Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny

Monitoring Report on Recommendations – May 2012

In 2009 and 2010 Redditch Borough Council took part in a review of the Worcestershire Hub. The Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny report was noted by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 8th December 2010, and by Executive on 12th January 2011.

Worcestershire County Council is currently arranging to monitor implementation of the recommendations that were proposed by the Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny Group. There were a number of recommendations that had implications for district hub arrangements. The County Council has therefore invited District Councils to contribute to this monitoring process by way of an update on local action against those recommendations which related to all Council's within the Hub partnership.

This provides an update on those recommendations in the Worcestershire Hub Scrutiny Report requiring local action. It is important to make the distinction between the Hub Shared Service, which Redditch Borough Council is not a part, and the arrangements locally where we work in partnership with the County Council, as part of the Worcestershire Hub partnership, to provide access to services though the Redditch Borough Council managed Customer Service Centre and One Stop Shops.

Recommendation	Response
1: If the Hub is to be increasingly used as a basis for service transformation across the County, it is vital that there is councillor understanding and support across all authorities. All authorities should ensure their inductions include briefing about customer service strategies across the whole of the Worcestershire Hub (and not just their local area), including visits to both local centres and the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service Contact Centre (based at Perry Wood Walk).	Local transformation has resulted in greater focus on local service delivery and members are kept informed on developments through quarterly update reports. The Head of Customer Services presents regular updates to the Leader and relevant portfolio holder, and Executive Committee. All members have been invited to visit the Centres and arrangements have been made as required. This invitation is extended to new members via the New Members induction process.
2: All authorities consider their scrutiny arrangements of shared services – this could be done at the joint scrutiny chairs and vice-chairs network.	A letter regarding joint scrutiny and the arrangements thereof was sent to Worcestershire County Council early in 2011. Clear arrangements are in place in respect of scrutiny of shared services locally.

3: We recommend that each authority and the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service review governance arrangements across the Worcestershire Hub Partnership. The aim would be to ensure clarity, accountability and transparency and to move towards a single governance structure.	Governance arrangements were reviewed and as a result the relevant portfolio holder appointed to the Hub Board. There has not been need for this Board to meet during the last 12 months.
4: We recommend that the District Councils should consider researching the cost of individual transactions for different services, which will build on the work being carried out by the Hub Shared Service.	Customer Service transaction costs were provided via the quarterly customer services update reports to Executive Committee. The transformation reviews are being used to establish costs on a service by service basis.
5: The more services use the Hub, the better value it becomes. Therefore, as part of the BOLD programme, the County Council should increase its efforts to ensure all its services use the Hub.	This recommendation related only to Worcestershire County Council.
6: In light of future funding and the move towards self-service within the Hub, all authorities and the South Worcestershire Shared Services Joint Committee should monitor and record the efficiencies and savings gained by use of the Hub.	Redditch Borough Council's focus is on the transformation of services to meet customer needs through Systems Thinking. It is through these reviews and shared management that efficiencies and savings will be identified This work is starting to develop a different type of customer service provision locally which relies on experts being available to deal with customer enquiries. Self-service is only being progressed where the Systems Thinking reviews evidence that it is appropriate and does not drive waste into our processes.
7: Appropriate resource plans for the Hub are in place to better plan for forecast demand.	This recommendation related only to Worcestershire Hub Shared Service.
8: The Hub also needs to be prepared to deal with unpredicted peaks in service demand, and we recommend that Business Continuity Plans are in place across the Hub Shared Service and the non shared service Hubs.	This recommendation related only to the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service. However, active queue management is in place, as well as business continuity plans.

9: Performance information should be consistent across the Shared Service and the non-Shared Service districts, to enable like for like comparisons, and we recommend a single performance management framework is established across the Hub	A single framework is in place and Hub Shared Service performance data is available on request.

Local data is provided via the quarterly customer service update. |
10: All performance information – for shared service and non-shared service districts – should be made available to all councillors.	Local data is provided via the quarterly customer service update to Executive Committee.
11: We recommend that all partners consider the role which scrutiny could play in helping to monitor performance of the Worcestershire Hub, if they have not already done so.	Relevant local performance information is reported via the quarterly customer service update to Executive Committee and an annual report of customer service and Hub related matters made by the portfolio holder to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
12: For telephone enquiries inform customers of their place in the queue, or an estimated wait time for them to be able to speak to a customer services advisor.	The telephone system is County Council managed and to date this has not been implemented, mainly due to concerns about the usefulness of this approach as it is not possible to accurately advise customers of how long they may have to wait. Focus has been on reducing waiting times and this has been very successful locally where waiting times have reduced significantly compared with in 2010.
13: Define and agree Service Level Agreements between the Worcestershire Hub and every service area**.**	These were already in place locally and are closely managed through on going dialogue with service managers.

14: Ensure there is sufficient time allocated for service area staff and Hub staff to review any issues or needs, and to monitor service provision via the Hub	Regular meetings are held between customer service managers and service managers to address any issues and local arrangements did not need to be changed. Issues with provision of service at the Hub Shared Service Contact Centre are escalated via the Head of Customer Services or Customer Services Manager and discussed directly with the relevant Shared Service Manager.
15: Further work on the flow of information between the service area and the Hub (and vice versa) should take place, to ensure that the correct information is provided by the Hub to the service area, and that service area staff provide a response which enables Hub staff to answer the customer enquiry. It is important that both teams understand the implications of what the information they provide will be for the customer. The creation of Service Level Agreements between the Hub and services will support this.	See comments in relation to recommendations 13 and 14. This was not an issue locally and related primarily to the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service.
16: Give all customers the enquiry reference number, to encourage and enable them to track progress themselves online, and reduce the need for repeat enquiries to the Hub.	A reference number can only be provided where the enquiry is logged through the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. This does not interface with the majority of systems and the use of it results in duplication of effort by staff. For this reason focus has been on reducing failure demand (where a customer has had to make multiple or preventable contact with the Customer Service Centre) and locally this is being done through the transformation reviews.

17: Move towards more consistent IT packages, as contracts come up for renewal.	This is progressed where there is a clear business case.
18: In view of the negative feedback from our survey of parish councillors, we recommend further dialogue between senior officer representatives from the Worcestershire Hub and parish councils, to ensure their feedback can be used to improve the overall Hub service.	This recommendation related only to Worcestershire Hub Shared Service.
19: The 'Hub' means different things to different people. We recommend further communication of the Hub's identity and services to the public. This could, for example, accompany the issue of council tax bills, which would present a cost-effective opportunity for marketing.	Extensive marketing has taken place through the Council Tax bill, local council magazines, and by the Worcestershire Hub Shared Service in local press. Locally residents are well aware of how to contact the Council.
20: Our investigation of best practice advice and customer survey results supports our findings that the website offers huge potential for helping customers to help themselves, and for making substantial efficiency savings. This can only be achieved if the website is as user-friendly and effective as possible. We are pleased to see that the website is being improved and recommend that this work continues in order to realise the potential gains in customer satisfaction and efficiency gains.	Work is ongoing to improve the Redditch Borough Council website.
21: In addressing the website and its expanding role in customer contact, we recommend that consideration is given to where the website sits within the council's organisational structure. This should take account of the need to align expertise in customer contact and communication, as well as information technology.	Web development sits within the Business Transformation team and this ensures that all developments link to the wider transformation of service delivery. Customer Service and Business Transformation Managers liaise regularly and are working closely together through the transformation of service delivery.

22: Councils' websites are very important and their profile needs to reflect this. A cabinet member for each authority should have responsibility for the website within his or her portfolio.	This was already in place at Redditch Borough Council.