

23 May 2018**Agenda Item: 9****REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR - CUSTOMERS AND HUMAN
RESOURCES****CHANGES TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE STRUCTURE****Purpose of the Report**

1. To seek approval for a revised structure and operating model within Customer Services.

Information

2. The Customer Service Centre has been open 10 years with volumes and demand continuing to increase each year. Ongoing increases in demand are expected in 2018/19 (10,000 more were taken in 2017/18). It is therefore important to look at how resources can be redistributed to create additional frontline capacity.
3. Since 2010 the customer service budget has reduced by over 50% (from £5.8 to £2.7m during 2018/19). This has been against a backdrop of significant increases in work being completed at the customer service centre and increased demand. The centre's enquiry levels have grown from 250,000 enquires a year to over nearly 600,000 a year in 2017/18 (a 230% increase).
4. The proposals set out in the report will ensure there are enough staff delivering frontline services to meet increases in workload at the Customer Service Centre as more enquiries are resolved at the Council's front door whilst ensuring that customer satisfaction remains high.
5. The proposals include:
 - The rationalisation of resources by merging the Design and Build team under one manager
 - The removal of some management capacity within the Senior Advisors team in order to redistribute budget savings to create more resources in frontline service delivery
 - Increases in capacity within the Team Leaders role to ensure there is tighter performance management and closer working relationships
 - A more consistent approach to training and development for the customer service staff
 - Maintenance and ongoing improvement of customer satisfaction levels.

6. In more detail, the proposal is to remove 0.5 fte Business Partner post. There are currently 4, within the Design function, one of which is vacant. This team will then merge with the Technical Team (4 x Technical Specialists and 5 x Technical Support Officers). Both teams will be managed by a single manager. This will create a more 'joined up' approach to change and assist with cross-training and staff development. It is expected that the Technical Specialists and Officers take on more responsibility for Service Reviews and day to day change management from the Business Partner role. The 0.5 fte saving will then be re-distributed into the wider 'pot' and used to take on additional advisors.
7. The Senior Advisor post is, in part, a management support role. It is proposed that this role is changed to become much more team coach and 'expert enquiry handler'. An amount of management responsibility would then be picked up and completed through the existing Team Leaders. This clearly defines the roles and the responsibilities of each level. It also brings the Team Leader and Advisor roles more closely together (i.e. removal of a 'layer'). The aim is to reduce Senior Advisors by 4 fte. There are currently 3.5 fte vacant posts, the remaining 0.5 fte would be 'removed' through natural attrition and vacancy management. Attrition rates in this team are high as the skills these individuals have are sought after by Adult Social Care teams. The savings generated will, as above, be re-distributed and used to increase frontline staff.
8. From the savings above (removing 4.5 posts, 0.5 at grade C and 4 at grade 5) this will allow the Customer Service Centre to recruit 6 additional advisors. That is 3fte Grade 3 Advisors within the Transactional Team and 3 fte Level 2 Advisors within the Social Care team.

Role and number reducing	Full salary costs	Total	Role and number increasing	Full salary costs	Total
Business Partner x 0.5	£39,177	£19,588.5	Level 3 Advisor (transactional) x 3	£18,070	£54,210
Level 1 Advisor X 4	£24,964	£99,856	Level 2 Advisor (Social Care) X 3	£21,264	£63,792
TOTAL		£119,444.5	TOTAL		£118,002

Other Options Considered

9. Other options were considered however these were not progressed as they would:
 - Require an increase in resources and therefore budget savings would not be met. At this time it was felt that if this could be achieved within the current budget and savings target, changes should be made to the operating model to make this happen.
 - Impact on customer satisfaction levels due to longer waiting times for customers. As customer satisfaction levels are consistently high within the team, it was felt that this would lead to more complaints and dissatisfaction.

Reasons for Recommendation

10. The Customer Service Team pride themselves on the service they provide and wish to continue to provide, wherever possible, the same or an improved service for the people of Nottinghamshire. Over the years the team have always strived to ensure this is done in the most cost effective way possible.
11. The additional advisor capacity that the proposed changes would create will enable customer service to manage increased volumes effectively across all areas, in particular Highways, Blue Badges, Registration Services and School Admissions (where volumes continue to rise).
12. The changes within the Level 2 team will also assist adult social care to meet savings and realise Options for Change benefits, by increasing resolution rates at the front door with less work of a low level of complexity being transferred to professionally trained and more costly resources. This enables professionally qualified staff to focus on more complex assessment activity. This is a key driver for the social care team with the adoption of the 3-tier approach.
13. Having a closer relationship between Team Leaders and Customer Service Advisors would bring a greater understanding of training and development needs and tighter performance management.
14. Merging the Design and Build team under one manager will give more resilience and support for technical developments (e.g. System integration, WebChat and Text facilities) and also support succession planning and the drive for self-service.

Statutory and Policy Implications

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

16. The changes will support the delivery of current budget savings targets.

Human Resources Implications

17. All changes will be managed through vacancy control and natural attrition. Trades union colleagues are supportive of the additional posts and have sought, and received, an assurance that the additional areas of work identified are already contained within the agreed job descriptions and grades for the various posts.

Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications

18. There will be more capacity available to take and manage these enquiries.

Implications for Service Users

19. Current customer satisfaction levels will be maintained and there will be some additional frontline capacity to manage expected demand increases in 2018/19.

RECOMMENDATION

1) That members agree the revised Customer Service Centre structure as set out in appendix 1, effective from 1st July 2018.

Marjorie Toward

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For any enquiries about this report please contact:

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Constitutional Comments (KK 10/05/18)

20. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Personnel Committee.

Financial Comments (SES 08/05/18)

21. The financial implications are set out in the report.

Human Resources Comments (JP 10/05/18)

22. The reductions to posts in the report will be managed through vacancy control. Recruitment to additional posts will be in line with the Authority's recruitment policy.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

- All