction that has stood us in good stead during the Covid-19 pandemic when our residents have been more insecure and the number of incoming enquiries has more than doubled.

Although work on the My Tendring platform will be ongoing as we continue to add services and processes, we have already begun to see savings in terms of the customer service agent's time. The project is running a little behind it's original time plan as resources were drawn away for Covid-19 related projects, however the original scope will be delivered on budget and we have developed the in-house skills of the project team so that they are able to continue the progress of the platform once the external consultants leave us.

DETAILED INFORMATION

During 2015 it had become clear that there was an ever increasing demand from customers that TDC should endeavour to provide a myriad of services online, 24 hours a day. This would benefit both those customers that work Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm and so cannot access other customer contact channels, and those that now prefer the convenience of digital access. Therefore a Channel Shift Strategy was devised and adopted by the Council 22 January 2016 with the statement that:

In order to meet the needs of customers, Tendring District Council must provide services that are:

•   Easily accessible
•   Simple to use
•   Streamlined
•   Convenient
•   Cost effective
•   Robust

In essence the Channel Shift Strategy was the roadmap to delivering services with little or no interaction from our staff.

In early 2016 the process of looking at the range of options available to TDC began. It was evident that there also needed to be a Customer Service Strategy that would inform the way we interacted with our customers; we would not stop providing other contact channels such as telephone and face-to-face.

The Customer Service Strategy was adopted on 16th December 2016 with the vision statement "Tendring District Council will deliver an excellent service to all of its customers, both internal and external, from all of its points of access and across multiple channels. Staff will be well trained and motivated, and excellence will be measured against key performance indicators". To create the Customer Service team to handle telephone, email and face-to-face enquiries we drew together members of Environmental Administration, Housing Repairs, Switch Board and Revenues & Benefits front office.

External consultants, Intergence, were employed to further assess the marketplace with regards self-service portals. A shortlist of possibilities were drawn up in terms of meeting our needs and value for money and finally the product from Firmsteps was selected.

The Digital Transformation project, which included the Customer Service element, was initiated on 16th Feb 2018 "to provide greater online services for customers, making it easier and more efficient for them to interact with the council", and the My Tendring self-service platform was installed during August of the same year.

The Transformation project set out a number of key deliverables including:
• Environmental services report-it functionality (missed bins, garden waste)

• Council tax enquiries

• Benefits enquiries

• Licensing applications and renewals

It was clear that it was not practical to fund consultants to do all of the computer scripting and that our ambition should be to use the consultants to grow our own in-house capabilities so that we can continue to add services to the portal after the external resources have left the project.

The Customer Service project and the funding, originally £306,000, was broken up into three smaller pieces (worktrains) which were to have a pause and time for learning reflection between each phase.

Worktrain one focussed on understanding the Firmsteps platform, looking at some of the component blocks that would be in many of the processes such as calendar integration and payments, creating the My Tendring accounts, and beginning to develop the garden waste process.

Worktrain two continued these themes and we began to use our newly learnt in-house capabilities to create more simple forms and processes.

Worktrain 3, which is nearing completion, would see the final key services delivered, and in addition, a suite of analytical and reporting tools. These reporting tools were not originally in the scope but it became clear that they would provide a valuable insight into customer behaviour and service performance. The cost for this extra piece of work would be £35,000 and would come out of the original budget.
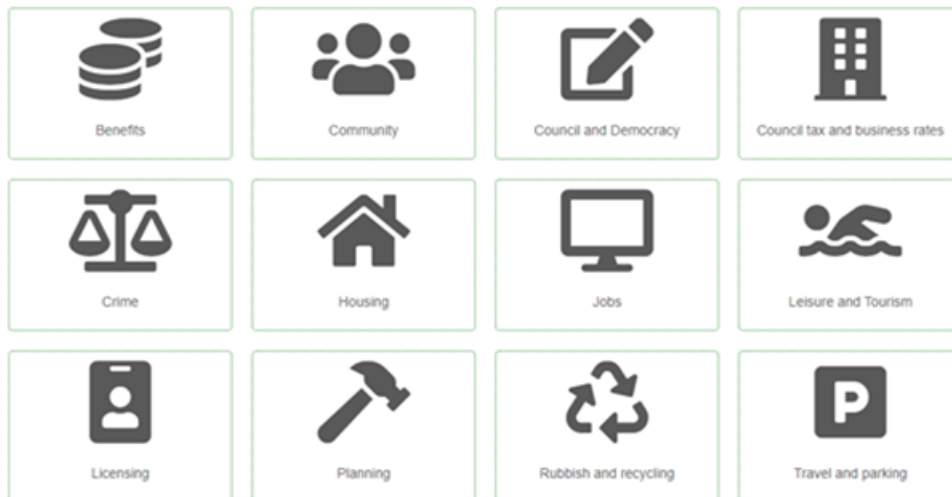
It is true to say that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a detrimental effect on the Customer Service element of the Transformation project. Timeframes have slipped as our valuable IT resources have been refocussed onto projects with more immediate need such as the track and trace power app. In the meantime though the team members have continued to learn, and also to release more and more useful forms for our customers (both external and internal). In terms of deliverables we have completed 74% of the original specification that was detailed at inception.

Current situation – My Tendring portal
Over the past 18 months we have seen telephone calls into the Customer Service centre rise dramatically. Firstly last summer with the roll-out of 70,000 wheelie bins and the associated changes in the recycling service and then more latterly with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. Undoubtedly the option for many residents to use the My Tendring self-serve portal has been of great benefit to them.

My Tendring

Access council services and get updates on issues you've raised and more...

Benefits	Community	Council and Democracy	Council tax and business rates
Crime	Housing	Jobs	Leisure and Tourism
Licensing	Planning	Rubbish and recycling	Travel and parking

An up-to-date list of all processes currently available through the My Tendring portal is available at appendix 1 as is a list of those processes that are nearing completion. On the portal, the resident can also find access to a whole range of other services in one place as shown above. It makes it very easy for the customer to navigate and this has proved to be very popular.

Self-serve stats dated end October 2020 (since May 2019)
Customers with a My Tendring account: 10524 (24.2% of all Tendring households if one account per household).
**Forms produced:**   16,361

Satisfaction from May 2019:
5 stars   63%
4 stars   20%
3 stars   8%
2 stars   3%
1 star   6%

All users of My Tendring are asked if they would like to rate the portal and leave a comment. You will see that since its inception in May 2019 83% have rated it as 4 or 5 stars. Upon interrogating the data we can see that of the 6% 1 stars, many people are actually commenting on the recycling frontline service rather than the portal. All negative comments regarding the self-serve process are used as a learning tool so that we can improve the offering.

In terms of budgets, of the original £306,000 that was set aside for the production of the My Tendring portal, we have spent £281,000, however £30,000 of this was spent on producing the suite of analytical and reporting tools.
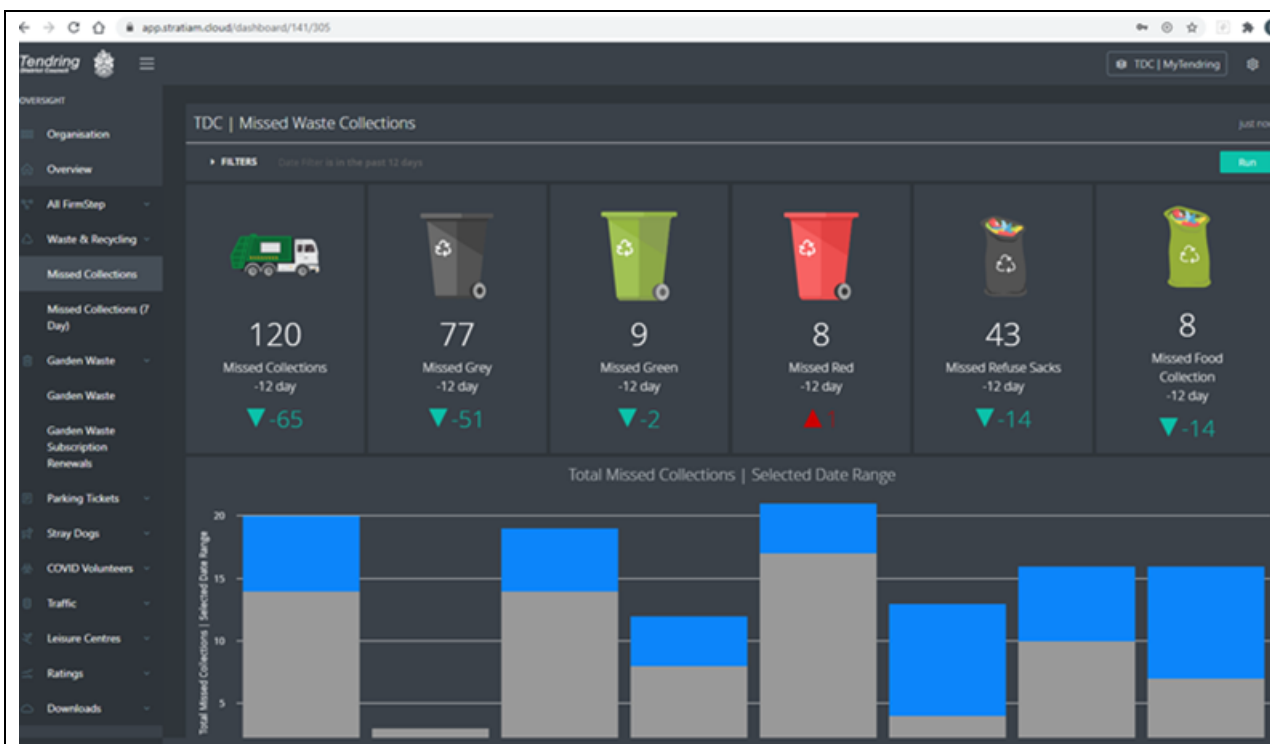
As can been seen in the above graphic, the platform is very flexible and we now have the ability to drill down into each incoming form that is filled in, so for example, in the case of missed bins we can look at instances by town or even by road to see if there are recurring problems. This will be very useful during performance meetings with external contractors. This flexibility of interrogation is available across the whole suite of forms.

Savings to date

The spreadsheet below illustrates the efficiency saving that the My Tendring portal has made within the Customer Service Environmental team. A total of 1924 hours have been saved in the year October 2019 to October 2020 as residents have self-served. This equates to 1.14 FTE that would otherwise have needed to be staffed.

TIME COMPARISONS FROM 9TH OCTOBER 2019 UNTIL 9TH OCTOBER 2020				
New Process	**Time to complete (Minutes)**	**Processes since 09/10/2019**	**Savings per process**	**Saving (seconds)**
Garden Waste New Subscription	00:03:00	807	Saving of 17 minutes per process	823140
Garden Waste Renewals	00:02:02	149	Saving of 12.58 minutes per process.	11622
Missed Waste	00.01.19	4025	Saving of 41 seconds per process	165025
Old Process	**Old time to complete (Minutes)**	**Total time to complete**	**Comments**	
Garden Waste New Subscription	20 minutes	00:20:00	CSA's only took the customers details and sent them through to the back office.	
Garden Waste Renewals	15 minutes	00:15:00	This was all back office.	
Missed Waste	2 minutes approx	00:02:00	All CSA's	
Customers who Self Served	**Amount**	**Savings per process**		
Garden Waste New Subscription	4171	20 minutes		5005200
Garden Waste Renewals	730	15 minutes		657000
Missed Waste	2214	2 minutes		265680
Total of self serve	7115			
			Total savings (seconds)	6927667
			Total savings (Hours)	1924
			Total savings (FTE)	1.14

Current situation – Customer Service Centre
As stated earlier, telephone calls into the Customer Service team have more than doubled in the last 18 months. At one point during summer 2020 each customer service agent needed to complete the work relating to 80 enquiries every day. There were also telephony issues relating to Skype meaning that some calls were dropped if all agents dealing with Environmental issues were already on a telephone call.

As we were not able to deliver the customer service excellence that we would expect to, action was taken. We increased the number of customer service agents by 3 FTEs (1 permanent and 2 temporary). We will monitor performance over the next few weeks so that we can ascertain if we have enough resource now to handle the demand, and also to try to understand if the current high levels of incoming calls will become the new normal.

We have also installed a completely new telephony system, Five9s. Originally this wasn't available to all customer service agents but extra licenses have been purchased and all incoming calls now go through this system rather than Skype. Five9s also allows customers to request a call-back rather than hold for an agent to become free. This will have the effect of reducing call wait times and also allow customer service agents to manage call volumes successfully. Again, Five9s comes with a raft of reporting tools and we will be able to understand trends in volumes and staff our customer service team accordingly.

The Future
Within the next few months we will complete the roll-out of self-service processes relating to Council Tax, Benefits and Taxi Licensing. Along with Recycling, these are considered as having the biggest impact for our residents. When these services have gone live we will commence a media campaign so that we can channel shift more people away from our customer service centre and towards the self-serve portal, thus looking to reduce the need for human resources.

We will also begin the process of seeking permissions to correspond with our customers via digitals means rather than by hard copy which is far more expensive. The Print and Post hub have the technology to be able to send digital correspondence to email addresses rather than produce letters which will have saving attached to it.

We shall look at implementing customer service excellence standards for both our people and our online self-serve portal. We shall roll-out the satisfaction surveys to both face-to-face and telephony contacts and by benchmarking ourselves against both other local authorities and commercial organisations we can set ourselves some excellence targets to attain.

Lastly we shall look at further technology, such as Chat Bots, to see if other efficiency savings are available. We will fully explore the capabilities of the Five9's call handling platform in order to release other technology and processes that will increase the productivity of the customer service team. We are aware that many local authorities are utilising Artificial Intelligence to provide responses to their residents yet without the need for additional staffing. It is certainly possible that we could see the customer service team grown to encompass the frontline interaction for other council services.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1.

List of self-serve processes currently available through the My Tendring portal:
Garden Waste New
Garden Waste Renewal
Report a missed waste collection
Waste collection days
MyTendring project request
Street name signs
Covid 19 Community Volunteer groups
NNDR support grant fund
HR Character Reference
HR Employment Reference
Pavement Licence
Private Water Supply
Garden Waste Admin Form

Production line nearing completion
Taxi licensing
Council Tax
Stray dogs
Benefits information
NNDR
Rents

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RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

3 DECEMBER 2020

REPORT OF DEPUTY LEADER, PORTFOLIOHOLDER FOR COPRPORATE FINANCE AND GOVERNANCE

A.3   TRANSFORMATION AGENDA OF THE COUNCIL - STAFFING
         (Report prepared by Carol Magnus, Acting Head of People, Performance and Projects)

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT
Transformation Agenda of the Council – and delivery against it. Staff (flexible working, home working and productivity).

INVITEES
None

BACKGROUND
The Chairman of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee has requested that Officers provide reports on the different strands of the organisation's Transformation agenda and progress to date. This report will focus on staffing. Over the past two years the organisation has worked at preparing for more flexible ways of working by updating policies and procedures as well as providing training and support for staff in preparation for these changes.

DETAILED INFORMATION
Throughout 2019 a significant focus was placed on preparing staff to work more flexibly and with greater autonomy, two programmes have been key to this; InDependence and Managing Remote Teams. All courses were delivered by external providers working very closely with the Organisational Development Manager and HR Operations Manager on design, development and content. The InDependence programme was designed and developed by the Organisational Development Manager with input from an organisation psychologist. The workshops were then delivered by a team of six internal managers who had been trained in how to deliver the programme. In total 273 staff attended this programme. The Managing Remote Teams course was attended by 52 managers and team leaders.

In addition, a booklet entitled Modern Working, Your Guide was written and published and circulated to all course attendees. This was reissued to all staff during the Spring lockdown. See Appendix A.

A number of policies were updated to support flexible working; these included the Allowances Policy (2018) and the Remote Working Policy (2019) which also included the Flexi Hours Scheme.

To further support the move towards greater flexible working and staff personal accountability online training has been overhauled. The organisation now uses a specialist online provider (iHasco) for all health and safety awareness training. This shift has resulted in greater compliance as staff can plan their own training schedule according to their work pattern. Compliance rates are in excess of 90%. Face to face delivery is still used for those requiring additional support or greater detail.

During 2018/19 a new inhouse online learning platform was designed and

Learning Zone

developed.

Learning Zone can be accessed by all staff via laptop and other mobile devices. Member access has also just been facilitated. This platform hosts a number of mandatory courses, Careline specific courses and personal development learning opportunities.

The majority of the courses on iHasco and Learning Zone include an assessment before learners can be marked as 'complete' to receive their certificate.

Flexible working has been rapidly accelerated as a consequence of Covid, especially since March of this year when Lockdown resulted in the majority of office based staff working from home. Managers have been instructed to follow the best practice they were taught on the Managing Remote Teams training; namely to ensure regular catch ups take place, to conduct regular team meetings online, to ensure that each team member is contacted every week, to ensure that goals and targets are set and monitored as usual. The flexi hours scheme has been extended to enable staff to work even more flexibly and to take regular breaks away from the screen. Managers and staff have been supportive and appreciative of this approach. It should be noted that the vast majority of staff have continued to work their standard hours with only a few variations, most notably around child care whilst schools were closed.

Government guidance remains that all employees who can work from home should continue to do so. It is therefore anticipated that in the short to medium term the majority of office based staff will continue to work from home.

In order to improve the sustainability of our remote working arrangements a staff survey was undertaken by Human Resources to gain further insight into the experiences and challenges of staff working from home, as well as those staff who have continued to work within the district and on site throughout the Pandemic. This has enabled the organisation to identify areas of concern and implement the necessary support.

Following over 300 responses, headlines from the staff survey are as follows:

- 75% of respondents agree they have achieved the correct balance between work and home life, with 50% of respondents reporting a better work/life balance;

- 72% of respondents agree their role makes a difference to local residents;

- 75% of respondents get a sense of personal fulfilment from their job;

- 84% of respondents feel proud to work for the Council;

- 92% of respondents feel as productive or more productive working at home;

- 90% of respondents reported that the Council has kept them well informed during the Coronavirus Pandemic;

- 80% of respondents feel supported by their line manager; and

- Almost 60% would like to maintain their current working arrangements indefinitely.

In addition, the following priorities have been identified by staff completing the survey:

- Prioritise return to the workplace for those who will benefit most (when it is safe to do so);

- Prioritise continued working from home for those most ready and able to continue;

- Balance preferences with organisational needs;

- Provide support for those who are most in need; and

- Identify what lessons we can learn for the future

There can be no doubt that Covid has accelerated the Council's plans for increased flexible working and has caused it to have a greater degree of home working than was originally envisioned. However, the early work that had been undertaken in 2019 had prepared managers and staff in advance. As we approach 2021 it is to be hoped that it will be possible to have a succsful blend of home and office based working so

that flexible working is fully embedded within the organisation.

Appendix B – Staff Survey Infogram

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee determines whether it has any comments or recommendations it wishes to put forward the relevant Portfolio Holder or Cabinet.

Modern Working
Your Guide

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Tendring District Council

Introduction

This booklet has been compiled to provide you with a handy resource to help you as we work together to transform and modernise the way we work at TDC.

It's probably fair to say that working practices at TDC have been established and fairly unchanged for many years. Many staff have worked at the same desk in the same location from 8.45 to 5.15 (4.45 on Fridays) with an hour lunch with a settled routine for a long while. There's nothing wrong with that but times and finance do mean that some practices need to change.

Contents

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Working Flexibly

"Home is home and work is a place you go to during agreed hours to do a fixed job," might be a sentiment many of us can identify with. Change that we don't choose is never easy and change that comes about so rapidly (such as constantly changing technology) can be a real challenge.

TDC's approach to remote working, including working from home, is based upon current research, best practice and the desire to offer staff more choice and freedom in how they manage their own working life.

There are numerous published reports and articles about remote and flexible working. Recently the Arbitration and Conciliation Service (ACAS) and Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) have added their research too. There have been lots of news reports and articles too on the subject. Some grab the headlines because they might seem quite extreme such as the accountancy firm PWC who, in summer 2018, advertised opportunities for recruits to choose their own work hours and work patterns. The BBC reported that *"PwC, one of the so-called Big Four accountancy giants, said that it decided to embrace the gig economy after a study it carried out showed that almost 46% of 2,000 respondents prioritised flexible working hours and a good work-life balance the most when choosing a job."*

In a paper produced by CIPD, it went even further and said that *"87% of people want to work flexibly but only 11% of jobs are advertised as being flexible!"*

As a result of our own audit of posts within the organisation we know that the majority of posts have elements that can be carried out remotely. With the smart and increased use of technology there's no need now for everyone to work from a fixed point all the time.

There is no intention to force staff to change their work pattern who, for valid reasons, are unable to change. Nor is there an intention to have posts without regular access to an office, a desk and their team. We're seeking to introduce a blended approach that gives staff flexibility and stability; finding that balance will take time. For us all it means thinking about our work in a different way.

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It does mean that we need to adopt more modern working practices such as open plan offices, making use of hot desks, reducing our reliance on paper, being clear about where we'll be when and making sure we tell others about our plans. It also means that we'll all be working more independently, taking more personal responsibility and accountability for our workload and how we manage it.

The InDependence workbook that you will receive is a tool to help you work through your own strengths and development needs in the 7 Skills. We all need to utilise these for modern working practices to be successful. It's there for you to use for your own development and also as an aid for discussion with your manager. Do make wise use of what it provides.

Self-Motivation

Self-Management

Continuous Improvement Focus

The 7 Skills

Self-Confidence

Problem-Solving Focus

Client/ Customer Focus

Relationship Management

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Working from Home Days

Ah, bliss, a day when you can stay in your pjs, relax and so long as you sign in, you can pretend you are 'working'….

That's the myth, and working from home often has those invisible speech marks put around it as if to say 'ha, a day of pretending to work'. In fact that just isn't true.

People who work at home for a day or two every week are more productive. According to the CIPD, *"81% of those who have access to remote working believe it increases their productivity. Managers and co-workers also report a positive or neutral impact on individual performance in terms of quality and quantity of work when flexible working practices are adopted"*

Nobody will be forced to work from home but for those who choose to do so, here are some suggestions that might be helpful for you:

Get dressed! You may find it easier to settle into work if you dress in your work attire.	Be clear about what you intend to do, set your focus.
Go for a walk round the block to give yourself a 'commute' and mental shift from home to working.	Plan all the little household chores you might want to do into your breaks.
If you need to take a longer planned break for the medical appointment for example thats fine. Just note it in your calendar.	Try to set a clear area where you plan to work. Not necessarily an office at home but a reasonably clear space.
Try to ensure that you have a brief 'touching base' call with a member of your team/line manager.	When you finish work then finish work! Just because your laptop is there you don't need to do 'just one more thing'.
Know your own challenges. Be aware of things that can distract you and plan how to manage them…that includes pets… and biscuits!	Give yourself some time with your unexpected social visitor or when the children come home from school. You can make up the time with an earlier start or working a little bit later.
If it works for you, spend an hour of so in a cafe environment, some people like to work with activity going on around them.	Most importantly, know yourself, be honest with yourself and work in the way that works best for you.

Meetings

Do not have work/business meetings at your home, even if you have a dedicated office space. Always arrange meetings at TDC premises or in a suitable public space such as a café.

DSE Checks

It is your responsibility to ensure that the space where you work is safe and comfortable. As TDC takes your health and safety seriously we ask that you complete a Display Screen Equipment (DSE) checklist before you begin to work flexibly. If you are already working from home, please complete one as soon as possible. You can download the form from Ping! When it has been completed please hand it to your line manager.

Insurance

Flexible working that includes occasional working from home (as in one or two days a week) is commonplace and this does not incur any insurance surcharges. In general, insurers and mortgage providers want to know if you are running a business from your home but not if you just happen to work at home semi-regularly. Nonetheless, if you have any concerns you should contact your own insurer and mortgage provider for clarification.

Working While Out and About

Working independently is more than working from home. For many staff it involves working out and about within the community of Tendring and beyond. This might include site visits, visits to the homes of residents for a wide variety of reasons or community liaison such as beach patrol, maintenance of public spaces, enforcement or a a range of different events. Whatever the task, this is remote working and as such there is a need to take personal responsibility and accountability for carrying out the work required without access to a supervisor who is immediately on hand.

First and foremost your safety is paramount.

We want to make sure that everyone who comes in to work also goes home from work. It really is as simple as that.

If part of the safety procedure for your team includes the issuing of Skyguard or other safety equipment then it is to be used. The organisation's Lone Working Policy should also be followed.

When working remotely and using IT and paperwork that belongs to the organisation it is important to make sure that it's kept secure at all times. This means following the correct security requirements that are set out in the Remote Working Policy.

This is a skyguard, small enough to fit in your pocket or on a keyring

At times, TDC's security protocols, or those in force, might make it difficult to log on at a different location. If you work regularly at a specific site, for example at a hot desk in another authority or at a partner organisation's premises and you have difficulties signing onto the network do speak to IT Service Desk so that the problem can be addressed.

If your role requires you to drive between sites, whether in a TDC vehicle or your own, you are expected to fully adhere to all traffic regulations. This means that you stick to the speed limit even if you are running late. It also means that you do not use your mobile phone whilst driving. Staff who regularly drive as part of their role are also expected to attend any road safety training or instruction that is provided by the organisation. In addition, all staff are expected to follow the organisation's Driving Policy

Remember, above all we want to make sure that everyone who comes in to work also goes home from work.

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In the Work Base

Even with the introduction of more flexible practices, most of us will spend at least 50% of our working time at our main work base. Working well and effectively in the office will also require more personal accountability and independence.

When we are in the office there is a strong likelihood that at least some members of our team will be working remotely, either from home or elsewhere. It's possible that at times you could be the only person of your team who is 'in' in that conventional sense.

Pre-planning of where you will be and when will be a great help as it will mean that the use of hot desk space will work more smoothly for the benefit of all.

When you finish for the day, leave the desk clean, clear and tidy. None of us want to sit at a desk with some-one else's mess. No, that cannot be used as a tactic to 'claim' a space so no-one else will use it!

You might want to make sure that your team keeps a supply of desk and keyboard wipes available for use.

You could create a simple name plate style sign that could go on the desk when you have finished that says 'desk available' to help others.


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As so many of us will be working remotely one or two days a week, we won't have our own permanent desks. This may feel strange at first but we will get used to it.

Don't race to be first in to 'claim' a favourite space!

When you see people using hotdesk areas, be friendly and welcoming. A smile and hello go a long way. We all like to feel welcome.

Equally, help people to be able to get drinks. Are there spare mugs, tea and coffee available? How about offering to share that 'splash' of milk? We don't want anyone to feel like an 'intruder' and simple gestures of welcome are vital.

If you have come into the office after perhaps two days where you have been working remotely do be sensitive to others. You might be eager to have a chat about 'what's been happening?' but others may be deeply into a piece of work and need to concentrate. Agree your catch up chat for a mutually convenient time.
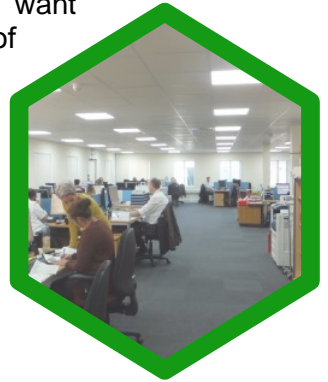
Workspaces

Try not to be a creature of habit! Use different hot desks in your building and even use different hot desks at different locations. It's a great way to get to know other people and to learn more about the Council as well as giving you a place to work. There are already work hubs available at Pier Avenue and Northbourne and soon at the Town Hall. Pier Avenue breakout room is often available and the Town Hall breakout room will become available in 2020. It's also possible to have workspace at the leisure centres by prior arrangement.

A very few words about trust

The writer Ernest Hemingway said that *"The best way to find out if you can trust somebody is to trust them."* Page 39

You are trusted.

Technology

"Technology by itself isn't going to change anything, it's the people who use technology to change people's lives that are going to do anything" Satya Nadella 1/11/18

In 1989 the photo below on the left was state of the art equipment. Typewriters were becoming a thing of the past and 'word processors' were replacing them. For some 'early adopters' desk top computers were making an appearance.

Mobile phones weighed almost as much as a bag of flour and were almost as difficult to hold!

Then just 30 years ago, in 1989, Sir Tim Berners-Lee invented the World Wide Web and the world changed. In technology terms we've progressed from the images you see below to the flexible equipment we now rely on. It's a huge transformation yet we know there's lots more progress still to come that will improve efficiency and reliability beyond our current imagination.

The rapid development of the technology that enables us to work from any location is incredibly new so perhaps it's no wonder that some of us find it hard to adjust to the idea of working in different ways.

The following pages have been compiled to provide you with a number of hints and tips to enable you get the most out of the technology we currently have available.

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IT - Support Guide

As part of our approach to modern working and the office transformation we have compiled a guide to remote working. This is to assist you if you have had limited experience of remote working using your TDC device.

Good operational practice and business continuity is to take your TDC device home each day just in case there is a need for you to work remotely, e.g. bad weather, office unable to be accessed, personal situation that requires you to work remotely. Remember if you do take it out of the office to ensure that it is safely stored e.g. in a house not left in a car.

If you have any issues or concerns, please contact the IT Service desk. ITServicedesk@tendringdc.gov.uk or 01255 68 6599. Opening Hours are Monday to Thursday 8am to 6pm, Friday 8am to 5:30pm.

NOTE: Ensure you have the 'Map N Drive' icon on your desktop before attempting to remote work. Please contact the IT Service Desk on 68 6599 if you don't have the button.

1. When you are taking your laptop home with or without the intention of working from home. Make sure you have all the equipment you may need. Essentials are usually: Laptop, power lead, and Skype handset/ headset. Also ensure that you have no outstanding updates, this can be checked by clicking on the update icon

2. When you work remotely and log-on to your computer, you will need to connect to your location's Wi-Fi (e.g. your home). To do this go to the wireless network connection at the bottom right of your screen, click on   or

   and select your WiFi. This will usually ask you to enter your WiFi password. NOTE: Your WiFi name and password are usually on the internet hub.

3. Once you have connected you will need to press the 'Map N Drive' icon on the desktop. This looks like this:

4. You should now be connected and able to work.

IT - FAQs

"I have logged on and I still can't do anything?" – Sometimes Direct Access (DA) will take a moment to start working (red cross over icon) . Give it a couple of minutes. The Direct Access Icon at the bottom right should then look like this. If it still doesn't connect, try restarting your laptop and try again. Check the laptop has a connection to the internet. Open a web browser and try going to a trusted website e.g. bbc or google.

"I can't find my WiFi on the options?" – Make sure your WiFi is working. Check on another device connected to the internet like your mobile phone that you have the wifi icon. Make sure you aren't out of range. Usually, WiFi will reach around the whole house however there can sometimes be weak spots. Try connecting the laptop directly to the broadband router with a network cable, the IT department can supply one on request.

"I don't have WiFi at my home, can I still work?" – Without access to the internet, you are very limited and may not be able to work effectively. You can access any secure Wi-Fi, just ensure that it is secure. (If you wish to check you are secure, contact cyber@tendringdc.gov.uk).

"Can I connect other devices to my laptop?" – It is not permitted to use/ install personal devices onto your laptop. TDC equipment is allowed. If you need to print something, it is best to wait until you are back in the office or print remotely to the Print hub.

"I have opened my Outlook emails and I have a message saying that the path specified for the file N:\ ___ is not valid?" – If you see this message, it is likely you have forgotten to map your N drive. Close Outlook and any of the 'pop-ups', Click on 'Map N drive' and again.

"My other drives have an X through them?" – You should still be able to use them. Once you click on it the X should disappear.

"I have no network drives and Mapping N Drive doesn't work?" – Log off and wait for a moment. Log back in and the drives should be restored.

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IT - Items that can affect Direct Access speed

If after connecting, email or your apps indicate "not responding", run very slowly or DA keeps losing connection, then the fault is probably with the broadband speed. Even though you have a connection to the internet and can still browse the web, DA takes a large broadband bandwidth to work,. Applications may slow down, become unstable or the connection may be lost if the broadband signal drops below a certain level. Skype calls can also experience problems with poor call quality, calls dropping or failing to connect. Things that can affect the broadband performance are :

The number of applications running - Close down any programs you're not using.

The type of applications running - Some programs, such as Uniform are very resource hungry, and may not work effectively on a slow home broadband connection. Try closing all other programs when using Uniform.

Opening large files - Avoid opening large files, disconnect your personal folders from Outlook.

The number of users/devices sharing the broadband - Smart TVs, games consoles, mobile phones, home hubs etc. will all consume bandwidth, even if you're not using them. Disconnect any devices not being used to improve response.

Poor connection between your router and your phone line - Check the cable running between the router and the phone socket, replace if damaged. Also try and keep this cable run as short as possible.

The time of day - Things can slow down when the schools close for the day. Does the connection regularly fail at a particular time of day?

The weather - Bad or even hot weather may also have an adverse effect, especially on properties serviced by an overhead phone line.

Broadband Router - Occasionally your broadband router may become unresponsive. Try powering it off, leave it for couple of minutes before restarting it.

There are a number of free online tools that can be used to check the performance of your broadband line. To get an accurate reading of the broadband speed, run the test from a laptop or PC that does not have DA installed and run it a number of times at various times of the day. If the tests show speeds significantly lower than those advertised for your area, then there could be a problem with the line and you should contact your broadband provider.https://www.broadbandspeedchecker.co.uk/

IT - Tools for modern working

Conference Calls
You can set up audio or visual conference calls via Skype for Business, use the Skype Meeting button on your Outlook Calendar. Skype training is available.

Instant messaging
This enables you to send direct messages, much like text messages to colleagues on their laptops or PCs.

EDRMS
Electronic Document Record Management System…phew. This is electronic storage and retrieval of all scanned paperwork to support your remote working and reduce our reliance on hardcopy paperwork which is at risk of accidental destruction.

Portable devices
TDC now has laptops and other portable devices, these are available to all staff if there is a business need for you to have one. All portable devices are secured by encryption

Remote network access
With Direct Access you can log onto your TDC laptop from any location that has Wi-Fi. You can access all your drives and emails remotely. All calls come via Skype for Business as long as you are logged on and using the Wi-FI

Sharing screen and documents
You can share what you see on your screen with colleagues, you can do this when on a conference call or instant messaging. Additionally, you can share you desktop via Skype with the IT Technicians when you need technical support.

How to guides are available on Ping! Additional support can be provided by our IT Trainer on 01255 686302

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IT - Top Tips

Outlook Calendar Appointments 'Show as' status

Always ensure you select the correct 'show as' status when adding a diary entry to Outlook as this will feed through to your Skype for Business status. If you are working remotely select 'Working Elsewhere' and input generic location data e.g. working remotely or working from home
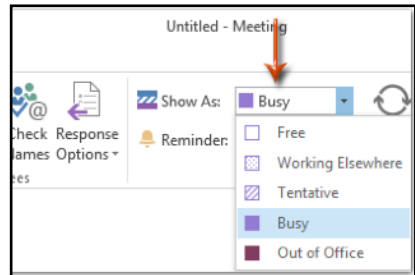
## Skype for Business Status/presence
Always ensure you select the correct 'show as' status when adding a diary entry to Outlook as this will feed through to your Skype for Business status. If you are working remotely the select 'Working Elsewhere' and input generic location data e.g. working remotely or working from home

If you are still logged in and your screen is locked	Phone will ring, you can reject call by pressing the red button on handset, goes to voicemail (if set up)
If you are busy status or you are on a call or have put yourself in Busy status	Phone will ring but sound is muted, can send to voicemail, change to do not disturb or click ignore
If your status is Be Right Back, Off Work	Phone will ring, you can send to voicemail, change to do not disturb or click ignore or press the red button on the handset
If you are Do Not Disturb status	Phone won't ring. Calls goes to voicemail Note: If your status is set to 'Do not Disturb' then your phone won't ring nor can you be 'instant messaged' (other than by a colleague in your workgroup)
If Signed out of Skype or exited Skype	Phone won't ring call goes to voicemail
If you have Out of Office set but are logged into the network	Phone will ring, you can send to voicemail, change to do not disturb or click ignore or press the red button on the handset
If you have Out of Office set and are logged out	Phone won't ring call goes to voicemail
If you are logged off the network	Phone won't ring call goes to voicemail

Skype location field

The location field is free text format and once set every time you log onto the same Wi-Fi it will pre-populate the location field. It is a good idea to have this set up for locations that you work in.

N.B Please only put 'working from home' or 'remotely' into the field and not your personal address

Work Monday - Thursday 9.15-2.15

Karen Hardes
Available ▼
working remotely ▼
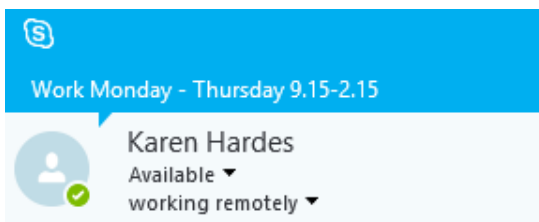
Remote working instructions for printing directly to the Print & Post Hub

To print to the Print & Post Hub either from your desk or remotely please go to the print option and choose Print Unit. This will send the file directly to our printers in the unit for us to release for printed. If you do not have Print Unit on your list of printers contact ITServicedesk@tendringdc.gov.uk

Then email printunit@tendringdc.gov.uk with any specific instructions on how you would like this printed, for example double sided along with where you want it delivered etc. Any letters printed will be inserted into envelopes and sent out on the next collection time without delay.

Alternatively, if the file is too big to email or you haven't get access to the printer from your device, on the network there is a drive called Finprintunit. On this drive you will see a folder called jobs or letter to be printed. Just drop you file in the folder and email to inform us it is there. Don't forget to add your instructions to the email!

Network Location (6)

Finprintunit
(\\tendringdc.gov.uk\Data) (B:)
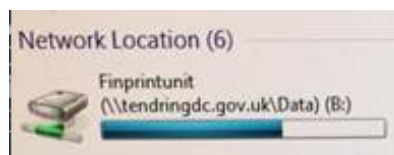
When we have printed your file we will move it to the printed folder. Files on the network drive are deleted periodically so if you need to keep your file you will need to save your own copy.

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COVID-19 STAFFING SURVEY HEADLINE RESULTS

Over 300 Responses

3/4 have achieved the correct balance between work and home life

1/2 reporting a better work/life balance

72% agree their role makes a difference to local residents

THREE-QUARTERS get a sense of personal fulfillment from their job

84% PROUD to work for the Council.

92% reported being more productive or just as productive working at home

90% reported that the Council has kept them well informed during the COVID-19 Pandemic

4/5 feel supported by their line manager

ALMOST THREE-FIFTHS would like to maintain their current working arrangements indefinitely

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Tendring
District Council

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