

## **WAVERLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

### **VALUE FOR MONEY AND CUSTOMER SERVICE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**

**30 OCTOBER 2017**

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**Title:**

**CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW**

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Tom Martin

Wards Affected: All

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**Summary and purpose:**

To provide an update to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress of the Customer Services Review.

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**How this report relates to the Council's Corporate Priorities:**

Customer Services is a Corporate Priority.

**Financial Implications:**

There are no specific financial implications to report at this time. Ultimately the recommendations made are expected to deliver cashable savings once fully implemented.

**Legal Implications:**

No immediate legal implications

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**Progress Update**

A previous presentation was made to the Corporate Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 22 November, 2016. Members were supportive of the overall direction of travel and of the themes being explored.

Shortly afterwards a series of interim recommendations were put before Executive at their meeting of 10 January, 2017 including;

- Revise the performance management system to ensure decision makers have a holistic, evidenced diagnosis of how a service is performing
- Channel shift
- Assess options re customer point of contact
- Assess options re dedicated customer services staff
- Assess options re the Council's local presence in the community
- Assess options re customer contact management systems
- Review strategies, policies and service standards
- Identify and review operational processes which will drive service improvement
- Assess options to facilitate a drive of cultural change (including a commensurate training programme)
- Design a communication plan to support, facilitate and launch the approach to Customer Services

At this meeting Executive agreed to request the Head of Customer and Corporate Services and the officer Foresight Group to continue the review of customer services.

Since that time the Foresight Group have developed their recommendations which were put before Management Board/HoST in early summer. The recommendations generated a series of internal debates culminating in a further report to Management Board in August.

Management Board made a series of recommendations which is due to be put to the Executive in November once Overview & Scrutiny have had chance to comment.

In summary these are:

#### *Channel Shift*

A business case has been submitted and agreed in respect of the Channel Shift sub-project and implementation is underway.

The purpose of the Channel Shift project is to automate transactions as far as is possible so those residents who wish to access services and conduct business via a web portal are able to do so. The project will roll out gradually across the organisation as each department will be different in terms of the services that will benefit from this approach. We will also be looking to replace the 130 plus generic e-mail addresses with web forms.

The business case is predicated on reduced telephone and personal contact from those customers who have chosen to interact on-line. This will translate to a reduced staff complement required to deal with such enquiries.

Channel Shift will begin to be rolled out in the Housing Department and the project is currently being scoped out in that area. We have also begun the process of appointing a contractor to deliver the software to facilitate our requirement.

We are anticipating a capital requirement of between £40-50k (for which we have in year budget), ongoing revenue costs of £15-20k and a minimum project duration of 18 months.

#### *Customer Services System Technology*

Whilst in time we expect the numbers of calls made to the Council to diminish (as has been the trend for some time with the increasing use of e-mail), at the present time 50% of all customer contact is made by 'phone and so traffic is still significant.

We are seeking to procure appropriate software and technology to enable our customer call groups to be more effectively managed. This includes the display of real time data in terms of caller numbers, waiting times etc as well as offering the ability for supervisory staff to connect to live calls.

We are exploring the market options and once we have identified a potential solution we will produce the commensurate business case.

#### *Customer Service Pilot Exercise*

The Foresight Customer Service Groups made a number of recommendations about customer access arrangements and customer service structures that generated high levels of debate and interest in the officer community. To test out the hypotheses put forward it has been agreed to run a pilot exercise, again in the Housing area. We are expecting this

to be underway within the next month or so once the objectives have been agreed and scoped.

### *Corporate Infrastructure*

The Foresight Group also put forward a series of recommendations about reviewing/refreshing the performance management framework, our customer services strategy, policy/procedures, service standards and operational processes. We are proposing to carry out this work concurrently with the activities described above.

We have also made arrangements for the Team Leaders of the individual Customer Care Call Groups to meet regularly to discuss and agree collective approaches to areas such as training. This Group will need to account for the local projects in services such as Housing and Revenues/Benefits which are generating changes specific to those areas but which might have impact and learning elsewhere in the Council.

### **Recommendation**

The Value for Money and Customer Service Overview and Scrutiny Committee is invited to comment on the proposals arising from the Customer Services Review.

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### **Background Papers**

There are no background papers (as defined by Section 100D(5) of the Local Government Act 1972) relating to this report.

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