

Portfolio Holder Annual Report

Portfolio: Corporate Management
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Michael Braley

Year: 2010/11

1. Executive Summary

1.1. Please provide a summary of progress over the last year (no more than one page).

Customer Services

- Launched Every Customer Every Time customer experience strategy.
- Implemented revise customer feedback policy and software to enable us to better record, track and report on complaints, compliment and MP enquiries.
- Implemented customer care training for all staff as well as various other customer service initiatives to help managers and staff to improve the level of customer care provided.
- Key role in supporting the revenues and benefits transformation.
- Worked with HMRC to bring them into the Town Hall, providing their service to customers from our customer service centre.
- Provided specific support to the elections by dealing with all customer enquiries, thus releasing capacity within the elections team.
- Implemented changes to the use of resources at the enquiries desk as well as in the telephone service to improve waiting time and reduce the number of lost calls.
- Worked with individual service to develop customer care initiatives and address specific issues, for example individual performance management.

Finance and Corporate Resources

Financial Services

- Officers trained on the requirement associated with introducing International Financial Reporting Standards
- Agreed to host a payroll service for Wyre Forest District Council which went live in April 2011
- Progressed the implementation of e-procurement
- Worked with Procurement Team on corporate contracts for energy and mobile phones
- Led on collaborative procurement with Bromsgrove District Council of new software for the management of BACS

Revenue Services

- Revised Write Policy and procedures drafted and approved by members
- Scoping exercise undertaken for Revenues Transformation Programme and team established
- Income Team moved from Housing to be part of Revenues Team

Benefits Service

- Improvement plan developed and performance monitored following Inspection
- Quarterly reporting of performance to Executive Committee
- Benefits Service re-inspected and judged to be 'good with promising prospects for further improvement'
- Scoping exercise undertaken for Benefits Transformation Programme and team established

Procurement Service

- Collaborative Agreement signed by all district CEOs in the county to deliver savings and efficiencies by collaborative procurement
- Officer is now the representative for all the Worcestershire Authorities on the newly formed WMRIEP Regional Strategic Procurement Board which cover West Midlands, Staffordshire, Shropshire and Herefordshire
- Harmonisation work taking place across RBC/BDC/Wyre Forest DC & Wychavon DC to establish common procurement documentation, policies and procedures
- Contract management and Specification writing training delivered
- Contributed to significant savings across the authority

Property Services

- Estates and Asset Management Team were TUPE transferred to the WETT Property Services hosted by the county council
- Client Officer Group established to oversee the service

Human Resources

- Business Case for a shared HR & OD Service with Bromsgrove District Council approved by members

- Job Evaluation exercise progressed to enable pay modelling to take place and consultation with staff and unions to commence
- Terms and Conditions of employment reviewed and consultation undertaken with staff and unions
- HR support provided to the newly formed Worcestershire Regulatory Services
- Health & Safety training programme delivered
- Fire risk assessments reviewed

Internal Audit

- Internal Audit Team was TUPE transferred to the Worcestershire Internal Audit Service hosted by Worcester City Council.
- Savings delivered in terms of the cost of Internal Audit

Legal and Democratic Services

General

- Proposals formulated towards new Shared Services - before the Council on 5th September

Democratic

- Strong Leader model adopted by the Council has now been implemented - doesn't change things enormously because of the way the Leader wishes to continue to work.
- Continued improvement in Council meeting arrangements, further to Constitutional review, approved by the Council in May 2011.
- Electronic Room Booking for Civic Suite fully implemented
- Following last year's transfer of local land charges, street naming and numbering, local property gazetteer post shared management team restructure, administration of Civic Suite Hire is the final element to be transferred out of the team - to Leisure Services. This now happens on 1st September.
- Member Development Programme approved and implemented
- Member IT arrangements reviewed and in the process of implementation, albeit with some teething problems.

Legal

- (2010) Large scale voluntary registration work – Commercial and open space completed – now working on residential area
- (2010) Solicitors from both RBC and BDC are working collaboratively to ensure that all legal work remains in house
- May 2010 combined Parliamentary and Borough Elections managed successfully in RBC. Note this was the first time that the new shared services working structure of officers at both sites had been used and it proved to be a very easy transition for both staff and candidates/agents.
- May 2011 saw the successful completion of combined Referendum, District and Parish Elections in BDC and combined Referendum and Borough Elections in RBC. The Referendum in particular was very challenging, it was new to all concerned and was led by the Electoral Commission, the fact that the EC led the Referendum meant that the team were faced with vast amounts of paperwork, that aside they were a great success with the counts in particular being noted by candidates, agents, press and staff as being exemplary.
- May 2011 saw the first joint postal vote operation between BDC and RBC. BDC hosted postal vote opening sessions for both Councils and used a mix of experienced and inexperienced staff from both authorities. The operation was a great success and is a model for the future.

Participation

- Events were held throughout Democracy week for the promotion of Electoral Services, in conjunction with other departments we had a stands at both New Collages with a polling booth to encourage everyone to become involved in Democracy.
- A complete overhaul has been completed for the Electoral Services pages of both Councils web pages. They have been made much more 'user friendly' and even though major works are now complete they are reviewed regularly. Feedback is monitored and to be honest it is all very favourable. Our web pages have become models for other Councils and we are often asked if our images and ideas can be used. There is still a little more work to be done on the youth section.
- Work is well underway on the production of a new easy to use folder system for use in Residential and care homes throughout BDC and RBC. This new folder will be introduced to the homes by way of a personal visit from an

Electoral Services team member who will talk to the manager, and if required, the residents about registration and voting options.

- 2011 saw the introduction of the first 'Be A Councillor' drop in meetings, these were held at both Councils and were a great success. They were independent in as much as they were in formal planned sessions where members from Committee Services, Electoral Services and Equalities were represented so that anyone who was thinking about becoming a Councillor at any level could come along and have their questions answered in a non formal environment. Feedback received after these events was very constructive and people welcomed the opportunity to find out more.
- 2011 saw the introduction of formal training for all polling station staff (previously only Presiding Officers were trained), this proved successful and feedback regarding splitting poll clerks and presiding officers for future training events has been taken on board, this will enable us to target staff on their experience.

Canvass for the Register of Electors

- The 2010 Canvass was completed on time and saw the reintroduction of an all out door to door canvass at RBC. This was well received and saw the increase of the response rate in previously poorer responding areas.
- The 2011 Canvass has now begun and this year for the first time we have re introduced a full first stage hand delivery for the RBC canvass areas (previously this first stage was done by Royal Mail) but cost savings can be achieved by the use of our own hand delivery staff.

Other Matters

- 2011, after the retirement of Heather Hayes, the structure of the Electoral Services Department was reassessed and a new career graded post will be put in place, this is an excellent opportunity to develop a new team member and ensure that the knowledge base and experience of the team is enhanced.
- 2011 will see Lizzie Tovey successfully complete the Certification Level of her professional qualification for the Association of Electoral Administrators.
- The review of the temporary electoral services staff (elections and canvass staff) is well under way, a new application form has been designed and telephone interviews will now take place. There are also plans in place to introduce

promotional recruitment campaigns in both BDC and RBC where a more face to face approach will be developed in order to recruit staff with the right qualities for the jobs undertaken.

- In August/September 2010, Electoral Services were inspected by the Electoral Commission in connection with raising our Performance Standard level. The visits were a great success and the EC representative was very impressed with the team and their procedures, this included the training developed for Canvass staff. As a result of the visits our performance indicators were increased to a higher level.
- A mini polling station review was undertaken for both Councils in January 2011.

Legal

- Completed legal agreements with Sport England and Redditch Premiers BMX Club for use and management of new BMX track.
- Completed legal agreement to out-source the management of the Arrow Valley Countryside Centre by Mr Creaton's Foods.
- Successfully recovered land at rear of Batsford Close which had been occupied by a number of residents, without recourse to litigation.
- Responded to the first application by residents for land at Peterbrook Close to be declared a "Village Green" [outcome awaited]
- Completed the transfer of the Care and repair Service to Festival Housing.
- Supported Standards Committee with the first matter to go to Final Determination Hearing of a complaint under the Standards regime.
- Assisted BDC to support Licensing Committee at Worcester City Council
- Completed legal agreements for Worcestershire enhanced two tier ["WETT"] agreements for delivery of Property, Audit, Payroll, Services
- Further collaborative working between lawyers from both RBC and BDC to ensure provision of legal services to all departments whether already in a shared service or yet to be shared

2. Performance

2.1. Please detail areas of good performance over the past year.

Customer Services

- Improved response times for complaints - 5% more complaints dealt with within the agreed timescales.
- Improved waiting times face to face – down by 10 minutes
- Dealt with 72,932 face to face customers
- Dealt with 59,475 telephone enquiries

Finance and Corporate Resources

- Time taken to process Housing Benefit/Council Tax Benefit claims has reduced from 13.4 days to 11.35 days
- £233,000 in additional welfare benefits claimed through the support of the Income Maximisation Officers
- Council tax collection improved from 97.0% to 97.6%
- The collection of NDR was maintained at 98.4%, despite the economic downturn

Legal and Democratic Services

See summary above

2.2. Please detail key performance indicators that are of concern

Key Performance Indicators – Areas of Concern			
PI Ref	PI Description	Explanation and/or corrective action.	Impact on budget

3. Revenue Budget

3.1. Explain problem areas – what has been done, what is planned to be done – impact on priorities, key deliverables

Revenue Budget – Areas of Concern			
Budget Code	Description	Explanation and/or corrective action.	Impact on performance and priorities

4. Capital Budget

4.1. Explain problem areas – what has been done, what is planned to be done – impact on priorities, key deliverables

Revenue Budget – Areas of Concern			
Budget Code	Description	Explanation and/or corrective action.	Impact on performance and priorities

5. The Year Ahead

5.1 Please detail the portfolio holder's main areas of focus in 2011/2012:-

Customer Services

- Systems thinking transformation of service delivery
- Implementation of shared management structure
- Review of letters and implementation of training to improve the standard of letters sent to customers
- Work with other services and partners to develop customer service provision.

Finance & Resources

- Implementation of job evaluation
- Establishment of shared service for Financial Services
- Support to be provided by HR & OD Service to overall Shared Service Programme
- Further development of Transformation Programme into other service areas
- Development of Training and Organisational Development Programme
- Further progress of Asset Disposal Programme
- Identification of further areas for collaborative procurement
- Implementation of CHRIS 21 kiosk (payroll and HR system) for RBC/BDC & WFDC

Legal and Democratic Services

General

- Implementation of Shared Services across rest of Legal and Democratic Services in April 2012
- slotting in / recruitment and selection, as appropriate.

- associated reviews of working methods across both Councils / training as appropriate.
- interim arrangements pending solutions around office changes in Bromsgrove.

Democratic Services / Committee Services / Members' Support

- Conclusion of further review of Constitution; with particular reference to updates to Delegations / Protocols for approval by Council in May 2012, latest
- Review and update of Member Development Programme, via MSSG
- Review of revised Member IT arrangements, via MSSG

Electoral Services

- Preparation for Police Commissioner Election processes
- Polling Station Review
- Elections May 2012 (RBC 1/3)