

Customer Services and ICT Scrutiny Standing Panel



**Epping Forest
District Council** –

Date of meeting:

**Portfolio: Customer Services, Media, Communications and ICT
Cllr S Metcalfe**

Subject: e-Government

Officer contact for further information: Adrian Scott – Head of ICT

Committee Secretary:

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

To note the IEG 6 Government Return that was submitted to the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) on 10th April 2006 (Appendix 1).

To note the Council's progress in delivering the requirements of the priority service outcomes (Appendix 1 – Section 1) and the BVPI 157 (Appendix 1 – Section 3) as reported in the IEG return.

To note and consider the outstanding 'priority service outcome' and BVPI indicators (Appendix 2)

To note the Council's e-Government Strategy (Appendix 3).

To note and consider the introduction from Central Government of the National e-Service Delivery Standards and the introduction of the recently announced "Transformational Government" strategy.

Report

1. Central Government started the e-Government initiative in October 2001. The main focus for this initiative is to use modern information and communication technology (ICT) to improve the quality, efficiency and accessibility of public services.
2. Central Government, in order to monitor progress with the e-Government initiative and assess the required level of capital grants to support it, has placed a duty on all local authorities to produce an annual IEG Government return that sets the Council's current status for electronically enabling 100% of all interactions with the Public by March 2006. The return process is completed electronically online in a prescribed format.
3. The IEG Government return has in the past been the mechanism that allowed all local authorities to gain access to Central Government funding by way of the IEG capital grant. These grants and the e-Government initiative have now come to an end (March 2006) and the Council will not be required to submit any further IEG returns. The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) is now using the IEG6 return as a key reference document in the audit process for assessing how related grant funding has been used.
4. The two major elements of the IEG return are firstly the Best Value Performance Indicator 157 (percentage of e-enabled interactions) this has a prescribed list of interactions; know as the Local Government Service List (LGSL). This list was formulated by Central Government and

the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA). The LGSL contains all interactions that Central Government believe that Local Authorities should or could deliver electronically. The LGSL contains over 1000 interactions but many are not applicable to a District Council and these have been removed from the local list. The number of interactions now measured under BVPI157 total 550. The Council has, as of the 31st March 2006, electronically enabled 98% of these. The remaining 2% (13 interactions – appendix 2) that remain outstanding are being considered for enabling by the service areas responsible for delivery. The DCLG have given notice that BVPI 157 is no longer required and that it has been deleted from the national BVPI's for 2006/7.

5. The second major element of monitoring is the “Priority Service Outcomes” for e-Government. This is a list of some 78 e-Government priorities that are focused on direct outcomes. This list, again, sets out how Central Government sees e-Government being implemented in Local Authorities. This list is broken down into 3 categories; Required, Good and Excellent. The DCLG expects Local Authorities to deliver all the “required” and “good” categories by December 2005. Many Local Authorities have complained at the late introduction of “priority outcomes” (September 2004) and many do not believe at this late stage in the initiative that 78 new targets can be accommodated into their current e-Government plans. Members will see from the return that the Council has made good progress in addressing many of these priority outcomes. However, with the e-Government initiative coming to end it is unclear if any further monitoring of priority outcomes will be undertaken by central government.
6. The current IEG6 Government return is attached as appendix 1. This includes the Council current progress with “Priority Service Outcomes” and the BVPI 157 performance indicator.
7. The current e-Government Strategy is attached as appendix 3 for information.

What's Next? - Transformational Government

8. In November 2005 the Cabinet Office published a report entitled ‘Transformational Government (TG) enabled by Technology’ (previously circulated). Transformational government is effectively about transforming public services as citizens receive them and demonstrating how technology can improve the corporate services of government so more resources can be released to deliver ‘frontline’ services. This central government vision is almost identical to the e-Government vision introduced 4 years ago. However the focus has changed from introducing new technology, to using the now established technology to deliver a real improvement of both service delivery and the efficiency of administering the whole organisation. Also, there is clear message within the strategy that the real benefits will only be achieved through more joint delivery of services and the use of other service providers such as voluntary ‘third sector’ services.
9. In March 2006 the Government published the implementation plan to support the TG report. The plan includes a timetable for various action to be undertaken by central government departments as well as other public bodies including Local Government. Although at this stage it is unclear what the direct impact this will have on a District Council, it is clear that the TG agenda will have direct links to the Local Government White Paper that is due for publication in the autumn.
10. To support the main service improvement aims of TG the DCLG have been working closely with the IDeA to produce a set of Local Government e-Service Delivery Standards (NeSDS). The DCLG and IDeA believe that any Local Authority that is able reach the ‘excellent level’ defined in the NeSDS will have taken their organisation through a ‘transformation programme’ to achieve it and will be ready to engage fully with the TG agenda.
11. The first draft of the NeSDS's have now been published and are being considered by the Council's Website Development Board (Officer group) that reports to the Management Board. The date for the final version of these standards has not yet been confirmed. It is proposed that

the Head of ICT should report back to this panel with an impact assessment of adopting these standards after the final versions are published. To give an example of the approach taken within these standards the NeSDS for customer services is attached as appendix 4.

12. The Council has now received formal notice (25/7/2006) from the DCLG of Central Governments intention to move forward with its TG agenda. At this point it has set out the three key themes of TG that are:

- Services designed round the needs of citizens and businesses
- Shared services delivery
- Professionalism of ICT delivery

The DCLG is inviting all Local Authority Chief Executives, senior decision and policy makers to consultation events in the autumn 2006 to discuss the implications of the Transformational Government strategy on local government. The results of the consultation will be published and used to inform the next steps in implementation planning.