

TRANSFORMATIONAL CHANGE PROGRAMME 2012 – 2015

DEMONSTRATING THE PROJECT LINKAGES - JUNE 2012

Over the last two months the telephone pressures in customer services have indicated that there is an ongoing need to make improvements, not only to the telephony channel but also to the face-to-face, e-mail and internet channels. Many of the telephone calls relate to follow up calls because of delays in processing pieces of work and many of the calls could also be dealt with more efficiently if we had effective service offerings available on a self service basis. There is still scope for services being streamlined and for the Customer Relationship Management System being used more effectively with it being corporately owned across the Council. It is also clear from some recent complaints and from monitoring information that delays are occurring in processing time and it will be important that we work to the original vision for customer services of processing as much as possible at the first point of contact with the customer. There is potential for a transactional based website to be used by customer service advisors to support face-to-face, telephone and e-mail channels when mediated support is needed in the future. We need to focus on making changes that will improve the end-to-end user experience of dealing with the Council which should lead to higher customer satisfaction and enhanced reputation. In order to achieve this we must relentlessly drive a shift in culture that puts customers first.

Members have indicated a desire to develop the website, which cannot be described at the present time as a transactional website. Even when services can be transacted using the website data usually comes into the Council needing to be re-input into back office systems. An initial desktop review of best practice sites has identified that some of the most progressive local authority sites are de-cluttering their websites and focussing on high volume tasks where users need to have contact with the Council. These sites are effectively creating their customer services/contact centres on-line. The Council has allocated a sum of money to support the development of the website and in order to maximise the opportunities provided by this for channel shift and greater efficiency it will be vital to provide cross-council leadership together with the necessary support. We will need to ensure that data input by the customer does not have to be re-keyed, that customers are properly authenticated and that processes are re-designed with users to ensure that doing business with the Council is easy and that opportunities for fraud and error are minimised. We also need to explore options for using apps and social media as part of our customer services access strategy. There is also the potential to develop a multi-agency site to improve access and cluster services around life events. This work also requires a relentless drive to put customers first in developing the website.

At the present time we know that there are certain groups of the population whose preferred contact channel would be on-line. However, these are not necessarily the service users who are the heaviest users of council services, with many of these users preferring face to face contact instead. Whilst this is undoubtedly the case at the moment the implementation of the Universal Credit in 2013 has the potential to drastically alter this. We are seeking to be a pilot site to test out how we can help more people to self serve and if we can successfully achieve this the potential efficiency opportunities to the Council and its partners could be huge. In order to achieve this we will need to work closely with local people, particularly people in receipt of benefits, with a view to simplifying on-line access and making it very easy for people to do business with the Council on a self serve basis. Another aim of the pilot will be to secure arrangements for appropriate face to face support for individuals who are not able to access services on-line and self-serve, which will potentially provide us with opportunities to offer a face-to-face service on behalf of Job Centre Plus. There is also an aim to help more people to become financially independent through

supporting more people to be job ready and getting some of those who are furthest away from the job market into work. This project has clear links to both the website project and the customer services project and also involves dealing with people who are heavily dependent on public services. There will be ongoing issues linked to getting more of these people job ready.

The implementation of Universal Credit will have significant implications for the Council due to housing benefit being rolled up into the Universal Credit, leaving us to deal with council tax benefit which is to be renamed as council tax support. There are many issues for us to work through in relation to this, not least of which will be the HR issues, establishing a new local Council Tax Support Scheme and dealing with some major financial risks as a result of a 10% reduction in existing levels of reimbursement from central government for current council tax benefit awards. We will need to dovetail this work with the pilot described above as there is potential for the two pieces of work to conflict, particularly because of the potential impact on people who are working or have a desire to be working. This particular project will also address the issues involved in local business rates retention to ensure that this can help us to support the local economy in ways that will help people get back into work, as well as managing some of the financial risks to the Council.

The community budget work is leading to some major changes in terms of how services will be delivered in relation to troubled families. We will have the opportunity to deliver a new service on behalf of partners, including the new post around employment and skills. Whilst we have considerable experience of delivering similar services this opportunity needs to be carefully managed and integrated with other pieces of work as part of this change programme to ensure that everything is joined up effectively. In particular we will need to understand how we can get people to be more work ready and address behavioural change at many different levels. Many of these families will be the people that we need to move towards self service channels which will provide a direct link into the Universal Credit Pilot and the Website project.

In order to ensure that we maximise our opportunities to work with vulnerable people we need to continue to work on the development of a single view of vulnerability and continue our innovative approach to information sharing and multi-agency problem solving. We intend to develop a proof of concept pilot to show what might be possible with different agencies understanding customer contacts to a much greater extent than is currently the case. This project will help us to identify people who are vulnerable and need a multi-agency approach to achieving better outcomes.

The recent work that has been carried out by SOCITM has highlighted that there are a number of cultural issues that need to be addressed in order for the Council to make the best use of new technology. In particular it has been noted that the Council needs to drive a culture around the use of the Electronic Records Document Management System. This will help the Council to work more efficiently but will also help us to ensure that we can provide the best possible support for customer service advisors and for customers self serving. We need to get to grips with the functionality offered by ERDMS and align it with other functionality within the CRM.

All of these projects will involve everyone thinking differently about how services are accessed and delivered, with a significant shift in culture to put people right at the heart of this change programme. The cultural change is so significant that it may need to be addressed in a separate project in its own right. Success will mean that the Council's reputation will rise significantly and the experiences that people have of dealing with the Council consistently exceed expectations every time.