

PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL

Subject: Response to Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel Task and Finish Group Recommendations

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 27 March 2012

Cabinet Member: Councillor Bowyer and Councillor Ball.

CMT Member: Adam Broome, Director for Corporate Services

Author: Malcolm Coe (Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets) and JP Sanders (Assistant Director for Customer Services and Business Transformation)

Contact: Tel: 01752 304566
e-mail: Malcolm.coe@plymouth.gov.uk

Ref:

Key Decision: No

Part: I

Executive Summary:

The Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Board requested that a Task and Finish Group (T&FG) be established to review the 2011 Restructure of Revenues and Benefits, Customer Services, Cashiers and Incomes and Creditors. The TF&G undertook the review on the 2 and 3 February and formulated 12 Key recommendations. These were approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on the 29 February and an additional two recommendations were made.

This report contains the recommendations of the T&FG and the appropriate responses from Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets and John Paul Sanders, Assistant Director for Customer Services and Business Transformation.

Corporate Plan 2012-2015:

Value for communities

Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications: Including finance, human, IT and land

There is no immediate implication for the MTFs or resource implications as this restructure and our response to the recommendations fall within the approved Budget Delivery Plan.

Other Implications: e.g. Community Safety, Health and Safety, Risk Management and Equality, Diversity and Community Cohesion:

The original restructure has a comprehensive Equality Impact Assessment and the recommendations and the responses fall within the scope of that assessment.

Recommendations & Reasons for recommended action:

The recommendations and responses from the Task and Finish Group and the Overview & Management Scrutiny Board are listed on the following pages.

Alternative options considered and reasons for recommended action:

None considered.

Background papers:

Task and Finish Group Project Initiation Document (PID)

Task and Finish Group Report

Draft Overview and Scrutiny Management Board minute

Sign off:

Fin	DJN 111 2.03	Leg	TH0 042	HR		Corp Prop		IT		Strat Proc	CTI 112. 06
Originating SMT Member Malcolm Coe & John Paul Sanders											
Have you consulted the Cabinet Member(s) named on the report? No											

1.0 Background

In March 2011 the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Management Board requested that a Task and Finish Group be formed to review the impact of the restructure into Revenues and Benefits, Customer Services, Cashiers and Incomes and Creditors.

The Task and Finish Group comprised as follows:

Cllr David James (Chair)
Cllr David Stark
Cllr Pauline Murphy
Cllr Alison Casey

Darren Stoneman Lead Officer
Ross Johnston Democratic Support Officer

We would like to firstly thank the members of the Task and Finish Group for the sensitivity and enthusiasm they showed through the process and extend our gratitude for the supportive and constructive report they have produced.

1.1 Response to recommendations

We would like to respond to the recommendations contained within the report as follows.

*(Footnote to R1 added by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board 29/2/12)

R1:	<p>Given the concerns identified with the call management in the Proof of Concept Team, the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Panel add this issue to its work programme and request an update at a future meeting from the Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care;</p> <p><i>*(The high level of abandoned calls to the Adult Social Care team was a major safeguarding issue and one which should be addressed as a matter of urgency. The Overview and Scrutiny Management Board therefore supported Councillor McDonald's proposal that a recommendation regarding the installation of a dedicated phone line to enable customers to ring directly through to Adult Social Care be added to the report arising from the Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Task and Finish Group).</i></p> <p>Agree – happy to present further updates</p> <p>There were some inaccuracies in the statistics in the original report, with the average wait time actually being 2 minutes over the last 12 months. We continue to work closely with ASC to maximise the productivity of available resources.</p> <p>The transformation of ASC and the new ways of working will improve the work flow into the Proof of Concept team for customers. The existing call routing is sufficient and prevents confusion for customers who are now use to using the one number approach for all council services.</p>
R2:	<p>A dedicated cross-department training resource be established to help deliver a service function that has a more effective and consistent role in dealing with training requirements, interpreting and dealing with legislation changes and monitoring quality assurance. It is believed that the training team will alleviate conflicts, friction and pressure between staff as well as ameliorate staff morale</p>

	<p>and assist a service which has suffered from poor performance levels;</p> <p>Whilst it is agreed that there needs to be a more strategic training plan put into place, we do not have the resource or capacity to deliver a centralised training team.</p> <p>A full training plan will be implemented to address the current needs of staff and prepare for forthcoming legislation changes. In addition, a temporary resource has been identified to support with Quality Assurance and legislation interpretation.</p> <p>Lead – Martine Collins</p>
R3:	<p>Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets and Efficiencies and Martine Collins, revenues & Benefits Manager to undertake a review of the role profiles for grade D and grade E posts and ensure that clear differentials are contained within the role profiles to bring clarity to the roles and alleviate confusion and friction between staff;</p> <p>Agreed. We will continue to work with staff in firming up the differences between the D&E grade. Whilst there will be inevitable overlaps, we have made progress with the grade E taking more coaching and mentoring responsibility.</p> <p>Lead – Martine Collins</p>
R4:	<p>The Strategic Manager (Revenues and Benefits) role be re-evaluated through Job Evaluation process in an attempt to ensure fairness is established in the grading of strategic manager positions;</p> <p>Agreed. The report reflects the differences in the span of control, both in terms of staff number and financial responsibility of the Strategic Manager (Revenues & Benefits) in comparison to the Customer Service and Transaction Centre Positions; We will liaise with our HR Partners to facilitate this recommendation in line with HR policy.</p> <p>Lead – Malcolm Coe</p>
R5:	<p>A single, central Customer Services location be developed as a part of the Corporate Accommodation Strategy to meet the needs of our customer base and allow for flexibility within disciplines.</p> <p>Agreed. This is a key part of the Corporate Accommodation Strategy and will gather momentum when the future of the Civic Centre is clearer. We are taking this opportunity to look at co-location with Sentinel to explore additional efficiency savings.</p> <p>Lead – JP Sanders / Chris Trevitt</p>
R6:	<p>An interim staff survey is conducted with all staff in May 2012, six months after the implementation of the new structure, and the results of which are shared with the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel;</p> <p>Agreed. A further survey will allow us to check on progress and amend plans to deal with any underperforming areas. We will implement this recommendation as part of the six month review.</p> <p>Lead – JP Sanders.</p>

R7:	<p>Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets and Efficiencies to undertake a review of the use of the flexible working policy within the affected departments</p> <p>On-going. The decision to place tighter controls on flexible working within Revenues & Benefits was due to the existing structure and working patterns not meeting the needs of the business or our customers. We are still committed to offering flexible working patterns, however all requests will be considered against business impact. The forthcoming changes under the proposed 'TimeBack' scheme will further support this position.</p>
R8:	<p>John-Paul Sanders, Assistant Director for Customer Services to review an extension to the Customer Services department operating hours to deal with general public enquiries between the hours of 8am and 8pm Monday to Friday and 8am – 5pm on a Saturday.</p> <p>John Paul Sanders has agreed to complete a full review line with this recommendation, initial thoughts are that it would be unaffordable with the current allocated resources, however if after the review it was felt that there was scope or need for an extended service, a Business case would be prepared.</p> <p>Lead – JP Sanders</p>
R9:	<p>Malcolm Coe, Assistant Director for Finance, Assets and Efficiencies to arrange the next stage of staff engagement workshops to follow through suggestions and recommendations raised by staff at the initial workshops</p> <p>We agree that continued engagement with our staff is key to the success of the changes made through this restructure process. We have set up and run a series of engagement forums through which staff have the opportunity to feedback their views and suggestions, the first series of staff ideas have now been assessed and implemented. We will look at further structured feedback as part of the 6 month review of the restructure.</p> <p>Lead – JP Sanders</p>
R10:	<p>Interview feedback is provided as a matter of urgency to all applicants successful or unsuccessful during the recruitment process;</p> <p>This has now been completed as recommended;</p>
R11:	<p>Uniforms for customer facing staff at First Stop should be incorporated into the role as soon as practicable and that consideration should be given to all back office staff having to dress to an appropriate standard;</p> <p>The implementation of this on a trial basis is imminent, uniforms have been designed and ordered and will be trialled within our First Stop team to assess on practicability, durability, customer & staff perception. We will look at rolling this out across all customer facing areas within this department.</p> <p>Lead – JP Sanders</p>

R12:	<p>Mark Grimley Assistant Director for Human Resources and Organisational Development should give consideration to establishing a staff reward scheme which would improve staff morale and encourage staff to promote service improvement ideas that could develop future service delivery;</p> <p>This is currently being considered but will need to be undertaken on an Authority Wide basis, and will have to be designed with longevity to ensure buy in from staff and prevent a repeat of previous aborted schemes.</p> <p>Lead – Mark Grimley</p>
------	---

Additional Recommendation from Overview & Scrutiny Management Board 29/02/2012

R1a:	<p>To include an additional recommendation to Cabinet, that the circulation and implementation of the Action Plan be implemented with immediate effect;</p> <p>Agreed. Revenues & Benefits detailed improvement has been circulated.</p>
R2a:	<p>The Action Plan is submitted to the next meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on 28 March 2012 for further scrutiny;</p> <p>Martine Collins (Strategic Manager Revenues & Benefits) will circulate the Action plan to the members of the Overview & Scrutiny Management Board as requested.</p>