

**REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL
KEY ISSUES AND ACTIVITIES**

Purpose of the Report

1. The report seeks to update Members on various issues relating to my portfolio.

Information and Advice

Blue Car Badges

2. The new Blue Car Badge process has been in place since January with the contract for provision of the on-line system being awarded nationally to Northgate. Work continues to develop processes which have been causing some concerns for our customers namely:-
 - a) The online application form is not user friendly and is lengthy and cumbersome to use;
 - b) Customers still have to send in paperwork for validation so “online” application forms are only part of the process.
3. Concerns from customers have been raised directly with Northgate to try and improve the application process nationally. The County Council, via the Customer Service Team, are responsible for checking proof of address and photographs as part of this and work is being undertaken to streamline and improve our in-house process and ensure that these interface effectively with the national system.

Services for Schools

4. Basic enquiries relating to County Council services to schools are now being managed and handled by the Customer Service Team with a small team also making outbound calls to follow up queries, gain feedback and further promote services. A review meeting is scheduled in May to review the approach and identify suitable models of operation for the future.

Call Routing

5. Call routing software has been in place now for two months. The addition of call routing has enabled the management team to prioritise calls effectively, fully understand the calls being managed (their duration and complexity), identify training and development needs and reduce training costs (training only on the skills required).
6. Some tweaks have been made to call routing to ensure resources are being managed effectively across all call routes and that customer service standards are met. Additional lines have also been installed at Mercury House to ensure that there is sufficient capacity for the number of calls being handled as initially some customers were experiencing delays during some peak periods.

Customer Management System Upgrade

7. This project is now underway with the system going live later in the summer. The Customer Service team are currently involved in testing the system which will continue through the various implementation stages. The new version of the system will provide additional functionality which will help to progress plans for customer self-service, channel management and improve customer access. Work is currently underway to ensure that the links with the Highways Asset Management System and production of electronic forms are robust enough to progress to the live system.

Self Funders

8. Work is progressing for the Customer Service Centre to provide call handling support to promote the use of a new helpline for self funders for Adult Social Care services. The service is being provided by Paying for Care (a new partner organisation) who will provide independent advice and information in relation to the long term funding of care. They are a not-for-profit organisation who aim to help people look at a tailored and more pro-active approach to their current and future social care needs. It is planned to have this service in place by the autumn

Advice for the Deaf and Visually Impaired Service (ADVIS)

9. Project work will commence shortly to review this service with a view to transferring enquiry handling to the Customer Service Centre. Initial meetings are now underway.

Handy Persons Adaptation Service (HPAS)

10. The Customer Service Team now process all work for the above service including enquiry handling, work allocation, supplier and tradesman liaison, customer feedback, invoice processing and the production of management information. Over the last six months there has been an increase in the number of users of this service from an average of 225 to 302 in March 2012.

11. There have been some issues with work allocation due to the initial impact of the new BMS system on invoice processing and payments to some suppliers. Manual workarounds have been put in place at the Customer Service Centre to ensure there are no delays for customers.

Localism

Development of the County Council localism agenda

12. I concluded my programme of meetings with town and parish councils with visits to Nuthall Parish Council and Ollerton and Boughton Town Council.
13. There followed two well-attended seminars for town and parish council representatives, held jointly with the Nottinghamshire Association of Local Councils (NALC), in Harworth and Bircotes on the 17th April and Ruddington on the 19th April. At these, two specific initiatives were explored further: the proposed County lengthsman scheme and the potential for disposal of small pieces of land surplus to County Council requirements for community use.
14. Letters have been sent to all town and parish councils inviting expressions of interest in participation in one of up to six pilot lengthsman scheme projects which it is hoped can be launched in different parts of the County during the summer months.
15. A recurrent theme throughout consultations on localism has been the demand for better communication between the County Council and town and parish councils. Whilst there are long-established protocols for notification of road closures and there are many examples of good practice and extensive consultation over major projects, in relation to more modest initiatives consultation is often perfunctory or non-existent, with the consequence that the County Council's reputation can suffer disproportionate damage.

Broader initiatives following the passage of the Localism Act 2011

16. On the 27th March Councillor John Clarke and I attended a reception at 10 Downing Street held to promote the concept of elected mayors for major cities. Hosted by the Prime Minister and chaired by Lord Heseltine, other speakers included the elected Mayor of Leicester, Sir Peter Soulsby (Labour) and the elected Mayor of London, Boris Johnson (Conservative).
17. Although the issue of an elected mayor for Nottingham was not of immediate relevance to the County Council, there is no doubt that the Government is concerned at the severity of the socio-economic problems afflicting Nottingham, in common with other cities, and that an elected mayor was seen as one means of countering these more effectively. It would be of much greater relevance to the County Council if extending the City's boundaries came to be seen as another.

Health and Wellbeing Board

18. At the meeting of the Board on the 2nd May the principal item for discussion derived from a presentation on stroke and physical disability, including long term neurological conditions. The Board approved the terms of reference of the Health and Wellbeing Implementation Group, adding two lead GP commissioners to its membership, and received the evolving Nottinghamshire Health and Wellbeing Strategy for 2012-2013, together with a report on the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment.
19. The Director of Children & Young People's Services reported on the work of the National Learning Set for Children and Young People, a national study in which he has been participating as a lead officer under the chairmanship of John Wilderspin, National Director of the Health and Wellbeing Implementation Team at the Department of Health, who attended the Board meeting on the 2nd May as an observer.

**COUNCILLOR MARTIN SUTHERS
DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNTY COUNCIL**