

Interim Report 2005/06

1. This Report is a summary of the work undertaken by the Customer First Scrutiny Task Group in the year 2005/06.

The Task Group consisted of the following councillors:

Mr Tony Deane (Chairman)	Conservative member for Chalke and Nadder
Ms Sarah Content	Liberal Democrat member for Holt and Paxcroft
Mr Andrew Davis	Conservative member for Warminster East and Wylde
Mrs Pat Rugg	Conservative member for Bromham and Potterne
Mr Brian Dalton	Liberal Democrat member for Salisbury South
Mr Christopher Newbury	Independent Group member for Westbury Ham and Dilton

Terms of Reference:

2. ***To review the Executive's development and implementation of its E-Government Strategy, including the impact on the Council's Customer First initiative and Change Programme***

Meetings

3. The Task Group met on the following occasions:
 - November 16 2005
 - April 24 2006
 - May 18 2006
 - June 29 2006
 - July 26 2006

4. The following officers and councillors contributed to the evidence gathering process:

Stephen Gerrard	Solicitor to the Council
Tim Gregory	Head of ICT
Frank Coleman	Customer Services Manager
Ian Cook	Change Programme Coordinator
Andrew Osborn	Development Consultant
Bryan Cash	Education Officer
Tracy Carter	Project Sponsor for the Highways BPR
Mark Baker	Cabinet member for Staffing and Customer Care
Jane Scott	Leader of the Council

Background

5. On July 29, 2003 Cabinet approved the proposal to commence work on developing a customer care centre to deal with 80% of all telephone calls to the Council. This was an integral part of a three year vision to transform the customer's experience when dealing with the County Council.
6. By directing 4 out of every 5 of Wiltshire's 1.5 million calls to a customer care unit (CCU), it was expected to realise the following key benefits:
- The Council would deal with its customers in a more business like fashion
 - The level of public satisfaction with the Council's performance would rise
 - People could more easily access the services they required
 - The number of repeat calls, which account for 40% of the total, would be reduced
7. The original 3 year period for change implementation ended in July 2006. The Customer First Task Group, with its responsibility to scrutinise the Change Programme, has reviewed how successful the authority has been in achieving the transfer of 80% calls from the back office to the CCU.

Evidence Gathering

Front Office Facilities

8. The Society of Information Technology Management (socitm) suggests that one of the key ingredients required to achieve a successful local government call centre is the implementation of an effective Call Relationship Management (CRM) system. The CRM system allows an organisation to record all interactions with customers, particularly useful when people use more than one service, as is the case with a local authority.

9. On April 24, 2006, the Task Group visited the County Council's CCU to receive a demonstration of the Lagan CRM system. Members noted that Lagan is already being utilised by the CCU and is the first example of joint procurement between Districts and the County Council. By adopting a partnership approach to the procurement of Lagan, the authorities have been able to share expertise and jointly utilise telephone scripts.

Identifying the calls for Transfer

10. Implementation is a further key ingredient when attempting to build a successful local government CCU. Socitm advise that implementation should start with a thorough analysis of current patterns of telephone calls and other types communication dealt with by the Council. Stephen Gerrard demonstrated that WCC achieved this by commissioning SERCO Consultants to undertake a programme which identified the work that would be more appropriate for trained customer care staff in the front office and the work which should be completed by technical staff in the back office. This programme was effectively a series of business process re-engineering (BPR) projects, which recognised how the front office (CCU) could be separated from the back office, and in doing so realise cashable/non-cashable benefits. Members noted that the final BPR projects were completed by August 2005.

Figure 1 Summarises the Benefits Predicted from a Sample of the BPRs:

Figure 1

BPR	Benefits Identified
Care Management Social Care Helpdesk	£108k cashable pa
Care Management DCE	£31k cashable pa
Services to Schools	No cashable benefits identified
Registration of Births, Deaths and Marriages	Further work required to identify benefits
Highways	£149k cashable £31k pa
Blue Badge	£8k cashable pa

This is equivalent to a £296k annual saving

BPR Implementation

School Admissions and Blue Badge BPRs

11. To understand the benefits and impacts of call transfer from front to back office, the Task Group received evidence from Bryan Cash - project manager for the School Admissions BPR.

Members noted that nearly all of the direct line telephone numbers for school admissions had been transferred to the CCU. The impact had been positive with the CCU in 2005/06 providing information to 4200 calls and dealing with 65% of customer enquiries. Initially there was a concern from the School Admissions Team that front office staff had the potential to provide incorrect information to customers, but in practice this has not happened. It was also evident that the project had been driven through by the project manager who believed in the benefits of transfer and fed this through to his team.

The Task Group also invited Frank Coleman to discuss the impacts following transfer of the entire Blue Badge service to the CCU. The Blue Badge Scheme (formerly the Orange Badge Scheme) provides considerable parking concessions for people with severe walking difficulties who travel as either drivers or passengers.

It was highlighted that 8,100 Blue Badge applications were processed in 2005/06 and the transfer has led to improved efficiency, with the public benefiting from a faster more accessible service. By dealing with all incoming communications the CCU can be defined as a contact centre, as opposed to a call centre purely taking telephone calls.

Implementation of Other BPRs

12. The scrutiny process clearly identified that implementation of the BPRs has not been consistent; with the most significant projects, in terms of call volumes, still to transfer to the CCU.

Evidence of this point can be seen in the Customer Care Service Plan 2006-07 which states:

"BPR transfers have been slower than first envisaged, leading to the under-utilisation of the IT, premises and staffing infrastructure already put in place. This has created pressures on budget and staffing has had to be capped to recover the budget position, leading in turn to an inevitable drop in service levels".

This point was reinforced when the Task Group visited the CCU. The members observed a number of empty desks, secured in readiness for the anticipated transfer of calls.

The Annual Review of the Corporate Plan also recognised the impact of BPR Implementation slippage:

"Targets not met. The percentage of public calls handled by the customer care unit (CCU) may need to be re-profiled as it is dependent on services moving to the CCU following reviews. Performance was much improved towards end of year."

It was originally anticipated that by July 2006, BPR implementation would result in the transfer of 80% of telephone calls to the CCU. To gain a clearer picture of where the BPR projects were in terms of achieving this goal, the Task Group invited Ian Cook – Change Programme Coordinator to undertake a risk analysis of each of the remaining projects. Part of this work included a member request to see the governance structure for the programme, which is included in the appendix. The Task Group recognise that following the deletion of the Deputy Chief Executive's Post, the governance structure for 2006 will need to be revised.

A summary of the results from the major BPR projects can be seen below:

Care Management - Social Care Helpdesk

13. This is the largest of the BPR projects in respect of call volumes. The BPR identified 35 full time equivalent staff to transfer to the front office in order to handle the incoming calls.

During the review it was emphasised that although calls had started to be transferred to the CCU, there was not yet a clear understanding of how much complexity can be dealt with by the Social Care Helpdesk, or the level of benefit (cashable or non-cashable) that could be expected. It was also lacking a Senior Project Manager to ensure effective implementation.

The Task Group noted that as part of the DACS Recovery Plan, on June 20 a project sponsor was identified and it was agreed to hold an initial meeting to ensure the project was moving in the right direction.

Care Management – Department for Children and Education

14. This is the second biggest BPR, with 27 fte due to transfer to the CCU following implementation. This project was due to start in July 2006, with a predicted completion date of June 2007 (12 months later than originally programmed).

Services to Schools

15. This will require 7 fte to transfer, but as of the time of scrutinising implementation had not started.

Registration of Births Deaths and Marriages

16. This project, which will release 2.6 fte, is waiting the release of new national guidelines and transfer of staff to WCC, before implementation can commence.

Highways

17. 38% of calls have been transferred to the CCU. The successful transfer of Clarence into the CCU has accounted for the majority of this figure. The department has to identify a further 42% of calls to achieve the corporate goal of 80%.

SUMMARY

18. To understand why BPR implementation has been so challenging, the Task Group invited Tracy Carter, the project sponsor of the Highways BPR, to provide members

with a service perspective. Evidence was also taken from Mrs Jane Scott and Mr Mark Baker, the political champions for Transforming the Customer Experience, and Andrew Osborn/Ian Cook leading officers for the coordination of change.

The main reasons for slippage are summarised below:

1. Allocation of resource – there was a clear concern that investing resources into the implementation of the BPR Projects would be detrimental to service delivery.
2. Impact of transfer- there was a fear that the transfer of telephone calls would lead to customers receiving a poorer service.
3. Lack of ownership – this is more of a cultural factor and resulted from a failure to drive the change through from the most senior to junior officers.
4. Fear of losing jobs – staff have not embraced the change because they are worried that the efficiencies will lead to job cuts.

Conclusions

19. WCC has made significant progress in delivering some of the key elements necessary to build a successful local authority CCU. Since April 2004 it has had the infrastructure in place i.e. front office desk space and equipment. The CCU now has a functioning CRM system jointly procured with the Districts. The Council has also undertaken a series of BPR exercises that have helped to identify the work that can be successfully transferred to the front office.

However, progress in the implementation of the BPR Projects has been mixed, with the largest projects presenting the biggest challenges. Of those services that have already transferred, it is important to recognise that the majority are yet to achieve the desired target of 80%, with Highways for example still to identify a further 42% of calls.

There has been a failure to meet the original target i.e. WCC has not achieved its 3 year goal from 2003 to direct 80% of calls through to the CCU. This target has now been revisited and the goal, as detailed in the Corporate Plan, is to achieve the full transfer by 2009. The CCU handled 240,000 calls in 2005/06, of which over 50% were operator type enquiries. The target for 2006/07 is to raise the total calls handled to 754,000, a 314% annual rise.

The supporting literature and officer evidence suggests that the single most important factor in achieving the vision of Transforming the Customer Experience in Wiltshire is culture. Reinforcing this point the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) advise on their web site:

“Culture – this is by far the biggest change to be managed and can either make or break the implementation of a call or contact centre. A crucial requirement is that such a change is both driven and supported from the top of the organisation downwards”

The scrutiny review highlighted that staff currently see BPR implementation as an add on, something extra to the day job. For the process to achieve its goals staff must see the need for change and be enthusiastic towards delivering it. There was also a concern that transfer of calls could be detrimental to the service, the evidence taken from Blue Badge and School Admissions suggests that this is not actually the case, and that service standards were unchanged or improved.

The Task Group noted Stephen Gerrard's comments about the potential introduction of an implementation team to accelerate BPR delivery. The members welcomed this suggestion and will be identifying this in the recommendations.

Finally, for the BPR Process to work there needs to be clear communication of the vision and benefits of the programme, which will help to ensure service departmental 'buy in'. The recommendations of the Task Group are strongly geared towards reinforcing this point.

20. Recommendations

1. The Task Group supports the proposal to create a BPR implementation team and recommend that this is approved as soon as possible. It is recognised that this requires enthusiasm and support from both cabinet and officers if this is to be successful.
2. The Task Group recommends that chief officers or project sponsors attend the next BPR project team meeting/s within their department. This will allow the most senior officers to reinforce the purpose of the programme and will facilitate the necessary cultural 'buy-in'.
3. To further encourage the cultural change, the Task Group recommends that representatives of successfully implemented BPR Projects brief the outstanding BPR Project teams to share their experiences/provide advice.
4. The Task Group recognise the importance of the back office continuing to work with the CCU following initial transfer. Joint, front and back office working parties must be in place and should meet at least quarterly to review progress and problems to attain the 80% target. This combined approach will also help to achieve the other corporate plan target for the CCU, which is to resolve 75% of calls at the first point of contact.
5. The Task Group recommends that all of the BPR projects should identify the cashable and non-cashable benefits that will be delivered from the project.
6. The Task Group recommends it receives a progress report by December 06 from the implementation team or project coordinators, highlighting current positions on a BPR by BPR basis.
7. The Task Group feel that a real incentive should be offered to each BPR Project Team which successfully migrate calls to the CCU. This should be retrospective.

Appendix – Change Programme Governance Structure 2005 & 2006

