

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COMMUNITY & CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

4 JUNE 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report updates the Customer Access Strategy from April 2005 to take account of ongoing Customer Service developments. It sets out the key changes in the Strategy as well as the implications for Wirral and the next steps as one of the cornerstone projects of the Efficiency Plan. Further reviews will be undertaken to ensure the Strategy remains relevant and up to date. The revised strategy was approved by the Executive Board on 12 April 2007.

2. CURRENT SITUATION

- 2.1 The Customer Access Strategy was approved by Cabinet on 28 April 2005 (Minute 579). Since that time, work has been undertaken by Customer Services to bring a number of new services to the front of house via the One Stop Shops and Call Centre as well as now utilising the Web as an important access channel for service users.
- 2.2. Since the last report Customer Services have maintained service levels while reviewing service access options on the basis of cost, as well as need with a focus on the use of the web for self-access. This includes the use of generic working by Call Centre staff whereby staff are able to answer calls on an extended range of Council services, as well as the promotion of relevant shared services with other agencies.
- 2.3. The Customer Service Development Team (CSDT) is currently working on introducing a number of new services to be handled by the Call Centre, One Stop Shops and the web as well as extending the depth of service in a number of others including;

Adaptations	(Regeneration & Adult Social Services)
Building Control	(Technical Services)
Licensing	(Regeneration)
Pest Control	(Regeneration)
Streetscene	(Technical Services)
Tourism	(Corporate Services)

The CSDT also helps develop the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which allows the Authority to gain maximum benefit from the system by extending its use in appropriate service areas.

- 2.4. The main access channels are the Call Centre, One Stop Shops and Web. The One Stop Shop network is complete with nine sites open, plus four smaller sites based in Job Centre Plus offices. These are now complemented by six Information Points based in libraries. The Call Centre, based in the Cheshire Lines Building has recently introduced generic working to extend the ability to respond to peak volumes. It is also connected to libraries as part of the Information Point network. The web-site is being re-launched whilst a Web Services Manager to co-ordinate its ongoing development is being recruited.
- 2.5. The ongoing development of the Customer Access Strategy will need the support of a number of IT systems including legacy systems as well as the document management and workflow systems, Civica and Documentum.
- 2.6. The change programmes are led by Departments with the aid of the Transformational Change Team supported by the Customer Service Development Team. The Transformation Change Team not only supports the service but ensures that the change is linked to the Efficiency Plan and that Service Re-Engineering methodologies are employed to maximum benefit.

3. REVISED PRINCIPLES OF THE CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY

- 3.1. The major changes in the revised Strategy are:
 - Setting the Customer Access Strategy as part of the overall transformational change agenda as well as being one of the Cornerstone Projects of the Efficiency Plan.
 - Ongoing change will focus on both customer facing and administration support service change to maximise efficiencies.
 - Setting out the clear need for resolution at first point of contact wherever possible to minimise repeat contact.
 - Re-stating the ongoing drive to ensure customer access channels handle service contacts as much as possible.
 - Ensuring that all services that engage in change have improved efficiency and value for money as an outcome
 - Clearer focus on developing and utilising the web as a low cost self access and transactional contact channel thereby allowing people to change and update information automatically.
 - Encouraging customers and service users to utilise the cheapest appropriate access channel for their enquiry
 - Emphasising the ongoing need to provide staffed access channels such as face to face and telephone for appropriate queries and reducing other face to face access points such as reception points

- 3.2. The Strategy states the principles and key message behind it. It is also dependant on both the change programme, which will help address the key risks associated with the strategy and a number of key targets to ensure that the Strategy brings about both change and efficiency. These areas will be covered by:
- Ensuring the Customer Service Development Team is backed by appropriate IT support particularly with regard to the CRM system. This is now in place and the IT staff are trained in the system and able to support the CSDT in its ongoing development.
 - Once the new web site is launched and the Web Service Manager is in place the Authority should increase significantly the use of transactional self-service. This requires the Web Manager to liaise with several key areas including the Transformational Change team, CSDT, Public Relations and I.T. This informal web development team will ensure use of the web is maximised.
 - Agreeing reasonable and challenging targets for the increase in self-access and the reduction of overall face-to-face contact and then monitoring to ensure the targets remain realistic and challenging. There will be short and long term targets in handling queries and resolving them at first point of contact.
- 3.3. Strategy implementation is a “no choice” option as the maximum benefits will be achieved when all services are handled as much as possible through the cheapest access channels. As one of the cornerstone projects of the Efficiency Plan roll out will further increase efficiency and improve contact with the service user.

4. FUTURE WORK AREAS

- 4.1. The current service areas under review will be completed and new services as shown in the appendices will be undertaken. These currently include “Life Events” focusing on Change of Address and Bereavement, Regeneration including Environmental Health Services and Licensing, Children and Young People, School Information Services and Adult Social Services.
- 4.2. Other services will be subject to secondary and extended reviews of working practice such as the Central Advice and Duty Team telephone service, completion of the Streetscene work and further Revenues and Benefits developments.
- 4.3. In addition to service specific work there will be extended work on ensuring the Web is of a high standard in offering information and self-access which will include linkage with the Government Connect project.
- 4.4. Future developments will be in line with the recommendations of the review conducted by Sir David Varney entitled Service Transformation: A Better Deal for Citizens and Business: A Better Deal for the Taxpayer which was reported to the Executive Board on 8 February 2007.

- 4.5. The Varney Review recognised that face to face access points, such as the One Stop Shop network on Wirral, should be the focus of linked public services. This will improve the overall service to local communities and minimise cost, whilst continuing to provide and encourage self-access.
- 4.6. The Transformational Change Team is enhancing the Business Process Re-Design methodology that helps integrate services into the corporate customer access channels as well as improving service area efficiency.
- 4.7. The detailed efficiency plan will be reported to the Cabinet in June. This will contain targets for each of the cornerstone projects including the Customer Access Strategy.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report. Efficiencies that accrue as a result of the adoption of the work programme as detailed in Appendices 6, 7 and 8 will be reported separately as part of the service re-engineering savings for 2007-08 and the efficiency plan for 2008-2011.

6. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report, although transfer of services to the customer access channels will have staffing implications.

7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report.

8. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report.

9. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report.

10. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no specific implications arising directly from this report.

11. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 There are no specific implications arising from this report.

12. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1 None were used in the preparation of this report.

13. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS

13.1 There are no implications under this heading.

14. RECOMMENDATION

14.1 That the revised Customer Access Strategy and the future work areas as set out in the Appendix to this report be noted.

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DIRECTOR OF FINANCE**

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