

Report title: **Customer Services – Duty Desk Review**

Report to: Cabinet

From: Roger Parkin - Director of Improvement & Development

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Introduction

This paper sets out the progress to date including a high level business case for change around the processes, structures and operation of the Customer route into the council. The work has been developed by a Corporate task and finish group (at the request of CMT), within the following parameters:

Exploration of the potential for:

- Improvement to the customer experience
- Synergy between functions
- Future savings through improved process design and efficiencies
- Review of present management structure

Consideration of different delivery models and the options for design and operation in the future including;

- Outsourcing the delivery of front end, contact, duty and hub systems to an external provider.
- Development of specialist services contact centre where the front end, contact, duty and hub system are brought together.
- Improvement of existing functions within reduced cost envelope

Senior staff from across the organisation has met to work on these considerations. Further work will be required to build a more detailed business case, once authority to proceed to this next stage has been given by CMT, after consideration of the emerging issues outlined in this paper

Recommendations:

1. Consider the service areas currently in scope and make suggestions for additions and amendments
2. Consider the business options outlined in section 4
3. A further report to be provided regarding progress and the next steps

1. Reasons: *Why is this project necessary?*

Following the announcement of reductions in local government funding, Slough has to make key decision about the scale and shape of its future operating model for delivery of services. In common with other local authorities Slough has pursued improvements to Customer Services through the setting up of a Customer Services centre with dedicated staff, private sector efficiency methods and exploitation of modern CRM technologies.

The original case for Landmark Place Customer Services Centre, although from a past era in terms of context, would have been based around delivery of a more coherent, efficient and customer centric model. Assumptions around cost savings due to streamlining of back office functions would also have been made.

The key areas of success and benefits assessment of the current model are therefore;

- The extent to which cashable savings have been released from back office functions to enable increased investment in front line services
- First time Issue resolution and reduction in hand offs resulting in efficiency savings and improved customer satisfaction
- Coherent Customer centric model where residents benefit from proximity of services and knowledge
- General Improvements to Customer Services including perceptions from resident and members of the public around general customer experience is still poor. Long waiting times both for queuing and telephone response are often cited alongside dissatisfaction around resolution of issues.

2. Outcomes Required:

Analysis of the current customer experiences indicates that a closing of the loop between front and back office needs to occur for customers to experience a more seamless service. When customers contact the council their issue need to be resolved if at all possible at the earliest point in the chain. The primary outcome measure for this area will be an overall reduction in contacts which achieve poor 'value add' i.e where the interaction with the customer does not result in significant progress in work flow or resolution of issues.

Savings are also required; the current budget for My Council when viewed alongside the costs of front end duty system for Housing Benefits , Council Tax , Housing and Adult and Children's Social represent significant expenditure for the council. Improvement in process design, particularly in minimising 'hand offs' and reducing transaction failure have the potential to realise efficiencies in line with savings achieved in other local authorities and the private sector.

3. Scope & Boundaries: *What will be included and what will not?*

From preliminary analysis and discussions within the task and finish group areas of service have been identified. The table shows these service areas and the some of the rationale for being hosted within a single Customer Services entity

Service Area	Reason for inclusion
<i>Adult Social Care</i>	Duty desks currently being consolidated as part of personalisation, 1 st contact currently handled by my council
<i>Housing Needs Business Support</i>	Potential synergies with Housing Services
<i>Housing Services</i>	Potential synergies with Housing Needs business

	support
<i>Children's Social Care Duty and Triage</i>	1 st contact currently handled by my council Triage systems need to link more closely with wider universal services
<i>Environmental Services Help Desk & Planning and registrars</i>	Current helpdesk high has high actual resolution of issues and is a good example of the specialist model
<i>Housing Benefits</i>	1 st contact currently handled by my council
<i>Council Tax</i>	1 st contact currently handled by my council

4. Business Options:

The task and finish group has considered the options below

	<i>Issues for Consideration</i>
<p>Option 1</p> <p>Do nothing retain existing My Council approach to Customer Services and existing Duty Desk systems.</p>	<p>Efficiencies and Savings targets will not be met</p> <p>Fragmented handling of Customer issues will still occur</p>
<p>Option 2</p> <p>Retain existing My Council set up</p> <p>Move Environment and Housing helpdesks into my council and increase the numbers of generalist call centre advisors</p>	<p>Fragmented handling of Customer issues will still occur</p> <p>Efficiencies and Savings likely to be small</p>
<p>Option 3</p> <p>Outsource selected areas of customer services, including My Council</p>	<p>Fragmented handling of Customer issues will still occur and could potentially be exacerbated by the involvement of different organisations</p>
<p>Option 4</p> <p>Outsources all front end services</p>	<p>Major challenges, Slough would be in the vanguard of LA's attempting this. Risk around service continuity and threshold decisions for Adults and Children's Social Care</p>
<p>Option 5</p> <p>Hosted specialist Customer Services entity</p> <p>All Council duty desks move into a dedicated Customer services entity to include</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accommodation • Common Customer management System • Accessible Directory of services • Opportunities for overlap and rounded approach to customer experience 	<p>Preferred Option meets CMT objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvement to the customer experience • Synergy between functions • Future savings through improved process design and efficiencies

5. Timescales and next steps

Development of full Business case

The full business case for this project will need further analysis's to determine the overall viability, included in this will be;

- Cost of current arrangements and anticipated savings if a new model is introduced
- The anticipated savings that can be made through processes efficiency changes

Examination of the potential improvements to process efficiency has already begun, however benchmarking and comparison is proving problematic due to a lack of common definitions at key stages of the workflow. One of these areas is the point at which an enquiry from a customer can be judged to be resolved. To tackle this issue and provide a more detailed level of information for other areas of the business case, the project board may commission 'time and motion' and caller surveys across service areas.

Timescales

- Full Business and project plan for implementation case October 2010
- Physical movement of current duty desks to commence in November 2010

Dependencies and linkages with other work

- Accommodation Strategy – location of duty desks will need to be considered as part of next set of moves
- ICT Strategy – future use of Siebel and council wide approach to CRM support needs to be identified