

Thursday, 16 January 2014

Dear Councillor Bowman

I am writing to you following the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee (OSC) held on 2nd December 2013. At the meeting I committed to provide a further update on the steps taken to stabilise the performance of the Southwark's current IT environment before the end of December 2013 and on progress with the plan for the "new world" IT environment to be delivered in 2014. In addition I agreed to feedback on specific performance issues raised in relation to IT operations at Council offices at Queens Road 3.

As discussed at the December OSC, Capita has faced real challenges since taking on the contract that led to a reduction in the level of service we would expect to provide. We recognise the impact this is having on the council and are focussing hard on a phased resolution approach based on 3 key stages: stabilise, maintain & improve.

From a stabilisation perspective during December the following key improvement actions were progressed. These have included:-

- Following on from the external assurance reviews that were commissioned with various specialist third parties a number of changes were made to tackle a number of major issues, not least the slow Citrix login times
- These changes delivered a reduction from login times that could take as long as 45 minutes to an independently verified average of less than 3 minutes
- Restored general internet performance to previous levels
- Further enhancements to the test environment and change control arrangements.

The activities being undertaken by Capita to ensure the services are maintained at acceptable performance levels until CEP is delivered are:-

- A comprehensive end-to-end risk assessment of the existing IT systems highlighting areas of vulnerability and developing solutions to address.
- To fully implement planned changes to the account structure and key roles to drive improved governance and control.

In addition, it has been necessary to address specifically a number of staff performance issues within the Capita team. This has included a closer review of previous staffing behaviours, some of which predate this contract, the introduction of new personnel and the removal of some staff from this contract where necessary. This work continues into 2014 to help assure performance moving forward. While improvements have been made, the estate remains subject to some unpredictable and unanticipated performance shortfalls; these can be extremely difficult to identify or to isolate, despite the further tightening of change control arrangements. These behaviours remain principally a function of the basic design of the estate inherited by Capita.

In particular, this means that some of the most straightforward changes may lead to unexpected outcomes, even after thorough testing. This makes service improvement much more difficult than it should be and greatly increases risk associated. This confirms the importance of the core enabling projects, which as an integrated set of solutions, will remove the complexity in inflexibility of the current infrastructure.

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The third phase relates to significantly improving the Council's IT systems. As you are aware we have been planning and designing the Core Enabling Programme (CEP) comprising of the 10 core projects identified by the Council. These projects will deliver LBS a reliable end-to-end ICT service that will support the delivery of council's strategy for modernisation & technology enabled service delivery, the development of which both the Council and Capita will be proud. The CEP will bring technology up to a standard that is responsive and supportable, resilient and efficient, and, satisfies the minimum of current end-user needs and then goes further to build a solid foundation upon which to generate future service improvements.

During recent weeks it has become apparent that our initial approach to CEP is no longer valid insofar as the team have placed too much reliance on the migration of existing data and system configurations that we have found increasingly to be flawed as a consequence of a significant number and variety of incremental changes and dependencies introduced over many years. These shortcomings in current configuration remain the root cause of the business as usual issues that we have repeatedly encountered since taking on this contract.

Capita, in conjunction with Southwark, are currently re-planning the programme to ensure we deliver maximum benefit from the changes. This planning activity will continue through January; by the end of the month we will be in a position to commit to a set of milestone dates for delivery. It is now known that this revised approach will extend the delivery timescales. This plan will provide a clear articulation of the dependencies on Southwark and will ensure we have an end to end plan for delivery. This plan will also include a communications plan that will be used as the basis of our end user readiness activities and describe what the CEP will deliver to them and when.

From a personal perspective I believe Capita have significant value to bring to Southwark and recognise that we have a long road ahead to rebuild confidence in us but I will ensure that we will not rest until we provide you with the services you require.

In relation to the Queens Road 3 systems failings I can confirm 3 key incidents occurred & I have prepared a summary report (attached) outlining the timings, impact and resolution steps taken to avoid re-occurrence.

I look forward to meeting again at the January 2014 OSC meeting to discuss further.

Yours sincerely



Craig Rodgerson
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