

FLINTSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

REPORT TO: CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

DATE: THURSDAY, 18 APRIL 2013

REPORT BY: HEAD OF ICT AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

SUBJECT: CUSTOMER SERVICES AS A FLINTSHIRE FUTURES WORKSTREAM

1.00 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.01 To provide an update on the Customer Services Workstream within the Flintshire Futures Programme.

2.00 BACKGROUND

2.01 The Council has developed the Flintshire Futures Programme as its corporate programme for modernising and transforming the organisation and to make best use of its resources and secure efficiencies. Within this programme are a number of workstreams Customer Service being one.

2.02 This report provides information on progress made on the various projects within the Customer Services Workstream. All align with and contribute to the implementation of the Council's Customer Services Strategy which is monitored by this Committee.

3.00 CONSIDERATIONS

3.01 Within the Customer Services Workstream we are ensuring that whatever changes we make we will put our customers at the heart of everything we do, in line with the Council's improvement priorities. We are aiming to improve customer access, customer service standards and customer engagement across the organisation.

3.02 Although improving the customer experience is our primary goal we are at the same time planning to make efficiencies by encouraging use of self service digital access and challenging our processes to ensure we standardise, simplify and automate wherever possible.

3.03 Customer Access

The focus of the work to date is in improving customer access to services and information. We recognise that we have to provide choice in terms of how, when and where services are available and although encouraging digital self service, we are also improving face to face and telephone access.

- 3.04 Flintshire Connects is focussed on face to face customer service. Our vision is “Delivering improved customer facing services to the residents of Flintshire in partnership with others and through the provision of accessible, modern and community based facilities.”
- 3.05 The central aim of the project is to improve customer service by providing more “joined up” and improved access to Council and other public-facing services in local towns, and at the same time enabling flexible working and decentralisation of Council staff and services to locations which best meet our customers’ needs. Efficiencies will be driven by developing generic job roles for customer facing staff, reducing journey times (and cost), and sharing office premises costs with partner agencies.
- 3.06 Whilst the primary focus of the project is about improving the customer experience it will also play a key role in regenerating our town centres. Flintshire Connects offers a clear opportunity to use a Council programme to act as both a catalyst for, and support to regenerating our town centres. Flintshire Connects centres providing access to Council and other partner services will be a new presence within our towns, they will create both a demand for space and additional new footfall.
- 3.07 We opened our first Flintshire Connects facility in Holywell on 30th November, 2012. It has been well received and we have seen a gradual increase in customers using the facility, around 400 per week. North Wales Police have relocated to Connects from Holywell police station, Job Centre Plus have a regular presence there, Communities First are based at the facility and Deeside College are using meeting room space for community learning.
- 3.08 We are now planning new Connects facilities at Flint, Connah’s Quay and Buckley following the County Council decision in March to extend the network. We have secured £700k of Invest to Save Funding from Welsh Government, and Job Centre Plus have confirmed that they will be operating permanently from the Flint Connects Centre with discussions on-going with other partners for all 3 facilities.
- 3.09 The Contact Centre opened in March 2012. We had some initial problems mainly due to underestimating the volume of calls due to the operational changes made to waste collection. We are now seeing high performance with targets for call handling being consistently met. The contact centre received on average 800 calls per day over the recent severe weather period. In addition to Streetscene we have recently implemented contact centre facilities for Housing Repairs, Revenues & Benefits and Leisure.
- 13.10 Another project within the Customer Services Workstream is Channel Shift, which is about encouraging customers to use digital self service

facilities to access services and information. The development of the new Council Website has commenced with a target date for implementation of September, 2013 and the Flintshire “App” for mobile devices will be launched in July, 2013.

13.11 Customer Service Standards

Although the focus for the project team has been very much around improving Customer Access there are other complementary pieces of work also in progress. A review of the Council’s customer care standards is underway. New standards and targets will be identified and incorporate the new access channels particularly digital self service which do not currently feature in our customer care standards.

13.12 Customer Engagement

The Customer Engagement Project Team has recently been established. Currently an exercise is underway to identify all consultation and engagement activities across the Council. We are aware of good practice particularly in Community Services and want to ensure that if appropriate this can be replicated across other service areas. The project will also look at communication channels which will include social media.

4.00 RECOMMENDATIONS

4.01 Members are asked to note this report.

5.00 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.01 None arising directly from this report.

6.00 ANTI POVERTY IMPACT

6.01 None arising directly from this report.

7.00 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

7.01 None arising directly from this report.

8.00 EQUALITIES IMPACT

8.01 None arising directly from this report.

9.00 PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

9.01 None arising directly from this report.

10.00 CONSULTATION REQUIRED

10.01 None arising directly from this report.

11.00 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN

11.01 None arising directly from this report.

12.00 APPENDICES

12.01 None.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT) 1985
BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Contact Officer: Chris Guest
Telephone: 01352 702800
Email: chris.guest@flintshire.gov.uk