

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Monday 14 January 2019

Present:-

Councillors Clarence, Dewhirst, Haines, Lyons, Dent, Jung and Pierce

Also Present

Strata IT Director, Compliance and Security Manager, the Director with responsibility for Finance, Strategic Lead Finance (East Devon District Council) Document Centre Manager, Business Systems Manager, Infrastructure and Support Manager and Democratic Services Officer

1 **APOLOGIES**

These were received from Councillors Nicolas and Prowse.

Councillor Clarence was substituting for Councillor Prowse.

2 **INVESTORS IN PEOPLE**

The Chairman welcomed Tina Hall attending as an observer on behalf of Investors in People for the Part I items only.

3 **MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2018 were approved and signed by the Chair as correct.

4 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

No declarations of interest were made.

5 **QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC UNDER PROCEDURAL RULES**

None.

6 **QUESTION FROM MEMBERS OF THE COUNCILS UNDER PROCEDURE RULES**

The following question was put by Councillor Lyons:-

"Who decides in Strata what is junk mail and what checks are made on this to ensure this is correct. My question is the result of the discovery that the LGiU (Local Government information Unit) to which the council subscribes was not going into my inbox, when I asked Strata staff I was told it was because they are blanket emails going to all councillors and was probably junk".

A copy of the question and reply is appended to the minutes.

7 **STRATA IT DIRECTORS REPORT - OVERVIEW OF STRATA PERFORMANCE - COVERING PERIOD OCTOBER UNTIL DECEMBER 2018**

The Strata IT Director presented the report on the last five months of activity the aim being to provide background to the core areas of specialisation within Strata

and identifying key activities, successes and areas for improvement. The report covered Financial Management, Business Change Requests (BCR's) and Projects, Service Desk, Global Desktop Environment and main ongoing corporate projects. Key performance indicators were also provided covering incidents, service requirements, security, problems, maintenance and business change requests.

2018 had been a year of consolidation and stabilisation of the core services, a review of key processes and a restructuring of the management of the Strata organisation. The core objectives of Reduced Cost, Reduced Risk and Delivering the Capability and Capacity for Change had been delivered against the business needs of the three authorities and the savings delivered back to each authority

He highlighted the following key areas:-

- the original 2018 budget figure had been exceeded and savings in excess of £382,000 would be delivered, overachieving against the target by approximately £110,000;
- Strata had nearly completed the City Council's Global Communications roll out, the East Devon roll out had been completed and the project team would be moving onto Teignbridge in March 2019 to commence the roll out there;
- East Devon new office fit out was on-target with the official opening set for 11 February 2019. The primary challenge faced during the build up to handover had been the delivery of the required connectivity by VirginMedia and Openreach but this had now been addressed;
- OneTeignbridge project was progressing well with Teignbridge delivering a single sign-on solution making it easier for the public to engage online with the authority;
- protecting the three authorities from the dangers from cyberattacks was a high priority;
- the Public Services Network accreditation had been achieved for the next 12 months across all three authorities;
- Keith Watson, the new Data Analyst, had started focusing initially on working with the three authorities to deliver corporate dashboards;
- Strata had applied for Investors in People accreditation and staff interviews were currently being held;
- Strata was supporting the EX1 project through Environmental Health at Exeter;
- ModernGov was being rolled out to East Devon and Teignbridge Councillors and discussions were underway as to how best the application was delivered and accessed via Councillors whether via iPads or via existing Councillor owned devices; and
- Annual Strata Conference had been held at the RAMM on 7 December 2018.

The Strata IT Director and Business Systems Team Lead updated Members on progress with real time reporting on BCR, project status and reporting of incidents and problems. The decline in BCRs had continued into December and the three IT Requirements Boards were working well prioritising and scheduling BCR's. The transformation projects across all three authorities were predominantly delivering large projects such as OneTeignbridge which was delivering efficiencies and benefits to customers.

It was noted that there was a divergence of views at Teignbridge regarding the preferred way forward for rolling out new IT equipment for Members which reflected the different level of support required. Teignbridge was also the first of the three Councils to move off GCSx and the Strata Outlook secure email 'plugin' had been released to support secure email sending.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted the report.

8

URL TO STRATA4@UPDATE

“Members were encouraged to study Strata@4, to be found at :
[http://strata.solutions/strata@4/.](http://strata.solutions/strata@4/)”

9

LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985 - EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that, under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act.

10

STRATA BUDGET MONITORING QUARTER III : 2018/19

The Director responsible for Finance reported that Strata had been given a total of £6,504,000 to run the IT Services in 2018/19 along with funding for various capital projects. The Company also maintained an account for additional purchases throughout the year.

The Strata budget was on track to deliver around £505,000 of revenue savings for the three Councils in 2018/19. After five months, the Board was projecting savings of £504,736 against the total original target of £381,960.

The report also set out variations in the capital budget.

The capital project to deliver the data centre and other implementation projects was progressing with some additional expenditure on the data centre incurred, funded from the annual capital payment. The Councils had requested additional equipment for which they were subsequently invoiced. At present there were outstanding payments of £206,344 to be invoiced.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the report.

11

STRATA BUSINESS PLAN OVERVIEW AND DISCUSSION

The Strata IT Director presented a new Business Plan currently being considered by client leads and Chief Executives/Managing Directors of each authority for review/comment. Follow up meetings would receive feedback on the plan for specific authority IT service requirements to be incorporated. The new Business Plan was linked to Strata’s overall aim of becoming more customer focussed in 2019 enabling the partner authorities to define their Business and IT strategies with the confidence that Strata had developed the infrastructure and resources to support these strategies.

It was a six year plan with an annual review cycle and laid out the predicted spend, costs and savings of the Strata service for this period. Each of the four business discipline teams within Strata had defined both the staff and product costs over the proposed period.

The Strata IT Director detailed the business plan cycle covering a review and revision of the plan and implementation of changes setting out the main fundamentals of each. The key driver would be transitioning to transformational value from business as usual and the plan set out a suggested governance model and proposed adoption of a funding model and a revised savings profile.

He responded to Members' queries on savings profile, staff culture and numbers and a proposal to recruit a non-Executive Director. He also detailed proposed capital requirements going forward.

Strata Joint Scrutiny Committee noted and supported the draft Business Plan including the capital requirements set out in the report and recommended that the Strata Joint Executive Committee approve the Plan for consideration by the three Councils.

(The meeting commenced at 5.30 pm and closed at 7.20 pm)

Chair

STRATA JOINT SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

14 JANUARY 2019

QUESTION FROM COUNCILLOR LYONS

Who decides in Strata what is junk mail and what checks are made on this to ensure this is correct. My question is the result of the discovery that the LGiU (Local Government information Unit) to which the council subscribes was not going into my inbox, when I asked Strata staff I was told it was because they are blanket emails going to all councillors and was probably junk".

Answer

The identification of spam (unsolicited emails) and malicious emails uses a combination of automated and manually configured filtering. The automated element uses a global spam specialist 'MailShell' along with various internet block lists and continually updates its automatic rules as email arrives. On top of this the Strata Security and Compliance team builds up rules that target cyber threats and the worst types of spam 'sextortion' being a current example. Spam is held as some of this is not appropriate for a work environment and also spam is very time wasting for those receiving it, and therefore like most organisations Strata limits this where possible.

Given the number of emails received, with approximately 1000 per day stopped as Spam and about 300 for security reasons, there will occasionally be incorrect decisions made for spam. To overcome this, the team add exceptions that override the automatic systems and the Strata Service Desk and the Security and Compliance team review emails that are blocked.

In the case of the LGiU emails they were both sent in bulk and are sent via a company called MailChimp that are known to send spam emails, and have various help pages on their support area like this <https://mailchimp.com/help/my-campaigns-are-going-to-spam-folders/> that show that others also treat emails sent via them as potential spam.

Therefore in summary for Cllr Lyons, there are no wholesale decisions made by Strata staff about a particular email sender or that blanket emails to a wide variety of senders should be blocked. A mass send of emails will however increase the likelihood that these will be treated as spam along with being sent via certain email delivery companies, in this case MailChimp. Where blocking is notified we can release these and if an ongoing newsletter can create rules to let them through.

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