

Report of	Meeting	Date
Corporate Director of People	Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel	20 November 2007

## **CONTACT CENTRE INQUIRY MONITORING REPORT: EFFICIENCIES AND PARTNERSHIP WITH LANCASHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1. To report an update to the Panel following their recommendations made to the Executive Cabinet in May 2007.

### **RECOMMENDATION (S)**

2. To note the progress on the various issues.

### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY OF REPORT**

3. To report the progress of the recommendations made by the Scrutiny Committee,

### **CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

4. This report relates to the following Strategic Objectives:

Put Chorley at the heart of regional economic development in the central Lancashire sub region		Improved access to public services	√
Improving equality of opportunity and life chance		Develop the character and feel of Chorley as a good place to live	
Involving People in their Communities		Ensure Chorley is a performing Organisation	√

### **BACKGROUND**

5. The Corporate and Customer Overview and Scrutiny Panel undertook an inquiry into the Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre. The objectives were split into two areas.
6. Efficiencies: to assess the contribution of the Shared Services Contact Centre to the achievement of the Council's efficiencies agenda.
7. Partnership Working: to assess the effectiveness of the Partnership arrangements, of both officer and Member arrangements, and to assess whether the desired benefits of partnership working are being achieved.

## Objective/Key Issue 1: Efficiencies

1a	When Directorates are sending out information, such as Council Tax letters, to ascertain whether other information could be sent out at the same time to reduce the number of letters sent to customers. This could be raised at monthly meetings between Customer Services and those Directorates whose services are delivered by Contact Chorley.	Initial discussions have raised questions about the practicalities of this. Most correspondence sent is subject to a particular time-scale or series of triggers. To co-ordinate specific letters being sent together may not be feasible. Sending fewer letters to customers may be possible, and to send general information about services out with specific correspondence could be done relatively easily. All these possibilities will be explored further.
1, b	That the Council identify the current cost of dealing with customer contact for the various contact channels i.e. face to face, telephone, and that this be developed to quantify efficiency savings gained when customers email or text.	A 'Cost to Access' review was recently undertaken. The methodology used was devised by ESD toolkit and was reviewed by 10 local authorities and approved by the Audit Commission. Findings were face-to-face cost £6.49 per transaction and telephone cost £2.80, based on volumes over 12 month period. The next stage is to develop the cost of contact for email and text.
1,c	To identify any future improvements to customer service following the transfer of services into the Contact Centre and to report these in the six monthly update reports to Overview and Scrutiny.	Additional areas of already established services are being transferred, eg. Council Tax payment plans & direct debit amendments are now dealt with by customer services, increasing the volume of queries dealt with conveniently at the first-point-of-contact. Building Control calls are now being taken in the Contact Centre. Due to the nature of the job the officers are out of the office for most of the day and previously customers would have had difficulty in getting through to someone.
1, d	To prioritise areas for investment in integration to back office systems and identify simple transactions not requiring integration and thus reducing software licensing costs.	Plans are underway to explore the possibility of using CRM for high volume Waste Management requests, removing the need to use Authority software in the Contact Centre. It is hoped that as the E-planning project becomes established this will remove the need for alternative Planning software and so the related licence fees.
1, e	To start the business process re-engineering exercise on high volume calls as this will help produce significant efficiencies and to create a task force (similar the to Change Team at Lancashire County Council).	In line with CRM implementation, work has started with the Waste Management team and Business Improvement to re-engineer the initial high volume processes which will be the first to 'go live' in CRM.
1,f	A resource has been transferred to Customer Services to deal with Planning Services calls. To monitor this to establish the cost to Customer Services in providing this service and to ensure that the level of service to the customer has been maintained.	Development and Building Control services are already dealt with in the One Stop Shop. The Call Centre is currently fielding initial calls for Building Control. The next stage will be Development Control, this has been delayed pending the completion of the e-planning project



2, a	Working with the Lancashire Shared Services Contact Centre Partnership to set a realistic timetable for the implementation of the Customer Relationship Management system.	A 'go live' date of February 2008 has been agreed. It is intended to go-live with 10 to 12 high volume Waste management service requests to ensure target is achievable. A small additional number of services has been identified in case progress is swifter than anticipated.
2, b	To support future developments with the CRM System to prompt the customer service advisor to suggest quicker and easier ways to access the service in the future on line.	This recommendation will be better progressed once CRM has been implemented. In the meantime there is an on-going 'Smarter Working' initiative within Customer Services where staff are encouraged to suggest improvements to working practices.
2,c	To promote the use of text messages for service request in future, such as recycling calendars and integrate this into the Customer Relationship Management system and to advertise this facility effectively on items such as green bags.	Initial discussions have taken place with partners to select a supplier. A specification of requirements is being drawn up. Ideas are also being discussed about other possible uses pending live CRM and the introduction of an integrated text messaging solution.
3, a	To review and simplify the Chorley Customer Focussed Access and Design Strategy in order to migrate customers onto more efficient channels of service delivery.	A revised version of the Customer Access Strategy is now available in draft format.
3, b	To examine the reasons why customers contact the Council to determine any root causes that can be resolved and therefore reduce unnecessary contact by customers.	The high volume of calls for certain service areas has been established using the telephony software currently in use in the Call Centre. Failure demand, customer contact due to service failure, will be more easily identified from the CRM system, as will repeat contact from customers for the same problem.
3,c	To look at Interactive Voice Response (IVR) as a means to deal with simple requests and therefore enabling the customer service advisors to deal with more complex service enquiries.	IVR is currently in use to handle Chorley Community Housing payments and the repairs line. Recycling receptacle requests are high volume and straightforward and initial work has begun with the efficiency team to map the existing call process with a view to develop this for increased use of IVR.
3, d	To take up the opportunity to deliver more services via home visits, such as the offer of a free bus pass and other service providers, for example, the Fire Service.	This requires effective collaboration with other public service providers. Whilst initial contact has been made with the NHS (flu Jabs) and the Fire Service (smoke alarms) to provide these services in the One Stop Shop further development is required to extend this to include home visits.
3, e	To have a section in the committee report template to highlight if the report affects customers.	The template now contains an option to highlight if the report has implications for customer service, see 'Implications Of Report'. This item is now considered closed.

<b>Objective/Key Issue 2:Partnership Working</b>		
4, a	To support the refined long term vision of the Partnership to deliver Lancashire County Council and District partner services and to support the refined vision statement.	A short-term vision statement has been agreed.
4, b	To ensure that the governance arrangements for the Partnership are effective by revisiting the terms of reference for the Joint Committee and to review the vision and project plan every 6 months and monitoring effectively the timescales set down in the project plan.	Governance arrangements and terms of reference for the Joint Committee have been revised and agreed. There have not yet been any subsequent meetings as the focus has temporarily shifted to the CRM implementation.
4,c	To develop a mechanism for Partner Districts, Lancashire County Council and the contractor for effective communication.	Northgate now present in both Programme and Partnership Board meetings to discuss progress and any difficulties with the project implementation. LCC also have regular contract meetings with Northgate.
4, d	To make the Joint Committee meeting effective it is suggested that the quorum is changed to a majority vote system with absent partners given the opportunity to respond electronically to any decision.	This will be updated verbally at the meeting.
5, a	For Lancashire County Council to provide Districts access to their Information systems where necessary to enable delivery of joint services.	The practicalities of this are still be considered as part of the roll out of CRM.
5, b	To explore opportunities for joint training between Chorley and Lancashire County Council in the future.	This has been agreed in principle.
5,c	To support extended opening hours for Contact Chorley facilitated by the Hub and to publicise emergency contact arrangements in place during out of office hours.	Comments from Lancashire County Council will be reported at the meeting.
5, d	To explore joint working on the measurement of customer satisfaction via the Customer Relationship Management System and to deal with complaints more effectively across the Partnership.	Focus currently on implementing CRM. The scope of measuring customer satisfaction and complaints across the partnership has not yet been explored and may prove challenging at this stage.

5, e	To look at other areas of excellent contact centre public/private sector initiatives and implement these if appropriate across the Partnership.	Taking place as part of the continued development of the Contact Centre. The service is represented at the NWECC 'Customer Services Managers' Forum where new ideas and initiatives in customer contact etc are being shared.
5, f	That any future Lancashire Gateways developments or public service partnerships, such as Housing Associations, for Chorley be based in the One Stop Shop.	Comments from Lancashire County Council will be reported at the meeting.

## IMPLICATIONS OF REPORT

8. This report has implications in the following areas and the relevant Corporate Directors' comments are included:

Finance		Customer Services	√
Human Resources		Equality and Diversity	
Legal		No significant implications in this area	

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There are no background papers to this report.

Report Author	Ext	Date	Doc ID
Asim Khan	5448	9 November 2007	OSS