

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

Purpose of the Report

1. The report seeks to update Members on matters which fall within my portfolio.

Information and Advice

Customer Service Centre

2. Members will recall that waiting times and call duration increased during some peak periods in October and November. This was partly due to a significant increase in call volumes and the restructuring of the Customer Service Centre not having been completed. The reorganisation of the Customer Service Centre and recruitment and training of additional Customer Service Assistants during November and December has resulted in an improvement in service standards. Call handling times, average call duration, call abandon rates and call response times are all now meeting service standards with 80% of calls answered within 20 seconds.
3. The overall number of customer contacts per month for the Customer Service Centre has increased from 15,000 per month in December 2009 to an estimate of 35,000 contacts per month at December 2011. This is due to a programme of service review and transfer of first line inquiry handling to the Customer Service Centre, with nearly 500 services currently supported. This leaves professionally qualified staff in front line service areas to focus on more complex advice and service delivery activity and ensures that economies of scale and efficiencies are realised in handling basic inquiries. This will continue during 2012 and be further supported by the development and increased usage of the County Council's web site.
4. The nature of the work undertaken at the Customer Service Centre is also evolving as more proactive activity is being undertaken, including customer surveys and feedback and outbound calls to existing service users and potential customers.
5. The introduction of electronic call routing is planned at the end of January to further improve efficiency, reduce costs, improve the service to customers and improve the available management information. In the interim manual transfers of more detailed or complex calls to more experienced and highly trained advisors will remain in place.

Tell Us Once

6. Phase 1 is now complete and an email has been received from the Department of Work and Pensions congratulating Nottinghamshire on the planning and implementation of the programme in this area. Work will shortly begin in preparation for further development of the scheme.

Blue Car Badges

7. The new legislation and central government supporting process and ICT system for processing Blue Car Badges are now operational. There are a number of teething problems with the system which require resolution by Northgate, the supplier. Issues have been logged with Northgate directly as they arise and so far response times to resolve these have been good. Due to the delay in the County Council being able to access the system; there is still some work to complete around staff training and finalising exactly how the supporting processes will work, which is in progress.
8. During the transition period from the old to the new system a large number of old style application forms are being received. The Customer Service Centre team are following these up and making outbound calls to customers to ensure that the missing information that the new system now demands is collected and applications can be processed without unnecessary delay for customers.
9. Occupational Therapy and Customer Service staff are working together to also carry out desk top assessments in some circumstances for Blue Car Badge applications. This will involve asking a series of questions over the telephone which may therefore obviate the need for the applicant to attend a clinic; again saving time and money for the authority and improving customer service for the applicants.

Family Information Services

10. The transfer of basic inquiry handling from the Family Information Service to the Customer Service Centre goes live at the end of January with the majority of calls expected to relate to access to child care provision, child minder information etc.

Winter Warmth Initiative

11. Government funding has been secured to facilitate a range of initiatives to support the elderly during the next three months. The Customer Service Centre will be the first point of contact for enquiries relating to the initiatives and support on offer and to advise customers on the process they should follow to access these.
12. The initiatives include:
 - i) A winter well-being media campaign with thermometers and top 10 tips for keeping warm. This will advertise the Golden Number.

- ii) An Energy Champion who will help people to switch providers to reduce costs and help remove the confusion about how to do it.
 - iii) Engagement with Handy Persons Advisory Service (HPAS) traders to look out for people who may be struggling to keep warm and working with traders to provide additional heating equipment, if appropriate. This will be fitted via the HPAS scheme.
 - iv) Trading Standards will be running an electric blanket exchange voucher scheme
 - v) Adult Social Care and Health colleagues will be providing thermometers which will be fitted in people's homes to alert them when the temperature drops, as a reminder to put the heating on. Where this is not possible a response service may also be available.
 - vi) A direct mail campaign is also planned for week commencing 16th January to all residents over 60 years of age (circa 9000 across the authority). This will also include the golden number as the key point of contact.
13. Web pages are being built to assist advisors with the provision of information and to assist with signposting of enquiries that require specialist services or support.

Services for Schools

14. In preparation for the launch of the "Management Choices" offer in late January/ early February; the Services to Schools project has undertaken a survey of a sample of schools and held focus group discussions in order to get feedback on the services the Council offers schools and the way in which it does this.
15. A key area of feedback from schools was that they would like a clearly defined, co-ordinated point of contact with the County Council. In the first instance it is intended to provide this via the Customer Service Centre with dedicated Advisors recruited and trained to be the first point of contact dealing with general enquiries from schools about the services on offer and to work with schools to help them develop the best package and level of services for their individual school. More detailed specialist advice on individual services will still be available from the service areas in question as required.
16. It is intended to run this service initially as a pilot and then review the feedback from schools and the information gathered as part of the pilot in order to determine the way forward for the future. The service will be made available from the end of January.

Health and Wellbeing

17. Nottinghamshire's Health and Wellbeing Board does not take on its statutory duties of producing a Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA) and Health and Wellbeing Strategy until April 2013. However, in light of the need for Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) to develop commissioning plans for 2012-13, an early start has been made on

agreeing local priorities. The Health and Wellbeing Board on 11th January was provided with an update on progress with the JSNA rapid refresh and the development of the first Health and Wellbeing Strategy (HWS), which are running concurrently. The HWS Editorial Group support the strategy work and emerging common potential priorities have been identified as a starting point for further assessment and consultation. The initial draft of the HWS, which includes the high level priorities common to multiple health and local government partner organisations, will be shared.

18. The aim is to develop an initial strategy which gives a useful baseline and reference point for organisations, whilst work continues on its development for the future. This is happening alongside the refresh of the JSNA and therefore will be subject to review as new priorities emerge. In light of the interim nature of the strategy, it is proposed that restricted consultation will take place within 2011-12. However, wider consultation will take place during 2012-13 as part of the extended review of the strategy. Assistance will be sought from CCGs using their public involvement processes to shape the future priorities.
19. The January Board agenda also included the emerging strategy and commissioning intentions of three CCGs (with a further three tabled for March 2012), Health Protection needs and arrangements and supporting structures for the Health and Wellbeing Board.

COUNCILLOR MARTIN SUTHERS
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL