

## REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

### KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES

1. This report updates Members on matters which fall within the Deputy Leader's portfolio.

#### Health and Wellbeing Board

2. At the November meeting of the Health and Wellbeing Board, a report was presented on substance misuse, which described why tackling drug misuse (illicit and legally obtained) and alcohol misuse were important areas of need for Nottinghamshire. The far reaching effects of substance misuse on the local community were highlighted, including: ill health, crime, anti-social behaviour, unemployment and loss of productivity. These were illustrated using fictional case studies. The Board agreed that early identification of problems, a person-centred approach and better access to joined-up services would help tackle the growing problem of substance misuse.
3. A report was also presented outlining the authorisation process being established to make sure that Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) have the necessary knowledge and skills to take on the commissioning of healthcare from existing primary care trusts by April 2013. The Board acknowledged the process, the role they would play in it and the positive progress to date.
4. The current position and future plans with regard to joint commissioning were reported. The Board supported the importance of progressing joint commissioning with partners to improve outcomes for the people of Nottinghamshire. Work is underway on the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, with a first draft due to be presented at the January meeting of the Board.

#### Localism

5. Since I last reported to Council the Localism Bill has received the Royal Assent and here in Nottinghamshire the Localism Member Reference Group, which was convened for the first time on the 31<sup>st</sup> October, has held two further meetings. On the 16<sup>th</sup> November I was invited to address the Annual General Meeting of the Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils (NALC) and a week later I attended a meeting with the NALC Executive. In addition I have held a series of meetings with members and clerks of town and parish councils in various parts of the County to discuss the potential and possible procedures for devolution of responsibilities and resources to local communities ahead of a report to

Council at its next meeting on the 26<sup>th</sup> January 2012. Localism issues also featured prominently at the County Councils Network (CCN) Annual Conference in Hertfordshire which I attended with the Leader and the Chief Executive on the 21<sup>st</sup> and 22<sup>nd</sup> November.

6. A significant number of Members attended the Localism seminar held on the 1<sup>st</sup> December. This featured an interactive video conference with two officers of Cornwall County Council, who explained and answered questions on the range of localism initiatives they were delivering and exploring in a unitary authority. Of more direct relevance to a two-tier authority was the presentation by a portfolio holder and highways director from Worcestershire, whose lengthsman scheme had over the past nine years successfully devolved a range of marginal County Council activities, with an appropriate level of funding, to local communities. A portfolio holder and senior officer from Cambridgeshire also contributed to the event and the interest and support of all three authorities is greatly appreciated.

### **Customer Service Centre**

7. During October and November, the Customer Service Centre received an exceptionally high volume of calls. The average call volume per month from April to August 2011 was 21,000 calls. This increased by an average of 3,300 calls per month in October and November. Enquiry volumes through other routes also increased by over 10,000 per month between September and November in comparison with the same period last year.
8. This was due to improved publicity about Council services and a number of new services and activities which the Customer Service Centre had taken on and which had gone live within this period and the period leading up to it. This included:-
  - an additional 2,500 calls per month for Registration Services with “Tell us Once” activity adding an average 45 seconds to each call;
  - taking enquiries and bookings for Instrument and Music services;
  - inbound and outbound consultations and campaigns (including support for the Budget Consultation exercise);
  - an increase in the number and duration of calls following changes to the Handypersons Adaptations Scheme;
  - implementation of the Dedicated Adult Care Team in order to improve signposting to services and the process for referrals for adult care services.
9. Over the summer period the service has been reorganising and restructuring to improve efficiency and ultimately to improve services to customers, with calls being routed directly to advisors experienced and knowledgeable in particular areas of service. This is part of the ongoing Customer Service Improvement Programme which has seen an overall decrease in the number of advisors as efficiency has improved. However, during the October and November period when high volumes of enquiries were being received, there were a number of staff vacancies. This has resulted in increased waiting times and call duration during peak periods in October and November. The overall number of calls resolved first time remains high with an average of 77.7% of calls being resolved at the first point of contact with the County Council.

10. In order to cope with the call volumes in the short term, staff temporarily adjusted shift patterns, worked additional hours and only took essential leave. The service has also reduced the level of activities which take trained advisors away from call handling.
11. The reorganisation was completed in September and vacant posts were filled from November 2011 thus ensuring that staffing is now at the required level to maintain effective service delivery. Staff have undergone comprehensive training to ensure that they are able to handle calls and deal with enquiries to the standards required. Call levels and call handling will continue to be monitored to ensure that the improved service standards are maintained.
12. It is intended to introduce electronic call routing from early in the New Year to further improve efficiency and service delivery. The benefits will include:-
  - more effective call routing – calls will be routed to advisors with the relevant skill sets, thus reducing training costs;
  - ensuring that the most important and urgent calls (safeguarding and vulnerable callers) are handled as a priority;
  - improved management information;
  - improved customer satisfaction by routing calls to the most appropriate advisors i.e. those with more advanced or more relevant skills who are therefore better equipped to manage particular types of enquiries.
13. This work was planned for December but was deferred given the implementation of the new Business Management System from early December (see below). The process of BMS going live has generated additional work for the Customer Service team in relation to payroll enquiries and other colleagues such as ICT services who are involved in implementing and supporting the new system. The deferment will allow time for the operation of the new structure to stabilise.

### **Registration Services and 'Tell Us Once'**

14. Since October the Customer Service Centre have been handling general enquiries and making appointments for registering a birth or death on behalf of Registration Services across the County. This has been introduced on a phased basis since July and has released capacity for Registration Services to take on additional tasks such as 'Tell Us Once'.
15. The 'Tell Us Once' service went live in Nottinghamshire on 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2011 and involves a single notification system to securely share the registration details of a birth or death with 24 central and local government services. The Customer Service team is handling all enquiries and appointment booking for the Registration teams across the County and managing the resulting "back-office" requests for action following 'Tell Us Once' notifications such as collecting of Occupational Therapy equipment, cancellation of home care packages, Blue Car Badges and meals at home etc.

### **Blue Car Badges**

16. *Mobility Assessment Clinics*: The new mobility assessments process is well underway. Two Occupational Therapists are in place and covering clinics across the county to

assess the mobility of Blue Car Badge applicants who are not already in receipt of higher rate disability living allowance. 130 assessments were completed to the end of November, saving the authority over £3,400 in GP fees in just two months and resulting in a faster turn around of assessments. It is hoped that this approach will also reduce the need for re-assessments in future, thus saving ongoing costs.

17. *Blue Car Badge Reform Bill*: Work continues to develop processes for the implementation of the new requirements. However, there is still a considerable amount of work involved in this project in terms of systems access, training and development, all of which has to be completed by end of December 2011.

### **The new Business Management System (BMS)**

18. Phase 1 of the new Business Management System went live on 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011 as planned. Arrangements are in place for the Customer Service Centre to open on both Saturday and Sunday 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> December to take calls from staff regarding their pay. This will enable payroll staff to work to ensure that any problems are resolved before Christmas. This will be the first payroll using the new system and a higher number of queries than usual are expected.
19. The BMS programme has a phase 2 starting in the New Year. It will be further developed in order to ensure that the benefits and savings from the implementation of the new system across the organisation are optimised.
20. Members are no doubt aware that the BMS is one of the key transformational programmes to make the County Council more efficient and effective. It is one easy to use system replacing several old systems. It integrates finance, HR, payroll, procurement and property management systems.
21. Having one efficient system will contribute to the money-saving measures being taken by the Council. It will also help make it easier for the Council to see how and where money is being spent, and on which goods and services.
22. Modernising and streamlining the way the whole of the organisation works will also help to safeguard frontline services.
23. There will naturally be many challenges ahead as one should expect from such a major change programme. However, I am optimistic that these will be overcome successfully in order to ensure that the County Council reaps the maximum benefits from this investment over many years to come.
24. Finally, I would like to extend our congratulations and thanks to all the staff across the County Council, and indeed our partner Logica, for their tremendous hard work in achieving a successful implementation of the programme within a demanding timescale.

### **Switchboard and Reception**

25. Work continues in County Hall reception with the new revolving door being installed during November, followed by new security barriers.

26. The customer service staff on reception will play a key role in the efficiency of the front of house operation, ensuring that visitors to County Hall are dealt with quickly and efficiently when the new barriers and doors are in situ and supporting the enhanced security plans for County Hall.
27. To ensure the team are projecting a 'one council', customer focussed and professional image; new uniforms, name badges, visitor passes and customer care standards are being implemented. Work is also ongoing to ensure that all reception staff across the County project the same image and work to similar standards.

**Councillor Martin Suthers**  
**Deputy Leader of the County Council**