

Agile Councils

(Document prepared by T3 Group)

1.0 The Challenges for Agile Councils

- 1.1 Statutory services** – challenging the notion that nothing can be changed.
Tradition – challenging historical delivery and council policy.

Through successive service redesigns and restructures the notion that things can't change has been successfully challenged. With the fire and the subsequent impacts re-enforcing this and converting those who perhaps had not been converted by this point. Some issues and areas remain.

- 1.2 Demand** – identifying and defining demand through careful analysis of what is supplied and what is needed.

The Transformation programme is using Mosaic to understand the customer, their preferences and the corresponding prediction of their interactions has been undertaken for the cohort within the UCP project. Linking this to actual demand is being analysed through constructing campaigns for each of the three sub-groups identified. Managing supply and closely tracking the demand and assessing this against the predictions of how the customer may behave. Although there could be gaps in this tracking where demand presents itself outside of the Customer Services as the campaigns are constructed in CRM which is not currently well used corporately.

Mainstreaming the approach would need a push to develop insight across the organisation and provide easier access to such analysis. Allowing service leads to pull such information and cut it into the customer groupings they are targeting.

Data quality and format has presented itself as an issue during this process which has required a substantial amount of manual intervention which would be a challenge on resources if the approach was scaled up. Limited capacity and consistency with the 1 FTE insight officer and skills sets within operational officers to extract data in consistent formats is also limited.

Developing the insight to understand the demand across other services such as arrears, homelessness, planning and waste has yet to be developed. This will be incorporated as required in the work on streamlining the 15 processes.

- 1.3 Intervention** – identifying what causes demand and the points earlier in the customer journey where intervention could prevent future demands arising.

Children's Centres early intervention – children 0-3. Based on the evidence of the importance of these years and difficulties of reverting the impact of a poor start in an individual's life provides the justification for the early intervention. Results may have a substantial time lag but early indications provide a positive picture.

Engagement activities undertaken and support of cohort early on in order to limit demand in areas such as arrears and potential evictions later on. The success of this engagement and the relative positive impact on those engaged is to be measured against those customers who were not engaged directly.

The Early Intervention approach is being developed in a co-ordinated way within the Council.

1.4 Service-failure demand – identifying and removing activities that are only demanded because the council, or another organisation, has failed in the delivery of another service.

Through close evaluation of customer communications and evaluations which have highlighted data quality issues it is evident that service-failure demand will be prevalent within operational activities. There seems an underlying culture of acceptance of such service-failure demand and in such would not be deemed failure. It is questionable if the activities undertaken when measuring such failure during the realm of NI14 would present the actual levels in light of the cultural view. Identification of issues through the Transformation Programme will enable these matters to be examined particularly with the 15 processes.

1.5 Dependency – managing public expectation through dialogue and communication, and identifying and supporting other ways to secure the necessary outcomes.

Strategy to shift resources to early intervention and work towards customer's personal independence.

The work of the children centres in focusing on the 0-3 age range aims to break the cycle of dependency for future generations.

Move towards understanding what people's "assets" may be that they can contribute back into society.

Looking at the concepts of the Local Area Co-ordination. Whereby a lower level of support can be provided to a broader level.

2.0 Reduced Cost

Costs are significantly reduced – we believe that the severe financial challenges posed by reduced funding and increased demand can be met by making the right choices.

2.1 Evidence:

Examples of budgetary decisions in previous years to meet the challenge:

- Balanced budget, no council tax increase and no removal services achieved for 2013/14 despite a cut in the government's formula grant funding of around £185k or 7%. This is in addition to cuts received in the previous two year period amounting to £1.3m or nearly 30% whilst maintaining a freeze on council tax increases.
- Budget scrutiny exercises by Management Team and Budget Strategic Planning Working Group and Central Establishment Charges adjustments resulted in savings of £122K for 2013/14 following original budget submissions from budget holders.
- Estimated budget surplus of £320K for 2012/13. This includes savings of £413K as a result of becoming debt free following the sale of land on Nottingham Road; part of which has funded supplementary estimates for investment in services of £203K. Net result is a saving of £110K in the net cost of services for 2012/13.
- Gershon efficiency savings achieved of £1,321K for the period April 2005 to March 2010.
- Post Gershon efficiency savings achieved in excess of £380K for the period April 2010 to March 2012.

2.2 Reduce process, information and IT complexity through consolidation, simplification and standardisation.

Evidence:

- The Council's Transformational Change Programme has identified future potential savings of £30K in 2013/14 and ongoing annual savings in a full year of between £200K and £400K as reflected in the Council's Medium Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- A Business Process Redesign was implemented in 2007/08 which gave the Council the springboard into this area of work and produced annual savings in excess of £70K.

2.3 Deepen customer intelligence.

Evidence:

- See also note above which links into the Transformation Programme.

2.4 Embed effective commissioning and demand management approaches across the organisation.

Evidence:

- Refer to work on commissioning Children's Services, Children's Centres and good Ofsted reports received.
- Refer to the review in 2009/10 of the Sheltered Housing Service which produced annual savings of £70K.

2.5 Establish new and cheaper and potentially more effective delivery models.

Evidence:

- WLC – new contract has resulted in average annual savings of £368K.
- Waste Management – new co-mingled contract has saved £117K per annum and avoided an increase in net costs of £192K per annum as a result in a fall in market prices for recycling commodities.
- A restructuring of the Environmental Maintenance Team in 2010/11 produced annual savings of £37K.
- A new collaborative insurance contract for implementation in 2008/09 involving four local authorities and led by Welland Procurement produced annual savings of £71K.

2.6 Continue to improve efficiency and effectiveness around back office support.

Evidence:

- Previous shared service arrangements in the back office has produced annual estimated savings in excess of £100K for Legal, Procurement and Internal Audit.
- A new shared service arrangement for IT with Hinckley & Bosworth is aimed at improving resilience and service effectiveness.
- A reduction in the Change Team by one change consultant in 2010/11 produced annual savings of £29K. Resources have been created by having virtual change teams.
- A review of the Land Charges and Planning Admin functions in 2009/10 resulted in annual savings of £17K.
- A review of the Communications Service in 2010/11 resulted in annual savings of £17K.

- The removal of a Team Secretary post in 2010/11 resulted in annual savings of £19K.
- Reviews of back office support, including Admin functions and communications produced savings of circa £53K.

2.7 Focussing on outcomes enhances the potential for better value for money by integrating local public services arrangements.

Evidence:

- The move to Parkside and sharing office accommodation with various partners has resulted in estimated net annual savings of £196K. This takes into account a net cost of £31K for Phoenix House.

3.0 Customer Experience

3.1 Customer behaviour is better understood and predicted through insightful customer and demand information.

Google analytics tells us how customers interact with the Council website and shows us 'visits and unique visits', how many pages people look at, when people look at the website. For example we know that there is a dip of activity at the weekends, where customers appear not to use the website as often. We can also analyse which individual pages are being looked at. This enables the Council to respond to emerging issues quickly. During February 2013 and the run up to the Welfare Changes, we noted a lot of activity around the changes to Council Tax Benefit but very little on the so called 'bedroom tax', which at the time was under the banner of Welfare Reform changes. Once we had changed the terminology to 'bedroom tax' the numbers of visits doubled in one day. This ensured effective communication of our message.

Through the use of our website focus group, customer survey and feedback from Customer Services, we are totally redesigning our website to become more accessible to a range of customers. This started with the Council Tax information as part of the preparations for the changes to Council Tax. This has been received favourably by our customers and led to an increase in activity. The Council has also identified web champions within the services to share knowledge around customer behaviour to improve the content of the website. This has helped reduce potential contact with Customer Services through letters or telephone contact.

With the introduction of Council Tax Support to replace Council Tax Benefit the Council has used 'Mosaic' to identify the personal characteristics of these customers. This has included dividing our Cohort of 1,800 into three distinct groups around their ability to self-serve using online services. We are aware of the characteristics of this group, including how they prefer to receive their communication – e.g. use of local papers, internet, face-to-face and letters. The Council is using the mosaic data extensively to help deliver the services that are appropriate for our customers. In particular the Council is focussing on the more vulnerable members of the community to deliver the holistic services that they need, including working with partners to deliver these services.

From this data and utilising external data – such as Unemployment Information for the Borough – we have identified the need to support troubled families with improving their employment opportunities and made a successful funding bid to the DWP for an employment skills officer.

Obtaining data from those people using our Children Centres and comparing with data held by health professionals we have been able to focus on families with Children under

the age of 5 who have not engaged to encourage them to take advantage of the services available.

Partnership bodies such as the Vulnerable Adults Group, Locality Based Partnership Group, Safer Community Partnership and Decent Place to Live look at detailed information regarding 'People' and 'Place' so that customer behaviour is better understood for the Council and Partners to be able to deliver services and positive outcomes to Vulnerable People and those people living in our priority neighbourhoods.

3.2 The full range of customer interactions and satisfaction are profiled to proactively manage and develop the delivery of outcomes through new delivery models.

Every transaction with Customer Services is logged through the Customer relationship Management (CRM) system and identified in broad categories of contact. This enables us to respond to issues that are arising but also to proactively plan around the delivery of services. This can range from improving the provision of information to people around Waste Management to providing services to help alleviate people from the pressures of fuel poverty by providing new services to undertake energy audits in people's homes.

The Children Centres constantly analyse their interactions with Customers and use the feedback to deliver specific services that are required from those users. The Children Centres use their profiled information to target those most in need and have identified that to receive the targeted support, families need to be in one or more of 17 identified characteristics.

Gov metrics data used on the website provides information around the satisfaction of customers with the website, has led to the formation of a user focus group to look at how to improve the content and style of the website and for a radical approach to improving the website. This includes barriers facing people 'channel shifting' to be able to use online services. The Council as a Universal Credit Pilot site is looking to support those people likely to be receiving Universal Credit in the future to be able to use online services. Using data from Mosaic about our community, we are looking to effectively engage with our claimants based on their Mosaic characteristics to be able to use online services and developing appropriate delivery models for the group. We will also take this opportunity to 'test' the veracity of the Mosaic profiling.

The council is also working with a member of the public who uses the information from the Council's website and puts it into a different format for his blog and provides information in a different way to his 1,000 followers. This collaboration will help us improve the delivery of the website services we provide.

Repairs Section undertakes a satisfaction survey with customers who have had work undertaken on their property to feedback into improving the service. This helped inform the recent tender for a new delivery of the service based on the needs and requirements of the tenants.

3.3 The day-to-day customer experience is managed to ensure that all contact channels make it easy to get the services or outcome that the citizen requires without duplication of effort or failure.

The Council provides a number of different contact channels which are aimed at making it easier for the range of our customers to receive the services or the outcome that they require. We have Offices in all our priority neighbourhood areas, to enable the more vulnerable people within our community to access face-to-face services. These sit within our Children's Centres to provide a hub for the communities. These centres include staff from our Customer Service teams who can support people for services that range across the whole Council. The Customer Services also provide a first-stop

telephone contact team that again covers all of the services provided by the Council. The aim is to resolve 80% of all queries at the first point of contact to remove duplication or failure for the customer. This is supported by the CRM which provides a history of those customers who have contacted the Customer Services Section previously, to manage the query and enable any of the Customer Service staff to be able to deal with the enquiry.

The Council's website is being further developed to enable those customers preferring to use this channel. Users of the Planning Service have some time been able to find information regarding local planning, from submitting planning application to viewing planning applications. Users are able to undertake a number of online actions from reporting a repair required on a Council property, reporting a missed bin to paying their Council Tax. The Council is constantly looking to improve the services that are available online and are introducing E-Revenues, (to report a change in circumstance) E-Billing (request to receive an electronic Council Tax bill) E-Benefits (ability to make a claim for Council Tax Support and/or Housing Benefit or to report a change of circumstance).

These channels of communication are being developed using knowledge of our customers received from a number of different sources, customer feedback, technological developments, best practice from the public and private sectors to enhance the customer experience of interaction with the Council.

3.4 Customer outcomes are delivered more effectively through targeted service delivery based upon need.

Examples of this are included in the sections above. The Council has been at the forefront of delivering targeted services through need. These include developing an in-house Family Intervention Project now assimilated into the SLF Programme service dealing with those families most in need within the Borough and also helping to support ex-offenders to successfully rehabilitate themselves back into the community. This has a positive effect on the individuals concerned but also on the wider community in general – potentially saving hundreds of thousands of pounds of public money due to the number of public services working with the families/individuals involved (through providing a co-ordinated partnership response) and also in some circumstances to improve the lives of the other members of the community.

In response to the Welfare Reform and Council Tax Benefit changes the Council has undertaken a number of targeted initiatives for both the customer concerned but also to other public and voluntary services working with the affected customers. One of the most successful of these was a Welfare Benefit event – possibly the most successful event of its kind in the County – which brought together partners including DWP, Adult Learning Services, C.A.B. and Credit Union with Council staff to provide information, advice and guidance on the changes to Council Tax and the 'bedroom tax' and to help support people with debt advice/money management. This innovative event – organised with the County Council – also helped support those facing financial difficulties by have 'energy action' agents to help alleviate fuel bills. This approach has been developed into a series of successful Job Fairs in recent months.

The Council was one of the first Council's in the Country to have Money Advice Services co-located in the Council Offices. This partnership has enabled Customer Service Staff dealing with someone on the phone in financial difficulty to be able to directly book an appointment with the Money Advice Service to enable them to receive independent, professional advice. The Council has worked hard to support C.A.B. and the local Credit Union – Clockwise to support those most in financial need. This included obtaining funding from the local Safer Community Partnership to provide an Officer at Clockwise to be able to deal with the impact of the Welfare reform changes.

4.0 Performance

- Processes are simpler, faster and cheaper to deliver, with less need for unnecessary managerial support.
- IT systems are more agile, cheaper and simpler, and support the council more directly, avoiding a range of complicated, underperforming and overlapping solutions.
- A common information set across IT systems provides 'one version of the truth' to support the decision making process – leading to faster and better decisions.

The Council with its contract through Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council, is able to work with other Partners including the Provider Steria to develop an approach to IT improvement and integration which should be of benefit to it. Opportunities also exist for cost sharing with delivery, 'product' purchase and influence in provision. This activity is closely aligned to the Transformation Programme.

5.0 Employee Satisfaction

5.1 The top scoring positive comments from 2012 staff satisfaction survey were:

I know how to go about getting my job done (94%)

I am encouraged to use my own initiative (93%)

I am clear what is expected from me at work (92%)

There are high scores suggesting that staff do feel empowered to undertake their roles. These scores have increased over the past 4 years. In the last 4 years staff have undergone significant change to their working environment including an organisation restructure and despite this the positive response has increased.

We have a rigid establishment and robust recruitment process which while ensuring equality and fairness internally and externally does not lend itself to a flexing workforce with clear career opportunities. This is the perception of the staff evidenced though the staff survey where only 20% feel there are opportunities to progress in the council.

Whilst the authority has successfully maintained a training budget the staff view on development is mediocre. Whilst there is not a negative view on development the percentage that neither agree or disagree that training and development is a priority, easily obtained or that the workforce is better trained than it used to be is in the high 40's.