

CABINET

30 NOVEMBER 2015

Present: Mayor (Chair)

Councillors D Scudder, S Johnson, I Sharpe, P Taylor and
M Watkin

Also present: Councillors N Bell and B Mehta

Officers: Shared Director of Finance
Head of Democracy and Governance
Corporate and External Communications Section Head
Regeneration and Property Section Head
Democratic Services Manager

24 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

25 DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

There were no disclosures of interest.

26 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2015 were submitted and signed.

27 CONDUCT OF MEETING

Councillor Bell spoke on behalf of the Labour Group. Councillor Mehta spoke on behalf of the Conservative Group.

28 ICT EXIT PLAN AND TRANSITION

The Director of Finance introduced the report. Notice had been served on Capita to terminate the ICT contract with effect from 30 June 2016. A contractual exit management process was now being followed. Watford Borough Council had initiated a change programme to take forward a new ICT service.

Following a question from the Mayor, the Director of Finance confirmed that a report regarding the current IT situation had been presented to the Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel which had been aware of the situation previously and had received presentations from Capita at its meetings.

The Director of Finance then gave an update on the current situation. As part of the existing contract with Capita there were exit management plans which were currently being worked through. Capita were obliged to help the Council in the transition to new providers. Weekly meetings were being held and the ICT Section Head was working with Capita. In addition the Council had consultancy support from Foresight Consulting which was helping to look at fixing some of the known and underlying issues. These included some 'quick wins', for example the Thin Client performance issues at Watford Borough Council, capacity issues with Exchange relating to Outlook e-mail and Netapp SAN which were issues regarding capacity and storage and overall the general performance of the IT due to old machines and servers. Foresight Consulting were working on these issues either on their own or with other companies assisting including local company Freedom Communications. Local companies had been selected to do the work including Twin Technologies. An options appraisal would now be produced on how the Council would go forward with IT.

In response to a question from the Mayor the Director of Finance responded that it was too early to have a deadline for coming to a view on the options appraisal at this stage as there was further investigative work to be carried out.

A business strategy would be produced, this had been started with Capita but not completed. It would consider where the Council wanted to go as a business and then have underneath this a technical strategy. There was an applications discovery in order to understand what was being used on the estate and work on becoming Public Services Network (PSN) compliant.

There was a PSN health check ongoing at Watford Borough Council and Three Rivers District Council to measure against the current government requirements. Measures of success in the transition phase between Capita and new providers included creating a PSN compliant environment. Also, rolling out desktops earlier where this was possible. Core infrastructure such as the Active Directory (which managed user profiles) and Exchange (e-mail) would be refreshed and updated which should help improve performance. There would be a replacement or upgrade of the Wide Area Network (WAN) – how the Council interacted with the outside world. Also the Local Area Network (LAN) – how the Council managed communication links between its own locations. A review of WiFi would take place as the Town Hall was not WiFi enabled.

Key milestones were listed in the report and it was hoped that they would be completed before Capita's exit. Financial implications were not entirely known, however, much of the work was already covered in the agreed IT modernisation programme. There was a request for exemption from procurement rules for using the companies Foresight Consulting and Freedom Communications. Currently the consulting costs were £95,000 for Foresight Consulting and it was expected to be around £50,000 for Freedom Communications.

The Mayor welcomed the inclusion of the local company Freedom Communications. The action plan needed to be monitored carefully by the Portfolio Holder with regular briefings to Cabinet. The Outsourced Services Scrutiny Panel should also monitor progress.

Councillor Scudder enquired whether Capita would be liable for any extra costs incurred by the Council. The Director of Finance responded that if this was the case it would be negotiated as part of the exit arrangements with Capita.

Councillor Bell commented that although he understood the reasons for the contract exemptions they would need to be monitored carefully.

In response to Councillor Bell's further comments regarding outsourcing the Mayor explained that the issue was not about outsourcing but rather being dissatisfied with this particular service. The Council was tied into a contract with a legal framework and had to give Capita the chance to make improvements, it had been very disappointing. Prior to Capita the in-house service had not been performing well.

Councillor Bell enquired whether there was confidence that by 1 January 2016 the Councils would be PSN compliant. The Director of Finance responded that by the start of January there would be a PSN compliance plan. They were working with the Cabinet Office in order to achieve PSN. The Cabinet Office had been helpful and supportive.

Councillor Watkin stated that the Council had suffered but Capita were also embarrassed and were looking for a way to work with the Council to exit the contract. Watford was not the only Council to fail to achieve PSN. Every year the standards were changed and councils were expected to improve. Last year the Council was compliant but not this year.

RESOLVED

1. Notes the progress on the Exit Plan and IT Transition.
2. Agrees the exemption to the procurement rules outlined in paragraph 4.2.

29

EXCLUSION OF PRESS & PUBLIC

RESOLVED

that, under Section 100A (4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business as it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during consideration of the item there would be disclosure to them of exempt information as defined in Section 100(1) Schedule 12A of the Act for the reasons stated in the report.

30

NEW LETTING OF 29 TO 35 HIGH STREET, WATFORD

In response to a question from the Mayor the Head of Democracy and Governance advised that the next two items on the agenda were Part B due to the reports containing information regarding the financial and business affairs of the Council.

A report was received by the Regeneration and Property Section Head which set out the terms for a new letting of 29 to 35 High Street as the Council owned the freehold of the building.

Cabinet discussed the report and the Regeneration and Development Section Head responded to questions.

RESOLVED

That Cabinet approves the new letting of 29 to 35 High Street to Wilkinsons on the terms outlined in the report.

31

WATFORD BUSINESS PARK - STRATEGY AND IMPLEMENTATION

A report was received from the Regeneration and Development Section Head regarding Watford Business Park. This report followed those already presented to Cabinet and the Major Projects Board. The aim was to enhance the economic productivity of the estate through regeneration.

Cabinet discussed the report and the Regeneration and Development Section Head responded to questions.

RESOLVED

That the recommendations set out in the report be approved.

Mayor

The Meeting started at 7.00 pm
and finished at 7.45 pm