

6. REVIEW OF CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE OPERATION

Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel: 5th August 2008

Reporting Officer: Andrew Brooker, Head of Finance (Acting Head of Customer Services)

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To update members on the outcome of a review of the current operation of the Customer Service Centre.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

2.1 At its meeting in July 2007 this panel discussed with key officers the development of the Customer Service Centre (CSC). This project being seen as case study to examine the way that the Council managed large projects.

2.2 The ensuing report was presented to Cabinet at its meeting in November 2007.

2.3 During the course of the review a hold was put on the further development of the CSC. As a result of a number of management changes the new Chief Executive commissioned a review of the operation of the CSC from consultants Vertex, specialists in the operation of CSC's.

2.4 A presentation has now been made to senior Council managers which makes a number of comments, a number of which support the conclusions drawn from the review of this panel. The report also makes some recommendations about the way forward.

2.5 The main findings can be summarised as:

- evidence of good management practice and positive attitude
- sound technical infrastructure
- high staff turnover
- lack of sufficiently experienced staff to maintain "expert" groups
- inability for agents to follow fulfilment of calls passed to back office
- inconsistent support for CSC in back-office
- 60% of calls being received on switchboard or general numbers
- lack of overall strategy

2.6 The report recommends the production of an action plan that includes the:

- development of customer strategy
- reorganisation of agents into skill groups
- realignment of staff reward with skills and performance demonstrated
- use of IVR to route calls
- work on improving relationship between CSC and service units
- continue freeze on migration until credibility re-established by consistent high performance

- extend CSC system access to back office – to enable CSC to track enquiry completion
- need to encourage/develop customer self help through web pages

2.7 CSC managers have now produced a draft action plan for consideration, initially, by the Council's senior management. It is envisaged that this plan will be available for consideration by this panel at its next meeting.

2.8 The plan will pick up each of the Vertex recommendations and will also include further improvements identified by CSC management. Inevitably there will be resource implications to the delivery of the of the action plan that will need to be addressed. There will also be a numbers of risks, some of which will be familiar to readers of the report to Cabinet in November 2007. Mitigating measures will be identified to ensure that these risks are minimised.

Background Papers:

Cabinet 22 November 2007 – Report from Overview & Scrutiny – Customer Service Centre