

**SEDGEFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 1**

Conference Room 1,
Council Offices,
Spennymoor

Tuesday, 29 August
2006

Time: 10.00 a.m.

Present: Councillor A. Gray (Chairman) and

Councillors Mrs. K. Conroy, B. Hall, J.G. Huntington, J.M. Khan, B. Meek,
G. Morgan, Mrs. E.M. Paylor and J.K. Piggott

Invited to attend: Councillor D.A. Newell

In Attendance: Councillors Mrs. B.A. Clare, V. Crosby, Mrs. A.M. Fleming, D.M. Hancock,
J.E. Higgin, J.P. Moran, D.A. Newell, A. Smith and T. Ward

Apologies: Councillors Mrs. J. Croft, G.W. Scott and Mrs. I. Jackson Smith

OSC(1).7/06 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

No declarations of interest were received.

OSC(1).8/06 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 13th June 2006 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

OSC(1).9/06 CUSTOMER SERVICES MODERNISATION PROGRAMME UPDATE

Consideration was given to a report of the Chief Executive (for copy see file of minutes) dealing with an update on the Customer Modernisation Programme, National Service Delivery Standards and Priority Service and Transformational Outcomes Position Statement.

Siobhan Walsh, Corporate e-Government Manager also gave a presentation on this item. Jerry Miller, Customer Services Manager and Graham Darby, Performance and Efficiency Manager were present to respond to questions raised by members.

Members were informed that the presentation would cover three key areas namely:-

- Customer Services Modernisation Programme and Durham Connects including an update on performance against Durham Connects Priority Service and Transformational Outcomes.

- National Service Delivery Standards
- Project Management Activities.

It was explained that the Customer Modernisation Programme had four objectives:-

- Developing and delivering a modern day Customer Services function providing seamless access to customer facing services.
- Reengineering business processes and exploiting use of new technology to achieve resolving 80% of customer enquiries at the first point of contact.
- Developing an accessible and up to date web site to provide information and on line facilities.
- Providing Internet facilities for Council Members to engage in electronic democracy functions and to allow members of the public enhanced access to their councillor.

The Programme was part of a wider countywide partnership strategy aligned closely to the Cabinet Office's Transformational Government White Paper, the Gershon Efficiency Review and the Durham Local Area Agreement approach.

Durham Connects was a partnership of the 8 Durham Councils. The Programme was driven by a joint committee and the eight Chief Executives in County Durham.

The aims of the strategy included procuring and implementing a shared Customer Relationship Management, a single golden telephone number and shared customer contact centres.

A Partnership Web Portal would pull together information from a range of sources, services, facilities etc. and would be built up over time to provide information on local councillors, schools, dentists, doctors and other local services to be displayed by particular postcodes.

Durham Connects also had a presence on the Looking Local Channel on Digital TV. This provided a service similar to teletext.

A Customer Relationship Management system was to be developed which aimed to resolve 80% of service enquiries at the first point of contact with information being captured once and for all and being used many times e.g. change of address and single customer accounts. Members were informed that the CRM in relation to Street Scene was going live at the end of September.

There were a number of issues relating to implementing corporate systems which had been identified and needed to be addressed.:-

- There was need for continuous improvement and the introduction of Customer Relationship Management and

Electronic Records and Document Management Systems represented a business change for the Council.

- There were also ongoing capacity issues.
- There needed to be a shared vision which would involve a common understanding of the vision at every level and effective communications.
- The Gershon Report on efficiency was at the heart of the modernisation agenda. A baseline needed to be set to demonstrate service improvement. The Business Transformation Team was looking at all of the Council's processes to see how much they were costing the authority to assess where efficiency savings could be made.
- Working in partnership with other local authorities also created issues of pace of development. The Council was also unable to independently purchase Customer Relationship Management and was relying on partnership resources for development.
- There were also conflicting priorities and agenda which needed to be taken into account.

Members were given an update on progress of Priority Service and Transformational Outcomes. It was explained that as at March 2006 41 out of 54 Priority Service and Transformational Outcomes (76%) had been achieved.

Details were given of the National Service Delivery Standards which had recently been launched by the Government. It was explained that the Council was the first in the region to use these Standards.

The objectives of the Standards were to provide a good practice model which would deliver a modernised, effective and efficient service. They were intended to be used by Service Managers to help them understand potential developments in their service area and the support required from other services within the authority.

For each standard there were four levels :- non compliant, minimum level relating to current e-Government targets, progressing and excellent levels which went beyond those requirements to further improve.

The reasons for using the Standards in Sedgefield were, to underpin the Council's commitment to becoming more customer focused, the desire to achieve an "excellent" rating at the next round of Comprehensive Performance Assessment, to provide a common standard as part of the Durham Connects Partnership and to use as performance standards.

A number of Self Assessment areas had been identified and were either completed or in progress. Those areas ranged from human resources, building control environmental health and included customer services.

The Customer Services self assessment had 25 standards based around a number of key themes including resource management, people, governance, processes, performance management and leadership. The results of the self assessment were detailed and showed a number of areas meeting the minimum standard.

As part of the aspiration to meet excellent standards a charter had been drawn up as part of a strategy. The draft Charter, which had been drawn up in consultation with staff, was available on the intranet. The next steps in relation to the Charter included obtaining Crystal Mark and considering the approach to consultation with members of the public.

The Committees attention was drawn to the importance of Project Management in achieving improved and joined up services. There was a need to ensure that the skills needed by managers and the workforce were developed to enable the provision of continuous and effective improvements.

During discussion of this item reference was made to response times for calls to Customer Services staff. It was explained that the target for response times was 90% of calls being answered within 20 seconds. A new system had been installed to streamline the process. However there was still a need to balance staffing levels to deal with peaks and troughs. Members were also informed that direct lines to businesses etc were being looked at as a way of enabling customers to get through more quickly.

Members made reference to the need for feedback from officers on issues which they had reported to Customer Services. In response it was explained that this would be addressed as part of Customer Relationship Management and would be used to measure the value of the service.

Reference was made to the prioritising of services and the efficiency savings which were expected to be made under the Gershon Review. It was pointed out that the efficiencies involved changes in people's roles. Customer Services staff would be expected to be multi-skilled which would have an impact on various roles. It was explained that information on the Gershon report would be made available in the Members' rooms.

Discussion took place in relation to project management which needed to be developed across the authority. This would need to be linked to Gershon efficiency savings and value for money. Information needed to be captured to achieve joined up services.

A query was raised regarding the development of kiosk technology which was ongoing. This involved taking services out into the community and accessing information. Sedgefield and Alnwick had been chosen as part of a pilot scheme.

AGREED:- The Committee notes the progress made to date and continues to monitor the Council's progress in delivering the Department of Communities and Local Government Priority Service and Transitional Outcomes and in meeting the Governments National e-Service Delivery Standards.

OSC(1).10/06 PERFORMANCE INDICATORS - ACTUAL OUTTURNS 2005/06

Consideration was given to Performance Indicators actual outturn for 2005/2006 (for copy see file of Minutes) relating to Strategic Leadership portfolio.

It was explained that the targets had been set by Strategic Working Groups and the report identified how outcomes had performed against those targets.

The comments of the responsible officer for particular targets were identified in the report and gave explanations on individual results.

A further update would be given in February/March 2007

AGREED:- That the information be received and further updates given.

OSC(1).11/06 WORK PROGRAMME

Consideration was given to a report of the Chairman of the Committee setting out the Committee's work programme for consideration and review. (for copy see file of Minutes)

Members were updated on the current position in relation to the reviews on Inform and Sickness Management.

Discussion was held regarding Leisure Centres and partnership arrangements, the benefits from such arrangements and the impact on staff. Concern was expressed that this may not be a relevant topic for inclusion in this Committee's work programme and clarification needed to be sought.

AGREED: That the work programme be noted

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Any person wishing to exercise the right of inspection, etc., in relation to these Minutes and associated papers should contact Mrs. L. Walker Tel 01388 816166 Ext 4237 email lwalker@sedgefield.gov.uk