

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** Cabinet

**Date of Committee** 4 May 2006

**Report Title** Funding for the Customer Service Centre

**Summary** This report sets out a recommendation from the Modernisation Fund Group (established by Council in February) for additional funding for the Customer Service Centre.

**For further information please contact:** David Carter Strategic Director Performance & Development Tel: 01926 412564 Kushal Birla Head of Customer Service and Access Tel: 01926 736362

**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?** No.

**Background papers** None

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:**

Details to be specified

- Other Committees  .....
- Local Member(s)  countywide
- Other Elected Members  Modernisation Fund Group 6/4/06 (Cllrs Farnell, Stevens, Tandy, Naylor and Roodhouse) Leaders Liaison Group 11/4/06
- Cabinet Member  Councillor Alan Cockburn, Portfolio holder for Corporate Services - support recommendation
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  .....
- Finance  Dave Clarke, Strategic Director of Resources
- Other Chief Officers  .....
- District Councils  .....

- Health  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals  .....

**FINAL DECISION: YES**

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:**

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee  .....
- To Council  .....
- To Cabinet  .....
- To an O & S Committee  .....
- To an Area Committee  .....
- Further Consultation  .....

**Cabinet - 4 May 2006.**

**Funding for the Customer Service Centre.**

**Report of the Strategic Director of Performance and Development on behalf of the Modernisation Fund Group**

**Recommendation from the Modernisation Fund Group**

That Cabinet approve the additional funding of £785,000 to meet the existing shortfall for 2006/07 and recognise that a further £500,000 will be required for staffing and further development work within the Customer Service Centre during 2006/07 (*para.4 refers*).

**1.0 Background**

- 1.1 The Customer Service Centre (CSC) was set up to explore the potential for a service that enabled people to telephone the County Council with queries, complaints or requests for service, and that at least 80% of the time they will be able to have their problem dealt with by the one person answering their call.
- 1.2 There were two other issues that the County Council wished to address. Firstly, despite best efforts there still remained an inconsistency in the level and quality of service provided across the county, depending on your first point of contact. Secondly, professional staff often had to deal with routine work that could be undertaken by less specialist staff. The CSC was a way of releasing professional staff to make best use of their time.
- 1.3 The CSC primary focus was therefore:
  - To make it easier for people to contact the County Council
  - To improve the quality and consistency of services
  - To free up professional expertise to focus on specialist tasks
- 1.4 In 2004 Cabinet approved a 5-year programme to develop the CSC. The overall objectives of the 5-year programme were:
  - Over the next five years, we should develop the pilot centre into a full-blown CSC, which handles not only telephone access to the County Council, but also acts as the first-line provider of services.

- For people who want to visit Council offices or designated One Stop Shops, the reception desks would link-up with the CSC and would allow the same 'one-stop' services to be offered in a consistent manner.
- The overall approach would complement the self-service facilities available via the County's web site and would draw on the same underlying information and databases.

## 2.0 Present Position

2.1 The CSC opening hours are:      Monday to Friday 08:00am -20:00pm  
    Saturday                                    09:00am - 16:00pm

N.B. Bank Holiday opening continues to be trialled

2.2 The CSC presently incorporates the following services:

Enquiry Type	Enquiry Description	Estimated Annual Call Volume
Switchboard	All incoming calls to 410410 and those sites where all calls are initially channelled through the central facility	660,000
Car Clear	Abandoned vehicle scheme to support the reduction in arson related crime. Liaising with Districts, Boroughs and the Police.	1200
Library Enquiries for 13 Libraries	General advice line providing information and services to library customers.	113,000
Social Care	Information requests, signposting and contact assessments to determine eligibility. Working with the DWP to make benefit referrals.	35,000
Disabled Parking Badges (Calls)	Providing information and support regarding the application process and eligibility	11,500
Disabled Parking Badges (Processing)	Receipting and processing applications for Disabled Parking Badges to determine eligibility and produce the badge. Liaising with GPs to confirm Health related issues affecting eligibility.	10,000
Vintage	General advice on any service (not just WCC provided) for anyone over the age of 50.	600
Street Lighting	Recording reports of faulty street lighting and illuminated signs.	9,500
Web Enquiries	Acting as a filtering point for web enquiries generated the Web Feedback and routing requests etc. to the appropriate services for response.	4,200

## 3.0 Funding

3.1 The CSC is presently funded from the corporate e-Government budget where there is currently a shortfall in budget. As a consequence of this shortfall

development work has ceased and permanent recruitment has been halted with temporary staff being utilised as an interim measure.

- 3.2 The Member Modernisation Fund Group has looked at this (and it has also been considered by the Leaders Liaison Group) and has agreed to recommend that Cabinet agree to £785,000 being allocated to the CSC from the Modernisation Fund. The £785,000 will fund:

Service/Provision
Kings House infrastructure costs - £201,000
Kings House rental costs - £165,000
Highways Management – customer service centre development and integration of systems – likely to generate approximately 37,000 calls per annum,
Change of Address process – initially supporting limited services with a view to expanding to all areas
Skills for Life – National Pilot in conjunction with the DfES signposting and supporting learners into basic skills learning
Racist Incidents – reporting of racially motivated incidents funding should be met
PC Bookings – booking of library based PCs
Registrations- answering frequently asked questions and booking of appointments

- 3.3 The budget request for £785,000 is based on the figures calculated for the budget preparation process for 2006/2007 and shared with the budget teams of all three political groups by the Strategic Director of Resources.

- 3.4 The budget forecast for 2005/2006 was as follows:

<b>05/06</b>	<b>£('000)</b>
Total projected expenditure	1,580
Switchboard funding	164
E Government Funding	750
Total Budget	914
<b>Budget Shortfall</b>	<b>666</b>

- 3.5 The projected figures for 2006/2007 were as follows:

<b>06/07</b>	<b>£('000)</b>
Total projected expenditure	1699
Switchboard funding	164
E Government Funding	750
Total Budget	914
<b>Budget Shortfall</b>	<b>785</b>

- 3.6 The 2005/2006 budgets forecast shortfall has been reduced to £230,000 estimate by delaying essential development work. The 2006/2007 shortfall remains at £785,000.

- 4.1 This is about the funding commitments which the Council has already made. It is about providing essential foundations for Customer Services based around the needs of the customer rather than around the organisational structure of the Council and its partners.

## 4.0 Development of the Service

- 4.1 A further bid will be brought forward for £500,000 to fund additional developments that are set out below. The Leaders Liaison Group supported this bid being put forward.

Service/Provision
Member information – answering frequently asked questions regarding cabinet meetings and member details
Emergency planning – implementing a Countywide approach to information management during periods of emergency.
Waste Management – all enquiries relating to waste and recycling issues
Inclusion of the 19 remaining libraries
Implementation of voice recognition for the switchboard function to reduce the number of calls answered in the centre and increase self serve call resolution (not a push button IVR solution, it recognises verbal requests)
Education transport-frequently asked questions and advice on application
Free School Meals-frequently asked questions and advice on application
Education frequently asked questions
Anti Bullying-frequently asked questions
HRMS systems support-frequently asked questions and signposting
F+R Fire – Safety Helpline-frequently asked questions
F+R Help on call –frequently asked questions
F+R Home call –frequently asked questions
F+R Industrial + commercial unit –frequently asked questions
F+R Working with Young People- frequently asked questions
Traffic –frequently asked questions
Recruitment –frequently asked questions
Services for the Deaf Team-frequently asked questions
Complaints –frequently asked questions
Customer satisfaction – technology to automate satisfaction-testing activity. Initially trialled in CSC with a view to roll out for other services
Integration of Street Lighting systems – to remove duplication of effort between front and back office.
Roll out of Change of Address-incorporate other services in change of address approach where applicable.
Introduce a performance management framework-IT work to pull together relevant statistical information across all access channels

- 4.2 It is possible that additional services will be incorporated into the CSC where there are significant similarities and therefore reduced development time.
- 4.3 It is important to note that these developments will support delivery through the CSC, the One Stop Shop/Neighbourhood environment and the web access channel.

DAVID CARTER  
Strategic Director,  
Performance & Development  
Shire Hall, Warwick, April 2006.