

Customer First Partnership

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To agree an extended role of the Customer First Partnership and to endorse the vision.

2. Recommendations

That the Executive:

- (i) Endorse a revised role for the Wiltshire Wide Customer First Steering Board to expand its remit to develop the County wide efficiency agenda;**
- (ii) endorse the vision for the Customer First Partnership; and**
- (iii) authorise the Customer Services Strategic Manager to agree any amendments required to the Constitution of the Steering Board as a result of the revised role.**

3. Corporate Links

- 3.1 The proposals fall within three corporate business plan areas namely Customer Focus, Partnership Working and Equalities and Diversity.

4. Background

- 4.1 The Executive will recall that the Customer First Partnership Board originated as an E-Government Partnership that allocated funds from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM).
- 4.2 Currently, the Partnership comprises the four Districts and the County Council's of Wiltshire. Swindon Borough Council decided not to participate.
- 4.3 In 2004 it was acknowledged by the Partnership that technology is a tool to deliver better services to the customer and is not an end itself. The Partnership latterly took on a revised role and a joint constitution was agreed by the constituent Councils. The terms of reference were agreed by this Council in December 2004.
- 4.4 The emerging efficiency agenda affecting all local authorities and the newly formed Regional Centres of Excellence are promoting collaborate working not only on procurement but also on the possibilities of joint provision of services. The county wide Chief Executives group have recommended that the Customer First Board expand its terms of reference to link in with work already agreed by the Board and to take a county wide strategic approach to develop the efficiency agenda.
- 4.5 The Customer First Steering Board has also revisited the vision for the partnership and guiding principles.

5. Proposal

- 5.1 The Customer First Board's remit be expanded to become the group responsible for driving the wider sub-regional efficiency agenda forward developing an approach that retains a clear focus of improving services for the customer but also embraces opportunities to work more efficiently through joint procurement, joint provision and collaborative partnerships, where appropriate.
- 5.2 Councillor Evans is the Executive portfolio holder for Customer Services and is a member of the partnership board. A non-Executive Member, Councillor Tonge is the Council's champion for Procurement and Efficiencies. The two will clearly need to work together in developing the customer focussed efficiency agenda.
- 5.3 The Executive are also asked to endorse the proposed revised version and guiding principles, set out as follows:

Customer First Partnership Proposed Vision

"The vision of the Partnership is to deliver:

- Excellent and efficient customer services
- Improved choice of access
- Consistent standards of customer service"

Proposed Guiding Principles

- Partners can opt in and out of projects to suit local priorities
- Projects identified for joint working will need to provide added value and/or efficiency savings that could not be achieved in isolation
- Partners will recognise, support and utilise the different strengths of individual councils
- Best practice and benchmarking of costs and quality will be shared to drive improvement

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 The funding and other resources to support the partnership programme has been previously agreed by the Council and is incorporated in the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- 6.2 There are no further implications that are explicit at this time although the aim of the partnership is to create a more efficient agenda. Details of efficiencies will need to be incorporated in future Efficiency Review Statements submitted annually to the ODPM.

7. Human Resource Implications

- 7.1 The partnership will be looking more closely at how services are delivered across the county and this is likely to change the way we all work. It is almost inevitable that there will be changes that have implications for staff but at this stage the report is only seeking endorsement of the principle to explore the opportunities and details are not here for consideration.

7.2 The Partnership aims to establish a work plan for the next financial year that will consider investigating areas for possible joint working.

8. Community and Environmental Implications

8.1 The purpose of the Partnership is to deliver better services to the citizen by working together than we would by working separately and is therefore seen to have benefits for local communities.

9. Legal Implications

9.1 A joint constitution has been agreed by the constituent authorities currently forming the Customer First Partnership and the changes proposed to be added to the constitution as an amendment.

**REPORT OF STRATEGIC MANAGER CUSTOMER SERVICES
TO THE EXECUTIVE – 1ST DECEMBER 2005**

Report Author: Nick Fenwick,
Strategic Manager Customer Services
Tel: 01249 706588
nfenwick@northwilts.gov.uk