

Wiltshire & Swindon Customer Services Programme

Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to outline proposals for a partnership programme of work focusing on customer care, which all partners can be asked to sign up to.

Introduction

Wiltshire and Swindon eGovernment partnership has been delivering a series of eGovernment projects over the past 2 years funded through the ODPM. This has proven a valuable introduction to collaborative working, and has highlighted a number of areas of common ground that can be developed beyond the lifespan of the projects funded by the ODPM.

A partnership vision for eGovernment was created in 2002, and on review, this vision still represents the partners' aspirations around how they want to interact with their customers. In order not to lose the momentum built up by current projects, a series of meetings have been held to try to establish where the potential for partnership working lies and what programme could be agreed.

What are we signing up for?: Customer Services in Wiltshire

The partners' shared vision of customer service delivery is for:

- A consistent approach to physical customer contact centres – those offering a face-to-face response to service and information requests. This will include basic and enhanced levels of provision from joint locations across the County, in addition to existing District Council contact centres.
- Each authority to have their own call-centre capability, forming a network of customer care centres to receive phone calls from the public.
- Contact and Call Centres to be supported using a common Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system.
- Greater availability of "self-service" information will be available over the internet. Web pages will present relevant information, and the means to access a wide range of services (such as electronic forms which can either be printed for completion, or submitted on-line).
- Support to the integration of back-office services to ensure maximum value is gained from the investment in customer facing services, and from previous investment in partnership e-government projects.

What would this look like?

<i>Enhanced Contact Centre</i>	
<i>Who?</i>	Offering access to services from the County and District
<i>Where?</i>	In a library or other existing public building
<i>What?</i>	Supported access to a range of services. Where possible access to a range of back-office systems.
<i>Key characteristics of the customer experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face-to-face service • A 'can do' approach • Branded service across the district • Resolution at first point of contact • No need to travel to main offices

<i>Basic Contact Centre</i>	
<i>Who?</i>	County Libraries staff available to access advice on services, but not a dedicated front-line resource

<i>Where?</i>	Initially in a County Library
<i>What?</i>	Basic access to a range of information via websites and signposting, and resolution of simple queries.
<i>Key characteristics of the customer experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face service • Robust and available ICT systems • Branded service across the district • Easily navigable range of information services • No need to travel to main offices

<i>District Council Contact Centre</i>	
<i>Who?</i>	District Council staff
<i>Where?</i>	District Council Offices
<i>What?</i>	Supported access to services, such as council tax, benefits and planning applications.
<i>Key characteristics of the customer experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Face to face service • A 'can do' approach • Branded service across the district • Resolution at first point of contact

<i>Telephone Customer Care Centres (Call Centres)</i>	
<i>Who?</i>	Trained customer service telephone-based staff
<i>Where?</i>	Developed within each authority
<i>What?</i>	All contacts managed by common CRM. Front-line service point for all local authority services.
<i>Key characteristics of the customer experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Out-of-hours support for access to services over the phone • A 'can do' approach • Call resolved at first point of contact or directed onwards • Call logged and followed up for action

<i>Integrated Back-Office working</i>	
<i>Who?</i>	Individual authorities leading, but working in partnership on agreed process areas
<i>Where?</i>	Developed in each authority but coordinated by a partnership steering group
<i>What?</i>	Improvements in joined-up working leading to more efficient customer contact
<i>Key characteristics of the customer experience</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better follow-through following initial customer contact • Transparency and integration of services across authorities providing related services

Partnership Programme

The initial proposed programme includes projects on:

1. *Coordinated roll-out of Counter Service and Information Points by each organisation*
2. *Joint Training programme for customer care staff*
3. *Development of a Customer Services Charter to cover all customer contact*
4. *Joint CRM specification and procurement*
5. *Coordinated Hub Development following on from current partnership projects*

The programme can be developed over time to include other areas, to pick up the involvement of other partners, such as Health, Police and Fire Brigade, and how Town and Parish councils could be part of the contact centre network. Other areas in time to be

addressed could be common approaches to human resources, finance and other shared services, including Electronic Document Management Systems (EDMS).

Principles

A set of basic principles have been agreed amongst the partner representatives as the basis of developing this programme, including:

- The programme should not proceed at the pace of the slowest partner
- Each organisation can join when they are ready to do so, as long as it is agreed at the outset that they will join.

Governance

A programme of this type will require leadership and direction if it is to achieve the level and nature of change required within each authority. It is proposed that a Customer Services Steering Group is established to manage the programme. This would comprise a member and officer from each partner authority. Their role would be to oversee the direction and development of the programme.

Project management of each project within the programme would be delivered by resources from within the partnership on a project by project basis.

In order to ensure that the projects in the programme are coordinated across the partnership, experience from recent partnership working suggests it would be appropriate to allocate resources towards shared support for Programme Coordination, ICT and Customer Services. It is suggested that each authority commits to allocating a maximum figure of £20,000 per year, over an initial two-year period, for support to be approved by the Steering Group.

Funding and Resourcing

Funding would be approached on a project-by-project basis and as such there would be no pooling of resources, except for the shared programme support resources as outlined above.

All projects would have to consider the future sustainability of project outputs.

It is proposed a legal agreement be drawn up covering liabilities for projects within the programme.

Conclusions

There was a great deal of enthusiasm and optimism over the potential for joint working, which resulted in agreement on a wide range of areas. It was felt that the remit for the steering group was to set a challenging agenda for the partnership, in order to drive through important changes in the way we interact with our customers. The national targets for achieving eGovernment delivery will be upon us soon, and we will achieve far greater benefits to the public together than we will by ourselves.

Recommendations

1. Approve the establishment of a Customer Services Steering Group to develop a programme of work
2. Seek member and officer nominations from each partner authority for Steering Group membership
3. Agree the initial projects to be included in the programme, as outlined.
4. Approve the allocation of £20,000 from each authority for resourcing the coordination of the programme.