

PART A

Report to: Budget Panel
Date of meeting: 29 November 2011
Report of: Partnerships and Performance Section Head
Title: Corporate Process Improvement Programme

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 In June 2011, Budget Panel received an initial report on the council's Corporate Process Improvement Programme (CPIP). The Programme was established to identify further organisational efficiency savings, beyond those identified within the service prioritisation proposals, whilst either maintaining or improving current levels of service delivery.
- 1.2 Since June, the projects identified within CPIP have been progressed and the programme is now near completion stage, where the benefits realised can be captured for consideration and any learning taken forward to support other areas of the council's corporate work programme.
- 1.3 This report, therefore, is an update on the CPIP programme and the benefits it has achieved.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Budget Panel notes and comments on the content of the report.

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Report approved by Tricia Taylor – Executive Director – Resources - Project Sponsor

3.0 BACKGROUND

In June 2011, Budget Panel received an update report on the council's Corporate Process Improvement Programme (CPIP). The Programme had been set up by Leadership Team with the following objectives:

- To transform the way the council works so it operates "lean" customer contact and other corporate processes that provide value for money and satisfy our customers
- To identify and deliver cashable savings to contribute to the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy

The overall sponsor for the Programme is the Executive Director – Resources. Each project within the Programme has its own project manager and the progress of projects has been monitored through regular steering group meetings. Nine out of 12 projects have been completed, with two projects on track to be completed in this financial year, and one project (the Environmental Services admin review) being transferred to the wider service re-design programme.

3.1 Overall scope of the Corporate Process Improvement Programme

The table below outlines the projects in scope for this year and their current status.

Project	Service	Status	Sponsor	Proj. Mgr
Development Management Admin Review	Planning	Completed	J.Custance	D Noble
Data Cleansing	Planning	Completed	J.Custance	D Noble
Complete Academy Implementation – phase 1	R&B	Completed	D. Gardner	P. Adlard
Bartec	ES	Completed	A. Gough	B. Beri
Change scanning solution in Dev Mgt	Planning	Completed	J.Custance	D Noble
Income Management & Cash-Receipting	ICT	Completed	D. Gardner	L. Ambali
Review of print, post and copy functions	Corporate	In progress	T. Taylor	D. Negrello
Channel Shift (Phase 1)	Corporate	Completed	T. Taylor	D. Negrello
Harmonise payments processes in CSC	Corporate	Completed	T. Taylor	D. Patel
Academy implementation – phase 2 - e-services	R&B	In progress	P. Adlard	C Cooper
Environmental Health process review	ES	Completed	A. Gough	J. Hoy
ES Admin Review	ES	Switched to the service re-design programme	A. Gough	Tbc

A full overview of progress is provided in Appendix A.

3.2 **Update on projects and benefits realised from Corporate Process Improvement Programme 2011/12**

3.2.1 **Planning projects**

Three projects were identified in Planning to improve processes and have been managed by the Development Control Section Head..

Review of Scanning contract

Status = completed.

This project procured a new supplier to scan planning applications and all associated documents and to publish these documents on line on Public Access which has reduced contract costs and provided improved service levels. Following an Invitation to Tender, the current supplier (Idox) was awarded the new contract but at significantly reduced costs and with enhanced service delivery. The cost of scanning a planning application has reduced from £22 per application to £11.50.

Benefits realised

- The annual contract saving made is: £12,600
- £1,050 saving per month since October 2011 for this financial year (i.e. £6,300)
- Idox is providing an additional service (redaction) within the reduced cost of the contract, which means that staff time is not required to undertake this task in future (supporting the implementation of the administration review – see below) [Note: “Redaction” means the removal of sensitive personal data before publication of the documents on line, which is an essential legal requirement]
- Reduced time before documents are available online – application documents will be available within 2-3 days instead of five days taken to view applications on line
- Improved availability for the public of documents online (previously those documents which contained personal data were not available on Public Access)

Data Cleansing

Status = completed.

This project was set up initially to correct an estimated 21,000 errors relating to property data held in the Planning Uniform database for the period from 1976 to 2011. The scope of the project was subsequently enlarged in order to capture data about all planning applications from 1948 to 1975. The errors that were initially identified were creating significant additional work when completing land charge searches and property histories. The savings realised for this project are linked to the administration review project – see below. Having reliable information in one database means that the Technical Admin Team and Land Charges can answer queries from, and provide information to, the public more easily, quickly and accurately, with a consequent saving of time on each transaction.

Benefits realised

- Savings achieved : £19,830 (equivalent of 0.5 FTE)
- For the first time, records relating to all planning applications made since 1948 are accessible electronically and from the same system (Uniform)
- Considerably faster and accurate land charge searches and property histories, thus significantly reducing the risk of compensation payments for false or incorrect search results

Development Management Admin Review

Status = completed.

This project identified process improvements in the work of planning staff within the Technical Admin team. An external facilitator ran a 2 day workshop to help the team identify process improvements. The outcome of this and further understanding of the needs of the service as it moves forward led to a review of the structure of the team and its associated roles. There had already been 2 voluntary redundancies within the team and the outcome of the review, along with the projects above, has resulted in efficiencies that allows all of the cost of the now vacant posts to be released as savings from Full Year 12/13.

Benefits realised

- Savings achieved : £70,895
- Smaller team, with greater resilience and more flexible ways of working
- Fewer management posts
- More efficient and effective methods of working

3.2.2 Environmental Services

Bartec

Status = completed

This project implemented the waste collection software and hardware into the depot back office and in vehicles. The software allows real time prompts of waste collections for the crews, monitoring in real time of completed rounds and automatic updates to the Customer Service Centre (CSC) on any bins not collected. This will allow the council to provide more accurate real time information on missed bin queries and create a basis on which further improvements to the process could be considered.

Benefits realised

- Real time data to assist the CSC when dealing with customer interactions
- Database of waste collection rounds
- All events recorded on the collection rounds including broken bins/boxes, contaminated bins, bins not on boundary etc
- Data extracted from the system enabling targeted campaigning to maximise recycling and waste minimisation
- A management tool to monitor performance and track vehicle efficiency

Environmental Health Process Review

This project reviewed Environmental Health processes to address feedback raised as part of the customer contact review work done last year. It was not intended to be a full service review but an improvement project designed to make current processes more effective particularly in relation to customer contact. Examples of where identified improvements to processes / working practices have been implemented include:

- Environmental Health Licensing (EHL) overall - making greater use of email rather than posting out letters and forms
- EHL overall – ensure CSC currently have the right letters to send to customers

Environmental Services Admin Review

This project, which was to look at the admin roles and processes across Environmental Services, will now be taken forward as part of the service re-design programme for waste and recycling, street cleansing and parks and open spaces. The service redesign programme is due to complete ready for implementation by 1 April 2013.

3.2.3 Shared services project

The following projects were identified as important to Watford BC as they enable the council to deliver customer contact processes more efficiently and effectively and realise the full benefits of shared services.

Income Management and Cash Receipting system

Status = completed

This project, replaced both Watford BC and Three Rivers DC's existing system with a new and harmonised system. There were a number of primary objectives for the procurement and implementation of a shared Cash Receipting and Income Management system for both Watford BC and Three Rivers DC.

- Improved management control resulting from a single integrated system for both cash receipting and income distribution services
- Resilience and skills transfer across a number of services
- Streamlining and alignment of the processes for both cash receipting and income distribution functions
- Compliance with the latest legislative requirements and the ability to quickly implement changes to legislation as soon as mandated
- Cost savings through the alignment of contracts

Benefits realised

- Cost savings in the region of £13.5k per annum across both councils. These were achieved through reducing two separate contracts to one by the implementation of a Shared Income management system.
- Both authorities are fully compliant with Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

- More efficient working due to:
 - The ease of the banking reconciliation process. The combined General Ledger and Accounts Receivable export file was specified accordingly in order to achieve this.
 - Automation of many manual activities e.g. emailing export files to external organisations, automatic import of selected transaction files, automatic production and email of daily reports to recipients
 - Consolidation of the operational and maintenance functions in the Cash Office, residing within the Revenues and Benefits service. This has led to higher levels of competencies through appropriate skills transfer and shared learning, resulting in better use and control of the system.
 - A platform that has allowed the Watford CSC to take on additional responsibilities for taking some payments, allowing the Cash Office to focus on other higher value activities such as processing transactions and resolution of issues

Complete Academy Implementation – phase 1

Status = completed

This project involved moving the Revenues and Benefits Academy system at Three Rivers DC from UNIX to Windows platform. It was completed on time in August 2011.

Benefits realised

- Met strategic requirements of Three Rivers DC to move operating systems from UNIX to Windows (to ultimately remove the need for UNIX Support/ Expertise)
- Presents opportunity for Shared Service Desktop to be implemented
- Provides basis for more effective implementation of e-service – see below

Academy implementation – phase 2 (e-services)

Status = In progress

This project involves the next phase of Academy implementation that will enable customers to access benefit forms from the website, thus speeding up their claims and reducing administration time within the service. It will require, amongst other things, implementation of ABC integration software and e-benefits forms which have already been purchased. The project will enable the full benefits of Shared Services to be achieved including service improvement and potential cashable efficiencies.

There has been a delay to the original proposal due to the realisation that additional physical servers would be required for the ABC software. This only came to light in recent discussions with Capita (the software supplier of Academy).

The Project Team held a meeting on 22 November 2011 and agreed to proceed with the project on a two phase basis; phase 1 to concentrate on

the Test Servers and phase 2 the Live subject to a successful evaluation and completion of phase 1.

3.2.4 Corporate projects

Harmonisation payments processes in CSC

Status = completed

This project ran in conjunction with the implementation of the new corporate Income Management system at Watford and Three Rivers and implemented processes which enable the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to take the full range of payments by “card” via the telephone and face to face. Previously, with a few exceptions, customers had to be put through to the Cash Office for these payments and the CSC team could not take card payments face to face. With the implementation of new Income Management and Cash Receipting system the CSC can take payments across all service areas.

Benefits realised

- All payments can now be taken by the CSC – examples include council tax arrears, pest control feed and allotment fees
- Transactions are completed from end to end by CSC staff without the need for a handover to the cash office. Payments for services such as pest control can be taken at the same time as booking an appointment.
- Through the resources that have been released the Cash Office have been able to undertake the administration of the new corporate Income Management system.
- Increased resilience of the processes for card payments.

Review of print, post and copy functions

Status = in progress

This project is reviewing current in-house provision, service delivery and costs of corporate print, copy, post arrangements. The review will be completed by January 2012.

Channel Shift (Phase 1 voice recognition software)

Status = in progress

This project tested the merits of introducing voice recognition telephony, which will allow the council to deal with the high volumes of ‘transfer only’ calls that it currently manages more effectively. It has been supported by extensive customer consultation.

An overview of the proposed system was provided in the November Members’ Bulletin.

The next phase of the project will identify where a similar approach, in terms of increasing self serve, can be achieved via the council’s website.

Work has already identified the reasons why people might currently be reluctant to use the council website, where improvements can be made and which service transactions could be moved to web only e.g. business to business

Potential Benefits

Voice recognition telephony

- The annual net saving made for the introduction of voice recognition telephony is : £49,000
- Increase in customer satisfaction as a result of
 - faster connection to the right person
 - directed to the right person, first time including re-directing calls to County and other partners/organisations
 - increased availability
- More flexibility than current routing option which uses limited numbers that customers have to press for required enquiry. This system allows for a variety of options as it is based on voice recognition.
- Better utilisation of CSC staff on responding to customer enquiries (compared to switchboard type requests) with a resulting increase in staff satisfaction
- Time saved by other officers in searching for extension numbers as the system could be used for internal purpose also.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial implications

4.1.1 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that the essence of the Corporate Process Improvement Programme is to look at how the council provides services to the community and internally between services with a key objective of identifying and delivering cashable savings to support the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. To date the programme has generated circa £150k savings. These savings are in addition to savings identified through the council's service prioritisation programme and will contribute to the additional circa £2million savings that the organisation needs to identify to meet its financial targets.

4.2 Legal implications

4.2.1 The Head of Legal and Property comments that there are no legal implications of the report. Where new contracts have been entered into such as for new scanning provider for Planning, the Council's procurement procedures have been complied with.

4.3 Risks

4.3.1 Risks have been identified and managed within the individual CPIP projects as part of the council's commitment to effective project management. This approach has been important in securing successful completion and implementation of the planned projects.