

# Portfolio Holder Annual Report

Portfolio: Corporate Management  
Portfolio Holder: Councillor Phil Mould

## Year: 2012/13

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1. Please provide a summary of services /areas covered within the remit of the Portfolio.

### **Customer Services**

- Face to Face Customer Service Centre and One Stop Shops;
- Telephone Contact Centre;
- Cashiering facilities;
- Reception and Switchboard Services;
- Customer feedback; and
- Corporate Customer Service Strategy;

### **Electoral Services**

- Combined elections on 5th May 2011 for Redditch Borough Council (ten wards), Feckenham Parish Council elections and National Referendum on Alternative Voting System at UK Parliamentary Elections
- Annual Canvass for Register of Electors published on 1 December 2011 achieved 94.4% response
- Preparation for the Police & Crime Commissioner Elections in November 2012
- Review of shared services team structure and change of Electoral Services Officer post to a career grade post to reinforce a robust professional team for the future

### **General**

Shared Legal and Democratic Service operational from 1st April 2012

### **Democratic Services**

- Provide support for Councillors in their day-to-day activities;
- arrange and support Council, Executive Committee, Overview and Scrutiny, Planning, Licensing and other formal and informal meetings;
- provide advice on decision-making processes to Councillors and members of the public;
- Co-ordinate and arrange Councillor development;
- Support and promote the role of Councillors.

### **Legal Services**

- Legal and Monitoring officer support to members
- Legal advisors at council meetings
- Legal advice to all council departments/officers
- Representation in courts and tribunals
- Implementing new legislation affecting local government
- Training to members on governance issues

- Support to participation in partnerships.

## **Finance and Corporate Resources**

The services provided by **Financial Services Section** include:

- Financial advice and guidance and a financial management service to both members and service managers
- An effective accounting service that allows the Council to meet its statutory responsibilities
- A Payments Service - the raising of Purchase Orders and payment of supplier invoices
- Insurances (mainstream covers plus Tenants Contents Insurance Scheme)
- A shared payroll service for both Redditch Borough Council, Bromsgrove District Council and Wyre Forest District Council employees
- Managing the council bank accounts, investing surplus funds and borrowing monies to meet cash flow and funding requirements (Treasury Management)
- Developing risk management throughout the Council
- Financial support to the Sure Start Programme
- Procurement advice and support
- Procurement of a corporate contracts for
  - Energy supplies (gas & electric)
  - Mobile phones
  - Group Life Policy

The services provided by the **Revenues Services Section** include:

- The billing and collection of council tax and non-domestic rates
- The provision of effective collection and recovery methods including bailiffs and referrals to insolvency practitioners
- Maintenance of the council tax and non-domestic rating data bases
- The billing and collection of miscellaneous income including commercial rents

The services provided by the **Benefits Services Section** include:

- The processing and payments of claims for Housing and Council Tax Benefit
- A verification service for the checking of all new claim to ensure correct payment
- A claims appeals service
- Welfare and home visits to those who require them
- An investigations team who deal with cases of suspected fraud
- A visiting service for inspecting vacant properties/premises

The service consisting of **Human Resources and Organisational Development Service**

- Professional Human Resource (HR) support and advice to officers and members on staffing matters
- Health & Safety support and advice
- Administration of the Job Evaluation Process
- Occupational Health support and advice
- Strategic and operational Organisational Development
- Liaison with Union representatives
- Support to Health, Safety and Wellbeing Committee

The services provided by the **Information Communication Technology (ICT) Service** include:

- ICT helpdesk and technical infrastructure support and design
- Website and Intranet support
- Information Management
- Data Protection and Freedom of Information Management
- Network management
- System development and design
- Geographic Information Systems
- Street Naming & Numbering
- Application and system support

The services provided by the **Internal Audit Service** hosted by Worcester City Council include:

- Review of systems and process with a view to providing assurance on internal controls
- Management of the National Fraud Initiative Reviews
- Special investigations including fraud
- Support to the Audit & Governance Committee

The services provided by **Property Services** hosted by Worcestershire County Council include:

- The repair and maintenance of all the Council's non-housing portfolio of properties
- Valuation service
- Risk management of void properties
- Property reviews
- Landlord role for commercial lettings
- Office-in-charge role for Town Hall
- Asset disposals
- Support to Development and Section 106 officer Group

## 2. Performance

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

#### Customer Services

The following table shows the numbers of customer enquiries dealt with by the Customer Service Team:

Face to face enquiries	72,785
Telephone enquiries	76,813
Email enquiries	3,270
Payments	118,576
Total customer contacts	271,444

In addition the team dealt with 106,988 calls through the switchboard.

Average Waiting times for customers have reduced during this year from:

Face to face – 12 minutes  
Telephones – 3 minutes 4 seconds  
in the 3rd Quarter of 2010/11

to

Face to Face – 3 minutes 35 seconds  
Telephones – 1 minute 8 seconds  
In the same quarter of 2011/12

The waiting times have remained relatively static since that time and we no longer report on the averages but monitor and manage the true wait times on a day by day basis. The recent installation of a queue management system is helping to ensure customers get to the right person at the right time effectively, and helps staff to monitor customer queues for the various specialist officers now working directly with customer within the customer service centre environment.

Customer services have supported transformation interventions in the following services:-

- Revenues;
- Benefits;
- Repairs and Maintenance; and
- Housing Options,

and now have 5 full time equivalent members of staff working within those intervention teams. Remaining Customer Service staff continue to provide access to the full range of council services but with the ability

to pass off to Benefits and Revenues enquiries to 'experts' who can help the customer more fully.

Customer Service Strategy Action Plan achievements include:

- Customer Focused Letter Writing training delivered for all staff.
- Development of various customer service training courses for managers.
- Increased recording of customer feedback.
- Delivered staff briefings for all staff on customer service issues, including dealing with complaints.
- Introduction of Key Customer Service Behaviours – setting out expectations of all staff in respect of customer care provision.
- Internal mystery shopping exercise carried out on the Revenues, Benefits and Planning services.
- Satisfaction Survey carried out via Redditch Matters.

Other achievements include:

- Implementation of shared management team.
- Reduction in overall budget, through shared service and transformation.

## **ICT Services**

- Worcester Regulatory Services – built and designed a new website and trained authors to update the site content. Phase one launch by the end of August.
- Palace Theatre website designed and developed and authors trained to update content.
- Ongoing Redditch and Bromsgrove Council website development and maintenance. Improvements have been made on the Housing, Sure Start, Customer Services and Community and Living pages.
- Orb intranet development continues in line with transformation requests.
- Team awards for:
  - Team that goes the extra mile
  - Individual who goes the extra mile
  - Commended for Project Team Award
  - Highly Commended for Outstanding Supporting Service
- Improved the National Land and Property Gazetteer (NLPG) for RBC from below National Standard to Bronze standard.
- Have imported full mapping from Worcestershire County Council into the GIS system.
- Data sent for use in Worcestershire Blind Persons assistance software – first time this has been done.
- Successful integration of new Ordnance Survey Open Source mapping into LocalView

- Creation of Knowledge base items for use by helpdesk with Uniform and GIS
- Supplied integrated transport data and mapping for Waste Services route optimisation.
- Integrated LocalView datasets for both Councils and identified where improvements can be made.
- Set up mechanism to export LPG data into the Council Tax system.
- Business Transformation for the ICT Helpdesk successfully completed.
- New corporate data storage device installed.
- Elections system implemented across both Councils.
- Sunray infrastructure developed across both Councils.
- Chris 21 Human Resources system upgraded.
- New corporate print server installed to improve printing at both Councils and WRS.
- Remote desktop access system 'Secure Global Desktop' implemented
- Two hundred and fifty Sunray devices rolled out to replace some of the old PC desktop devices.
- Telephone system replaced at both Councils.
- Additional Virtual server infrastructure installed.
- Ensured the retention and disposal schedule is being rigorously applied to reduce physical and electronic space.
- Successfully implemented a 'system' in the corporate archive to ensure it is fit for purpose, i.e., an archive, not a store room.
- Provide guidance during system interventions on matters relating to information management or data protection.
- Improved Data Protection Training is now delivered in Team Meetings and is tailored to the services needs.
- Improved FOI response times by being proactive, rather than reactive:
  1. More information made available via the web.
  2. Regularly meet with departments to target right people first time.
  3. Developed an FOI knowledge base to share knowledge and experience between the team.

### **Legal and Democratic Services**

- Successful support and delivery of combined elections and referendum in May 2012.
- Good response to annual canvass at 94.4%

### **Democratic Services**

- Shared Democratic Services Manager in post from July 2012
- Constitution work largely completed – need now to focus on Scheme of Delegations update

- The Team have continued to ensure all meetings are arranged and supported during the development and implementation of a shared service;
- Supported the implementation of the Localism Act 2011.

### **Legal Services**

- Progressing large scale voluntary registration of council property with the Land Registry. Commercial and open space completed, now working on residential areas.
- Supporting the Borough-wide review of blanket tree preservation orders by planning/landscape departments.
- Supporting front line departments through comprehensive transformational programme
- shared service agreements across north Worcestershire authorities for building control; land drainage;
- agreements to transfer management of the Arrow Valley countryside centre.
- Preparation for introduction of the Localism Act 2011 from November 2011 and supporting implement provisions as they become applicable across the client departments. There are major changes and new provisions affecting many council functions.

### **Finance and Corporate Resources**

- Implementation of a payroll service from the 1st April 2011
- Preparation of a viable 30 year Business Plan for the HRA
- Implementation of Shared HR & OD Service between Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils delivering savings for both authorities
- Finalist for Outstanding Achievement in Procurement 2011 (SOPO Awards)
- Implementation a range of harmonised Human Resource Policies including Annual Leave, Travel and Subsistence and Reorganisation and Change
- Completion of the pre-consultation stage of the Job Evaluation Review process
- Systems Thinking introduced in both the Benefits and Revenues Services
- Same day `face to face` assessment for benefits claims introduced. Potential for new claims and changes in circumstances to be processed in hours rather than days.
- Revenues Officers now processing changes to Council Tax and Non-domestic Rates accounts at point of contact. Changes can now be measured in minutes. The requirement for form filling has been minimised.
- Unqualified Statement of Accounts for 2010/11
- In excess of £2 million delivered in capital receipts from asset disposals



- Proposal developed for a Shared Finance Service with Bromsgrove District Council

**Please detail any areas of concerning performance in the year.**

### **Customer Services**

**Call handling** - Significant peaks in phone calls are increasingly difficult to manage as we have less capacity within the Telephone Contact Centre. This has no impact on day to day basis but unexpected and unmanageable peaks in calls through bad weather or other such events do have a considerable impact on our ability to meet our aims in terms of service level.

**IT or telephony issues** - reduce our level of customer service and inconvenience customers. Customer Services Managers are working closely with ICT Managers to reduce the impact and minimise the risk of future problems.

**Complaint handling** - The percentage of complaints not responded to within the timeframe we aim for (15 working days) has increased. The actual number of complaints recorded has increased significantly and there is no trend to suggest that any one service is failing to deal with complaints appropriately. Those complaints that have taken longer to respond to are often complex cases and the delay is unavoidable. Customers are informed if the complaint is going to take longer to investigate than anticipated. The Head of Customer Service is working with other HOS and Managers to ensure that addressing complaints is a priority and that staff are equipped to deal with these appropriately and to a high standard.

### **ICT Services**

The replacement of the telephony system at both Councils was more complex than anticipated and has resulted in some downtime which has affected other services. Many of the issues have now been resolved. Outstanding issues are being resolved as quickly as possible to minimise disruption to services.

The transformation and subsequent redesign of the ICT Helpdesk has highlighted a number of capacity issues within the ICT Service. As demand from transforming services increases the existing ICT resources are not able to deliver solutions as quickly as the customer needs. There is potential for this to severely restrict transformation in some other services. This issue has been highlighted at Programme Board and additional resources are being sought.

## **Democratic Services**

The Scheme of Delegations was due to be reviewed in time for the Annual meeting in May 2012 but had not been completed. This work has been taken up following the arrival of the new Democratic Services Manager and will be brought to the Council for consideration shortly.

## **Legal Services**

Implementing the new shared service meant that we had to recruit to lawyer posts, which has been successfully achieved.

## **Finance and Corporate Resources**

A number of issues prevented the delivery of the agreed progress with the implementation of the HR21 module (kiosk) of the integrated HR/Payroll system.

Ongoing negotiations with UNISON have delayed the implementation of the Job Evaluation Review.

Recruitment issues have delayed the re-introduction of an in-house Occupational Health Service. The service has continued to be made available via external support.

# **3. The Year Ahead**

3.1 Please detail the Portfolio Holder's main areas of focus in 2012/13.

### **Customer Services**

- Relocation of Woodrow One Stop Shop
- Implementation of new Contact Centre telephony system
- Improvements to the process for dealing with complaints.
- Implementation of new cash receipting software in conjunction with colleagues in Finance.
- Further mystery shopper exercises.
- Developing customer feedback mechanisms to include an online survey.
- Improve the use of space in the public areas of the Town Hall to provide more interview and 'quiet space' facilities for staff to see customers.

### **ICT Services**

- Corporate network redesign and configuration.
- Implementation of an additional telephony module to provide contact centre functionality.
- Implementation of a single cash receipting system.
- Implementation of Electronic Document Management for Planning and Benefits services.

- Data cleansing and single data store for Planning and Environmental services GIS and CAD systems.
- Continuing rollout of Sunray devices.
- Design and development of data systems for Housing, Environmental Services and Planning as a result of transformation.
- Continuing transformation of ICT Services to include Information Management, DPA and FOI.
- Complete Leisure Services website rebuild.
- Implement MS Office 2010 across both Councils.

### **Electoral Services**

- Redditch Borough Council Elections on 3 May 2013 in nine wards
- Presentation on Shared Services at national seminar of electoral administrators
- Police & Crime Commissioner Elections on 15 November 2012 and based on alternative vote system with a central count in Shropshire as lead for West Mercia Police Area
- Annual canvass for register of electors to be brought forward to summer 2012 and published on 16 October 2012 for use at the PCC elections in November
- Five year review of absent voters in January 2013

### **Democratic Services**

- With the Member Support Steering Group, review of the induction process for Councillors following the 2012 elections.
- Progress the transformation work for the processes associated with meetings (“the life of a report”) whilst continuing to ensure decisions are made having considered sound information and in a transparent and accountable way.
- Continue to develop effective working arrangements within the shared service.

### **Legal Services**

- Continued implementation of the provisions of the Localism Act 2011 as they continue to come into force and supporting council departments affected.
- Consolidating the legal services team and services to work effectively and efficiently within the new service.
- Complete the voluntary land registration project.
- Continue support for council participation in partnerships.

### **Finance and Corporate Resources**

- Localisation of Council Tax Benefit from April 2013
- Implications for the authority and residents of the Welfare Reform
- The choices concerned with the pooling of retained business rates receipts
- Progress with the implementation of the Job Evaluation Review

- Implications arising from the Finance Settlement alongside existing budget issues
- The role of the Council in the Community Right to Buy arising from the Localism Bill