

Addendum to the Report of the Deputy Leader of the Council

1. This report seeks to update Members on matters relating to the Customer Service Centre and face to face aspects of customer service previously delivered by the County Contact Service; which fall within my portfolio.

The County Contact Service.

2. The County Contact Service provides face to face advice and information to members of the public about the County Council and other related public and voluntary services. The service is currently delivered from 6 locations concentrated in the Bassetlaw, Ashfield, Mansfield and Broxtowe districts and a mobile contact point covering the remainder of the County.
3. The County Council Budget for 2010/11 agreed a reduction of £700,000 in the budget of the County Contact Service leaving a residual budget of £240,000.
4. In order to continue to support this crucial aspect of customer management it is intended to implement an interim model of face to face access for customers whilst an integrated customer access strategy is developed and agreed involving a range of different access channels.
5. The residual resources from the County Contact Service have been transferred to the Corporate Services Department to form part of the establishment of the Customer Services Centre. Funding from the Customer Services Centre budget will be used to supplement the remaining County Contact budget and establish and implement an interim model for face to face contact between the County Council and its customers. Line management, staff cover and support for the interim face to face service will be provided from resources within the Customer Service Centre. Proposals in respect of this are the subject of a separate Delegated Decision Report. This will enable the development of a more co-ordinated approach; with the strategic lead for customer management now sitting within the Corporate Services Department.
6. The interim model will also see a more equitable distribution of face to face customer access across the County, with services provided in all districts and the retention of the mobile rural contact point. The model will involve closer working with district council colleagues across the whole county and negotiations are currently ongoing in relation to the detail in individual districts. The model will involve a localised approach including retention of the current service in some areas; delivery of face to face contact from district council premises and County Council libraries in other districts and, in one area, it is envisaged that the service will be directly commissioned from and delivered by the District Council on behalf of the County Council.

7. Staff within the County Contact Service were initially identified as being “at risk” of redundancy. However, a number of staff have sought alternative employment and some have volunteered for redundancy. The remaining staff have been asked to express preferences for posts and the majority have been matched against posts in the interim structure or as part of the Customer Service Centre structure. Redeployment opportunities are being sought for the small number of staff who are currently unallocated to posts. The Service Head post will be retained working in a development role in relation to future face to face customer access across the organisation.
8. This interim model for face to face customer access will remain in place for a period of up to twelve months whilst an integrated customer access strategy is developed and implemented to support the delivery of the County Council’s Strategic Plan and vision. The strategy will include different channels for customer access including telephone, web, face to face and other key customer contact.

The Customer Service Centre.

9. The Customer Service Centre is also currently undertaking a review of services and ways of working as part of an overall Improvement Programme. This will include streamlining and simplifying processes and systems to quicken customer responses and further improve the efficiency of service.
10. Work is also in hand to review the services which are provided by the Customer Services Centre with a view to expanding these further in some cases. For example, the Occupational Therapy pilot which has recently been extended.
11. Effective from 19th April 2010 the Customer Service Centre will also be operating an extended hours switchboard service for the County Hall switchboard. The current County Hall switchboard service operates between 8.30 am and 5.00 pm Monday to Thursday and until 4.30 pm on Friday. The new service will mean that calls will automatically be diverted to and answered by the Customer Service Centre, Monday to Friday from 5 pm until 8 pm and Saturday mornings from 8am until 12 noon. Thus improving services to County Council customers, partners and other key stakeholders. This will also ensure effective business continuity in the event of closure of County Hall for any unforeseen reason.

Councillor Martin Suthers
Deputy Leader of the County Council