

REPORT

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Councillor Mrs Warrander : Cabinet Member for Resources

Customer Service Provision in the Community Areas

Executive Summary

The new Customer Service Unit manages the delivery of a range of SDC services in three central Salisbury locations, in Amesbury and in Mere. In May 2004 (minute 311) Cabinet requested a feasibility paper on the provision of SDC customer service "to the additional community areas of Downton, Tisbury and somewhere within the Southern Area". This report seeks to define a clear set of proposals for enhancing service delivery to Mere and Amesbury, and outlines consultation proposals for the additional three community areas.

The South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance (SWSA) has adopted as one of its' priorities "Access to Services". One of the 3 project streams is "Linking Services" and Debbie Dixon has been asked by the SWSA to lead this work. At the recent SWSA conference the PCT, Salisbury Hospital, Salisbury Police, the Fire Service, Citizens Advice Bureau, Salisbury College, Age Concern, Community First, Churches Together, and representatives from parish councils expressed an interest in working on this stream. It is therefore proposed that these organisations are invited to meet with us to explore possible joint working as part of the programme outlined in this report.

This work draws on a number of predecessor reports from both Customer Services and Community Planning, these are listed at the end of this report. Cabinet is requested to recommend the proposals in section 6.

1. Amesbury and Mere

The Amesbury and Mere offices cover service provision to the residents of the Stonehenge Community Area and Mere and District Area respectively. A wide range of SDC services is currently available at these offices. These currently include local tourist information services, housing and garage rent enquiries, viewing of planning applications, requests for environmental services, benefits advice and non-cash payments. There are a number of forthcoming changes that will enable these services to be delivered directly through these offices, leading to an enhanced level of service delivery. The aim is to ensure that 80% of SDC queries to these offices can be resolved at the first point of contact. This will be achieved by taking advantage of the CRM and telephony upgrades already being implemented in this financial year. In addition the BPR project will focus on a range of customer requests across the council, and a target of three additional services will be provided through these two offices in the next nine months. The detail of services is to be identified and agreed in consultation with the local communities.

2. Downton (Southern Area)

This area has a population of over 21,000, with a higher than average percentage of older people, and just under 10% of the population on low incomes. Most of the area is remote from Salisbury, and the

dispersed settlement pattern means that many live closer to small towns in Hampshire than to Salisbury. Further local consultation is required to scope the appetite for providing part-time outreach services utilizing existing community facilities.

3. Tisbury (Nadder Valley Community Area)

This area has a population of just over 7000, with a higher than average percentage of older people, and just under 10% of the population on low incomes. Further local consultation is required to scope the appetite for providing part-time outreach services utilizing existing community facilities.

4. Wilton (Four Rivers)

This area has a population of just over 10,000, 1/3rd of whom live in Wilton. This area has a higher than average percentage of unemployment for Wiltshire, and lower than average car ownership. Further local consultation is required to scope the appetite for providing part-time outreach services utilizing existing community facilities.

5. All areas

Key themes emerge from the Community Plans, which will assist us in scoping opportunities for improved service delivery; these are

1. Making better use of existing community facilities.
2. Better provision of information via the internet.

The first of these will require additional work with the existing Community Planning teams and local residents, and this forms a recommendation to this report. The second is planned into existing improvement work within SDC's Corporate Plan, and will form a key plank for improving access to service for all SDC customers.

Customer Service will monitor all service provision to the standards set out in the Salisbury District Council Customer Care Charter, and targets will be set to measure customer satisfaction. This includes; time to respond to queries, requests and complaints, quality of customer service, access and fairness.

Customer Service is also working on methods to increase opportunities for customer feedback (searchable by ward) and targeted customer survey work.

6. Recommendations

- 6.1. Undertake local consultation in each area to develop detailed plans for shared access to SDC service in identified locations with well-informed staff on a peripatetic basis– eg Post Office, library, pubs, shops etc.
- 6.2. To prioritise access to SDC service around the needs of traditionally “hard to reach” groups in rural areas.
- 6.3. To liaise with managers of community facilities to assess the benefits of extending access to e-enabled service by providing public access terminals.
- 6.4. To resource the above actions by re-investing measurable and accrued savings achieved by directing customers to less expensive access channels such as self-service and internet and to report back with clear proposals to Cabinet by April 2005.
- 6.5. To work in partnership with other public service and community agencies to identify and implement additional benefits for customers, in line with the South Wiltshire Strategic Alliance agreed priority, and ensuring that SDC service resolution targets and customer care standards are maintained.

7. **Background Work:**

Draft Community Plans
Integrating Customer Service Programme
Customer Service Partnership Board Draft Programme
Presentation to Annual Parish Liaison Meeting 27 October 2004

8. **Implications:**

- **Financial:** The additional resources to carry out the recommendations in this report can be found within existing budgets by recycling efficiency savings.
- **Legal & Human Rights:** No legal or human rights implications arising out of the report
- **Personnel:** Depending upon the outcomes of consultation there may be an impact on staff training requirements and a need for staff to be even more flexible in their approach towards working location. Also, dependent upon consultation outcomes, there may be an increase in joint working with staff or volunteers from other organisations and a requirement to consider how their training needs may be met.
- **Community Safety:** None
- **Environmental:** None
- **Ward(s) Affected:** All, except Salisbury City wards.