

<b>Subject:</b>	Customer Service Review – initial findings & consultation	<b>Status:</b>	For Publication		
<b>Report to:</b>	Policy Overview and Scrutiny	<b>Date:</b>	10 <sup>th</sup> September 2012		
<b>Report of:</b>	Director of Customers and Communities	<b>Portfolio Holder:</b>	Customer Services		
<b>Key Decision:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> Forward Plan <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/>	Special Urgency	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Community Impact Assessment:</b>	Required:	Yes	Attached:	Yes - Open	
<b>Biodiversity Impact Assessment</b>	Required:	No	Attached:	No	
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Janice Crawford		<b>Telephone:</b>	01706 252416	
<b>Email:</b>	janicecrawford@rossendalebc.gov.uk				

1.	<b>RECOMMENDATION(S)</b>
1.1	It is recommended that Members consider the results and recommendations from the Customer Services Review so far, and note that these will be updated following further community and customer consultation which is currently ongoing.

## 2. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 2.1 The purpose of the report is to update Members on the initial findings of the Customer Service Review and present the draft recommendations which are now going out to wider consultation as part of the community impact assessment process.

## 3. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 3.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:
- **Responsive and value for money local services** – responding to and meeting the different needs of customers and improving the cost effectiveness of services.

## 4. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:
- Failure to consult with the public would mean that we did not understand the impact of proposals on the public and may not make the most effective changes. Public consultation is still ongoing and following on from some citizen's panel general consultation the proposals will now be consulted upon in greater detail with customers accessing the service over the coming weeks.
  - Failure to consult with staff and unions could mean that we would not understand the impact of proposals on staff and may not make the most effective changes. Staff and union consultation has already begun as part of the initial data gathering exercises, and is continuing in relation to the proposals being put forward.

## 5. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 5.1 It is anticipated that Rossendale Borough Council will experience around a 39% cut in its revenue budget by 2014. We have saved around £1.5m over the past 2 years, but are required to find a further £1.3m savings by 2014.
- 5.2 In addition, we are always striving to improve our customer experience and aim to facilitate more self-service, so that customers can carry out transactions or find information at a time and place that suits them, and to resolve more queries at the first point of contact to save customers having to contact us multiple times.
- 5.3 In order to achieve these aims, we have embarked on a review of our customer service provision. This report sets out progress and recommendations so far.
- 5.4 There are a number of staff across the organisation who provide a customer service function in relation to council services, which involve contact with the public. The functions delivered range from reception duties, answering phones and internet queries, and providing information, to carrying out transactions such as taking bookings and payments for services.
- 5.5 The purpose of this project is to review all the various customer service functions across the organisation with a view to consolidating them to improve the customer experience and deliver efficiencies.
- 5.6 The project developed into 5 distinct phases as follows

1	Demand Analysis	Aug 2011 - Apr 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• demand analysis and customer access patterns</li><li>• best practice reviews, both internal and external</li><li>• customer consultation on access channel preferences,</li></ul>
2	Write up results	May 2012 - Aug 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• 'as is' mapping</li><li>• 'draft 'to be' definition</li></ul>
3	Consultation	Sep 2012 - Nov 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Consultation with stakeholders on draft 'to be' definition</li></ul>
4	Decision & Implementation	Dec 2012 Jan 2013 - Dec 2013	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Decision proposals to be implemented</li><li>• Implementation of 'to be'</li></ul>

### 5.7 Conclusions on current findings

- 5.8 20% of customers tell us that they have a need to contact the Council on a regular basis, 80% do not. Of the 20%, only 6% use face-to-face communication at the One Stop Shop (OSS), 55% use the telephone and 39% use the website.

5.9 Digital communications methods are increasing in their use and for the right sort of communications this can achieve both cashable and non-cashable savings for the Council and its customers. In the case of electoral registration the Council has already moved over 29% of its customers to non-paper electronic responses (phone, internet or text), with over 5% coming in from text messages. Such take-up shows the appetite for change amongst our customers.

5.10 The Council currently operates two 'call centres', one through Capita for the central switchboard via 01706 217777 and one for the operations team on 01706 878660. There is merit in combining these two centres, and other call taking provision, to provide better resilience across the current services. The Unified Intelligent Desktop (UID) currently being implemented is a system which brings together a number of systems and allows us to understand our customer histories better. It is expected to help customer service staff to improve their ability to deal with customer queries at the first point of contact and thereby reduce costs.

5.11 For face-to face customers the proposals being consulted on through the accommodation strategy include potentially moving the OSS facility up to the Futures Park Business Centre. Around 40% of the OSS visits relate to benefits. There are around 7,400 benefits customers and approximately 50% live to the east of the borough and 50% to the west. Around 8% the current OSS customers are businesses rather than individuals. We are currently consulting with service users and the wider population to understand the impact of a potential move.

5.12 The new Council website is about to go live, which should improve the customer experience. Phase 2 of this project involves work to develop online forms which will enable customers to carry out a wider range of transactions online, at a time that suits them, which will assist with meeting the needs of the 16% of customers who tell us that they would prefer evening or weekend access to council services.

### 5.13 **Proposals**

5.14 It is proposed to move to a '3 tier' model of customer services, as follows:

- Tier 1 – enable the customer to be self-sufficient as far as is possible, to allow them to access the service or information that they need at a time and place that suits them. This will be achieved by further developing our website.
- Tier 2 – staff our telephone customer service centre with multi-skilled staff who are able to deal with a wide range of queries at the first point of contact.
- Tier 3 – enable customers to deal with more specialised members of staff who can resolve more specific queries.

## 5.16 Website

- Ensure that all of the information on the revised web pages is relevant and updated regularly.
- Implement phase 2 of the website upgrade, extending the range of self-service on-line forms available for the less complex service requests, linked to the on-line payments system and a way of booking the service times.
- Actively encourage take-up of the on-line service facilities, especially amongst the 20% of customers who access services more regularly as efforts there will bear the greatest impact in terms of efficiency for the Council and satisfaction for the customers

## 5.17 Telephones

- Combine the call centres currently being operated by Capita, the Operations Team at Henrietta Street and other similar customer service functions into one unit at the Futures Park Business Centre. This will provide a more resilient service.
- Complete the introduction of the UID for pest-control and other 'street' related services, to include waste-related services. This will enable more calls to be resolved at the first point of contact.

## 5.18 Face to Face

- Move the face-to-face contact centre (One Stop Shop) to the Futures Park Business Centre and consolidate the staffing of this reception with the call centre above and the Business Centre reception. This will ensure that customers receive the same level of service at first point of contact, whether they call in personally or phone up and will further strengthen the resilience of the service.

### **COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:**

#### **6. SECTION 151 OFFICER**

6.1 Financial implications have as yet not been quantified. However, this area was included in the June 2012 Cabinet report on the Medium Term Financial Strategy, where a range of savings were identified. This area came under the heading of "Review of Council Accommodation and Assets" with a savings range of £80k to £175k being noted. In addition to Customer Service reviews this range of potential savings includes accommodation and information technology which will be reviewed and reported on separately in due course.

#### **7. MONITORING OFFICER**

7.1 Comments contained within the body of the report.

#### **8. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)**

8.1 At this stage there are no Human Resources implications arising from the review. However, consultation has commenced with staff and the Trade Unions as the review may lead to changes in the future.

## 9. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 9.1 Internal Consultation - Management Team highlight reports and discussions. Staff have been kept informed via Team Brief and more detailed consultation has been carried out with staff in the Operations Team and Licensing Team
- 9.2 External Consultation - Citizens Panel during May 2012.
- 9.3 Further consultation is currently taking place with residents via the current Citizens Panel questionnaire and a more focused questionnaire for customers of the One Stop Shop. Results of these consultations will be considered prior to any final proposals.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Customer Consultation Feedback May 2012 Consultation Summary v1 Service Review 1 – Henrietta Street v1 Service Review 2 – Licensing & Land Charges Best Practice Review – Salford Customer Services RBC OSS Customer Profiling RBC Customer Service Promise RBC Channel Strategy 2010 draft v1 LGIU digital communications report	Financial Services
Accommodation Options Cabinet Report Accommodation Options Cabinet Report - details	Website – Cabinet agenda June 2012