

## UPDATES REQUESTED BY MEMBERS

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### CAMBRIDGE OFFICE

1. The Cambridge Office provides South Cambridgeshire residents with a place to access Council services that is convenient for them to use when they are in Cambridge. Following the Cabinet decision on 9 June 2005, the Council has entered into an agreement with Cambridge City Council for that authority to provide the Cambridge-based customer service facility for this Council.
2. On 9 June 2005, Cabinet received a report on the Cambridge Office which included the following table on the basic financial implications:

|   | <b>Continue</b> | <b>Close</b> | <b>City Council</b> |
|---|-----------------|--------------|---------------------|
| Immediate one off costs                                     |                 |              |                     |
| - redundancy  | none            | £27,500 *    | £27,500 *           |
| - capital   | none            | £20,000      | £20,000             |
|   | £0              | £47,500      | £47,500             |
| Ongoing costs   |                 |              |                     |
| - rental  | £33,100         | none         | none                |
| - staffing  | £82,000         | none         | none                |
| - running costs   | £18,500         | none         | £30,000 **          |
|   | £133,600        | £0           | £30,000             |
| Cost to SCDC over remainder of the initial five year period | £534,400        | £47,500      | £167,500            |

\* Potential costs; this figure would increase with the April 2005 increments and the pay award.

\*\* Subject to confirmation and level of service required

3. Cabinet considered the various options. Here is the relevant minute from the meeting:

*The Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder reported that the staff were fully occupied with workloads related to their previous service areas in addition to their customer services duties, but that the cost of maintaining the office was unacceptable given the number of visitors. Options for the future were set out in the report: to enhance the service, to close the office, or to arrange for Cambridge City Council to operate the service. Views varied from the need to publicise the office more, to support for closure, but it was ultimately **RESOLVED***

- a. *To ask Cambridge City Council to provide the Cambridge based customer service facility, transferring the Cambridge Office staff back to appropriate departments at the Cambourne HQ;*
- b. *To give delegated authority to the Leader and Resources and Staffing Portfolio Holder to deal with any associated staffing matters, including redundancies and the transfer/establishment of posts as necessary;*

- c. *That investigations be carried out into the possibility of applying for the removal of the planning condition requiring provision of the Cambridge facility.*
4. The annual cost of the service is therefore in the order of £30,000, subject to the level of service. This represents a saving of approximately £100,000 on the previous annual revenue costs. If the service is to be considered for being removed in order to help meet the Council's capped budget, the planning condition attached to the Cambourne HQ - requiring provision of the Cambridge facility - would also need to be removed.

## **CONTACT CENTRE AND E-GOVERNMENT**

5. The Contact Centre operates and delivers SCDC services on a 12 hour day / 6 day week basis, a total of 72 hours per week compared with our more normal 37 hours per week. It is contracted out to the County Council. Irrespective of the contract, early calculations show that it would be more expensive to provide the same level of service based here at Cambourne.
6. E-Government is the initiative that drives the provision of the Council's services to the public by electronic means wherever possible. The priority outcomes are prescribed nationally and we are both charged and challenged with providing the basic services by the end of 2005. Much of the required investment has already been made. It would be unwise to rush into short-term funding cuts when we are so close to providing sustainable long-term service provision to our residents.
7. Other initiatives for cost savings within ICT support are being vigorously pursued.
8. In conclusion, it is not appropriate at this time to review the provision of either the Contact Centre or the e-Government programme.