

meeting COUNTY COUNCIL

date 21 October 2010

agenda item number **7(a) ii**

REPORT OF THE DEPUTY LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

1. **Purpose of the report**

- 1.1 This report seeks to update Members on matters relating to the Deputy Leader's portfolio.

2. **County Council Networks (CCN)**

- 2.1 On the 8th September I attended the CCN Annual General Meeting at Local Government House, Westminster, which provided a useful opportunity to learn how other counties were approaching decision making ahead of the Comprehensive Spending Review.
- 2.2 The meeting was followed by a reception at the House of Commons at which I took the opportunity of pressing the case for devolution of additional powers and resources to town and parish councils upon Greg Clark MP, the Department for Communities & Local Government minister with responsibility for the Decentralisation and Localism Bill.

3. **Regional Planning**

- 3.1 On the 1st October I attended an East Midlands Councils event on planning and localism, at which elected members and officers discussed the proposed Decentralisation and Localism Bill and the implications of the abolition of the Regional Spatial Strategy.
- 3.2 It was agreed that completion of Local Development Frameworks by district councils remained an urgent priority. Housing market areas, concerned with such sensitive issues as projected housing numbers, continue to exist and it is intended to bring a report to Cabinet in November on the current status of proposals in the three such areas that incorporate parts of Nottinghamshire.

4. East Midlands LawShare

- 4.1 On the 4th October I attended the conference held by East Midlands LawShare at the East Midlands Conference Centre.
- 4.2 Although this project preceded the Council's improvement programme by several years, it is an excellent example of the philosophy behind it. Nottinghamshire County Council has led the consortium arrangements, which are delivering lower legal costs as well as providing advice to member authorities, now numbering 26, throughout the East Midlands, including fire and police authorities. Through partnership arrangements with leading private sector legal practices to provide external legal support in times of work overload or lack of in-house expertise, significant efficiency savings and financial benefits have been achieved for the member authorities.

5. Face to Face

- 5.1 Members will be aware from my previous reports of the extensions to face to face customer access which have already been made. Work is in hand to develop face to face services from West Bridgford, Kimberley and Stapleford libraries to go live between October and December 2010.
- 5.2 Nottinghamshire Police decided to cease the mobile rural unit following close of business on Friday 1st October. This will release capacity to develop the County Council's own services as outlined above.

6. Customer Service Centre

- 6.1 Following successful completion of the social work and occupational therapy pilots this work has now been mainstreamed. The Adult Social Care and Health Customer Access team became fully operational at the Customer Service Centre on 4th October. This team comprises a range of staff including social workers, community care workers and service advisors who will provide the first point of contact for a range of services.
- 6.2 The Customer Service Centre is currently undertaking a two year improvement programme to improve efficiency, reduce cost and improve its services to customers. Myself and Councillors Adair and Stewart visited Mercury House on Wednesday 29th September 2010 in order to see first hand the improvements which have taken place to date and discuss plans for continuous improvement over the next 6 - 12 months.
- 6.3 Overall, significant improvements were evident from our previous visit in July 2009. Processes have been reviewed and streamlined so they are more efficient, customer focused and user friendly. Caller profiling questions have been removed where this is not required e.g. pot hole and street light enquiries. This work has resulted overall in a 51 second reduction in average call duration and a 54 second reduction in average wrap time as of September 2010. By April 2011 plans are to reduce call

duration by a further 1 minute and 9 seconds and call wrap up by a further 45 seconds.

- 6.4 The total number of enquiries dealt with by the Customer Service Centre has increased by 40,000 per annum with an increase of a further 60,000 enquiries approximately expected during 2011. All of the improvements to date have been made whilst reducing the planned number of customer service advisors and overall budget due to improved efficiency and productivity and the use of improved technology and systems.
- 6.5 Plans are in place to centralise a number of services which are currently delivered elsewhere within the organisation. For example, all Blue Car Badge processing will be centralised and delivered by the Customer Service Centre by April 2011. This will increase the speed of processing; ensure consistency of delivery and economies of scale. Future plans are to develop online application forms and an assisted form filling service for this and other services.
- 6.6 A number of services require service users to undertake a medical assessment. Work is underway to develop clinics for mobility assessments which would replace the current system of GP referrals which currently cost the County Council £26.50 per assessment. This will be linked to other services such as drop kerbs, bus passes and permits to develop one assessment which will cover all mobility requirements.
- 6.7 The Customer Service Centre is therefore now better placed to support the County Council's future customer service operation model based on the majority of initial contact being made via the Customer Service Centre, face to face or web for information provision and simple transactions. I look forward to reporting on further progress.

Councillor Martin Suthers
Deputy Leader of the County Council