

Corporate & Customer Overview & Scrutiny Panel - Efficiency Sub-Group

Tuesday, 24 October 2006

Present: Councillor Mrs Stella Walsh (Chair), Councillors Margaret Lees and Edward Smith

1. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

Councillor Mrs Stella Walsh was nominated and seconded to act as Chair of the Sub Group.

RESOLVED - That Councillor Mrs Stella Walsh be appointed as Chair of the Efficiency Sub Group.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were submitted on behalf of Councillors Alan Cain and Geoffrey Russell.

3. DECLARATIONS OF ANY INTERESTS

No Member disclosed any interests in relation to matters under consideration at the meeting.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Sub Group considered and discussed the draft terms of reference in full.

It was AGREED that the terms of reference be as follows:

1. To review the efficiency programme relating to the Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre,

To clarify

i, the plans for achieving the efficiency programme and

ii, the reporting methods used in Chorley and by Partners.

Forward Looking

i, to consider the potential efficiencies

ii, to highlight any investment required to save in the long term

Shared Services

i, potential for efficiencies

2. To assess whether the Council is achieving the desired efficiency benefits and what the benefits are.

3. To identify possible improvements.

4. To report on the findings and make recommendations to the Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

5. CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT: 2005/2006 BACKWARD LOOKING

Officers reported that as part of the Gershon efficiency agenda the Council has to save £1.29 million over the next three years. Each year the Council produced a

backwards looking statement and a forward-looking statement. Efficiencies were categorised as cashable or non-cashable savings. A cashable saving would be the reduction in the establishment; the reduction of sickness absence would be a non-cashable saving.

The Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre contract was worth £14,000,000 over 7 years. Districts had paid £90,000 in the first year and £50,000 per year thereafter. There were ongoing meetings with the Partners and since the recent Lancashire County Council Scrutiny Inquiry report and changes to the management of the project at County there was a positive look forward.

The IT infrastructure was in place although there had been issues with the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software and there were discussions ongoing to resolve this. When the CRM was resolved the next phase would be operating on a virtual network with Lancashire County Council enabling them to deal with calls from Chorley and vice versa.

In 2004/2005 some savings were declared for services that had transferred into the Contact Centre. In 2005/2006 a further £34,000 was declared in the backwards-looking statement. The closure of the cash office, procurement exercise and the savings achieved through the Partnership for the Contact Centre project in comparison with going alone on a Contact Centre project.

It was AGREED that the Backwards Looking Efficiency Statement be noted.

6. CONSIDERATION OF THE ANNUAL EFFICIENCY STATEMENT: 2006/2007 FORWARD LOOKING

Officers reported that there were many benefits to be achieved from the Partnership in the future such as extending the opening hours, for example in the evenings and Saturday morning. There were internal efficiencies to be realised from integrating systems within directorates, such as Environmental Services (FLARE) with the CRM. Practically this would mean that a customer would phone the Contact Centre and request a new bin, this information would be inputted by the Contact Centre & go straight through to the FLARE system. Currently the information was emailed to Environmental Services & then inputted on to their system. The service to the customer would be enhanced as they could access services from the County and District at the same time.

An amount of £30,000 of savings had been included in the Forward Looking Efficiency Statement for business process reengineering with services transferring into the Contact Centre. Due to the delays these efficiencies had not yet been realised yet, but would be in the next year or so.

It was AGREED that the Forward Looking Efficiency Statement be noted.

7. CONSIDERATION OF THE PERFORMANCE STATISTICS FOR CONTACT CHORLEY

The Sub-Committee considered the performance statistics for Contact Chorley and congratulated the staff on the excellent statistics.

It was AGREED that the statistics be noted.

8. THE WAY FORWARD

The Sub-Group considered the way forward on the Scrutiny Inquiry.

It was AGREED that

1. James Douglas be the Lead Officer for the Sub-Group,
2. The Sub-Group visit the Chorley Contact Centre in the next few weeks. The Democratic Services officer would make the arrangements.
3. Information outlining Chorley's current and future efficiency plans for the Contact Centre be presented to the next meeting,
4. Information on Partners current efficiency plans and any future plans for their Contact Centres be presented to the next meeting to enable comparison,
5. Information on best practice from other local authorities in this area be presented to the next meeting,
6. That potential efficiencies arising from the Shared Services aspect of the Partnership and suggestions for improvements be considered at a future meeting.
7. That large documents sent to Members be provided in the Members Room, or electronically, to save paper and postage.

9. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was AGREED that the Democratic Services Officer would arrange the date of the next meeting in early December.

Chair

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