

REPORT

Cllr Mrs Warrander : Cabinet Member for Resources

CUSTOMER CARE PROGRAMME

1. Purpose of Report::

- 1.1. To seek approval for the Customer Care Programme Initiation Document (attached) which has been developed as part of the Service Continuance Improvement Plan (SCIP) of the Best Value Review of Customer Care and Communications.
- 1.2. To seek approval for £634k capital funding over two years for the implementation of key projects from the existing office centralisation budget allocation.
- 1.3. For Members to note that there are anticipated efficiency improvements of 20%, equal to £324k over the first 5 years of implementation, with ongoing efficiencies projected for future years.

2. Report background:

Improving customer service is a key Council priority. The Best Value Review of Customer Care and Communication highlighted the need for significant improvements to deliver improved access to services and recommended the development of a customer contact centre for the delivery of a wide range of council services and information.

Vantage Point produced a report containing an outline Business Case for the establishment of a Customer Contact Centre solution for Salisbury, approved by Members on 25th September 2002.

A subsequent audit of customer contacts confirmed that the council delivers services in a fragmented way, that services are not joined up in ways that make sense to customers, and that each service area duplicates a number of processes, such as data recording, that could be handled more efficiently and effectively by adopting a corporate approach.

Cabinet agreed improving Customer Service as one of the 11 key themes in the Integrated Change Programme in May 2003.

In order to take this work forward, a formal Customer Care Programme Initiation Document has been compiled for the work needed to improve access to council services, improve reliability of information, and achieve efficiencies through an integrated Customer Contact Centre that will be the point of enquiry, by letter, e-mail, phone or in person, for the majority of the Council's customers. Efficiencies of 20% on these functions should be achievable over 5 years.

3. Customer Care Programme deliverables:

The Customer Care Programme will deliver a Salisbury-based customer contact centre and call centre to enhance the Council's delivery of high quality low cost services, and will ensure that the necessary process re-engineering, staff development and training are in place to maximise the scope and success of the access channels. The programme will also work closely with e-government, organisational capacity and performance management initiatives in the council to ensure that customer needs are represented in systems integration and organisational development.

4. Resource Implications:

The programme is predicated to achieve considerable savings through increased efficiencies, but the start-up costs will be significant. Included in the Programme are the costs of effecting deep level organisational change to rationalise and improve the way in which services are delivered. This work is likely to affect 50% of all staff, and is aimed to enable a 20% reduction in the front line and administrative tasks over 5 years. The main areas of cost are e-government systems to improve data handling, staff and organisational development work, including a dedicated HR specialist to ensure successful management of change and a part time secondment post to support the programme. Both these posts will be for two years.

As part of the establishment of the Customer Service Unit, it will be necessary to identify those parts of existing Service Units that will be transferred, in terms of staffing and associated costs. Members will receive a future report identifying the appropriate budgets to reflect this and asked to agree the disaggregation of the budgets as part of the 2004/05 budget-setting process.

Considerable efficiencies are achievable, although in the early years some of these represent parts of posts and can only be realised by concentrated management to ensure that efficiencies are achieved through reallocation of tasks and work plans.

There is a potential additional fund of £250k available from the Wiltshire and Swindon E-Government Partnership following the approval of a joint Customer Relationship Management system. This meeting takes place on 23rd July, and its outcome will not therefore be available to this meeting of Cabinet.

Projected costs and savings are detailed in Appendix One of the Customer Care Project Initiation Document.

5. Benefits:

The Customer Care Programme will deliver a range of benefits, to the customer and SDC, these include:

- Seamless access – so that information of different types is provided at one access point.
- Quality and accuracy of information – speeding up response times, saving customers and ourselves time and money.
- Extended opening hours.
- Accountability and tracking of customer queries.
- Higher quality value for money services.
- More efficient use of Council resources.
- Accessible services – at a time and place to suit our customers.
- Consistent response – to enhance the Council's reputation for good quality low cost services.

6. Timescales:

The programme will be delivered as a phased programme. Implementation will take between two to three years, dependent on decisions relating to the location of the customer contact centre, and the degree of involvement of major partners.

The long term establishment of a customer contact centre "One stop shop" will be determined by the decision of the office centralisation project, but in the meantime a phased implementation of joined up service delivery will enable progress to be made on improving customer access to service and identifying efficiencies.

The development of an integrated call, e-mail and postal handling is not dependent on the office project, and can be achieved in Stage One of the Programme. Once the Programme Plan is agreed it is critically important that delivery is achieved as close to target as possible, to control costs. Given the likely public interest in new council facilities a timely delivery of outcomes will also have a positive impact on the Council's reputation, both to customers and to staff. A detailed communication plan will be created to manage expectations.

7. Recommendations:

It is recommended that Cabinet approve:

- (1) The Customer Care Programme Initiation Document as a working document for the programme.
- (2) The utilisation of £634k from the existing Office Centralisation budget.
- (3) That work on the Programme deliverables should proceed, subject to control by a Programme Board.

(4) That cabinet nominate a Member representative to sit on the Programme Board.

8. Background Papers:

Customer Care and Consultation BV Report.
Office Centralisation Feasibility Study – Vantage Point.
Customer Care Programme PID.

9. Implications:

- **Financial:** Capital funding of £634k has been requested in order for the implementation of key projects from the office centralisation budget. This budget, within the approved Capital Programme, totals £900k over the 3 years 2003/04 – 2005/06. (2003/04 £100k, 2004/05 £300k, 2005/06 £500k).
- **Legal:** None at this stage.
- **Personnel:** These arrangements will have a significant impact on:
 - staff numbers (particularly those in front line and administrative positions),
 - roles performed,
 - skills and competencies required,
 - the established SDC culture,
 - current organisation wide and unit specific structures.

Robust trade union and staff communication, training and development, systems process re-engineering, management development and general skills and behavioural development strategies will need to be in place.

Current personnel processes and procedures will need to be reviewed to ensure that the organisational changes required may be dealt with as efficiently and cost effectively as possible.

Future career development arrangements will need to be reviewed in order to assist employees to develop.

- **Community Safety:** None.
- **Council's Core Values:** Supports the core values of delivering excellent service and supporting the disadvantaged by improving access to service. Supports the core values of being a learning, and an open and listening council by using broad consultation to underpin the reconfiguration of service delivery. Supports the core value of being a progressive employer by enabling staff engagement with the change process, including opportunities for developing the skill sets of council employees. Supports the core value of protecting the environment by improving access to services in the community areas, and improving the delivery of services using new technology and self-service, thus reducing the need to travel.
- **Ward(s) Affected:** All.
- **Consultation Undertaken:** The Customer Care Programme includes a project to secure consultation on the detail of proposals with existing service users, with residents and local businesses. The work is also informed by the consultation and survey work undertaken as part of the Best Value review into Customer Care and Consultation, desk-top research from local and national sources. Some visits to other Local

Authority one stop shops have already been undertaken, and further visits are planned.