

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting30th November 2006

1. Title of Item/Report

Access to Services - Turning the Vision into Reality

2. Record of the Decision

Members were reminded that in January 2006, Cabinet had approved a vision for the way that the Council's customers might access its services in the future.

Following this Cabinet now considered a report that recommended a plan of action for turning the vision into reality and focused on "phase 1" of an Access to Services Programme which included several key front line services, the development of a corporate telephone contact centre, the Thornaby multi-service centre and a pilot community access point in Ingleby Barwick.

Since the January 2006 Cabinet meeting, work had focussed on identifying what needed to be done to turn the Access to Services vision into reality. This had included:

- Consultation with customers through a series of Viewpoint Focus Groups;
- Consultation with Members through a Members Seminar in July, and a site visit to Darlington Council's Customer Service Centre for Cabinet members;
- An analysis of all Council services that had customer interfaces;
- Organisation design for the new Customer Services Division;
- A review of accommodation options;
- Financial appraisal.

Subsequently a plan of action had been identified. Cabinet noted the key elements of the plan.

It was proposed that the customer contact element of the following services form phase 1 of the Access to Services Programme, which would be delivered by a new Customer Services Division.

- Care for Your Area to include refuse collection, street cleansing,

recycling and waste awareness, horticultural services, highway maintenance. (The Care for Your Area services had gone “live” on the new CRM system earlier in November 2006, as a pilot for rolling out the system across the following other phase 1 front line services);

- Taxation;
- Benefits;
- Main switchboard;
- Telephone payments so that customers can book a service and pay for it at the same time;
- Pupil & Student Support (free school meals/grants/admissions);
- Libraries;
- Signposting and simple scripts for First Contact (the First Contact Team to remain separate from the telephone contact centre in view of the complexity of the queries and the length of calls).

It was proposed that the new Customer Services Division be built up in phases as follows:

- Phase 1 – establish the management structure, implement the telephone contact centre, one multi-service centre (Thornaby), and one pilot community access point (Ingleby Barwick);
- Phase 2 – open a second multi-service centre (Stockton or Billingham – to be determined at a later stage) and, following a review of the pilot, start the roll out of community access points;
- Phase 3 – open the third multi-service centre and complete the roll-out of the borough wide network of access points.

In addition to staffing and managing the contact centres, the Customer Services Division would be responsible for the ongoing development and roll out of the Council’s Customer First Programme, which defined standards and promoted a customer focussed culture for the whole Authority

As it provided corporate services, the Customer Services Division would sit within the Resources Service Grouping. The Head of Taxation and Administration would be responsible for the management and strategic development of the service and the implications of this new responsibility would be considered in the Heads of Service review, which would be presented to Cabinet in 2007.

The proposed management structure for the Customer Services Division was provided for Members. It was explained that relevant Trade Unions were being consulted about the management structure, associated job descriptions and recruitment arrangements. As the consultation period would not end until the beginning of December 2006, Cabinet was asked to delegate final approval of the management structure to the Corporate

Director of Resources in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhoods, subject to positive outcome of the consultation.

Cabinet considered siting and accommodation issues for the proposed Corporate Telephone Contact Centre, the multi-services centres and Community Access Points

The Council's Capital Strategy and Asset Management Officer Group was undertaking a Council-wide review of buildings and accommodation. The review was scheduled for completion by March 2007 and included consideration of the requirements for the telephone contact centre and phase 2 and 3 multi-service centres.

In terms of phase 1 requirements it was noted that the telephone contact centres could be located anywhere in the Borough, but it was suggested that the Thornaby multi-service centre be located within the existing Thornaby Library Building.

Cabinet noted work undertaken to identify locations for Community Access Points, which would deliver a borough-wide access to services network for customers who were not able to access one of the main multi-service centres. Suggestions included supermarkets, GP surgeries and the mobile library bus.

Consultation through the customer focus groups indicated that this type of service would be welcomed, however at this stage it was difficult to gauge demand. It was therefore recommended that one network point be set up as a pilot to enable further analysis and review before the scheme is rolled out to other borough-wide locations.

In following up customer suggestions, an approach was made to Tesco Ingleby Barwick branch where management expressed a firm interest in working with officers to establish a Council community access point within the store. It was recommended that this form the pilot scheme and the results of the exercise inform the roll-out of other access points.

Members were provided with details of capital and revenue costs associated with the programme.

Details of the many potential benefits, that the Access to Services Programme would deliver for the Council's customers and the Council itself were provided.

It was recommended that funding for both the Capital and Revenue

budget pressures arising from the implementation of Phase 1 be requested as part of the 2007/2008 budget setting process. The potential Capital and Revenue budget pressures arising from Phases 2 and 3 should be noted at this stage, pending successful implementation of Phase 1 and approval to proceed with Phases 2 and 3.

Cabinet was provided with a proposed high level timetable indicating key programme dates.

It was noted that the new Customer Services Division would adopt the National e-Service Delivery Standards for Customer Services. The objectives of the standards were to provide a good practice model that would deliver a modernised, effective and efficient service. The standards addressed important aspects of the service that customers had indicated were important. Details of the standards were provided to Members. For each standard there were three levels – minimum, progressing and excellent. The aspiration was to achieve “excellent” level within 3 years.

RESOLVED that

1. the front-line element of the services described in paragraph 7 of the report be delivered through the new Customer Services Division as phase 1 of the Access to Services Programme.
2. approval of the management structure for the new Customer Services Division described in paragraphs 9 to 13 and Appendix 1 of the report be delegated to the Corporate Director Resources in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Social Inclusion and Neighbourhoods, subject to a positive outcome of ongoing trade union consultation.
3. under the Council’s Scheme of Delegation, officers enter into discussions and then formal consultation with the trade unions around the detailed organisation structure beneath the management level and the mechanism for filling posts.
4. the corporate telephone contact centre and Thornaby multi-service centre form the “building projects” for phase 1 of the Programme.
5. officers continue to liaise with staff from the Ingleby Barwick branch of Tesco with a view to this being the venue for a pilot community access point.
6. the financial implications for phase 1 of the Access to Service Programme described at paragraphs 27 – 35 of the report and the

funding strategy described at paragraphs 41 and 42 be noted and approved in principle, and the details be fed into the 2007/2008 budget setting process for final approval.

7. further reports be presented to Cabinet in relation to the roll-out of the Access to Services Programme including detailed plans for phases 2 and 3.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To seek approval of plans for implementing the Council's vision of the way that customers would access services in the future and to highlight the financial implications so that they could be taken into account in the 2007/2008 budget setting process. This would enable the Access to Services Programme to move forward into the implementation phase early in 2007/2008.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

Councillors Leonard and Nelson declared personal/ non prejudicial interests in this item as they were both Members of Tristar Homes Management Board, which was referred to in the report considered by Members.

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable.

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 8th December 2006.

Proper Officer
05 June 2006