

REPORT OF THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR CORPORATE SUPPORT

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This document presents a selection of the work undertaken by Corporate Support services and details some of the aims and objectives for the future.
- 1.2 Throughout 2017 work has continued to deliver more commercial opportunities and increasing opportunities to increase revenue for the council resulting in more cost effective service delivery.
- 1.3 Again in 2017 the Digital Transformation Programme has been a focus of activity. Now that the design phases are underway staff roadshows are being planned for the new year to increase understanding and levels of engagement with the programme.

2.0 HR Advice

2.2 Upskill Shropshire

The introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy on 6 April 2017 has seen the creation of Upskill Shropshire – a branded offer for our staff to maximise the use of the levy pot for the council. We have also created a commercial offer which is already being taken up by other local authorities and public sector bodies. A fully procured framework of providers is in place and the first selection panels have taken place with a number of apprentices lined up to start in the autumn.

2.3 Leadership Programme

The Shropshire Leadership Programme launched in April 2017 - Top Team (Directors), Senior Leaders (Heads of Service/Service Managers - direct reports to Directors) and focuses on the challenges and changes ahead for the authority. The programme content covers the key drivers of change: Digital Transformation, Commercialism, Agile and Mobile Working and Customer Experience taking account of external influences around national/local politics and enhancing Economic Growth for the county. The Future Leaders Programme launches in

September 2017 and will bring together talented individuals who aspire to be leaders of the future and will be mentored by our senior leaders. We are currently working with the University of Chester for accreditation of the Future Leaders Programme as well as looking at opportunities for co-delivery for Level 7 Apprenticeship programmes in Leadership.

2.4 Commercial Opportunities

As well as the commercial interest generated from Upskill Shropshire, a number of contracts have been secured for provision of HR Advice Services generating income in the last 6 months including a Care Home in Oswestry, Just Credit Union, Town & Parish Councils, schools in neighbouring authorities and a school in a London Borough looking for consultancy advice in federating. Our Business Plans are currently being updated to reflect a changing marketplace and informing our offer going forward.

2.5 Sickness Absence – Joint Working Group

Work continues on the group and an update to Directors took place in the autumn. Policy changes are being recommended along with other interventions to reduce sickness absence levels and support the overall workforce health.

2.6 The focus for the coming year will be on developing the Organisation Development Strategy to support the cultural and behavioural change required as part of Digital Transformation, being more Commercial, Agile and the changing Customer Experience.

3.0 Employment Services

3.1 Employment Services (Payroll, Recruitment & Contracts) have been focussing on the design phase of new systems for Digital Transformation (see 5.9 below). Work also continues on developing the commercial offer and following up leads for new business.

4.0 Occupational Health and Safety

4.1 The Occupational Health and Safety team have been focusing on improving a number of health and safety initiatives to support staff in the following activities:

- Further measures piloted for managing employees who are lone working in higher risk situations.
- Focused workshops on the use of laptops and equipment in agile working environments to reduce and minimise the risks associated with musculoskeletal conditions.
- Continuation of specific workshops for Schools on health and safety.

- Focused support via the Crime Prevention Officer on management of suspicion incidents in Schools. Working closely with School Leaders and the Police on policy development and communication strategies.
- Continuation of a full programme of health and safety courses including first aid to support the work undertaken by employees and provide a commercial offering to external companies, i.e. Academies for reasonably priced quality courses.

4.2 Continued work to improve employee health and wellbeing has occurred as follows:

- Monthly ‘Feel Good’ employee events around the county at Council buildings focusing on a range of self-help, prevention programmes and fun activities during lunchtime.
- Working with colleagues from Public Health’s ‘Help2Change’ Team to deliver monthly Health MOT checks to employees to check blood pressure, blood sugar and cholesterol levels.
- A Health Monitor machine has been placed in Shirehall’s Ground Floor to enable employees to monitor their own weight, blood pressure and obtain a regular reading of their Body Mass Index as and when necessary.
- Targeted support for musculoskeletal conditions has been arranged through Robert Jones and Agnes Hunt Orthopaedic Hospital NHS Foundation Trust for fast track access for employees to Physiotherapy Services and accessible clinics as part of the Wellbeing ‘Feel-good employee’ events around the County.
- Planning is underway for seasonal Influenza Campaign for front line staff.

4.3 Health, safety and workplace health is reported regularly to the Health, Safety and Welfare group and the group continues to monitor progress against work plans, incidents including accidents and approves all new health and safety guidance.

4.4 The focus for the coming year will be to continue to support initiatives regarding workplace wellbeing, reducing sickness absence and to build on the commercial approach of the teams.

5.0 Digital Transformation / IT

5.1 IT Strategy

The IT Strategy was approved by cabinet but due to a change in management and the increasing speed at which IT develops, an updated version is being produced.

5.2 The IT Strategy sets out how the vision for IT underpins the Council vision and the

strategic and delivery principles that will be adhered to in delivering that vision. The document includes the approach being taken to delivering the Digital Transformation Programme, the Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity strategy and progress in the delivery of that strategy, and commercial opportunities being pursued by IT.

- 5.3 The update to the IT strategy defines how Shropshire Council's IT department are adopting the internationally recognised best practice IT management principles of ITIL (formally an acronym for Information Technology Information Library but now a brand of its own).
- 5.4 The IT department are now managed by Technology and Communications manager, Andrew Boxall.
- 5.5 The IT department have worked extremely hard to reduce the number of Audit recommendations and have made great strides in overcoming the issues this presented.
- 5.6 The IT department have also worked to reduce the associated risk around IT service provision, bringing the risk level from a "High" to a "Medium" with plans for it to be reduced further over the coming months.
- 5.7 The commercial offering of IT is also expanding, with work for schools and academies continuing to expand – particularly with the new offering of the Schools Managed Service (SMS), which is proving popular with early adopters.
- 5.8 IT's contribution to the Digital Transformation programme has increased significantly over the past six months, with fundamental parts of the programme being worked on by the team. This not only ensures the knowledge of the work remains within the organisation but also reduces the cost, as consultant fees can be prohibitively expensive.
- 5.9 The Digital Transformation Programme
The Digital Transformation Programme is a major transformation initiative that will enable the Council to transform the delivery of services through a customer focused approach utilising cloud technologies.
- 5.10 Delivery of this programme is being enacted through four interrelated and concurrent projects:-
 - **Social Care** – which will improve the provision of such services to both Adults and Children's Services to meet the increased demand on these services whilst reducing the ongoing costs of such service provision.
 - **Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP)** – that will provide an integrated modern solution for all back-office processes to automate our existing manual

and disparate systems, and provide improved management information and a better reporting capability. This project also includes the delivery of an improved Customer Services Centre which will enable customers to contact the Council digitally.

- **Infrastructure and Architecture (I&A)** – to support delivery of the other streams of work, enabling staff to spend more time on customer-facing activities through improved connectivity; enable agile and flexible working and provide improved Wi-Fi capability in Council offices and other public meeting points. This project will also support the ICT initiative to provide resilient Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity for all Council systems and software.
- **Customer Experience** – this piece of work is looking at the way we, as Shropshire Council, interact with residents, businesses and other organisations to identify opportunities to make improvements, mainly using digital means. For instance, new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software will enable staff to create automated workflows that take currently manual processes and automates them – increasing productivity significantly. This piece of work is also delivering a new piece of Call Centre software that will allow a much more seamless experience for residents.

5.11 The business case to support this programme was approved by Cabinet meetings on 27th April and 11th May, and ratified by Council on July 21st. That paper forecast that the cashable savings derived from the programme would be £4.276m and total non-cashable benefits of £31.805m over a 5-year period.

5.12 Social Care Project

The Social Care project has chosen its supplier (Liquid Logic) and is now in the design phase, documenting the information needed for the software provider and our own staff to benefit from this new solution.

5.13 Enterprise Resource planning (ERP)

The ERP contract has also now been signed, with the UNIT 4 offering being selected. This piece of work has now entered the design phase.

5.14 Infrastructure and Architecture (I&A)

The I&A encompasses many pieces of work into one manageable programme. Improvements such as new WiFi at strategic points is now coming to fruition, with the installations being planned at some sites for before Christmas 2017. Other important parts of the I&A include improvements to our security, supporting mobile and agile working and other undertakings that will create a more flexible and commercially viable organisation.

5.15 The I&A is also looking at the organisations data needs, both now and in the future. This will enable managers to make more informed decisions, as timely information will be readily available.

5.16 Programme Management

The Digital Transformation Programme is on track to deliver against the strategy set out in the business case that was approved by Council in July. The Social Care project is also ahead of schedule in the supplier selection and contracts award phase of the project, and anticipates enabling delivery to commence 2 months ahead of schedule.

- 5.17 The Digital Transformation Programme and the 3 constituent projects are managed through fortnightly programme and project boards who's' memberships include directors acting as the SRO, stakeholders from the relevant services, and officers representing Governance, Audit and Risk Management.
- 5.18 The actual spend on the programme to date is less than that which was budgeted, the savings being achieved through faster delivery and recruiting less expensive external resources than those originally forecast.
- 5.19 The business case will be updated once the preferred supplier's actual costs have been factored in, and the resource requirements (internal and external personnel) have been re-forecast
- 5.20 The Programme Manager also is a member of the ICT Approvals Board to ensure that other ICT related initiatives across the Council do not contradict the Digital Transformation Programme strategy or delivery.

6.0 Communications

- 6.1 In 2016, the Communications department was relocated to a central point in the West Wing of Shirehall and from August 2016 the department was overseen by a single manager in the Communications and Public Relations manager (Andrew Boxall). In April 2017, Andrew was successful in his application for the Technology and Communications Service manager role, expanding the positions remit to cover IT services alongside communications.
- 6.2 The objective of the communications department has been to find more positive articles and communications, to ensure that residents and businesses understand the work undertaken across Shropshire Council. A new Communications strategy has been documented and will be submitted to Cabinet in September 2017, detailing the plans for improving our communications.
- 6.3 A restructure of the Customer Services department, which includes elements of the communications teams, is due to close in early September 2017, this is in response to the reduction in opening hours of Face-to-face customer service sites (approved by full Council in December 2016) and to help achieve the required savings targets. The restructure sees the removal of split grades (a corporate

objective) and more staff being moved into the areas of work required, such as moving to work in the call centre rather than face-to-face service points which have seen a drastic reduction in clients.

- 6.4 The Media team have been given a focus on finding good news and the staff newsletter has been very successful in sharing information (the readership figures continue to rise). The communications team have plans to offer and support other methods of communications, all of which are detailed in the upcoming strategy.
- 6.5 2017 will see the Sustainability and Transformation Plan (STP) and the Digital Transformation Program, delivering a much needed shift in the delivery of information for residents of Shropshire. These shifts have been prepared for and work is underway to ensure the Shropshire Council communications team play a central role.

7.0 Commissioning Support – Data Analysis and Intelligence

- 7.1 The past year has seen Commissioning Support extend how it works across the Council with individual teams and commissioning activity, as well as informing and supporting more strategic work. There has been an emphasis on making information more accessible, and developing performance management with a focus on contract performance measures and how these are used in commissioning and contract management.
- 7.2 The Corporate Performance Management Framework has continued to develop with the Performance Portal providing the means to share the key measures and provide access to information on trends and explanations on performance provided by the services areas.
- 7.3 The introduction of new systems through the Digital Transformation Programme will enable access to information and the presentation and interaction with data to improve further.
- 7.4 New ways of presenting and sharing information have been identified. This has a number of benefits, including preparing plans and for the new systems and to support key activity by the Council including Economic Growth, profiles are being developed for the market towns. So far profiles for Oswestry, Shrewsbury and Bridgnorth have been published on the Council's website, with the profiles for the other market towns being added as they are completed. The electoral division profiles have also been refreshed.
- 7.5 The development of reporting for Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care has also progressed, with new dashboards and information being created which automate self-serve reporting to staff, managers and senior managers to support

them in their planning and decision making, and to identify the impact of change on people who receive services.

- 7.6 The Big Conversation took the opportunity to ask people for their thoughts on the Council's priorities set out in the draft Corporate Plan and to better understand the likely impact of changes on people. A particular focus was to reach those groups who would be least likely or able to take part in engagement work through face to face activities. This was completed by working with organisations who were best placed to engage with the target groups. Through this approach we heard from over 700 children and young people, people with disabilities and those who care for them, as well as people who don't tend to complete online surveys and people on lower incomes.
- 7.7 There has also been a continued increase in customer feedback to the Council which helps to inform how services can improve. All types of feedback are positively encouraged. The largest increase was in compliments with smaller increases in the number comments and complaints compared to the previous year.

8.0 Legal and Democratic Services

- 8.1 Legal Services continues to support the corporate governance of the Council and the specific needs of the service areas. A new case management system is going to improve our efficiency and should also provide additional opportunities for income generation.
- 8.2 Though all areas of our work are under on-going pressure, child-care in particular has experienced an exceptionally difficult twelve months with a number of highly contentious and complex cases which have been extremely challenging and resource intensive. There is no sign of this pressure reducing and so we plan to address this structurally.
- 8.3 Electoral Services have undertaken two major elections in the last year including a snap general election. They are currently undertaking the annual canvass. Individual Electoral Registration is dealt with on a day-to-day basis alongside any other legislative obligations that are required for Electoral Registration and Elections. Since May we have had three by-elections. At present we are in the early stages of looking at working with other councils to bring in some income.

9.0 Commissioning Development & Procurement

9.1 Procurement and Contracts

9.2 On-going procurement and contracts support

- 9.3 The Procurement team has continued to provide Procurement support throughout the year to all areas of the Council through the following:-
- The Provision of Procurement advice relating to all types of procurement activity throughout the Council.
 - Management of tender processes and advice to all types of tendering activity throughout the Council
 - Category management of certain corporate expenditure items
 - Procurement support to arms-length organisations
 - The Provision of procurement guidance, training and facilitation of best practice within the Council
 - The Administration of an e-tendering system and Expenditure Analysis Tool
- 9.4 Support has been provided to major procurement processes within the last 12 months which have included the new Highway Term Maintenance Contract, major Public Health, Social Care and Procurement supporting the Council's Digital Transformation Project.
- 9.5 Contracts support has continued providing, advice on and drafting of contracts for Adult Social Care and Children Services, assisting with contract management and monitoring within these areas and safeguarding investigations and relevant liaison with commissioners and other colleagues in Adult Social Care and other bodies as appropriate and market shaping and market resilience work.

9.6 E-tendering

- 9.7 The Council has had an e-tendering system ('Delta') over recent years which provides a full audit trail for procurement processes as well as an electronic means of managing tender processes and receiving tenders. This has been particularly effective when used by the Procurement Team and Property Services, the use has also been extended over the last year to Highways, Passenger Transport and HR colleagues. Almost all tendering undertaken by the Council is now carried out through this system. The system also provides the contract register for the Council and is also used for the storage of procurement and contract documents which strengthens governance of contract award and management.

9.8 Expenditure, Contractor & Market Analysis

9.9 Over the past year the Council have procured a product from Porge Research called Illuminator which can be used by commissioners, procurers and contract managers to analyse the Council's contractor expenditure, the make-up of public sector organisations who use the same contractors, and a view of the market available. This includes understanding how much reliance any particular contractor has on the Council i.e. the Council's spend as a proportion of the contractor's total income from the public sector. This helps to inform commissioners about the sustainability of the contractor and the potential risk to the Council's procured services should they lose another contract from a different public sector organisation, or the risk to the contractor of losing a contract from the Council.

9.10 Contract Management & Assurance

9.11 The Commissioning Assurance and Performance Board has met throughout the last 12 months. The board consists of the Directors Group who have met on a monthly basis to consider commissioning assurance issues. This has included receiving reports from each directorate on their key contracts based on costs, risk and strategic importance. Directors are updated on whether contracts are judged to be performing well, achieving expected outcomes or failing to deliver what is required. Directors consider and also invite contract managers back to their meetings to explain their systems and processes and how they ensure contract outcomes are delivered.

9.12 As well as the contract management reporting to Commissioning and Assurance Board identified above, other developments have been progressed. Training and Development has been identified as a key requirement for good contract management.

9.13 The procurement team has tested some contract management training provided free of charge which has been developed by the University of Southampton, the UK Cabinet Office and other public bodies. This training has been assessed and will now be rolled out through the Leap into Learning portal to relevant contract managers and commissioners across the Council.

9.14 Commissioning Development

9.15 Commissioning Development has;

- Developed and launched a Social Value Charter for Shropshire <https://shropshire.gov.uk/social-value/>. The Council has led on this with organisations from across the public and voluntary community and social enterprise sectors. This extends the Council's framework and approach to

this activity to achieve additional social, economic and environmental benefits from the delivery of services on behalf of the Council.

- Supported Children's Services to transition to new contracts for assessed Short Breaks.
- Has worked with stakeholders to prepare for the re-procurement of Local Healthwatch.
- Has supported Housing Services to commission mortgage support for people with long-term disabilities and to commission work to determine the future of the Council's current housing stock.
- Has commenced work looking at how outcomes can be better coordinated across the Council. This work is ongoing.
- Has supported and undertaken a number of invitations to quote and service reviews as required.
- Is working with Adult Services and local voluntary and community sector providers to review and plan the future of preventative services in the county.
- Is working with Library Services to seek a new provider for Church Stretton library.

9.16 Anti-Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement

9.17 A council statement is being drafted which includes our policy and action taken to meet the policy around safeguarding, procurement, supply chain activities. Approval will be sought from Council before its publication and promotion.

10.0 Shire Services

10.1 Shire Services is a Trading Department of Shropshire Council providing catering and cleaning services predominantly to schools. The service also manages the Facilities team and oversees the day to day management of the Student Accommodation building at Mardol House. Catering services are provided within 8 Local Authority areas, as well as within Shropshire. Services are provided in North Wales, Cheshire, Walsall, Telford, Sandwell, Worcester, Hereford and Wolverhampton.

10.2 For the first time in 2017/18 the number of catering contracts held outside of Shropshire has exceeded the number of catering contracts held within Shropshire. Due to financial pressures and the perceived savings that can be generated by managing the service in house, a number of smaller schools across the county have opted out of the current agreement. Multi Academy Trust arrangements has also resulted in schools moving away from the service provided by Shire Services to join the collective arrangements of the trust.

- 10.3 In 2016/17 the overall Turnover for the department was £14.82 million, with £2.82 million from cleaning contracts. In April 2017 the service had 170 catering contracts and 134 cleaning contracts.
- 10.4 During 2017/18 and 2018/19 the service has plans in place to remove the need for the base budget from Shropshire Council and to achieve a break even position. In 2017/18 savings of £200,000 are planned in 2018/19 the savings target is £297,000. This is a challenging target, given that our costs are increasing over and above the savings target which increase the overall amount that we need to save.
- 10.5 When budgets were set and issued to schools ready for 2017/18, the employer's pension costs were set at 13.5%. In May 2017 it came to light the employer's pension costs had increased to 14.8%. This added another £84,000 of costs to the service that had not been anticipated or budgeted for. We have also been made aware that legal services will be introducing a recharge for services that they provide to start in 2017/18. The service was of the impression that legal services were already included in the Corporate Recharge figure but apparently that is not the case.
- 10.6 The greatest challenge the service currently has is reducing our resources and overheads to achieve the savings targets whilst retaining sufficient staff to deliver the current level of service required, as well as to grow and mobilise new contracts.
- 10.7 Our new online pre-order and payment system (Squid) has now been introduced to 20 schools. Introducing this new system will have a number of important benefits as well as allowing parents to pay for meals online; reduced queueing time for pupils, reduced waste as kitchens know how much of each menu item need to be produced, existing paper based processes can be eliminated as data can be transferred electronically between devices, kitchen employees can spend more time preparing and making food and less time completing paperwork, whilst also improving the speed of communication between kitchens and Head Office. The system has been well received by parents and schools. We have consistently seen an increase in the uptake of meals in the schools that are now using the system.
- 10.8 The move towards the Living Wage of £9.00 on 2020 continues to impact on site based staff. Whilst the lower grades of staff such as cleaning assistants and catering assistants have had a significant increase in salary over the last couple of years, the staff who line manage these groups of employees have not experienced the same increase. In some cases an employee are expected to manage all aspects of a team of people for as little as an extra 9p per hour. This reducing differential has affected our ability to recruit and retain staff of the right calibre to line manager roles.
- 10.9 Phase 2 of providing Student Accommodation for the University of Chester is underway with the Tannery project now being underway. The service continues to

manage the day to day operational aspects of the accommodation at Mardol House. As well as being involved in the Project Group for Phase 2.

11.0 Property Services Group

- 11.1 The Council's Property Services Group undertook a rebranding exercise in order to raise commercial presence in the market. This included a new website, social media campaigns, marketing material and extensive training. This is a continuation of the group's business development activities, which commenced in January 2016. This commercial focus has prompted the group to re-evaluate resources and restructure in order to meet the demands of the market.
- 11.2 The group enjoyed another successful year with high levels of buy back from Shropshire Schools, including schools and academies who have not previously bought into the service. This has resulted in extensive recruitment of two team leaders, building and mechanical surveyors. They have also recruited trainee surveyors and continue to support their development for succession planning. The Finance & Business Development Manager has recently completed an MBA in Business Administration and is currently on the Future Leaders Programme.
- 11.3 Trading income exceeded £1.3 million in 2016/17 ensuring a profitable position for the group. New external business contracts awarded included Shrewsbury Academy Trust, Needham Inks Ltd, Town & Parish Councils and Libraries. The group is working in collaboration with Adult Social Care and Housing (HOLD, HIA & SHIP properties) to develop a strategic approach to managing and maintaining properties. The group is also developing a good working relationship with First Choice Housing and are looking at assisting with acquiring and refurbishing properties on their behalf.
- 11.4 Tech Forge Cloud has enabled the group to continually streamline their processes. They are engaging with the Digital Transformation Team as the ERP will interface with TF. As their processes have already been streamlined, this should be a seamless transition.
- 11.5 340 capital projects worth £6.3 million were completed in financial year 2016-17 and 255 projects are in progress worth £7.4 million in this current financial year, with more expected. The projects included school placement planned extensions, L&S condition programme which included projects ranging from boiler replacement, electrical rewires, windows and roofing, to meet the essential requirements of the DfE dashboard criteria for ensuring schools are water tight and safe. The group have also taken on the responsibility and budget management for the Corporate Landlord properties. They also undertook conditions surveys of all Shropshire schools/academies and a number of corporate buildings.

- 11.6 During 2016 & 17, 61 customer satisfaction surveys were returned with an average satisfaction rate of 9.10 out of 10 for our service and that of our contractors, with more questionnaires expected to come in. Customer testimonials are also available on their website.
- 11.7 The focus of the group will continue to investigate areas of new business as well as analyse existing business to ensure sustainability. New services have been offered to customers including CIF bids, 3D survey scanning, Fire Risk Assessments, TF Cloud training. Staff have also undertaken Prince 2 Practitioner/Foundation training to enable effective project management.

12.0 Commercial Services

- 12.1 The Council needs to create new sustainable income streams through commercial activity above the current level of resources it receives. The Council approved its Commercial Strategy in March 2017. The Leader has asked me to accelerate the commercial and investment programme to support our economic growth ambitions for the county. Our aim is to invest £300 million over the next 3 years with an overall return of 10%, or 5% net of capital repayments and interest.
- 12.2 Projects will be prioritised based on the level of return and benefit they bring to the council and the county. Most will require us to work closely with partners, public and private, to generate the best return. We are looking to invest in sites and projects which bring together public services in a more integrated way in local communities. This includes housing, employment, health, care and other community based services. We will look to use the new technologies that the Council is investing in to equip a more agile workforce allowing running costs in Council owned property to reduce and income to be generated by letting out available office space to third parties.
- 12.3 We are also providing commercial skills training to our workforce as we know they are a valuable asset who can generate income generating ideas which can be tested and, where applicable and properly appraised, delivered.

13.0 Strategic Asset Management

- 13.1 Strategic asset management for the future will be key in releasing value from the Council's assets and to deliver economic growth. The Council's portfolio will be continuously reviewed to ensure it provides a durable income stream. This may involve the release of poor performing assets together with the retention of those which present the best opportunity for increased return and high property yields for the future. Property Investment will be a key part of a new asset management strategy with acquisition opportunities being assessed, again to both generate income streams and to further economic growth and development. Land

management, place shaping and property master planning will ensure a coordinated and focused approach alongside public sector partners and the private sector to match the Council's key objectives relating back to the economic and commercial strategies.

- 13.2 The new approach may involve delivering property services differently with a more investment and commercial focus together with the delivery of efficient and effective property management.