THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING

OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

HELD ON TUESDAY 15 JULY 2008

Present: Councillor A Burnip (Chair)
             Councillors Mrs M Baird, A Collinson,
             J Haggan, A J Holmes, R Liddle,
             D Maddison and Mrs V M Williams

1   **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 24 June 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2   **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 1 July 2008, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

      RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

3   **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

      There were no members of the public present.

4   **FEEDBACK FROM SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

      The Chair advised that at the last meeting of the Scrutiny Management Board held on 7 July 2008 the following issue was discussed.

      County Durham Overview and Scrutiny Member Network

      RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

5   **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – E GOVERNMENT AND INFORMATION SERVICES**

      Consideration was given to a briefing note prepared by the Head of e - Government and Information Services, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

      The briefing note provided an overview of the operational tasks and development projects undertaken by the IS Unit over the last month.

      Members were advised that the level of development work for the council had fallen as a result of LGR and the main area of work was now focused on East Durham Homes (EDH). However, the day to day requests the unit received from users to solve problems with their IT Systems remained at the same level.

      As well as the routine day to day work the main developments regarding the Help Desk included the introduction of new processes, which were the result of the Best Value Review of Support Services. This involved the introduction of processes as specified in the IT Best Practice framework (ITIL) and included:-

      • Introduction of Service Desk as a Single Point of Contact (SPOC)
      • Incident Management – whether minor or major

- Service Level Agreements (SLA's) – To measure performance. As there were no PI's to measure performance ITIL recommended that the council set targets by way of SLA's.
- Service Targets – which would help in the formation of the new council. It would provide documented evidence to help source units demonstrate best practice.

The target date for completion was October 2008

Development work included minor and major projects that typically took several weeks or months to complete, the type of work could vary from the development of a software package to a departmental or organisational move. Much of the work was now concentrated on helping EDH achieve 2 star status, a key priority in the Transitional Plan.

Staff working in the Applications Development unit dealt with the development and support of software packages, i.e. IBS the Revenues and Benefits software and Orchard the software used by EDH for housing repairs.

Projects for this month included:-

- EDH / Morrisons Interface – Providing a system to transfer information from the ORCHARD system used by EDH to the IT systems used by Morrisons.
- Ongoing development of handheld devices used by maintenance staff in the field.

Development work to support LGR included:-

- Developing interfaces with the councils systems i.e. Benefits and Council Tax to provide a new single Financial System for the new council by April 2009.
- Developing interfaces for Revenues and Benefits systems across all 7 Councils to provide a unified system by the end of 2010.

The Systems and Networks unit dealt with the networks that the computers used to communicate with each other, i.e. Staff at EDH Meridian Court using ORCHARD software which was installed in the main computer room at Seaside Lane, e-mail and internet access and telephony.

Projects for this month included:-

- Delivery of telephony and networking for Kier staff located at Hackworth Road was nearing completion.
- Upgrade to Telephony software would be installed in July.
- Report on security systems i.e. Mailsweeper being produced to provide options to improve access.

Development work to support LGR included:-

- Security policy for new council – new system would need to link into central government systems to enable the transfer of personal data.
- Integrated telephony and single number for new council to provide a seamless joined up system. Old telephone numbers would gradually be phased out.

It was pointed out that with regard to LGR the workload of the IS Unit was starting to increase, the Head of IS was now involved in two workstreams (ICT and Customer Access) and was the Project Manager for the new councils website.

A member of the website team was currently on temporary secondment to Durham County ICT to assist in the development of the new website. Work for the council was still carried out as and when necessary and all expenses were paid by the County Council. It was expected that this workload would increase.

The Chair made reference to the upgrade of the Telephony system and queried what the cost was to the council and if this could be justified bearing in mind the council would cease to exist in April 2009.

B Nicholson advised that the upgrade would cost in the region of £14,000 and had been budgeted for. EDH had also been asked to contribute £6,500 towards the costs and discussions were ongoing in this regard. The Telephony system at Easington would still be needed after vesting day in April 2009 as it would need to be linked into the County's system for the foreseeable future.

Councillor Mrs J Maitland queried the single telephone number that would be introduced for the new council and asked how this would work.

B Nicholson advised that initially there would be a telephone reception system and the operator answering the call would do nothing more than forward the message on to the relevant officer. It was expected that eventually there would be a single customer services function that would cover the whole of the county.

The Chair thanked B Nicholson for his attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

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