

Transformation and Delivery Programme

The Transformation and Delivery Programme report is the business transformation proposal from Qedis, the consultants who have been working with the Council over the last few months.

So far, these proposals have been presented to the Corporate Management Team (CMT), the Officer Communication Group and Members.

Now, all employees have the opportunity to have their say about the proposals – see below.

Would all managers ensure that colleagues without computer access have sight of this report.

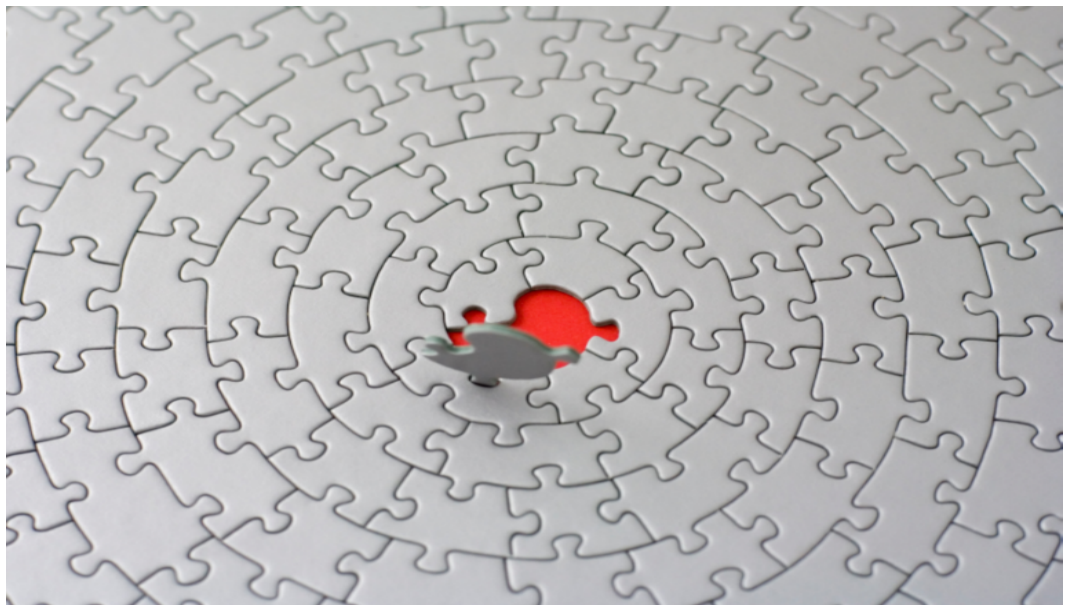
Please send your views and comments by 23rd September 2009 to strategy@wyreforestdc.gov.uk or pass them to your director.

All responses will be presented to CMT in October 2009.



Wyre Forest District Council

Transformation and Delivery Programme



“Our ambition is to deliver affordable and accessible services for our community. We will achieve this through improved efficiency and partnership working by 2012.”

Introduction:

In working closely with Wyre Forest District Council during May 2009 Qedis has been able to formulate clearer views about the Council's service context, and its transformation challenges. This report is intended not only to summarise the key issues but also provide clear and genuinely independent recommendations about the way forward.

However, although the thrust of this report is about improvement and change, it is critical that **all** stakeholders really appreciate the current service arrangements and quality, as major organisational transformations inevitably carry significant risk, and therefore a considered approach is required to maintain the Council's good reputation and real services to residents. It must also be expressly noted that our analyses of the recommended areas of change inevitably focus on the issues still to be addressed and therefore, in the interests of clarity, do not provide a well balanced report about the Council's outcomes and achievements; we apologise in advance for this bias. Our report will be updated to reflect further input from CMT, staff and members.

Wyre Forest has traditionally provided good quality services to residents, with the vast majority of residents believing it is a good place to live. Performance levels are comparatively good, and customer satisfaction with the Council remains relatively high (although is marginally slipping in common with local government perception across the UK). We believe Wyre Forest, in planning its necessary transformation, must be careful to preserve the many positive virtues of the Council, whilst continuing to address the pockets of poorer performance and efficiency imperatives.

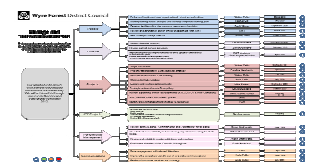
It is clear that the Council now operates in a much changed and more pressured financial environment, Principally arising from a range of pressures such as the government funding squeeze, impact/s of the global recession, reduced Council income in areas such as Land Charges and Planning, capital at risk from the Icelandic bank crash, service efficiency imperatives, increased fuel and energy costs, etc.

As a small local authority, Wyre Forest face most of the same issues exhibited in much larger Councils, but without the luxury of the same options, flexibility, and resources often available elsewhere. In many ways, this poses a much more difficult challenge in reconciling existing service commitments and aspirations with pressured resources.

The greatest potential for sustaining good quality services in this changed climate is through strategic improvement and efficiency savings and the transformation of the Councils business processes and service delivery. An urgent need existed for the reorganisation and creation a new management structure to deliver sustainable change to the Council.

Qedis' role has been to practically support the Council in analysing and then facilitating a clear, focussed and achievable programme of change.

We have facilitated and challenged key stakeholders, to produce this high level Transformation Report which underpins a cogent, high level plan, and enshrines a more focussed statement of the Councils vision (mission statement), primarily developed with the Corporate Management Team. The Transformation Plan is a 'living' document with the current version contained at Appendix 3.



This first draft 'Transformation Report' and 'Plan' are our initial deliverables, and represent our own conclusions, although we recognise most are also shared by Chief Officers. For ease of reference, the report and plan follow the same general structure. This report is highly abbreviated to ensure that the key issues and recommendations are easily identified.

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1. People:

1.1. Define & implement new organisational structure and culture:

Issue: The Council now operates in a more pressured financial environment which has put the Council's budget under severe strain. To survive immediate pressures and ensure long term viability, the Council needs to change to adapt to this new environment. It is evident that internal processes need to be more efficient and streamlined, in line with good practice achieved by a number of other Councils.

Human resistance to this change and change process is likely to be a key issue and also a critical success factor for implementing the new culture.

As an early part of this process, the Council has already reluctantly undertaken a first round of redundancies and restructuring. A second round of redundancies is due to be undertaken next year. As a consequence of these redundancies there has been a noted fall in employee motivation in some areas of the Council, and there appears to be ongoing uncertainty with a commensurate adverse impact on morale and individual performance.

Recommendation: The Council needs to be more efficient, flexible, customer focused, skilled and effective. To meet these goals a new and sustainable organisational structure and culture for the Council need to be defined and implemented as part of this change and transformation process including:

- Definition and implementation of the new divisional management structure (including the appointment of a strategic change Director) including new roles, job descriptions (for those whose roles have changes as a consequence of both the previous and future restructure) etc.
- Further workforce reduction measures are required to meet the Council's financial imperatives with fifteen posts to go by March 2010 and fifteen more by 2011. This process of reviewing the posts at risk and identifying the reductions should be undertaken as soon as possible. (Walter Delin 2011)
- Open and visible way communication of the workforce reduction programme should be accelerated to all employees to reduce fear and uncertainty (Walter Delin July – Sept 2009)
- Changing the organisational culture will be a difficult and key undertaking, and we believe additional capacity will be required to deliver this, and this is likely to be one of the largest areas of focus for the new Strategic Change Director

1.2. Identify training needs analysis and develop corporate training plan

Issue: Training needs are identified and prioritised in a systematic and consistent manner across the Council. The annual process for establishing training needs takes place at an individual level through the Employee Development Review (EDR) and the Competency Framework process between employees and their Supervisors/Line Managers. The agreed plan of needs identified from the EDR process is passed to the relevant Director to prioritise before forwarding to Human Resources (by February). Using the 'training needs' requirements identified in the individual EDR's a planned corporate training programme is developed in line with the HR Strategy

As part of the organisational restructure a short term Training Needs Analysis (TNA) has been identified. Employees who have taken on additional and new responsibilities to their existing roles require additional skills / training to successfully fulfil these roles; this additional requirement will not have been picked up in

the annual training needs analysis. An important part of changing the organisational culture is re-skilling all employees to a new level of competence to ensure that the organisation is fit for purpose.

Recommendation: A further training needs analysis is required to identify training needs for all employees in the new organisational structure (i.e. for management as in 1.1 above) whose roles have or are likely to change. It is recommended that:

- Each Director should identify the skills gap for all employees (whose roles have or are likely to change because of organisational restructuring), including project management which is currently inconsistently applied across the Council.
- Feed this back to HR
- This analysis should then be used to update the corporate training plan (as this years plan is behind schedule because of the organisational changes) that proactively identifies the required training and courses to fill the identified gaps.

Over the medium term employees should be re-skilled with the right skills, toolsets, new ways of working (i.e. ICT technologies) etc to move the Council forward.

Rachel Gill is responsible for developing this by July 2009.

1.3. Greater employee motivation

Issue: CMT perceived a significant dip in employee motivation and increase in uncertainty, which can be directly attributable to the recent changes within the Council, including the redundancy process and the potential shared service involving Parks and Green Spaces. We believe this was inevitable, after the job reduction programme; however this trust clearly needs to be re-established/rebuilt if the organisation is to work effectively.

Recommendation: Greater engagement with employees at all levels is required to provide re-assurance, greater visibility and ensure that employees understand and are on board with the changes and transformation required throughout the Council. It is recommended that:

- CMT continue to portray a positive attitude and positive messages (i.e. why Wyre Forest District Council is genuinely still a good place to work). In addition it is recommended that over the next few months the Chief Executive continues with his 'walkabouts' throughout the Council, explaining to employees the Council roadmap and the need for change to ensure the Councils long term viability.
- There should be still further CMT involvement in management teams and through improved engagement help create the conditions that better motivate employees
- 'Mixed messages' (i.e. from Members, CMT and Senior Officers) need to be reduced / eliminated. A united front across all these parties needs to be presented to all employees with consistency across all messages, as part of rebuilding goodwill and trust
- There should be a Council wide climate survey (for all employees) to gauge current employee satisfaction. From this an action plan should be created that addresses common messages, problems and issues etc.
- Setup a stronger culture where employee feedback at all levels is encouraged

Walter Delin has responsibility for this with a target period of July to September 2009.

1.4. Develop flexible policy that supports new ways of working

Issue: Currently all of the Council employees (with the exception of a small number of 'mobile' employees) work from one of the Council six offices on a daily basis. The Council is moving towards flexible new ways of working for greater efficiencies (pilots have shown a 15% productivity increase when working from home and a large reduction in sick days), staff retention, welfare and to reduce the office space requirement and the associated costs when the Council moves to a single site.

While pilots for home working are underway, it is felt that this initiative is being led by the technology rather than each business area and the lack of a defined policy is hampering progress. A flexible working policy would underpin home and mobile / remote working. There currently appears to be much resistance to home / flexible working at lower levels throughout the Council which will need to be overcome.

Recommendation: A flexible new ways of working policy is required to underpin home and mobile / remote working. Ideally this should be completed before implementing these new ways of working, but as a minimum should be done in parallel. This policy is critical to help deliver the organisational culture change that new ways of working will facilitate.

This policy, procedures and the requirements for each service area (i.e. the proposed % take up of home working, new ways of working etc) should be defined by the business and thereafter implemented by the ICT team when rolling out home and mobile / remote working. At a minimum this policy should address:

- Who is eligible / suitable (home and mobile workers) – provide recommendations for this
- Processes to be followed – from application to implementation (including required forms, authorisation etc)
- Costs and equipment – who pays for and has responsibility for these (Council or employee) including: furniture, PC, broadband, phone calls, equipment maintenance and suitability, any other expenses such (i.e. electricity, insurance) or allowances,
- Working hours – ensuring customer service standards are maintained or improved
- Regular office meetings and catch-up's
- Health and safety compliance
- Security and insurance - including risk assessments,
- Governance and management of home working employees – new procedures may be required?
- Any other difficulties i.e. communication and isolation of employees

In addition to this policy it is recommended that an accompanying communications strategy / plan be developed that outlines the numerous advantages and benefits of home / mobile working for all employees. This should educate employees on flexible working and help overcome any potential resistance to these new ways of working

The newly created corporate development and performance management team are to be assigned to the delivery of this by December 2009. Tom Kelly is currently trialling the required ICT technologies and new ways of working through a series of pilots, and Council Tax and Benefits have been identified as two services areas that could benefit greatly from home working and should be amongst the first to be implemented once the policies and technology are in place.

1.5. Review and strengthen senior officer engagement with CMT

Issue: A number of senior officers completed an accredited leadership course adopted by all districts in the County and the County itself. It was envisioned that this senior officer transformation team (SOT) would be the future leaders and stars of the Council freeing up CMT time. However there was no continuation strategy put in place following on from completion of this course and all the officers have been fully occupied with their regular Council roles.

The Performance Management Officer Working Group (OWG) was originally set up to support the implementation of the Council's Performance Management Framework and Covalent system across Divisions. However in light of the organisational changes and the perceived value of this group it is clear that the purpose and remit of this group requires reconsideration and has been effectively disbanded.

Engagement with service managers also needs to improve. Service manager's strengths lie in the managing the delivery of the day to day operational services; however developing an understanding of and getting involved in corporate level activities and with the Councils broader activities require improved awareness and engagement. We believe that goals / initiatives / new processes (etc.) communicated from CMT are often filtered when passed along the line management route (though this cannot be verified with certainty); which, in some measure, retards or blocks the delivery of corporate goals.

Recommendation: The existing Performance Management Officer Working Group has effectively been disbanded and a smaller more focused Corporate Development and Performance Management Officer Working Group should be handpicked, to provide what we believe will offer a more effective driving force, to complement the CMT.

A plan and action list (i.e. draft the flexible working policy and other that require immediate attention) is required to engage with and involve these officers in the broader CMT activities (including change & transformation in the Council) and utilise their skills to free up CMT time. In addition it is recommended that and future employees that undertake accredited leadership courses be carefully selected and be better utilised after course completion.

Service managers need to focus not only on operational delivery of their service area but also foster and implement a greater awareness of the Councils broader remit and goals. To achieve this they need to be better engaged with the Councils aims and delivered through better engagement with CMT (and the CMT better engaged with them). Their priorities should be aligned to those of the CMT to enable them to provide a key role in motivating their teams and driving corporate goals throughout the entire Council.

This desire for improved engagement and utilisation is the responsibility of all the CMT and should be implemented by March 2010, through better engagement with senior officers and more regular team meetings to cascade corporate goals and required actions, changing the culture and empowering employees to take greater ownership and responsibility.

1.6. New Strategic Change Director:

This section of the report has now been overtaken by events as a result of the Council's decision on 29th July to delete this post from the structure.

2. Finance

2.1. *Update Financial Strategy*

Issue: The Council has been effectively running a planned deficit revenue budget (approximately £450k annually) for some time; however this deficit was previously offset by under spends against budget, this position has greatly reduced as budgeting has become more realistic as the requirement for efficiencies has increased. The Medium Term Financial Plan has been significantly supported by Investment interest, in the main generated on capital receipts from the Large Scale Voluntary Transfer in 2000. However, due to the worldwide collapse in investment markets (due to much reduced interest rates and the Icelandic bank crash) this source of revenue has been lost, the annual impact of this reduction being in excess of £1m. In addition with Council tax being capped at 2.5% annually and there being no increase in government funding and from 2011 / 2012 the funding for Council services is being further pressured.

As a consequence it is estimated that over £2 million of the council's cash reserves will have to be used over the next two years to enable the council to provide its business as usual services to the public. Cost reduction measures and process efficiencies have, and will need to continue to be implemented to address this.

Recommendation: That the Council continues its annual budget timetable and activities during the months of April to June, with the previous year's accounts being finalised, and the broad financial picture is being reviewed to consider spending options. As an output, the budget timetable will be completed by the end of June, and the budget process itself will need to address the potential funding gap and the financial strategy for the next financial year. This review will include:

- The updated size of the deficit on the Medium Term Financial Plan.
- An update on the likely settlement from the Icelandic banks (£3 million in Landsbanki, £1m in Heritable and £5 million in Kaupthing Singer and Friedlander - KSF) and the timelines for this.
- Other investment alternatives – where there is likely to be very little return on existing investments due to historically low interest rates
- Remedial actions to cut the funding gap if required – revise services / concentrate on core levels of service etc (as per 2.2 below)

David Buckland is tasked with identifying this gap and finalising the financial strategy during October to February as part of this annual process and to ensure the Councils long term viability.

2.2. *Review current service provision*

Issue: It is apparent that the Council's service expectations and plans are no longer matched by available / sufficient resources (as outlined in 2.1 above) and require rebalancing. Efficiency and cost savings equivalent to the identified funding gap need to be found and implemented by 2011/12, which will have a direct bearing on current service delivery and aspirations.

The provision of the Councils services is reviewed on an annual basis (as part of a rolling three year plan) with new services introduced and some existing services removed. This year has been the first time that the Council has had to make such severe and immediate service efficiency savings, directly impacting upon delivery.

Recommendation: In addition to the already identified efficiencies, as part of the ongoing efficiency requirements, it is recommended that the Council undertakes a more comprehensive review of all services, to determine whether some of these services (or the level of provision for these services) should be potentially reduced.

The prioritisation model should be used to overlay and taxpayer priorities, statutory services and the Council aims and vision to determine relative priority scores that determine what to commit to and what to aspire towards. This exercise should be undertaken as part of the budget review process and in line with the financial strategy, funding gap and budget.

This exercise will be led by David Buckland and supported by the entire CMT team as part of the budget allocation process for 2010-2013.

2.3. *Implement process improvements to drive greater efficiencies*

2.3.1. Greater efficiencies in cash payments

Issue: Throughout the Council's three public facing Worcestershire hub's (Kidderminster town Hall, Stourport Civic centre & Bewdley) a current public service is taking cash payments from members of the public e.g. paying council tax, licenses etc. These cash payments are both time intensive and expensive (high cost to maintain cash facilities – security and banking charges) to process. These hubs are currently staffed by approximately 25 employees in total at an annual cost of £500k (for salaries) and £315k for other operational costs, though the County provides £181k in subsidies for these running costs.

In 2010 the County Council expect up to four of these employees may be moved to a dedicated telephony call centre (as part of they County's shared services integration) which will put the delivery of the existing services under extra pressure.

Recommendation: We believe that providing the ability to make cash payments should not be a priority for the Council when there is a good banking system and infrastructure in place for this purpose at a lower cost. Therefore we recommend that the cash payment function be outsourced and removed from all Worcestershire hubs. We believe that this cash payment function (and potentially some others) can easily be reduced (through automation) and outsourced (i.e. to the post office / banks) in all three hubs, without greatly impacting the level of service provided to customers (currently the best in the County) and generating greater efficiencies and cost savings. It is estimated that there are currently 100k face to face payments made annually and therefore of a suitable level to outsource.

The Council would also benefit from a significant 'push' towards automated (phone and web) and direct debit payments instead of cash payments as these are cheaper and more efficient. These automated web services should be available from July 2009 as part of the ICT strategy.

Recommended actions include:

- An analysis and review of the current usage of each hub, breakdown of services provided, footfall, operational costs etc is required.
- Identify high volume repetitive transactions (i.e. council tax payments) that could be outsourced and 'pushed' towards automated payments.
- Research potential options i.e. outsourcing partners such as the post office, automated payments, greater use of self service technologies etc

- Provide recommendations and options (including estimated costs and savings) on the future provision of services and the most efficient means of delivering this.
- CMT approval for this strategy and implementation

Linda Collis (with support from David Buckland) is responsible for reviewing this opportunity by January 2010.

2.3.2. E-Procurement

Issue: Procurement is currently largely paper-based and undertaken by each individual council office, resulting in multiple suppliers, individual contracts etc. This system for the raising of orders and the payment of invoices is labour intensive, slow, and without commitment accounting, budget officers and financial services keep records outside of the ledger to provide an overview of the overall financial position. The Council has implemented the Agresso Financial Management system which has the functionality available to implement e-procurement and commitment accounting.

This centralised E-procurement solution will provide many benefits including: administration savings and efficiency (reduce the amount of time spend dealing with paper orders and invoices), provide greater control, economies of scale savings, rationalisation of suppliers, catalogues, purchasing cards, e-auctions etc.

Recommendation: The Council continues with phase 2 Agresso where development E-procurement is being developed and implemented, this scheme has a budget available of £215,900 (approved by CMT) and is planned to be implemented by April 2010. An action plan is being developed for this, and key activities include:

- Mapping the required new business processes – Internal services and external consultants including Tom Kelly (as part of ICT strategy)
- A internal catalogue needs to be populated with Council approved suppliers (this is currently being re-negotiated for bigger discounts)
- A current spend analysis has been funded from the West Midlands RIEP to determine the correct system population
- Implementation plan (implementation commences October 2009) including the loading of suppliers onto the system
- Additional support may be required for resources (£32k in support already signed off)

David Buckland has responsibility for this action plan (July 2009) the implementation of this system by April 2010, with support from the ICT consultant and the IT team

2.3.3. Review corporate print & design options

Issue: As a consequence of a combination of moving to a single site, centralising the Council's printing service and the implementation of home / remote working there is an opportunity to review the most efficient provision of the corporate print service.

Recommendation: We believe that potential cost savings could be realised by outsourcing the print (and possibly also design) service; this has been successfully outsourced by many other Councils. To facilitate this the Council need to:

- Identify and understand the current spend on corporate print and design (i.e. brochures, Council letters, publications etc) – detailed ‘forensic accounting’ required in the finance systems on specific cost centres etc.
- Review potential outsourcing options and then compare current spend to potential marketplace deals to determine if more effective.

Linda Collis will review the potential options and provide an interim report in October 2009 and a final report in 2010.

3. Projects / Programmes

3.1. *Single site review*

Issue: It has become clear that the Council now operates in a more pressured financial environment which places the Councils budget under severe strain and has a more direct impact on the Councils plans to move to a new single site.

We believe that for a small geographical area such as Wyre Forest there is little valid justification for more than one site, which is probably the biggest efficiency initiative the Council can make. However, it is noted that in relation to a 'single site' there is also a continued requirement for a depot, though this does not necessarily have to be co-located with the single site.

For customers and employees, location and accessibility of this site is an important factor, though customer access can be overcome by providing alternative arrangements, and for employees improvements can be made through implementing flexible working.

We consider a combination of a workforce reduction programme and new ways of working enabled by ICT (home and mobile) has the potential to reduce the size/spatial requirement for the corporate office development, initially anticipated.

We believe the existing, planned KTC3 development is now unlikely to progress in its preferred form as the financial viability has been severely compromised in the current economic downturn and that a revised mix of uses, possibly including bespoke office provision, is required to maintain viability. However, the KTC3 site, which would probably require further study to provide a feasible option, could provide the necessary (reduced) capacity required for the single site, and is therefore a much stronger potential option particularly because of its location and access advantages for customers. We understand this potential option is being reconsidered by the Council, although the strengths and weaknesses of this site will need to be carefully balanced before its attributes as a contender for a new single site could be fully established.

Whilst the Stourport Road site has (to date) been the preferred site (by Council and Members), the Council have recently encountered issues in relation to site contamination and negotiations with the land owners (who initially wished to develop the site as part of any sale). We also consider that although having the advantages of a green-field site (the Romwire site isn't green-field, it is brown-field), its access from a customer perspective is relatively poor without independent transport. This, of course, could be addressed through revised bus services. We have also been informed that another site on the opposite side of Walter Nash Road, Finepoint, is now a valid contender for the Single Site. This is already part of an existing business park and presents no contamination or other environmental issues.

Recommendation: We acknowledge the considerable time and effort by all parties to get the Council to the position it is in today in relation to the selection of the single site selection. However we strongly believe that in light of the more pressured economic environment, issues and changed requirements (as outlined above), the Council should select out of the key available options and agree on the best single site solution, as detailed in the Chief Executive's draft report

This review considers the following options: 2.6 acres, 7 acres, and the full site at Romwire, KTC3 and FinePoint). Recommended criteria and issues to consider when evaluating these options include:

- **Value for money:**
- **Promoting sustainable development:**
- **Putting customers first**

- **Valuing employees:**
- **Working in partnership**
- **Being open, responsive and accountable**
- **Site configuration**
- **Project Manager**

On 29th July the Council chose the Finepoint site as the best solution for its new corporate headquarters.

3.2. Property Rationalisation & site disposal strategy

Issue: The Council currently utilises six sites [Stourport civic centre and New street, Coventry Street office, Kidderminster town hall, Duke House, Green street depot and offices, in addition Worcestershire hub facilities are also provided at Stourport and Bewdley]. By moving to a single site significant building operating cost savings can be made (currently estimated to be half a million per year on current spend) including: reduced building operating costs, and centralising of duplicated services (post room, messenger services, printing, administration etc). Capital receipts (from the sale of existing buildings) will also be made; these are proposed to finance the cost of the new single site.

Recommendation: The number of properties utilised by the Council should be rationalised towards a single site plus depot arrangement. A strategy and implementation plan is required to determine the exact number of buildings the Council will require (including offices required to provide the Worcestershire hub public facing services in line with the 'Worcestershire Hub evolution'. Because it is believed that there is currently some potential underutilisation of buildings in the short term, this plan should include any possible property rationalisation that can be undertaken prior to moving to the single site for immediate savings and capital gains. Disposal of these buildings should be undertaken in the most effective manner to maximise the capital raised, the timing of property sales will also be dependent on market conditions.

The cost and duration of any bridging finance also needs to be determined. Where possible duplicated services (services currently provided at each site) should be centralised, redundant services removed (i.e. the current messaging service between the six sites), and outsourcing of services (where cost effective) researched.

In relation to the existing buildings it is recommended that:

- **Stourport Civic Centre** – This is built on a large and very marketable site, the Council should realise a significant price for this building (which is currently under utilised) after moving to single site.
- **New Street**- This office could be emptied prior to moving to 'single site' by moving staff to the civic centre and other offices / home working as appropriate. Therefore this could be sold sooner and refresh capital funds.(NB: this building is Listed)
- **Coventry Street Office** – This office could be emptied prior to moving to 'single site' by moving staff to other offices in Kidderminster / home working as appropriate. Therefore this could be sold sooner and refresh capital funds.
- **Kidderminster Town hall** – This is a listed building and its disposal is thought to be prohibitive. The Worcestershire hub facilities could be retained here and this site can also act as the Disaster

Recovery site (* this may depend on the proximity to the new single site) as the server room is being upgraded to the required standard.

- Duke house – This is a leased building, whose lease is currently expiring. There is, however, an exercised option to extend this for a further two years and then be reviewed again (depending on the move to dingle site). Thereafter rental savings can be made by non renewal of this lease.
- Green Street – It is recommended that the depot remain here as this is costly to rebuild elsewhere because of the fuel store and it is preferred that this is not co-located with the single site. However should alternative fuel supply and contingency arrangements be negotiated with 3rd party fuel suppliers then the entire site could be sold. Regardless of the depot the offices which are both very popular and marketable should be sold after moving to the single site.
- Bewdley – Worcestershire hub facilities are currently provided in a separate cash office to the museum which is a leasehold asset to be disposed of in line with the 'Worcestershire hub evolution'. Thereafter rental savings can be made by non renewal of this lease.

Caroline Newlands is currently working on this property rationalisation strategy for immediate building rationalisation and efficiency savings. While CMT need to agree (post moving to single site) this strategy because of the potential impact on services; this is due by April 2010, thereafter Caroline Newlands will be responsible for the implementation of this.

3.3. *Worcestershire enhanced 2 tier working (WETT) Programme*

Issue: As part of the shared services initiative the County (funded by the Improvement and Efficiency Programme), is looking across work streams in the district Councils at a basic level to determine if any of these can be run as shared services. This was narrowed to five areas: Internal Audit, Human Resources, Property, Street Scene and Regulatory Services. A high level business case was put together for each; however it was felt that these were not completed to an appropriate level of detail and confidence in these (throughout the Council) was low. Consequentially it was decided that a detailed business case be created for Regulatory Services and one other area (yet to be decided). This has had a significant impact upon the resources in Mike Parkers directorate as the County consultants have not set appropriate parameters for data gathering, and no model exists for developing the cost savings, as a consequence employees spend a lot of time creating and populating templates for these.

The Council have also been concerned at the rapid pace at which these initiatives are being imposed upon the Council (as there are currently no Council employees dedicated to these initiatives, employees have to perform all their business as usual functions in addition to all these) and the perceived lack of an overall vision for each initiative. The Council also have concerns about the value for money in these service integrations not having seen any detailed business cases to date, and the lack of risk management and escalation procedures.

Recommendation: Following our discussions with both the Council and the Consultant employed by the County (Adrian McCormick) we make the following recommendations:

- The WETT programme is currently a commitment and much time and commitment has already been given to the Regulatory Services detailed business case, it is recommended to continue with this work even through it has significant resource impacts.
- We recommend that where possible the Council commit to detailed business case development to help shape the delivery of future service. Should resources and capacity be a serious constraint,

then where possible the operational roles of key members involved should be backfilled by others; alternatively other services / activities need to be de-prioritised.

- Walter has also agreed to suggest (at the CEP) that once the detailed business case for regulatory services is completed at the end of July, a review of the process to develop this be undertaken. Lessons learned during this process should be identified and a set of best practices & guidelines, pitfalls etc, be created for subsequent detailed business case development. Walter has also agreed to raise the opportunity of sharing DR / BC arrangements with bordering Councils.
- The Council will be provided with an estimate of the resource requirements to develop detailed business cases for each of the four remaining proposed services areas. This should allow the Council to make a more informed decision on whether to commit to each these or alternatively to 'pullout'. The down side is that the Council would miss the opportunity to influence the way these services will be delivered in the future and the costs of joining late may be higher.
- Once completed each detailed business cases must be thoroughly validated and assessed to ensure that this is still in line with the Councils strategy and vision before committing to the next stage and implementation. Implementation plans also need to be thoroughly assessed and deemed feasible and at pace that is realistic for the Council before signing up.

On 29th July the Council decided to:

Re-affirm its commitment, along with other councils in Worcestershire, to continue to look at ways of working closely together to improve services to the public and businesses and to make efficiency savings.

Approve Regulatory Services as a priority for the development of a Detailed Business Case by the end of September, 2009 with participation in Internal Audit and Property Services Detailed Business Cases as time, resources and capacity permits.

Approve continuation of discussions with the County Council on Joint Working Arrangements, outside WETT, in relation to Human Resources and Property Services.

3.4. Worcestershire Hub evolution

Issue: As part of a County initiative the Worcestershire hub provides customer facing services throughout the county. Key services include: benefits, blue badge, county services, car parks, concessionary travel, council tax, environmental health, housing, highways, planning, operational services and other services.

Wyre Forest currently provides the best Worcestershire hub performance to its customers (100k calls, 50k visitors and over 100k payments annually) throughout the County. However this has a high annual running cost estimated to be £500k for salaries and £300k for other operational costs, though the County provides £181k in subsidies for these running costs. This is an expensive access channel into the Council for customers, while alternative and cheaper access methods are being developed.

There are also concerns in relation to the next phase of the Hub's evolution whereby four generically trained employees are moved out of the Hub and into to a County dedicated call service centre. This is not in line with how the Councils perceives they should provide services

The Council are also concerned that by distancing themselves from the Hub's evolution and the County's shared service integration initiatives (as previously outlined in 4.3 Worcestershire enhanced two tier working) this funding may be in danger; however this should be reviewed against the potential savings by rationalising the number of hubs required.

Recommendation: We believe that for small geographical area such as Wyre Forest there is no justification in the current environment for more the maintenance of more than one Worcestershire hub, however other access channels should continue to be improved.

We recognise that there are plans for a riverside theatre facility in Stourport with a provision for both civic offices for the Town Council and Worcestershire hub facilities; in addition access to the Bewdley hub has recently been upgraded. However in the interests of the Council providing best value for money services, we recommend that the number of hubs in the Council be rationalised resulting in the Stourport and Bewdley hubs being phased out and the hub retained in Kidderminster, as this has the highest number of visitors (estimated to be 5 times the other two combined). Co-location of the hub at the KTC3 site (if chosen as the single site) should also be reviewed. In addition and as outlined in 2.4.1 cash payments should be outsourced / automated resulting in fewer visitors per hub.

However there is a requirement to undertake a comprehensive review to determine the value for money of each including an analysis of the current usage of each hub, breakdown of services provided, footfall, operational costs etc.

It is also recommended that the Council carefully review the next stages of the Hub's evolution and ensure that these are in line with the Council's preferred service delivery strategy (Including both the property rationalisation strategy and greater payment efficiencies) and the costs / potential impacts of pulling out of this initiative before deciding on a course of action.

A rationalisation of the existing hubs is recommended to provide the most efficient provision of customer services throughout the Council, including:

- Kidderminster Town Hall – This is a listed building and its sale is prohibitive, in addition this site has the highest footfall (approximately 50 thousand visitors annually) and provides the highest levels of efficiency and value for money. Therefore it is recommended that Worcestershire hub facilities be retained here.
- Bewdley – It is recommended that this Worcestershire hub facility be closed due to a combination of low footfall (approximately 3.5 thousand visitors annually) and high associated running costs resulting in poor value for money when compared to Kidderminster. Consideration was given to moving this service into the Museum and combining this with Tourist Information however this is unfeasible due to the expense of this (providing accessibility and security for cash onsite) and role diversity.
- Stourport Civic Centre – This building and the surrounding land will be sold as part of the property disposal strategy once the single site is completed, in addition the Coventry street office will also be

sold. Therefore there will be no council office in Stourport (though a location for this would be available), and it is recommended that Worcestershire hub facilities not be provided here due to the prohibitively high costs i.e. a new secure (for cash payments) building would be required for this service and relatively low footfall (approximately 7 thousand visitors annually) resulting in poor value for money.

Linda Collis is assigned to define and implement the strategy and action plan for this by 2010.

3.5. *Explore joint working arrangements*

Issue: As part of the North Worcestershire regeneration project a business case is being considered for a joint proposal between Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC), Bromsgrove District Council (BDC) and Redditch Borough Council (RBC) for the provision of regeneration and economic development services across the three North Worcestershire districts including a detailed financial appraisal and requirements gathering.

This aims to combine funding allocation, business grants etc within these with the aim of improving the collective benefit to both rather than cost savings, by having a stronger position to attract regional strategic funding, partners etc. The PID for this has been created

Recommendation: There is clearly a lot of potential for service efficiency by employing a 'joined up' approach to regeneration with bordering Councils; these opportunities require further investigation and development of a detailed business case for approval, tasks include:

- Define the proposal including possible models, authorities' responsibilities, activities that could be shared etc
- Setup a project team a project team to determine the vision and strategy for the project
- Determine the contents of and deliver the final business case based on a single business unit approach to regeneration (inc economic development) across the three authorities (July 2009)
- External consultant to facilitate a workshop to flesh out in detail the opportunities (by end of June) to help create a strategy / roadmap.
- Investigate the potential of combining a disaster recovery / business continuity site with one or more bordering District Councils to save on the high associated costs. Walter is to raise this opportunity at the next CEP.

Mike Parker is working with colleagues from R&B to progress the project with the aim of providing high level recommendations by September 2009. However capacity is both a concern and a risk as Mike currently doesn't have time to create a detailed business case.

3.6. *Strategic review of waste & recycling*

Issue: A huge cost to the Council and all local authorities is the issue of waste collection and disposal, while waste minimisation and increasing recycling is a key priority. Currently the Council collects residual waste (standard two wheel bin) on a bi-weekly basis and recycling materials (in a recycling box in a general cage vehicle) on a weekly basis.

Because of the improved recycling facilities which will be available later in the year, the Council consideration of collection methods which were previously unavailable is now possible. As a consequence the Council can now also collect recycling materials in the standard 'two wheel bins' and thus can be collected on a bi-weekly basis. Thus resulting in 50% less recycling material collections and an annual saving of £300k has been identified; however there are likely to be capital implications for any new method of collection which will include the potential procurement of new wheelie bins and refuse vehicles.

A strategy and action plan is required to outline the vision for, and implement these changes. This is currently subject to a review by the Corporate Resources Scrutiny Committee which is due to be completed by September 2009.

Recommendation: We recommend a continuation of the review into the Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy and the future method of domestic waste and recycling service scoping paper has been approved by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee and £1.2 million has been identified for the provision of new refuse collection vehicles. Various strategic options are currently being researched and evaluated including:

- Requirements and cost of new vehicles and bins to provide this new service
- Strategy for the existing vehicles used for recycling collection (no longer required for this), options include using them for a 'paid for' green waste service during summer months or disposal / sale.
- Any potential redundancies.

These options will then be presented to and appraised (by the Community Services Scrutiny Committee), feedback, questions etc taken on board. Recommendations will then be made to CMT in August and the strategy finalised in September. Thereafter a detailed implementation plan will be required.

David Buckland will develop the strategy by October 2009 and thereafter oversee the implementation of this which commences in April 2010.

3.7. BSF, Leisure, Parks, & Green Spaces.

Issue: The building schools for the future (BSF) programme commences in 2011 for 5 schools in the district at a cost of £120 million. The planning process commences this year with high level business cases due in November 2009. This impacts upon the Council in three ways: land usage (existing sites i.e. linking into the town centre regeneration and leisure facilities), affordable leisure within the Council and greater alignment of capital projects.

Recommendation: The Councils strategic approach to each BSF school site requires clarification to optimise the benefits to the selected schools; this also needs to be aligned to external funding opportunities (i.e. aligned with leisure facilities investment). Specialist advice on BSF programme synergies should be sought and factored with the County and schools primary capital programme. This strategic approach is due for completion by December 2010.

The current leisure partner (DC leisure) contract is due for renewal in 2013 and requires a strategic plan of action. This is a ten year contract which costs the Council approximately £1.3 million per annum which includes a management fee to DC Leisure and costs for repairs and maintenance of the buildings and plant. This is a good deal for the Council resulting in half a million a year in savings.

A series of meetings are required with DC Leisure (and potentially other leisure partners should initial meetings with DC leisure prove unsatisfactory) to determine efficiencies, new investment opportunities and

to enhance the overall quality of leisure provision (rather than cost savings); a report for CMT including a series of options and recommendations should be produced by March 2010. Thereafter the target outcome is leisure contract negotiation strategy in addition to the re-negotiation of this contract. Negotiations with Leisure partner(s) should also focus on upgrading the facilities and equipment in the Leisure centres at a similar cost to the existing contract.

The management and maintenance of the parks and green spaces is currently conducted in house at an annual cost of £1.3 million (net). However an overall vision and strategy for the parks and green spaces in the Council is required.

A parks and green spaces review is required to delivery greater efficiencies from 2009 / 10. A saving of £120k has been identified for 2009/10 and the review which will commence in September 2009 will identify further savings and examine options for partnering, externalising or retaining the service in-house, with an additional £100k per year thereafter. This parks and green spaces review is due for completion by March 2010 and should outline how these prospective savings can be achieved.

Linda Collis is responsible, with Kay Higman taking the practical day to day lead.

3.8. Review & planning of new developments

3.8.1. KTC3

Issue: In 2006, assisted by Chase & Partners (C&P), the Council ran a 'design competition' and selected Wilson Bowden (WB) as its preferred developer for the KTC3 site. 2.3 The WB concept scheme comprised: an 8 screen cinema, 20 lane bowling alley, 40-50 bedroom hotel, 32,500ft² of food and drink premises, 52 residential units (inc. 12 affordable) and various public realm and connectivity improvements.

There is an interest still, despite the current economic climate however WB have indicated that if the Council wishes to continue to pursue the leisure scheme as originally conceived, then they would most likely withdraw as they do not believe delivery is viable any longer.

As previously outlined in 3.1 (because of the employee reduction programme and the implementation of home / mobile working) the KTC3 site offers a potentially viable option which is being currently being considered in terms of its prospective strengths and weaknesses as a single site option.

However, it is recognised that alternative redevelopment schemes of this specific site, although different from the original WB concept, could provide better options for the Council in terms of local facilities, redevelopment opportunities and value, in the longer term.

As a consequence new options and way forward are required for this site.

Recommendation: As this site is a potential option for the single site, it is recommended that a decision on the future of this site be made after location of the single site has been finalised (as per 3.1 above).

Should KTC3 not be identified as the primary option for a single site then there needs to be a different mix of uses than originally proposed, in order to create value to offset the deficit of the cinema facility. There are at least two possible options for this site that could achieve this:

- Offices –if an anchor tenant can be found (although this latter is deemed less likely in the current financial environment)
- Retail uses (e.g. Asda/Lidl), but at the scale these additional land would be required

It seems prudent that these and other options should be further evaluated, to maximise the site and its economic potential. However redeveloping the site for alternative mixed use including a hotel, associated food and drink uses and other uses (excluding a cinema) or using the site as the Councils new single site as preferred options, will require further investigation.

Once a preferred option is agreed, a strategic plan/ roadmap will be required.

Mike Parker is responsible for this.

3.8.2. STC4

Issue: In April 2008 the Council made a compulsory purchase order (CPO) to acquire land that forms part of the bridge street basins link site (STC4) in the Councils district local plan which was adopted in 2004. The land is required to act as a stimulus for the development of the whole STC4 site and to provide a pedestrian thoroughfare from Bridge Street to the canal basin area. The Council is working with British Waterways and Advantage West Midlands the regional development agency, to deliver the first phase of the STC4 site development. The acquisition is expected to cost £1 million split equally and the ROI is also to be split equally. The value of this redevelopment is estimated to be in the region of £2 million to Stourport in additional income from new and existing tourists.

Recommendation: The CPO has been confirmed and legal issues to resolve title to the land have been completed and the acquisition is almost finalised. Because this is a big project combining partnerships and regeneration, sets an important precedent and with the Councils reputation at stake it clearly requires immediate focus and priority and it is recommended that:

- The project timelines and milestones need to be revisited and re-checked to ensure they are still accurate and updated where required.
- An action plan / strategy created to move this forward (including getting a development partner on board) with robust planning procedures.
- This project then needs to move to the delivery phase.

Mike Parker has ownership of this.

3.8.3. New Cemetery

This project is now back on track. See Report to Cabinet 24th June. Tender timetable and procurement approved – progressing project for completion end of 2010

Issue: The District's main burial site is Kidderminster Cemetery; its capacity to open new graves will be exhausted, based on the current death rate and pre-plot purchase rate, in approximately 10-12 months. In the rescheduled capital programme 2008-2009 to 2011-2012 a sum of circa £2.3M has been reserved towards the associated building costs to create a new cemetery. The new site consists of approximately 23 acres and has been purchased by the Council. It has capacity to accommodate burials for in excess of 90 years and planning permission has been secured The Council recommenced the advance sale of plots in

the Kidderminster Cemetery with effect from 1st April 2009, however they Council may consider suspending the advance sale of plots at some point during the next 12-14 months.

However negotiations with the preferred have partner has fallen through and a new partner / developer is required to enable the project to progress.

Recommendation: We recommend continuation to identify and appoint a partner operator to manage the cemetery and build a crematorium, chapel, etc. The partner operator would build the facility using the plans already drawn up by the Council for which planning permission has been granted. The partner operator provides the shortfall in capital in exchange for a 150 year lease initially at a peppercorn rent. The Council would be required to make a maximum capital contribution of £2.3M.

To explore the partner operator also managing the Kidderminster Cemetery in the form of a management fee as the existing cemetery and new district cemetery may benefit from a co-ordinated management approach.

A new action plan (with timelines, milestones etc) has been prepared to get this project back on track including, partner selection through a tender process through to implementation and operation of the new Cemetery.

Linda Collis and David Buckland have responsibility for this by September 2009.

3.9. *Identify project management priorities and resources*

Issue: Project management techniques are currently used (including the 'project in a box' methodology); however these are not consistently applied and used (i.e. to the same level of detail) throughout the Council. Given the size and magnitude of change and transformation facing the Council, there is a need for the Council to be smart in their approach and use of resources to deliver this.

Recommendation: To achieve this we recommend that more rigour and consistency needs to be brought to the field of project management throughout the Council including:

- The new strategic change director (or interim) should firstly setup a lightweight Programme / Project Management Office (PMO) function to action the below recommendations. The initial focus should be on the change programme, large capital projects and other high priority initiatives.
- Project management processes and procedures also require formalising and implementation i.e. reporting, meetings etc as part of the PMO function (as outlined in 1.6 above).
- All developed plans should have the right priorities, resources and timescales in balance
- Consistency in the application of the 'project in a box' methodology throughout the Council. Guidelines for its use need to be defined and implemented; to achieve this consistency a training course for project managers may be required.
- CMT should also act as the programme board for the change programme

This task is assigned to the CMT.

4. ICT Processes

Overview: A common thread identified across all ICT initiatives has been that, although well focused and driven, they appear to lack an appropriate involvement and steer from the relevant business owner. Without a clearly defined business owner and suitable business direction there is a serious risk that these will deliver good ICT outcomes but fail to delivery appropriate organisational and efficiency benefits. We are clear that all ICT initiatives should be business lead and not technology lead as is currently the situation. Furthermore the investment and value for money for each initiative should be re-assessed if not well defined i.e. for GIS.

We recommend that the new strategic change director should provide the necessary challenge to re-establish and ensure that the ICT initiatives have the appropriate level of engagement (with the business) and will deliver tangible benefits in terms of Council service improvements and efficiency, and will be accountable for this.

4.1. *Develop web self service needs*

Issue: As part of the ICT strategy the Council are moving towards customer self service as this is often a cheaper and more efficient means of serving customers. The first step in this process is defining and agreeing the forms to be used on the website and provide the required level of functionality. However the County are leading the Council to use the forms they are creating, without robust consultation with the Council to determine if these forms Wyre Forest needs.

Inc web functionality

Recommendation: While standardisation of customer forms through the County is desired, Wyre Forest forms must meet the Councils needs. It is therefore recommended that the Council define what these forms should contain (to meet the Councils needs) and meet with the County representative to ensure these forms have this required functionality. A suitable alternative needs to be developed where they don't provide the required functionality (and County appear unable to change them to meet the Councils needs). Thereafter Council online services should be implemented and rolled out as per the ICT strategy.

This activity is owned by CMT with a delivery date of October 2009.

4.2. *Home working*

Issue: The ICT consultant (Tom Kelly) in conjunction with nominated volunteers from the service areas are currently piloting the technologies and business process / ways of working required for home working, for multiple service areas across the Council. However this needs to be business led rather than technology lead as current is the case as a consequence this project is lacking direction and is being held up by the lack of a 'flexible working' policy i.e. how to deal with employee phone bills when working from home.

Recommendation: Council Tax and Benefits have been identified as two services areas that could benefit greatly from home working, thus it is recommended that as a priority home working is implemented for these initially (by February 2010), with other areas to receive a lower business priority. Once completed and approved the flexible working policy should provide guidance for employees working from home.

This activity is owned by CMT

4.3. *Mobile working*

Issue: A significant portion of Council employees spend the majority of their time working out of the office. Building control, street scene, food inspections and licensing have been identified as service areas whose employees fit this remote working criterion.

Recommendation: These remote / mobile working employees would benefit from ICT that enables them to work independent of location i.e. 'on the road' or from home. Resulting in greater efficiency (employees don't have to come into the office to pickup their workload), improved customer care and optimised outcomes.

Mike Parker (in conjunction with the ICT consultant) is tasked with reviewing this by October 2009 with the view to enabling this remote / home working for employees across the identified four service areas.

4.4. *Administration & centralised document management review*

Issue: Currently business processes and functions are not automated and there is no central document management system. Each site also has its own administration team.

Recommendation: A combination of the new flexible ways of working and the move to single site will result in one central administration team, thus the size and remit of this team needs to be reviewed and defined. As part of these new ways of working a centralised document management / imaging / distribution system is being implemented using EDRMS; as part of this implementation business processes and functions should be reviewed, streamlined (where possible) and automated with workflow functionality.

Walter Delin has completed the scoping document for the administration review, however it is difficult to rationalise the numbers while on six different sites.

This activity is owned by Paul Ryder.

4.5. *ICT platform rationalisation*

Issue: The County (including the Worcestershire Hub) is implemented a new CRM system (One Serve from July 09) throughout the Councils in the County. However this system is not linked to any of the Councils back office systems or workflow. As part of the ICT strategy business processes are being automated and made available on both the internet and intranet.

Recommendation: As part of the ICT strategy greater integration / rationalisation of systems and infrastructure should be investigated for potential savings (i.e. using one DR site across multiple Councils). In addition system integration (between County and Council) should be reviewed.

A DR review is required as the Council do not have the budget for a full live DR site (i.e. not as many servers / SAN's in DR site), a large data link between DR and main sites will also be required (currently very expensive), and the Kidderminster town hall (proposed DR site) is low lying and could potentially get flooded. £60k is required to upgrade the server room in Kidderminster town hall.

David Buckland (with support from Tom Kelly) has responsibility for this.

4.6. *Review GIS efficiency opportunity*

Issue: As part of the ICT strategy considerable effort and cost is being devoted to upgrading the Geographical Information System (GIS), new map layers being developed and a costumer facing module is being purchased.

Recommendation: It is recommended that the benefits, value for money, potential savings and efficiencies of this project be evaluated (including the vendor presentations), with recommendations produced for the appropriate level of investment of time and resource to this initiative. A detailed business case is required that outlining the benefits for each section i.e. customer module, backend system etc.

Mike Parker (with support from Tom Kelly) has responsibility for this.

5. Performance Management

5.1. *Review, define and agree 'Commitments' and 'Aspirations' for corporate, directorate & business service plans*

Issue: There is currently disjoint between the aspirations, planned deliverables and resources to deliver these, this has recently become more acute with the downsizing of the organisation. Members and chief officers in our view need more mature dialogue about what can realistically be defined and targeted within the finite Council resources. However this should not prevent stretched targets or hinder innovation but provide a clear distinction between commitments and aspirations.

Recommendation: We recommend that the Council separate and define their annual commitments (what the Council must do) and their aspirations (what the Council would like to do) on directorate and business service plans and other reporting metrics. This re-setting of expectations should be outcome driven and these commitments and aspirations should be done as part of the annual business planning process and should be included in the annual directorate and business service plans. Guidance should also be provided and enforced on the use of business service plans i.e. one plan for each business function not one large plan for all. Sample commitments and aspirations are outlined below:

- Commitments :
 - To achieve service efficiencies by developing and embedding remote working practices into everyday procedures.
 - Launch the customer service strategy throughout the whole authority, ensuring all employees are aware of their responsibilities under the strategy
 - Establish Performance Clinics for underperforming indicators or targets
- Aspirations :
 - To ensure efficient service delivery by maintaining top quartile performance against NI 157 performance indicators.
 - Update and maintain CED sections on the Council's website and intranet
 - To review the Sundry Debtor and Miscellaneous Income function and Introduce an appropriate range of local performance indicators

Once completed service plans should then be discussed, agreed and signed off by CMT (a day long working session is required to deliver this) with an appropriate level of constructive criticism and challenge to ensure consistency throughout all plans in the Council. Each plan should thereafter be signed off by the responsible director, by CMT and by the responsible Cabinet Member.

Once finalised these should be communicated (including performance indicators and what realistic outcomes look like) throughout the Council and to Members.

This process is owned by Alison Braithwaite and should be completed in June 2009.

5.2. *Re-establish accountability and monitoring of performance targets at all levels*

Issue: There is currently a lack of accountability and monitoring of performance targets throughout the Council, often resulting in targets not being met.

Corporate priorities, national indicators (NI's) and local performance indicators (LPI's) and are regularly reported on; however service plan (directorate & business) actions are only reported on at financial year end, which is inadequate. These are far more detailed and granular than NI's and LPI's and active monitoring of these would provide the Council with more pro-active warning on when commitments are in danger of not be met.

Recommendation: The establishment of a bi-monthly Performance Management Clinic has been approved by CMT and Council. These clinics will be chaired by Walter Delin with; the Leader John Campion, the opposition leader Howard Martin as vice-chairs, and others as required. Corporate priorities, NI's and LPI's that have had a 'red' status for the past two months will be escalated to this clinic, whereby the issue is discussed, the owner proposes a remedy plan to be discussed and a issue resolution agreed.

While this clinic is a big improvement, actions (commitments only) in all service plans should also be regularly monitored with issues escalated and the following recommendations are also made:

- Monthly directorate review meetings whereby all committed service actions are discussed and updated (on the covalent system). Each Business plan should have an owner who is responsible for this.
- Quarterly CMT review meetings. This processes should focus on management by exception and only on escalated actions (i.e. those with issues and deemed red's) from the monthly directorate meetings. If a resolution cannot be found these should then be escalated to the performance management clinics.
- All service actions (in addition to corporate plans, NI's and LPI's) should be recorded and regularly updated (as appropriate) on the covalent system.

The CMT team are responsible for this process, but Alison Braithwaite is leading this.

5.3. *Review and establish consistent monitoring, reporting and publishing of performance targets*

Issue: The Covalent system is used to; monitor and report performance targets throughout the Council. However the reporting on performance targets is currently only done on a percentage complete basis and the status (red amber, green) is determined solely by the % complete (i.e. if not complete and the target date has passed red, otherwise green). Therefore a target could be 80% complete but actually be behind plan and should actually have a 'red' status which the current covalent reporting metrics would not show. While an additional behind target (amber) metric is currently being applied to the covalent system, we do not believe that this is adequate.

In addition it is felt that the Council does not provide a balanced view on reporting, focusing on the few negative aspects instead of the many ongoing successes and high levels of delivery. While information is monitored and reported on it is not published in a meaningful and constant way.

Recommendation: The Council need to define what is important to them and then in an open and transparent way publish this information on a regular basis to both employees and customers (i.e. on the

internet / intranet). This will provide a greater balance acknowledging that most services are well run but some occasionally go wrong (refer to Lambeth Council's 'Council Performance Digest' – available on their website as an excellent template).

In relation to monitoring and reporting on the covalent system we recommend that this be reviewed and at a minimum an extra column be added to show the current status of each target including:

- Green - On schedule to deliver in line with the plan
- Amber - Encountered some issues which could affect the delivery within agreed time, cost and resources.
- Red - Delivery within agreed time, cost and resources is presently threatened

Therefore a combination of the % complete and the RAG status provides a comprehensive update on the delivery of each performance target.

As part of the annual business planning process, all corporate plans, NI's LPI's and service actions (from directorate and business service plans) should be uploaded to the Covalent system. Owners for each performance target identified and status updates provided (by the assigned officer) in line with the agreed frequency i.e. monthly for business service plans. These should then be published in a standard template (i.e. on intranet and internet) on a regular basis.

Alison Braithwaite is responsible for this.

5.4. Fundamental review of the Councils' risk register

Issue: The Council now operates in a much more risky and pressured financial environment to that of recent years, and as a consequence now faces a greater array of risks and challenges than ever before. There is a risk management group which is chaired by David Buckland, this group contains representatives from all departments, key risks are monitored and a report is taken twice annually to CMT and the audit commission. However in light of this new more pressured financial environment, the Councils £9 million in capital still frozen in the bankrupt Icelandic banks, the loss of revenue from the worldwide collapse in investment markets and the impacts these have on the Councils services, a fundamental review of the existing risk register and review process is required.

Recommendation: We recommend that because the Councils risk appetite has changed dramatically over the past year (much more risk averse now) a comprehensive and updated Council wide risk register is required to identify and pro-actively manage both the existing and new risks the Council now faces. In addition to this review a process for pro-actively identifying new risks is required.

David Buckland is developing an action plan for this review of the risk register and should include:

- Zurich Municipal services (responsible for setting up the original process and register) or another consultancy should be brought to review and re-run the risk analysis and review process as the risks now faced by the Council are much greater and the existing risks on the register do not reflect this.
- A process for a regular review of the Councils risks is required i.e. quarterly or bi-annually.
- Once the new risks have been identified a new process for managing these is required and as a first step an action plan to mitigate each is required.

- The highest priority risks should be the initial focus.

David Buckland is responsible for re-establishing and sustaining both the risk register and the review process.

6. Communications

6.1. *Better engagement with elected Members*

Issue: On our short engagement we have identified a potential need to re-clarify the roles of members and chief officers, to re-assign members towards strategic and policy input and leaving chief officers to manage the organisation on a day to day basis. Currently elected Members frequently interact with the Council in an ad hoc manner often seeking to influence the current business priorities (the Council and Members often have different priorities) or add new ones that are not in the business plans / budget. As a consequence other priorities often get neglected.

Recommendation: There needs to be a clear process where Members acknowledge that they should be guiding and steering the direction of the Council, but leaving the Council to determine the day to day priorities and how best to deploy finite resources to manage this.

In addition greater buy-in with Members for co-ordinated sharing of information, key messages, alignment of priorities etc will better define the relationship and reduce ad hoc interaction from Members. The development of a Member engagement strategy is required for this including:

- More member involvement in the business planning process (i.e. Cabinet Member sign off for business service plans in their area).
- Greater sharing of information including Corporate plans, directorate and business service plans.

CMT is to produce a first draft of this strategy by September 2009.

6.2. *Improve the consistency and focus of corporate communications*

Issue: The Council's corporate communications often tend to focus on negative aspects where the Council could be doing better (i.e. the red RAG's) instead of pro actively managing and promoting the Wyre Forest brand and reputation throughout the Council. We believe that the Council is a well run Organisation and needs to more positively portray the delivery achievements of the Council rather than keep the focus on the low number of negative issues.

The communications team has also been affected by the workforce reduction programme with ongoing service reviews and line management changes impacting the team.

Recommendation: The Council needs to be more focused in determining its priorities, how it delivers these on an ongoing basis, publishes performance metrics (that we believe will show the Council in a good light) with the limited resources available. The Council should seek to shift the perception (from focusing on reds) through greater openness and transparency on the services delivered to a high standard which boosts morale, improves the culture etc.

Corporate communications is an ongoing process; however it is recommended that the internet / intranet and other channels could be used more effectively to communicate positive messages, promote the Council's brand and increased visibility and transparency to both employees and the public - refer to Lambeth Council's 'Council Performance Digest' available on their website as an excellent template.

Realistic expectations need to be managed in a consistent way across all service areas. The Council's unique brand (what differentiates Wyre Forest from the other border Councils and the County) including the Council's aspirations, positioning and focus need to be clarified and communicated in a consistent manner.

The communications team have recently undertaken a Council wide transformation programme called 'Forward Together' as part of this they are committed to a employee climate survey, it is recommended that work continues on this programme and on the 5 pledges / action plans below:

- Members and employees will be informed and involved with the transformation and restructuring programme – 'FORWARD TOGETHER'
- The Council's reputation in the media and the community will be proactively managed.
- Communities will have a voice and there will be meaningful opportunities for participation in the Council's decision making.
- The Council will promote a strong commitment to equality and diversity and promote safe, cohesive communities.
- Raise the profile of the District.

This process is owned by Linda Collis and is due to be completed by June 2009.

6.3. *Review of customer services and strategy*

Issues: Currently there are no defined minimum customer service standards and no customer standards are published internally or externally; while customer (the public) services are not defined and managed in a consistent way across the Council including: no clear plan or strategy for current and future electronic commerce communications with both customers (i.e. a CRM system for customer management) and employees (i.e. to reduce the amount of printouts). In addition there is a lack of clarity on customer requirements on methods of access to Council services

From July 2009 it is expected that the first customer self services will be available online (in line with the ICT strategy) however there is no strategy in place to encourage both Customers and business partners to utilise these more efficient services.

Recommendations: We recommend that there is a requirement for detailed research on access to services (perhaps through the use of a survey in addition to the NI14 survey). The Council need to a greater understanding of what methods of access to services are acceptable for customers and the tolerances for each as some are more efficient than others. These would include:

- What the Internet is suitable for i.e. getting information, downloading & submitting forms etc and what is not suitable for.
- What an automated telephony system is suitable for i.e. payments and what is not suitable for.
- When do customers require a phone operator i.e. when they need access to information
- When would customers come into the Worcestershire hub i.e. help filling in forms, generic queries etc.

We also recommend that the customer service strategy is revised and updated. The minimum required standards need to be established, defined, published (including on the Council's website) and implemented. This strategy should include:

- The minimum customer service standards for all services and customer interactions (e.g. out of office assistant and how to manage contacts).
- Any future strategy needs to be in line with NI 14 (national government indicator on how to reduce avoidable contacts). A four week customer contact survey is being undertaken to understand how well the systems currently used to communicate with customers are working and to improve: how services are provided and how the Council communicates with customers.
- All e-commerce communications including how to contact and deal with both customers and Council employees. The 'linking' of customer databases used throughout the district also requires consideration e.g. the County's new CRM system, leisure databases, web etc.
- The Council's positioning, branding and new online services (from July 2009) also need to be defined, marketed and communicated – including how to get customers and business partners to utilise these new self services. As a first step it is recommended that by early 2010 the Council encourage as much business to business (B2B) transactions as possible to be conducted in this manner, with less emphasis on the individual Council customer at this stage. B2B transactions provide the opportunity for greater initial savings and efficiencies.

Linda Collis has responsibility for this strategy with a timeline of July 2009 – the working group 'putting customers first' has been tasked with delivering this.



Change and Transformation Plan

This provides an internal roadmap that is implemented through the directorate and business plans to deliver the Councils' corporate plan

Our ambition is to deliver affordable and accessible services for our community. We will achieve this through improved efficiency and partnership working by 2012.

