

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Leader and Cabinet

7 July 2011

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Corporate Manager for Community and Customer Services

CUSTOMER CONTACT STRATEGIC REVIEW RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SCRUTINY AND OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

Purpose

1. Cabinet is invited to consider the report and recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, fully supported by the Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder, in respect of future options for customer contact for the Council.
2. This is a key decision because:
 - it is likely to result in the Council incurring expenditure which is, or the making of savings which are, significant having regard to the Council's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.
 - it is likely to be significant in terms of its effects on all the council's customers.
 - it raises new issues of policy, or is made in the course of developing proposals to amend the policy framework, or is a decision taken under powers delegated by the Council to amend an aspect of the policy framework, and

It was first published in the April 2011 Forward Plan.

Recommendations

3. Cabinet is recommended to resolve:
 - (a) That the following recommendations of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee and Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder be **agreed**:

Stage One: Research and findings

- 1: That the reception area at South Cambridgeshire Hall is
 - a) equipped to cater for visitors accompanied by small children and
 - b) upgraded to create a quieter and less draughty environment, with access to privacy where desirable or requested
- 2: That consideration is given to providing joint customer care training for Members and officers
- 3: That a system is developed for using text messaging to send payment reminders to those who request it
- 4: That research is conducted into the use of apps for smartphones such as My Council Services

5: That the Council considers producing a full range of easy-to-read booklets on SCDC's services for display on reception and via parish councils, libraries, local access points and other outlets

Stage Two – Principles for Designing a Customer Contact Service

6: That the next customer contact service provision should

- a) include telephone; email; texting; social media; and webchat
- b) provide a telephone service during office hours only, with further research into the need for one late night per week
- c) include a Customer Relationship Management system capable of being used throughout the Council and with the capacity to link with partners' CRM systems
- d) provide flexibility and scalability that would enable a timely response to any need to grow or reduce or serve other partner organisations
- e) reflect the Council's priorities, especially those regarding sustainability, equal opportunities and supporting local economic development

7: That if the next customer contact service is based at South Cambridgeshire Hall then it should include the face-to-face service; and inclusion of the post service should be considered as part of the management review of the post service planned for 2011/12.

8: That the Council's emerging Customer Access Strategy should include the intention to encourage and support customers to use the most cost effective customer contact channels such as email, webchat and social media.

Stage 3 – Options for a Customer Contact Service

9: That the customer contact service provided by the Council from December 2012 be managed in-house and located at South Cambridgeshire Hall.

- (b) That, subject to the agreement of recommendations (a1) – (a5) above, the action plan attached as **Appendix 1** to the report be **agreed** as the Cabinet's response.
- (c) That, subject to the agreement of recommendations (a6) – (a9) above, the Chief Executive be **authorised** to develop the preferred option for the future of customer contact services as part of the emerging Customer Access Strategy.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 4. These recommendations are brought forward to enable the key principles of the Council's future customer contact arrangements to be agreed as a basis for the timely development and subsequent agreement and implementation of an integrated customer contact framework to follow the expiry of the current contractual arrangement with the Cambridgeshire County Council in December 2012.

Background and considerations

- 5. All relevant background and an option appraisal are set out in the report and appendices submitted to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee on 30 June 2011 (attached **Appendix 2**).

Implications

6.	Financial	As set out in Appendix C to the report of the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (attached)
	Legal	None specific
	Staffing	As set out in the report and appendices submitted to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (attached)
	Risk Management	As set out in the report and appendices submitted to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (attached)
	Equality and Diversity	See below
	Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes A partial impact assessment has been completed, as attached as Appendix 3 to this report.
	Climate Change	As set out in the report and appendices submitted to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (attached)

Consultations

7. As set out in the report and appendices submitted to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee (**attached**)

Consultation with Children and Young People

8. The Council undertook specific consultation with Children and Young People as part of the development of its Young People's Plan, agreed by the Cabinet in March 2011, relating to preferred methods of contacting the council (see background papers). The contents of this report will be taken into account during the development of the Council's preferred option for customer contact.

Effect on Strategic Aims

9. The report and recommendations seek a strategic decision which will have far-reaching implications aimed at ensuring continuous improvement in customer service in pursuance of a specific Council Action for 2011-12 relating to customer contact and generally to the achievement of all the Council's strategic objectives.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- [Children and Young People's Plan](#)

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