

Overview and Scrutiny: Single Front Office

Resources and Efficiencies

Introduction

1. The Single Front Office needs to develop in a way that is sustainable in the long term against a backdrop of reduced resources. It will need to be able to smooth processes and remove duplication and also effectively manage any increase in demand for services.
2. The consolidation of processes to the front office has enabled a reduction in management costs, and in the longer term will support reductions in support services. The staffing savings achieved through the initial change are £175,000. Future savings are likely but this will depend on the level of further integration and consolidation of services and ultimately the success of the initial implementation phase.

Progress so far

3. Significant efficiencies and savings have been achieved by the Single Front Office project and work continues towards achieving further savings.
4. This includes information processing and reducing the duplicate handling of information, increasing digital take-up and improving overall performance and productivity.

Customer and Transactional Services - Budget Savings

5. The table shows a breakdown of the savings achieved for Customer and Transactional Services from 2012-2013.
6. The most significant savings have been made from staffing. Miscellaneous savings have come from areas such as stationery, publications, legal fees etc.

Customer Services (SFO)	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Staffing Savings	(32,080)		(175,000)		(80,750)	(287,830)
Other Savings						
Northgate (Mailroom Services)	(8,580)	(15,070)				(23,650)
Printing & Copying	(19,730)				(18,000)	(37,730)
Misc.	(2,500)	(3,000)	(5,900)	(14,730)		(26,130)
TOTAL BUDGET SAVINGS	(62,890)	(18,070)	(180,900)	(14,730)	(98,750)	(375,340)

ICT Services - Associated Savings

7. There have been some associated cost savings within ICT Services over the same period as detailed in the table below.

ICT Services	2016/17	2015/16	2014/15	2013/14	2012/13	TOTAL
	£	£	£	£	£	£
Staffing Savings						0
Other Savings						
Telephony	(5,740)	(11,530)				(17,270)
Computer Equipment/Software	(11,340)	(3,500)	(2,260)		(30,700)	(47,800)
Consultants Fees					(15,000)	(15,000)
Misc.			(1,650)			(1,650)
TOTAL BUDGET SAVINGS	(17,080)	(15,030)	(3,910)	0	(45,700)	(81,720)

Future changes

8. Additional efficiencies will come from continued progress in a number of areas. There will be further opportunities to extend the successful service delivery model as seen in the Single Front Office where productivity continues to increase. These include:

a. Further consolidation of services to the SFO enabling further end-to-end delivery:

This will allow the principles that have guided the successful service delivery model in the SFO to be applied to additional service areas. Those functions that involve high levels of customer contact can benefit from the principles that have driven the success in the SFO such as strong performance management and reducing duplication in work processes.

b. Continued streamlining of processes and ensuring the maximum use of technology available:

Changes to the planning support service are being implemented as part of the SFO Planning Business Support project which will lead to improvements in business processes and more efficient handling of information.

c. Continued migration to digital services and channel shift:

Many services in the front office can be requested digitally and some are capable of end-to-end electronic delivery such as railcard applications and waste service requests. There is still extensive scope for the realising of further efficiencies in this area. Where services are available electronically, customers can be encouraged to access them using the online channel using financial incentives or even by removing alternative options.

d. Further enhancements of digital services and improvements:

Online forms are being developed in the large service areas of council tax and this will help to streamline processes and reduce duplication. My Account take-up is increasing and the software is being continuously reviewed and changes made in line with customer feedback and operational demands. The insight gained from the digital data collected will allow better profiling of services based on demand, eg. streetscene

e. Commercial agreements for line of business applications:

There are a number of service contracts due to expire in 2016, namely the Capita (Revenues and Benefits software) contract, IDOX (Licensing and Planning software), Siemens telephony contract and the Mail services contract. Work is underway looking at a number of procurement options. In relation to the Capita software, new modules have been implemented and work is still being undertaken to ensure that best use is being made of options already included in the contract eg. the housing benefit Appeals module is being tested.

f. Consolidation of management costs

As the changes to the delivery of the service are made there will be opportunities to reduce and consolidate management costs across the service.

g. Changes in policy which support digital aspirations

Agreement has been established to some policy changes which will increase efficiency across the council. These include payment up front for services and the extension of off-site printing. Further changes will be supported by working smarter initiatives and changes to support digital behaviour.

h. External factors

There a number of changes imminent in terms of welfare reform. The most significant of these is the roll-out of Universal Credit beginning in 2016 and completing by 2021. There will be an impact upon the subsidy paid to the council for the administering of housing benefit. There may also be changes to court costs in respect of the recovery of council tax and business rates.