

Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel Agenda



Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel Thursday, 30th April, 2009

Place: Committee Room 1, Civic Offices, High Street, Epping

Time: 7.30 pm

Democratic Services Officer: Adrian Hendry, Office of the Chief Executive
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Members:

Councillors B Rolfe (Chairman), J M Whitehouse (Vice-Chairman), D Bateman, A Boyce, Mrs R Brookes, Ms J Hedges, Mrs J Lea, R Morgan and J Philip

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. SUBSTITUTE MEMBERS (COUNCIL MINUTE 39 - 23.7.02)

(Assistant to the Chief Executive) To report the appointment of any substitute members for the meeting.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Assistant to the Chief Executive). To declare interests in any items on the agenda.

In considering whether to declare a personal or a prejudicial interest under the Code of Conduct, Overview & Scrutiny members are asked to pay particular attention to paragraph 11 of the Code in addition to the more familiar requirements.

This requires the declaration of a personal and prejudicial interest in any matter before an OS Committee which relates to a decision of or action by another Committee or Sub Committee of the Council, a Joint Committee or Joint Sub Committee in which the Council is involved and of which the Councillor is also a member.

Paragraph 11 does not refer to Cabinet decisions or attendance at an OS meeting purely for the purpose of answering questions or providing information on such a matter.

4. MEETING OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING (Pages 5 - 8)

To note the minutes of the last meeting held on 25 November 2008.

5. CONSIDERATION OF FINAL REPORT BY CABINET: (Pages 9 - 36)

The final report of the Customer Transformation Task and Finish Panel (attached) was fully endorsed by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11 December 2008.

The Chairman of the Panel subsequently presented the report to Cabinet on the 6 February 2009. Contained within the report were nine recommendations, which the Cabinet were requested to agree. These are listed below:

- (1) That given the increasing importance of the Council's Website with respect to communication, information and electronic interactions, the level of dedicated resource to the maintenance and development of the Council's Website be increased;
- (2) That a Continuing Services Budget growth bid be made to fund an additional two, Range 5 (subject to job evaluation) Website Support Officers as part of the Budget Process for 2009/10, at an estimated cost of £48,850 per annum;
- (3) That a re-organisation be undertaken at the Civic Offices to enable customers to access the majority of Council Services at a single reception/customer services area of the ground floor:
- (4) That further detailed feasibility work be undertaken to establish the costs of the new single customer services/reception area to include innovative use of information technology, for which provision should be made from the existing allocation of funds within the capital programme;
- (5) That a Customer Relationship Management System be developed and deployed to provide accurate and timely information to enquiries;
- (6) That any such Customer Relationship Management System be capable of providing accurate management and monitoring information, not only to meet the requirements of N14, but also to drive customer satisfaction levels higher;
- (7) That the results of the Forester consultation be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to any fundamental design changes or content;
- (8) That the establishment of a Corporate Services front office model, such as "Contract Harlow", be pursued by the Council in order to complete the maximum number of enquiries and transactions at the first point of contact; and
- (9) That the Corporate Customer Services facility be achieved by the utilisation of existing staffing resources being brought together to become "generalists" as per the "Contact Harlow" model.

The Cabinet accepted that communication with the residents of the District was important and as such the Council's website required additional resource. It was proposed that an extra Website Officer be employed on a three-year fixed term contract at a total cost of £25,000 per annum, funded out of the District Development Fund. The Portfolio Holder for Finance and Performance Management explained that it was prudent for the Council to avoid growth of the Continuing Services Budget for

extra staff given the current budgetary constraints. The Panel Chairman was requested to reconvene the Task and Finish Panel and further prioritise the remaining seven recommendations of the report, for further consideration by the Cabinet.

Options for Action

When the Council set its budget for 2009/10, the District Development Fund bid for an additional Website Support Officer at Grade 5, on a fixed term three year contract, was agreed. The recruitment process for this post is due to commence shortly.

As per the Cabinet request, the Panel are now asked to prioritise the remaining 7 recommendations of the report.

Recommendations 3 and 4, relate to the creation of a single reception/customer services area. Recommendations 5 and 6 relate to the development and deployment of a Customer Relationship Management System, which would also meet the needs of NI14.

Recommendation 7 relates to reporting the findings of the Survey on the future design and content of the Forester to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Recommendations 8 and 9 relate to the establishment of a bespoke Customer Contact Centre, along the lines of "Contact Harlow".

Members of the Panel can therefore see that the remaining 7 recommendations cover 4 areas for improvement. Given that the Council has set a deficit budget for 2009/10 and that the medium term financial strategy requires CSB Savings of £300,000 per annum for the financial years 2010/11 to 2012/13, affordability is therefore a key consideration. This was recognised by the Cabinet who, whilst endorsing the conclusions of the Panel's work and sharing a desire to increase the quality of Customer Services, were concerned about embarking on such a major initiative in the current economic climate. The decision to only appoint one Website Officer on a fixed term contract basis reflects this concern.

With respect to the remaining 4 recommended actions, the Forester Survey has already been undertaken and any redesign could be accommodated within the existing budget allocation. It is therefore, proposed that Recommendation 7 becomes the highest priority.

The current situation of multiple reception points within their associated issues of poor access for people with disabilities and lack of privacy for confidential discussion, was identified as a significant issue in the Panel's review. As there is currently provision of £2.2 million within the Capital Programme it is feasible that a single reception post could be achieved without the need to request additional resources. As such, recommendations 3 and 4 could become the second highest priority.

The Council has a statutory responsibility to collect Data for NI 14, (Avoidable Contact), which would be greatly assisted by the implementation of a CRM System. However, the full benefits of such a system, in relation to customer enquiries, could only be achieved by the creation of a Contact Centre. However, given the issue of the high level of telephone enquiries answered outside national targets for time and also the numbers of calls abandoned, some investment in this area is still probably desirable. It is therefore proposed that recommendations 5 and 6 become the third

highest priority.

Members will recall that they were advised of the costs associated with the development of a front/office, back/office Customer Contact Centre. The amount of redeployment, retraining and other staffing changes necessary would require a significant amount of additional resources. As this is unlikely to be available within the period of the next medium term financial strategy, recommendations 8 and 9 are proposed to be the lowest priority.

Members of the Panel are requested to consider the proposed priorities and advise Cabinet accordingly.

6. ANY OTHER BUSINESS