

A meeting of the **CABINET** will be held in the **CIVIC SUITE 0.1A, PATHFINDER HOUSE, ST MARY'S STREET, HUNTINGDON, PE29 3TN** on **THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 2013** at **7:00 PM** and you are requested to attend for the transaction of the following business:-

## **APOLOGIES**

  
**Contact**  
**(01480)**

**1. MINUTES** (Pages 1 - 6)

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting held on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2013.

**Mrs H J Taylor**  
**388008**

**2. MEMBERS' INTERESTS**

To receive from Members declarations as to disclosable pecuniary, non-disclosable pecuniary or non pecuniary interests in relation to any Agenda item. See Notes below.

**3. A14 IMPROVEMENTS - HIGHWAYS AGENCY CONSULTATION** (Pages 7 - 14)

With the assistance of a report by the Assistance Director, Environment, Growth and Planning, to consider a response to the public consultation exercise by the Highways Agency on the proposed A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme.

**S Bell**  
**388387**

**4. CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY 2013-18** (Pages 15 - 66)

To consider a report by the Head of Customer Service seeking endorsement for the draft Customer Services Strategy 2013-18.

**Mrs J Barber**  
**388105**

**5. JOINT MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY PROCUREMENT INVITATION TO TENDER** (Pages 67 - 70)

To receive a report from the Head of Operations on the Materials Recycling Facility Joint Procurement.

**E Kendall**  
**388635**

**6. OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY INVOLVEMENT IN IDENTIFYING PRIORITY AREAS FOR SAVINGS** (Pages 71 - 78)

To consider a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources, outlining a delivery review programme.

**S Couper**  
**388103**

**7. STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING - IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGES** (Pages 79 - 84)

To receive a report from the Head of Environmental Management on the implementation of charges for Street Naming and Numbering.

**C Allen  
388380**

**8. PAY REVIEW - PROGRAMME PLAN**

To consider a report by the Managing Director – to follow.

**Mrs J Lancaster  
388300**

Dated this 9 day of October 2013



Head of Paid Service

**Notes**

**1. Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

(1) *Members are required to declare any disclosable pecuniary interests and unless you have obtained dispensation, cannot discuss or vote on the matter at the meeting and must also leave the room whilst the matter is being debated or voted on.*

(2) *A Member has a disclosable pecuniary interest if it -*

*(a) relates to you, or  
(b) is an interest of -*

- (i) your spouse or civil partner; or*
- (ii) a person with whom you are living as husband and wife; or*
- (iii) a person with whom you are living as if you were civil partners*

*and you are aware that the other person has the interest.*

(3) *Disclosable pecuniary interests includes -*

- (a) any employment or profession carried out for profit or gain;*
- (b) any financial benefit received by the Member in respect of expenses incurred carrying out his or her duties as a Member (except from the Council);*
- (c) any current contracts with the Council;*
- (d) any beneficial interest in land/property within the Council's area;*
- (e) any licence for a month or longer to occupy land in the Council's area;*
- (f) any tenancy where the Council is landlord and the Member (or person in (2)(b) above) has a beneficial interest; or*
- (g) a beneficial interest (above the specified level) in the shares of any body which has a place of business or land in the Council's area.*

**Other Interests**

- (4) *If a Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest then you are required to declare that interest, but may remain to discuss and vote.*
- (5) *A Member has a non-disclosable pecuniary interest or a non-pecuniary interest where -*
- (a) a decision in relation to the business being considered might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing of you or a member of your family or a person with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the council tax payers, rate payers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the authority's administrative area, or*
- (b) it relates to or is likely to affect any of the descriptions referred to above, but in respect of a member of your family (other than specified in (2)(b) above) or a person with whom you have a close association*

*and that interest is not a disclosable pecuniary interest.*

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**Please contact Mrs H Taylor, Senior Democratic Services Officer, Tel No. 01480 388008/e-mail [Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk](mailto:Helen.Taylor@huntingdonshire.gov.uk) /e-mail: if you have a general query on any Agenda Item, wish to tender your apologies for absence from the meeting, or would like information on any decision taken by the Cabinet.**

**Specific enquiries with regard to items on the Agenda should be directed towards the Contact Officer.**

**Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting as observers except during consideration of confidential or exempt items of business.**

Agenda and enclosures can be viewed on the District Council's website – [www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk](http://www.huntingdonshire.gov.uk) (*under Councils and Democracy*).

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***Emergency Procedure***

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## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MINUTES of the meeting of the CABINET held in the Pathfinder House, St Mary's Street, Huntingdon, PE29 3TN on Thursday, 19 September 2013.

PRESENT: Councillor J D Ablewhite – Chairman.  
Councillors B S Chapman, J A Gray,  
N J Guyatt, R B Howe and D M Tysoe.

IN ATTENDANCE: Councillor S J Criswell

APOLOGY: Anpology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor T D Sanderson.

### 28. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Cabinet held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2013 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

Executive Councillors noted that Councillor N J Guyatt had been appointed as the District Council's representative to the Cambridgeshire Pension Fund Board.

### 29. MEMBERS' INTERESTS

Councillors D M Tysoe declared a non pecuniary interest in Minute No. 31 as Clerk to Ellington Parish Council.

### 30. PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCAL JOINT COMMITTEES IN HUNTINGDONSHIRE

*(Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well Being) was in attendance and spoke on this item.)*

Further to Minute No. 12/21 and by way of a report by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet were reminded of their previous decision on the proposed establishment of Local Joint Committees (LJC) in Huntingdonshire. This had included the adoption of a constitution and approval to trial a pilot scheme in the Norman Cross County Division. Having regard to the latter, it was reported that only one informal meeting of the pilot LJC had been held.

At the invitation of the Chairman, Councillor S J Criswell, Chairman of the Panel, addressed the Cabinet. He explained that as a result of Members' concerns over the absence of a face to face neighbourhood engagement mechanism within the district the issue of LJC's had been raised with the Executive Leader's Strategy Group. As a result, a series of new principles for LJC's were agreed with the intention of promoting local ownership of the scheme rather than a

top-down approach.

In considering the information before them, Executive Councillors expressed reservations over the prescriptive nature of the proposed boundary map areas adding that some towns/parishes may wish to join up with others not within the areas identified. In response to which, Councillor Criswell explained that the Town and Parish had been consulted on whom they considered to be part of their local communities and that no one had raised any disagreement with their proposed geographical allocation. However, the Cabinet felt that the areas should be perceived as guidelines only in order to allow some flexibility.

Having thanked the Panel for their input, the Cabinet

**RESOLVED**

- (a) that Town and Parish Councils be notified of the opportunity to establish their own Local Joint Committees across the District within the parameters set out in Appendix A and Appendix B;
- (b) that the revised Constitution for Local Joint Committees in Huntingdonshire as set out in Appendix C of the report be approved; and
- (c) that each individual Ward Member be requested to attend their respective Local Joint Committee(s) if a meeting is called by the communities.

### **31. FINANCIAL FORECAST TO 2019**

By way of a report by the Assistant Director, Finance and Resources (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet were acquainted with the present position in relation to the Council's financial forecast for the period up to 2018/19 together with the deliberations of the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) thereon.

In considering the information contained in the report, Members have been informed of progress to date in the achievement of savings and have acknowledged the major financial challenges facing the authority arising from the Government's Spending Review. Particular attention was drawn to the Government's limit for Council Tax increase in the current year, uncertainty surrounding the level of Government Formula Grant and a proposed requirement for local authorities to pass a significant portion of New Homes Bonus to the Local Enterprise Partnership. The Cabinet acknowledged that the Government's Review had created additional major financial challenges for the Council and its ability to deliver its current portfolio of services. Furthermore, mention was made of the uncertainty that surrounded Government support for Councils after the 2015 General Election with a potential for a fall in grant of 2.5% per year.

In discussing existing savings proposals, Members considered whether to continue with a grant to Town and Parish Councils previously awarded as compensation for changes in funding arising from the Government's Local Council Tax Support Scheme. Given the challenges being faced by the authority as a result of the budgetary cuts, Members felt that this grant should not be continued beyond the current financial year, subject to there being no change in Government legislation.

With regard to additional savings requirements, Executive Councillors recognised the need to focus on the larger areas of the Council's expenditure and the importance of communication to ensure that Huntingdonshire residents are able to influence and remain informed of the process.

Having noted that the Managing Director was currently developing a performance management framework to link the Leadership Direction with the Budget/MTP

#### RESOLVED

that Council be recommended to;

- (a) consider the contents of the report and acknowledge the significant financial uncertainty for local authorities;
- (b) confirm that there will be no grants relating to the impact of Council Tax Support to Town and Parish Councils in 2014/15 and subsequent years;
- (c) support the Financial Forecast as the basis to estimate the potential level of savings required by the authority; and
- (d) request the Managing Director to identify proposals for additional major savings for 2015/16.

### **32. HUNTINGDONSHIRE TOWN AND PARISH CHARTER**

By way of a report by the Head of Environmental and Community Health Services (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet was invited to consider the content of a proposed Huntingdonshire Town and Parish Charter which sets out a framework for partnership working to improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of the district. The Charter had been considered also by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Social Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Members were informed that the Charter would be an evolving document which would take into account any future changes such as the proposals for Local Joint Committees in Huntingdonshire, the Parish planning process and any changes announced by the Department of Communities and Local Government in respect of the

Localism Act.

In considering the contents of the Charter, Executive Councillors concurred with the Overview and Scrutiny Panel that in Appendix C reference should be made that the District Council would advise Town and Parish Councils of developments which were taking place through “permitted developments”. Having also supported the Panel’s view that Local Joint Committees in Huntingdonshire should be included within the document as an example of an appropriate forum in which to engage with communities, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

that, subject to the inclusion of the suggested amendments referred to in the text of the preamble hereto, the contents of the Huntingdonshire Town and Parish Charter be approved.

**33. MAKING ASSETS COUNT - CAMBRIDGESHIRE'S PROPOSED APPROACH TO STRATEGIC ASSET MANAGEMENT**

Further to Minute No 11/15, consideration was given to a report by the Assistant Director, Environment, Growth and Planning (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) updating Members with progress of the Making Assets Count project which aims to deliver high quality and effective management of public sector assets across Cambridgeshire. The report had been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well-Being) whose comments were relayed to the Cabinet.

Executive Councillors were advised that the MAC Partnership consisted of Cambridgeshire County Council, Cambridgeshire’s District Councils, the Police Service, the Fire Service and some of the local Health Providers. It was reported that there had been some initial success thus far including the re-letting of office space to accommodate health service requirements at Pathfinder House.

Members’ attention was drawn to a proposal to establish a publicly-owned joint venture vehicle which would enhance the work of the Partnership by delivering projects and managing transferred assets. In recognising the importance of investigating all opportunities and having noted that none of the authority’s assets would be committed to or encumbered by this without further reference to a future meeting, the Cabinet

RESOLVED

- (a) that the Making Assets Count principles, outlined in paragraph 2.1 of the report now submitted, be endorsed and the County Council’s intention to proceed with the creation of a countywide publicly-owned joint venture (the MAC Public Property Partnership) noted; and
- (b) that the pragmatic approach taken to date by the authority in respect of maximising the use of our own assets be supported and all further ‘common sense’ sharing opportunities fully explored and expediently delivered wherever that may be possible;



#### **34. JOINT MATERIALS RECYCLING FACILITY PROCUREMENT**

With the aid of a report by the Head of Operations (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book) the Cabinet considered a proposal by the Recycling Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Waste Partnership (RECAP) to jointly procure a materials recycling facility to manage and process all the recycling materials collected across Cambridgeshire and Peterborough. The proposals relates only to bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials.

In considering the information in the report, Executive Councillors discussed the risk associated with the contract and sought assurances that the authority would benefit from being part of a combined procurement with other local authorities. Having referred also to the lack of any financial justifications in the report, the Cabinet

#### **RESOLVED**

- (a) that, subject to all RECAP partners agreeing to the appointment, the Council's commitment to the procurement and appointment of a Contractor to deliver a joint materials recycling facility for bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials for all participating partners, be endorsed;
- (b) that the RECAP Advance Partnership Working Charter and Governance Agreement, appended to the report now submitted, be approved;
- (c) that the final Invitation of Tender document for the project be considered by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) prior to final approval by the Cabinet and if necessary a special meeting be called for that purpose in order to meet the timetable for the joint procurement;
- (d) that the nomination of a preferred supplier by Peterborough City Council, in collaboration with the participating partners, for the provision of the services of bulking, sorting and onward processing/sale of recyclable materials contract on behalf of Peterborough City Council and the RECAP participating partners be endorsed; and
- (e) that the RECAP approach to the Waste Framework Directive and Waste Regulations for the collection of recycle materials streams from 2015, as set out in Appendix 3 of the report, be approved.

#### **35. FACING THE FUTURE 2013**

With the aid of report by the Managing Director (a copy of which is appended in the Minute Book), the Cabinet was invited to consider

future potential business options for the delivery of Council services together with a programme of activity aimed at supporting the delivery of a robust business plan.

Members were advised that the proposals explored a range of options available to reform the way the authority delivers its services, with the aim of creating a sustainable solution to the stark financial difficulties facing the authority. In welcoming the pragmatic approach being adopted by the authority and in acknowledging that consideration would need to be given to a number of difficult decisions in the future, the Cabinet

#### RESOLVED

- (a) that the list of potential options for future service delivery be approved and they be considered in respect of all the services currently delivered by the Council;
- (b) that the Overview and Scrutiny Chairmen be requested to prepare proposals for a delivery programme to be presented to the next meeting of the Cabinet for approval and to agree resourcing for that programme and a proposed governance structure; and
- (c) that the Overview and Scrutiny Panels be requested to review all options in line with the programme and present their conclusions and recommendations to the Cabinet.

Chairman

**Public**

**Key Decision - Yes**

\* Delete as applicable

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** A14 Improvements – Highways Agency Consultation

**Meeting/Date:** Overview & Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) – 8<sup>th</sup> October 2013  
Cabinet – 17<sup>th</sup> October 2013

**Executive Portfolio:** Strategic Planning & Housing

**Report by:** Assistant Director, Environment, Growth & Planning

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

The A14 improvement project is vital to the delivery of the sustainable growth agenda across Huntingdonshire and the wider Greater Cambridgeshire area.

The scheme that is now subject to non-statutory public consultation by the Highways Agency, addresses many of the issues that the Council has been lobbying for over many years, including the proposed provision of a new off-line A14 route to the south of Huntingdon and Godmanchester, the upgrading of the A1 between Alconbury and the A14 and the associated removal of the Huntingdon Viaduct, which would create greater accessibility for Huntingdon and reduced traffic congestion on the local road network caused by traffic avoidance of current sub-standard route, particularly during traffic incidents on the existing route.

### **Recommendation(s):**

Based on the information contained within this report, it is recommended that Cabinet agrees a response to the Highways Agency stating our support for the scheme as proposed, including our reiteration that our approved local financial contribution is conditional on;

- The overall scheme including the removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and the creation of an improved new local road network for Huntingdon; and
- That construction works commencing by 2016

Additionally, the Council recommends that;

- If the scheme has to include a tolling element, that this must be collected in a free-flow fashion and that the daily charge must be maintained at a level which is as low as possible (to be agreed) at a lower end of the charging scale i.e. £1 for cars and £2 for HCV's over an appropriate extended time period to be agreed between all the funding partners

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## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to enable a Council response to be made to the current formal consultation by the Highways Agency on the proposed A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Improvement Scheme.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The Council has been a key partner in the development of the current proposals, which are now subject to non-statutory public consultation. It is vital that this Council remains engaged in this project in order to influence and help to deliver the best possible solution available for Huntingdonshire.
- 2.2 The first major improvement initiative dates back to August 2001, with the publication of the CHUMMS Study, which include various road-based options.
- 2.3 Eventually proposals were published by the HA (Highways Agency) to provide an 'Ellington to Fen Ditton Improvement Scheme', including a new off-line route south Brampton & Godmancheser rejoining A14 at Fen Drayton, then on-line improvements to Girton and eastwards to Fen Ditton.
- 2.4 Various challenges were made to the HA proposals and certain variations were subsequently proposed inc. different lane provision (3-lane and 2-lane options) and variants to build a new southerly route while also proposing keeping the existing route through Huntingdon open as a Trunk Road.
- 2.5 A Final Proposed Scheme was eventually published and subject to detailed design with Statutory Procedures moving forward until 2010 when, as part of the Government 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review, the Proposed Improvement Scheme was cancelled as being 'unaffordable'. The previous 'Route of Protection' was also withdrawn but at the same time, Government announced a new A14 Study and an 'A14 Challenge' with a commitment given to explore alternative options and working arrangements with partners.
- 2.6 In response to the A14 Challenge, this Council, together with the County Council, South Cambridgeshire, Fenland and East Cambridgeshire issued a joint response emphasising the importance of improvements to the route to national and local economic prosperity and the need for a radical, multi-modal solution rather than a piecemeal solution. The statement outlined that without this the County's contribution to the economic and financial prosperity of the nation would be severely threatened at all levels. It was agreed that this Council would be represented on the DfT Steering Group overseeing this work and we also provided detailed technical input to the DfT Project Board, via the County Council.
- 2.7 This report seeks the Cabinet's initial view on the new scheme now being promoted but does not consider the detail of the Council's financial contribution to the project, which has been agreed separately.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 As part of the new A14 Study, the DfT carried out a three-stage study looking at a range of options in order to ascertain the best possible solution for the corridor between Ellington and Milton and they are consulting on the current proposals until 13<sup>th</sup> October 2013. The consultation also includes the options which have been discounted at this stage.

- 3.2 The proposed off-line section of the route to the south of Huntingdon is fundamentally the same as scheme that was cancelled in 2010 and is described below. The on-line widening to the east of Fen Drayton is also similar but the junctions and local road arrangements alongside the improved A14 are significantly changed and are also described below;
- 3.3 From the A14 Ellington heading eastwards and the A1 Alconbury heading south, the key issues are;
- a. Upgrading of A1 between Alconbury and new A14 from dual 2-lane to dual 3-lane carriageway
  - b. New off-line A14 2-lane dual carriageway between Ellington and A1 at Brampton/Buckden
  - c. East of A1, new off-line A14 3-lane through to Bar Hill
  - d. An A1198 partial junction at Godmanchester (west facing slip roads)
  - e. From Swavesey / Fen Drayton to Girton, a new single carriageway local road will run on the north side of the existing route and connect to the old A14 near Fen Drayton / Fenstanton through to Huntingdon in the west and to Girton in the east. This will enable Huntingdonshire residents to travel toll free alongside the route of the A14
  - f. Full junctions at Swavesey and Bar Hill connecting the local road network to the A14
  - g. The new A14 will be a free-flow Toll Road between the A1/A14 junction and Swavesey.
  - h. From Bar Hill to Girton, the A14 will be 4-lane
  - i. Girton Interchange has been simplified (compared to the cancelled scheme) and will provide and improve all existing traffic movements
  - j. Widening of the Cambridge Northern by-pass from dual 2-lane to dual 3-lane between Girton and Milton (Note – an additional 3<sup>rd</sup> lane between Girton and Histon is due to be provided as part of the HA Pinch-point programme in 2014)
  - k. The scheme will include the removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and the creation of a new road network connecting to Huntingdon Town Centre and Brampton Road. The current indicative layout is the same as that for the cancelled scheme.

#### **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

- 4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has recommended the Cabinet to approve the proposed terms for the response to the consultation.

#### **5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

- 5.1 The only key risk for the Council is a failure of the scheme to proceed. It is imperative that the Council continues to lobby Government for the provision of

this road and a construction start before the end of 2016 and the recommendations included within this report reflect that.

## **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

6.1 Following the completion of this non-statutory public consultation stage of the process, the HA intend to make a Preferred Route announcement in late 2013, followed by further statutory public consultation on a detailed design for the whole scheme between Ellington and Milton. The scheme is designated as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the terms of the Planning Act 2008 and it will require a Development Consent Order, which subject to approval, is anticipated would be given in late 2014. This is then considered by the Planning Inspectorate and is estimated to take around 6-months.

6.2 Once this process is completed, it is estimated that construction work would commence in late 2016 and take 3 to 4 years to complete.

## **7. CONSULTATION**

7.1 This report covers the formal consultation process currently being undertaken by the HA and our planned response to that process.

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

8.1 Given the route of this project through Huntingdonshire, the Council will have a role to play in respect of the determination of the Development Consent Order application. This would include comments on the 'Statement of Community Consultation' and the submission of appropriate evidence.

## **9. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 As outlined earlier within this report, the financial contribution by the Council towards this scheme has been considered separately.

9.2 As the project moves towards the application for a Development Consent Order, there may be other legal costs associated with presenting this Council's case as part of that process. That has already been accounted for within our current proposed MTP.

## **10. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 Since the original publication of the CHUMMS Study in 2001, this Council has played a significant role in the development of this scheme to ensure that the best possible solution is achieved for the District. Officer time will continue to be needed as the project evolves and that is accounted for within current staffing structures and budgets.

## **11 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

11.1 This Council has been an active participant in the development of the A14 project since the time of the CHUMMS study back in 2001 and our stated position has always been to support the upgrading of the existing route and to achieve the best possible overall solution for the District with an emphasis on dealing with the current unacceptable mixture of strategic and local traffic.

- 11.2 We have previously identified that the creation of a new A14 would allow several new development opportunities to proceed to support economic and employment growth, such as at Alconbury Weald and the regeneration of Huntingdon Town Centre.
- 11.3 We have supported the provision of a new off-line route on the basis that it would ease serious traffic congestion within Huntingdon & St. Ives and surrounding communities due to the current of the sub-standard A14 route.
- 11.4 Air Quality, Noise and Environmental impact issues currently exist within urban areas of Huntingdon and a new offline route is the only opportunity to address those, and additionally, at Godmanchester and at Fenstanton.
- 11.5 As part of our engagement work on the recent A14 Study, the Council has consistently lobbied for tolling levels, if they have to be included as part of Government policy, to be set and maintained at a lower end of any charge threshold i.e.£1 for cars and £2 for HCV's
- 11.6 The new scheme now being proposed is supported by a local finance package of £100M including contributions from various partners including this Council, the County Council and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). This Council has agreed a contribution of up to £5M, spread over a 25-year period with two essential caveats;
- i. That any contribution is reliant on construction works commencing by 2016; and
  - ii. That any scheme includes the final removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and its replacement with a new local road network creating greater accessibility for Huntingdon

**Recommendation(s):**

Based on the information contained within this report, it is recommended that Cabinet agrees a response to the Highways Agency stating our support for the scheme as proposed, including our reiteration that our approved local financial contribution is conditional on;

- The overall scheme including the removal of Huntingdon Viaduct and the creation of an improved new local road network for Huntingdon; and
- That construction works commencing by 2016

Additionally, the Council recommends that:

- If the scheme has to include a tolling element, that this must be collected in a free-flow fashion and that the daily charge must be maintained at a level which is as low as possible (to be agreed) at a lower end of the charging scale i.e. £1 for cars and £2 for HCV's over an appropriate extended time period to be agreed between all the funding partners.



## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

CHUMMS Study – August 2001

A14 Wider Study Challenge – Joint Cambridgeshire Local Authority response

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Public Consultation Briefing – September 2013

A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon Technical Review of Options – September 2013

## **CONTACT OFFICER**

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**Public**  
**Key Decision - Yes**

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** Customer Service Strategy 2013-18

**Meeting/Date:** Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Economic Well- Being) -  
3rd October 2013  
Cabinet – 17th October 2013

**Executive Portfolio:** Customer Services

**Report by:** Head of Customer Service

**Ward(s) affected:** All

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### **Executive Summary:**

- 1.1 The Customer Service Strategy for the period 2007 – 2012 has expired, and a new strategy has been developed for the period 2013 – 2018.
- 1.2 A Members Working Group has been involved with this development as part of the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well Being) Panel. The main strategy document is supported by a two-page summary for distribution to staff.
- 2.1 We aim to be a service organisation with a reputation for good customer service. We will provide accessible services via a range of channels, but focussing on self service (via the internet) to keep costs down.
- 2.2 Customers can expect a high level of service, no matter which department they are in contact with. We will do this by empowering staff to complete customer transactions, preferably at first point of contact.
- 2.3 We will find out more about our customers and use this information to assess their needs and how we can meet them. At the same time, we will use resources efficiently by enabling more self service interactions from customers.
- 2.4 The Customer Service Strategy is shown in Appendix A, the annexes of the strategy are shown in Appendix B and the summary document is shown at Appendix C.

### **Recommendation:**

**it is recommended that Members approve the Strategy.**

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## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 This Strategy was created to be a starting point to ensure that all councillors, managers, employees and customers of the Council understand what customer service is to the Council, why it is important, how we are aiming to continually improve and how putting the customer first can help us achieve our financial savings objectives.
- 1.2 This Strategy is a high level document that will enable and oversee positive change within HDC by placing the customer at the heart of all council activity and decisions. Business cases for projects that will deliver return on investment in terms of financial savings will be created as a consequence of this strategy.

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 The previous Customer Service Strategy has expired and successfully achieved. It is important to set the direction and aspiration for customer service for the next five years; the vision and objectives will be made visible and clear so that all staff feel sure why they are here and what the Council is hoping to achieve. This Strategy will feed into annual service plans and KPAs to ensure it stays on track.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 As this Strategy proposes fundamental changes in the way our services are delivered – i.e. shifting customer contact online to free up resources and enable the continuation of services, analysis has been undertaken into digital inclusion and exclusion. This is research into how people access the internet and who potentially cannot access these and how this may impact our plans in this area.
- 3.2 Significant research was undertaken into how other Councils are reacting to austerity and how they are simultaneously improving services as well as making financial savings.

## **4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

- 4.1 The draft Strategy was considered by the Economic Well-Being Panel at their meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2013. The Panel has been extensively involved in the development of the Strategy and recommends that it should be adopted and implemented.
- 4.2 The Panel commented on a range of issues, including -
- ❖ the need to be aware of the potential implications of transferring customer contact online on the adult population (specifically the elderly) within the District’;
  - ❖ the potential opportunities to make better use of the Town and Parish Councils to support the delivery of District Council services in their areas;

- ❖ the opportunities that exist for working in partnership with other public sector organisations to deliver services for Huntingdonshire residents from the Customer Services Centre; and
- ❖ a suggestion was made that the Council's own services might be promoted on some of the more popular web pages.

4.3 The Panel has also indicated their support for the future co-location of the Council's Call-Centre with the Customer Services Centre and suggested that this should be progressed. There may be scope to accommodate other local authorities Call Centres within the District Council's facility.

4.4 Members have commented on the need to monitor satisfaction levels to ensure that the implementation of the Strategy does not have an adverse impact on customers. It has also been suggested that the introduction of a series of milestones to 2018 to enable the Council to establish that the Strategy is on track.

4.5 The Panel has also discussed the ways in which Members can help to support the change in culture which the new Strategy would require. It has been suggested that there is a role for local councillors to encourage members of the public to use web services where they are able to do so.

## **5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

5.1 The Strategy recommends looking at how we operate as a Council and putting the customers first in all activity and decisions that are made. This involves challenging managers and staff members and encouraging staff to think differently. This is already being addressed in the course of creating the strategy, which has been circulated for comment to all team managers, senior managers and other key staff members.

5.2 Huntingdonshire District Council is going through a period of major change with services beginning to radically change the way they are operated and delivered (e.g. shared services and outsourcing.) The principles and objectives highlighted in this strategy need to be considered when engaging with partner organisations if this strategy is to succeed.

5.3 The channel migration activities outlined will require investment as a series of invest to save bids.

5.4 Achieving this Strategy will involve a significant amount of effort from the web team. Additional or re-directed resource will need to be considered as part of the channel migration business case.

## **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

6.1 There are two comprehensive action plans within this Strategy as well as a table of objectives which sets out on a high level what we aspire to achieve over the next five years. The customer service strategy action plan can be found starting from page 9 of the strategy. The channel migration action plan can be found within Annexe 4, Appendix 2 of the strategy.

## **7. LINK TO THE LEADERSHIP DIRECTION**

- 7.1 This Customer Service Strategy enables delivery of a number of corporate aims. To achieve the 'golden thread' through our performance management framework, we have adopted these aims in this customer service strategy and they will be used to inform service plans and individual staff key performance areas (KPAs).

## **8. CONSULTATION**

- 8.1 This Strategy has been created in consultation with all HDC team managers, Heads of Service, COMT, other key staff members and a small members working group formed of the Overview and Scrutiny Economic well-being panel.

## **9. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Channel migration does have an impact due to some customers not having access to the Internet or being unable to use self-service channels.
- 9.2 The equality impact assessment for this strategy is shown in Appendix D, which requires due regard.

## **10. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 10.1 This strategy will pave the way for Huntingdonshire District Council to become a more effective and productive Council while simultaneously improving the service our customers experience. Approving this strategy will give the innovative staff of HDC a mandate to move the council forward in terms of customer service, process improvement and meeting the needs of our district's residents with a reduced budget.

## **11. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED**

Appendix A - Customer Service Strategy 2013-18  
Appendix B - Annexes of the Customer Service Strategy  
Appendix C - SAMPLE 2 page version of the strategy for circulation to all staff  
Appendix D - Equality Impact Assessment

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

None

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# **Customer Service Strategy 2013-2018**

**Version 5**

**FINAL**

**4<sup>th</sup> October 2013**

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## Executive Summary

Huntingdonshire District Council will place customers at the heart of every service activity especially in respect of:

- The role the Council plays in the community and
- Performing as efficiently and effectively as possible.

This will ensure that the Council adopts a more proactive financial stance whilst continuing to provide essential services to the residents of Huntingdonshire. In other words this will make better use of the taxpayer's pound.

The lynchpin of the Strategy is to adopt a more constructive and realistic approach in the provision of good customer service. It aims to challenge traditional ideas and will make the case that this ideology can be delivered without significant additional cost, and will deliver efficiency savings.

Some of the key themes/ deliverables of this strategy are (further information is within Annexe 3):

- **Commitment to understand our customers better** (customer insight) so that the council is better placed to provide the right services to customers at the right time. (See Annexe 1).
- **The Customer Service Delivery Model** which shows how Huntingdonshire District Council plans to deliver services to the public. It effectively depicts that for a majority of customer enquiries will be routed through self service channels (mainly the website). As the transactions become increasingly complex, they will be suited to the telephone, then face to face at one of the customer service centres and finally at the resident's home.
- **Reaffirming that our staff are key** to delivering the level of service we aspire to achieve. Enabling them and empowering them to resolve customers' enquiries will improve first time resolution rates and will also improve morale.
- **Working together** as an authority to re-design processes with the customer in mind and bringing services together in order to think long term about single points of contact for public services.

For the Strategy to succeed, the Council's management, officers and members must commit to deliver the changes outlined in this document. We will all need to work in unison if the essential services are to be maintained and improved upon.

One of the most important elements of the strategy is Channel Migration (Annexe 4). This can be defined as the migrating of customers to more effective/less costly mechanisms for contacting the Council. The rising use of technology in the UK means that customers are now expecting to contact and interact with organisations through self-service channels (e.g. the website). This shift to self-service reflects the change in customer demand as more of them conduct their business on line. This service will be available 24/7 and can be conducted in the customer's own time. It is a fact that once established, self-service channels cost the council less money per contact and therefore efficiencies can be gained through migrating volumes of customers to these channels for appropriate transactions. A comprehensive breakdown of each of our customer channels can be found in Annexe 2.

# 1 Introduction

Huntingdonshire District Council is committed to delivering good quality customer service and value for money for the taxpayer. This document outlines our strategic approach, progress to date and how we plan to continue delivery of the action plan for the period 2013 – 2018.

This strategy aims to ensure that delivering high value customer service is at the heart of everything the Council does. Outlined within this document is the vision of how we aim to make it clear that the delivery of local government services in Huntingdonshire is built around the needs of customers. It is a council-wide strategy that will outline steps that will guarantee that the Council continues to provide services which are consistent, professional and co-ordinated to ensure the customer is satisfied at the first point of contact.

The channels through which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with the authority, (be that via telephone, online, in person or other means), are a critical part of public service provision, and there is ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.

The **customer insight** element of the strategy sets out how Huntingdonshire District Council will base its decisions, actions, services and future developments around the needs of customers. It describes how the Council will better understand our customers, their requirements and priorities.

This strategy also paves the way for the channel migration plan. This is driven by customer service goals to improve service and reduce the cost of service management and is essentially about migrating appropriate customer contact online to encouraging customers to self-serve. It will detail the Council's plans for influencing how customers access Council Services, and how services can be made more accessible to Huntingdonshire residents, whilst also delivering maximum value for the tax payer.

The 2008 strategy brought together the "front-office" services – Customer Service Centre, Call Centre and Community Information Centres under the management of the Customer Services Manager.

The Call Centre provides access to many services such as Streetscene, Payments, Council Tax enquiries, Elections, Switchboard and many other services. As more services transfer to the call centre, direct dial volumes have decreased and these calls have become more focused on the complex, specialist calls, best dealt with by service experts.

The new purpose built Customer Service Centre in Huntingdon opened in February 2010 and is the first point of contact for all visitors to Pathfinder House. The Centre responds to enquiries about Payments, Planning, Building Control, Housing, Benefits, Council Tax and Electoral Services and many other services. There are also Customer Service Centres at St Neots, Ramsey and Yaxley which also provide a similar service. The range of services and information between these centres has been brought in line during the last few years.

## 2 Vision

Our vision is **to be an organisation with a reputation for good customer service amongst our peer group and customers with excellent financial productivity.**

**To do this, we will provide:**

- Accessible services that provide customers with choice as to where, when and how they access services.
- Good quality services which exceed customer's expectations and resolve enquiries, where possible, during the customer's first contact.
- Reliable and continually improving services which are cost effective, efficient and delivered through a highly trained workforce.

## 3 What is good customer service to us?

Good customer service is striving to understand our customers by actively listening and consistently responding to and meeting (or exceeding) their expectations within a specified timescale.

Where possible, staff should check that they are getting it right by being open to feedback from our customers, keeping an open mind and remaining willing to change and challenge in order to continually meet the (changing) needs of our customer base.

In the most basic terms, good customer service is striving to get it right first time, always treating the customer with dignity and respect while acting professionally and politely.

This is all totally free, no cost at all.

## 4 Corporate Context

This Customer Service Strategy enables delivery of a number of corporate aims. To achieve the 'golden thread' through our performance management framework, we have adopted these aims in this Customer Service Strategy and they will be used to inform Service Plans and individual staff Key Performance Areas (KPA's).

## 5 Where do we want to be?

In five years time, HDC will be or aiming to be **an organisation with a reputation for good customer service amongst our peer group and customers with excellent financial productivity** by ensuring that our whole organisation is more customer focussed.

Becoming more customer focussed is not about delivering an unaffordable Rolls Royce service. It is about making sure we are providing the right services at the right time to the right people in the right way. It is making sure that we are achieving value for money and that we are utilising resources as effectively as possible. It is about reducing waste and increasing productivity. It is about making difficult decisions regarding the way we provide services in the hope that they can continue. It is about finding new ways of working to enable us to do more with less.

### 5.1 How do we get there

Overarching objectives	Sub-Objectives  Over the next five years, we will
To ensure that the customer is at the heart of everything we do as a council.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritise customer service as an authority and put the customer first. This needs to be measured and monitored through service plans and KPIs.</li> <li>• Consistently serve all of our customers to a high standard no matter how they choose to contact the council and which department they contact.</li> <li>• Make it as easy as possible for customers to access our services and get appropriate information</li> <li>• Support delivery of consistent customer service training for all frontline staff</li> <li>• Do more to find out who are customers are, what their needs are and how we can best meet them (customer insight).</li> <li>• Create a programme of work to improve customer service and performance monitoring of service departments.</li> <li>• Measure our performance against publicised standards and openly report on this in a clear, consistent and customer-friendly way.</li> </ul>
To get it right first time.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measure and improve the rate of customer enquiries answered first time</li> <li>• Significantly reduce levels of avoidable contact (repeated customer contact that could have been avoided by being proactive).</li> <li>• Empower front line staff to resolve more problems at the customer's first point of contact.</li> <li>• Recognise the role of complaints to facilitate continuous improvement.</li> </ul>
To be clear about what we can and can't do and what we aspire to achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regularly publish and make available our plans and services standards and information about our performance.</li> <li>• Fulfil reasonable customer requests within the stated timescales.</li> </ul>
To meet the rising demand of our services and the needs of our customers without	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Plan for the increase in Huntingdonshire's population and ensure that we understand how this will impact customer service.</li> </ul>

<p>costing the tax payer more money.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Propose ways of making the best use of customer facing staff resources. E.g. bringing the call centre into Pathfinder House and having one team on one site.</li> <li>• Engage in more channel migration – migrating services on-line to better utilise staff resources.</li> <li>• Create business cases to propose initiatives that address how we can be more proactive in providing information to reduce customer contact, identifying quick wins and long term opportunities.</li> <li>• Work with departments to become more open with information online and that it is presented in a customer-friendly format.</li> </ul>
<p>To motivate our staff to deliver excellent services and empower them to try new things in order to provide a high standard of service.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Embed strong values as an authority that prioritises positive behaviours that lead to empowerment of staff and excellent customer service.</li> <li>• Achieve the Customer Service Excellence accreditation as an authority.</li> <li>• Create Customer Service awareness campaigns around ‘thinking like a customer’ and work with LGSS to provide training for managers and staff.</li> <li>• Map customer journeys and processes to ensure that they are efficient for the customer and the council and that we are utilising our resources effectively.</li> </ul>
<p>To work innovatively together as an authority in order to recognise where we can improve and streamline services to reduce cost and improve efficiency.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with managers in order to generate ideas and improvement schemes and encourage staff to come forward with ideas of how to improve processes.</li> <li>• Work cross-organisationally to identify customer processes that could be re-designed and streamlined by working more closely together.</li> <li>• Make the most of improvement projects and ensure the customer’s needs are always paramount.</li> </ul>
<p>To engage and work with external partners to find ways of improving the way we handle customers and reduce costs by sharing resources.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further explore partnerships and shared services with other public sector organisations. This would improve efficiency in staffing levels and also provide joined up working, which means customers may not need to contact numerous agencies, and contribute to the idea of a ‘one stop shop’ for local public services.</li> <li>• Work with partners delivering services on behalf of HDC to ensure customer service levels are not affected. Over the life of this strategy, it is likely that some services will be provided by shared services or external organisations, so it is important to foster a positive working relationship with these organisations to ensure customer service levels are maintained.</li> </ul>
<p>To utilise our resources (staff, contact channels, software etc.) in the most efficient way. To shift appropriate transactions to self-service channels to free up resources for the more complex cases and residents that require more assistance than others.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shift appropriate transactions to self-service channels to free up resources for the more complex cases and residents that require more assistance than others.</li> <li>• Increase the availability of self-service customer channels and be mindful of consistency in service standards</li> <li>• Spend time and effort to promote on-line services and support customers using them.</li> </ul>

## 6 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensuring that we achieve the objectives.

To ensure we are making progress we will:

- monitor our performance against local (and national, if any) measures
- report performance on customer service
- collect and publish evidence of good practice throughout the Council.

This strategy and action plan will be reviewed annually. A highlight report will be submitted every year so that we can monitor progress, review and set specific targets for the future. A comprehensive review of the strategy will be undertaken every three years.

## 7 Risks

The council's corporate risk register identifies a large number of risks that may have negative effects on the council.

An effective customer service strategy is imperative to ensure the risks and the possibilities of them becoming a reality are kept to a minimum or prevented altogether.

The following key risks have been identified:

- This strategy requires a commitment to change. We may experience a lack of buy-in from HDC managers which would make this strategy undeliverable.
- The organisation is going through a major period of change with some departments and services being considered for shared services/ outsourcing so this will impact how we deliver services to the public. IMD is also being considered and the web team is a part of this team.
- Delivering the strategy may require resources already committed to other activities and projects.
- The website is under-resourced, the web team is under pressure and may not have time to work on channel migration projects.
- Customer insight may focus effort onto the majority of customers at the expense of hard to reach groups.
- Shared service requires commitment from outside the Council; it may be this is not forthcoming.
- Channel migration means that our reliance on technology becomes even more prevalent. This has support implications in terms of the Help Desk/ web team and means that there is more to potentially go wrong.
- The infrastructure needed for successful channel migration is expensive and hard financial climate means there is less money available for improvement projects.
- Staff perception of channel migration – staff may feel their jobs are at risk
- The web team and the call centre and face to face customer service teams not being one team could be a barrier to channel migration.
- Proactive customer service – customers may not want to give us their email addresses and mobile phone numbers.
- Member buy in/ approval of spending. In order to deliver the channel migration solutions, infrastructure and marketing, this will need capital in the short term.



## Customer Service Strategy Action Plan 2013-18

Corporate Theme	Corporate Aim	Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
Improve the quality of life in Huntingdonshire	Make our services accessible to all	Ensure our services accessible to those who cannot travel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mobile and flexibly delivered services away from the Council to be developed where there is a clear business case to do so, particularly in rural locations.</li> <li>• Investigate alternative more customer focused premises for our Customer Service Centre in St Neots and Yaxley.</li> </ul>	Customer Services Divison Customer Services Manager	Ongoing  September 2014	
		Open up more channels for customers to contact the council	Pilot with a view to introducing interacting with customers through new channels. E.g. web chat and social media.	Customer Service Manager / IMD	September 2014	
		To manage resources effectively to ensure service is available to the public	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Utilise emerging council technology and solutions that could enable home and remote working for call centre advisors which could then enable face to face staff to answer calls remotely when call demand exceeds face to face.</li> <li>• Create a business case that will propose relocating the call centre to Pathfinder House to create one customer service team responsible for face to face and telephony.</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager / IMD  Customer Service Manager	September 2015  January 2014	
		Evaluate customers needs by utilising available data to gain customer insight	Periodically analyse the population of Huntingdonshire to identify areas of increased need to ensure that we are meeting the needs of residents. See customer insight section in Annexe 3.	Customer Services	Ongoing	

Corporate Theme	Corporate Aim	Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
		To be clear about what we want our Customer Relationship Management system (CRM) to be and what we want from it. Maximise the opportunities and benefits that the council's CRM system gives us	Investigate how the new CRM system (deployed in 2013) can provide further benefits. This provides us with many opportunities. These need to be investigated and projects set up to utilise this system further to maximise the benefits we get from it. E.g. Central logging of all customer enquiries so we have a full view of historical information for each customer for all channels.	Call Centre Manager/ IMD	Ongoing following completion of CRM rollout project	
		Ensure our services are accessible to all people of all ethnicities, people who have disabilities and are sensitive to the needs of all customers no matter what their personal circumstances.	Continue to ensure that all customer facing staff receive regular Equality and Diversity training.	Customer Service Management team	Ongoing	
		Make the most of all of our contact channels	Deliver objectives for each channel in Annexe 2	Customer Service Management team	January 2018	
Improve the quality of life in Huntingdonshire	Develop the Council's role in reducing benefit dependency	Aid the smooth implementation of welfare reform	Work with the Benefits and Housing departments to ensure that we deliver the front line services to customers in the most effective, knowledgeable and caring way with highly trained and proactive staff.	Customer Service Management team	Universal credit timescale	

Corporate Theme	Corporate Aim	Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
		Help to reduce the impact of welfare reform on customers where possible	Work with the Communities teams to join up in planning to help our communities cope with the welfare reform changes. Work with other HDC departments and partner organisations to ease the impact of welfare reform on customers.	Customer Service Management team	Universal credit timescale	
		Help prepare customers for Universal Credit – Digital by Appropriate	Help prepare our customers for using online Universal Credit forms. Benefits e-forms have paved the way for this. Plan to do more to prepare residents by linking up with partner organisations (e.g. CCC – libraries) to help customers fill in online forms and use the digital resources.	Customer Service Management team	Universal credit timescale	
Working with communities	Build constructive relationships with other public sector organisations, parishes &	Work closer with partners to improve efficiencies and provide better services to customers	Further explore partnerships and shared services with other public sector Customer Services. This would improve efficiency in staffing levels and also provide joined up working across the public sector, which means customers won't need to call so many separate agencies, and contribute to the idea of a 'one stop shop' for local public services.	Customer Service Manager	September 2018	
		Maintain service levels in a changing working environment	Work with partners delivering services on behalf of HDC to ensure customer service levels are not affected. Over the life of this strategy, it is likely that some services will be provided by shared services or external organisations, so it is important to foster a positive working relationship with these organisations to ensure customer service levels are maintained.	Managing Director	As contracts are written	
		Look for opportunities for consultation	Work with the Corporate Office to take advantage of opportunities to consult with the public as an authority.	Customer Service Management team	Ongoing	

Corporate Theme	Corporate Aim	Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
		Openly publish clear performance information	Ensure that customer service performance information is made available and is clear and concise on the website. Encourage all services to be open with performance information.	Customer Service Management/ IMD	March 2015 and ongoing	
The Council	Balancing our budget Skill development – supporting the development of the workforce	Reduce the cost of services	Initiate/ continue phasing out extremely manual processes via mediated channels where possible (e.g. post, cheques). Look into what processes we could make 'digital by default'. For example, parking fines, residents permits etc.	Customer Service Management/ IMD	Ongoing	
		Generate savings by shifting processes online.	Create a business case to integrate key back office systems into the CRM. This is essential if we would like to generate savings through channel migration as integration is key to making transactions non-mediated. Create a business case to include looking at the infrastructure needed to provide end-to-end non-mediated processes on line that may or may not involve payments.	Customer Service Manager/ IMD	March 2014	
		Improve customer service skills throughout organisation	Assist LGSS in the development and release of Customer Service training. Advocate the training packages and encourage all new starters and existing staff to attend training regularly.	Customer Service Management team/ LGSS	March 2014 / ongoing	

Corporate Theme	Corporate Aim	Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
		To save money through process improvement	Identify processes that could be streamlined with the customer in mind by working with managers in order to make processes more automated and efficient	All managers	Ongoing	
Customer Service Strategy Objectives		Create a programme of work to improve customer service and performance monitoring of service departments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer service protocols to be signed off and agreed throughout HDC</li> <li>Service standards to be published clearly so that customers are clear about what they can expect from all council services</li> <li>Feedback mechanisms to be implemented where possible for customer facing services.</li> <li>Performance information for services collated and publicised clearly on our website.</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager	September 2014	
		To get it right first time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Measure and improve the rate of customer enquiries answered first time (the customer receives an excellent level of service, and the Council does not spend effort dealing with avoidable and repeated customer contact.)</li> <li>Look for opportunities to empower front line staff to resolve more problems at the customer's first point of contact.</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager/ All managers	December 2014  December 2015	
		Achieve customer service excellence as an authority	Review the readiness for a Council Wide assessment for the Customer Service Excellence Standard.	All managers	April 2016	
		Ensure sustainability of the councils payments function	The payments function sits within customer services and is chiefly administered by one member of staff. Consider how best to manage this for HDC and implement necessary changes	Head of Customer Service	July 2014	

<b>Corporate Theme</b>	<b>Corporate Aim</b>	<b>Objective</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>By whom</b>	<b>By when</b>	<b>Result</b>
		Utilise staff resources in the most effective way and provide efficiency savings	Create business case to move call centre to Pathfinder House and re-think how we utilise staff to provide services	Customer Service Management team	March 2014	

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## Annexe 1- Customer Insight

Information obtained from the office for national statistics website shows that across all age groups and all sectors of the population, more of us are using technology to conduct our business – personal and professional. 86% of the UK's population now accesses the Internet compared to 82% in 2011.

### 1.1 Digital Exclusion

People who are digitally excluded are those that potentially would not be able to access online services either because they don't have access to a computer or Internet through a mobile device or because they have never used the Internet before for other reasons.

It is important to know information about the residents of Huntingdonshire in order to understand whether or not migrating services online has the potential to digitally exclude residents depending on their age or personal situation such as income or disability.

Although the fastest growing age bracket, with an increase of 10% from 2011, the most significant group of people who are potentially excluded is the over 75's, as in the first quarter of 2013, only 34.5% of this age group had accessed the internet before, so we need to consider this when considering moving services online.

### 1.2 Digital inclusion

***More people are using the web – and more people are using different devices to use it.***

This makes the web more accessible as you don't need a PC and using the web is easier (usually by using touch-screen devices).

In 2012, 51% of adults used a mobile phone to access the Internet. This is more than double the estimate of 24% for 2010. The two youngest age groups (16 to 24 and 25 to 34) both reported mobile phone Internet use above 80% in 2012. While still reporting the lowest usage, those aged over 65 have shown a four-fold increase in mobile phone Internet use from 2% in 2010 to 8% in 2012.



## **Annexe 2 - Breakdown of customer channels**

### **1.2.1 Primary Channels**

#### **1.2.2 Web**

The web channel includes all services requested, reported, and submitted on line. It also includes all information provision provided on the website. This is managed by IMD.

The website is arguably the most important customer channel with an average of 4000 visits every day. As per Socitm's<sup>1</sup> 2012 rating, HDC's website is amongst the top 12% of District Council websites in the UK. It is a powerful tool for customers to gain access to services immediately, when they want them, 24 hours a day. It is the main channel that customers use to gain information from us, but it could be utilised more for transactions as it is the cheapest customer channel. Customers are becoming more digitally competent and increased usage of mobile devices means that more people are getting online and expecting us to deliver services in this way. IMD has a strategy for the website, and we will link in with this to help the website to deliver services to the public.

#### **Customer Services key objectives for supporting the website channel 2013-18**

- Work with the web team and web authors to ensure that the content of the Council's website is written in plain English, making it concise and simple and use 'top tasks' based on real search volumes and trend data.
- Encourage services to comply with a corporate approach to ensuring the information on the website is of a high quality, relevant, up to date and can be easily found and utilised by the public.
- Analyse volume/ trend information to ensure that most widely used pages/ most searched for services are prominent.
- Customer Service Advisors are fully confident in using the website and it becomes their primary tool when dealing with customers. This will enable to them to pick up on errors quickly and will also then give them the confidence and knowledge to 'sell' the website more to customers.
- Once we have achieved integration of our online services and more services available on line, we will launch a large scale marketing campaign highlighting the services available online. (We may be able to target customers that are likely to take up the service based on customer insight data).
- Consider partnership working to help customers use online services via libraries and other government organisations.
- Ensure the website works well on all forms of device, including phones and tablets as all good websites work well on all devices.
- Look into how we can utilise the website and emerging technologies to engage with customers and help them to use online facilities such as web-chat.

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<sup>1</sup> Socitm is the membership association for all ICT professionals working in local authorities and the public and third sectors, and suppliers to those sectors.

- Consider having a resource within Customer Service dedicated to helping services develop customer-focussed content for the website and on-line transactional services and becoming the link between the Customer Services team and the more technical web team.

### **1.2.3 Telephone**

This channel includes all calls received within the Call Centre and directly within Council service areas. This also includes answer phone messages and automated phone lines.

Some generic service telephone numbers are directed straight to the call centre are: Switchboard, Housing, Planning, Operations, Elections, Pest Control, Street name and numbering and Payments.

- The Call Centre deals with over 140,000 calls per year. The calls that are received within the Call Centre are measured, reported and recorded, with appropriate quality assurance assessments.
- Approximately 65% of calls are resolved at the first point of contact.
- The average length per call has increased from 130 seconds in 2010 to 166 seconds in 2013.
- Leisure also has its own call centre.
- Customer satisfaction for the year 2012-13 for the Call Centre reported an overall satisfaction rate of 97%

#### **Automated lines**

Automated phone payment line dealt with 19,563 payment calls in 2012/13.

#### **Other Telephone Calls**

There are also a substantial amount of additional calls that are received within the Council spread amongst other service areas. It is more difficult to measure the volumes and abandoned call rate for these calls. We do not know the cost per call for these contacts and there is no speed of answer targets for these additional volumes. There are also areas within Council where mini call centres have been established using hunt group technology.

#### **Key Objectives for telephone channel 2013-18**

- Continue with integration of services into the Call Centre where appropriate to maximise the amount of enquiries that are resolved for the customer during the initial phone-call without needing further calls or transfers. This will relieve the burden on other Council service areas and create efficiency and capacity.
- Create a business case for integrating more systems into the CRM system to reduce the amount of systems used by advisors. This would reduce call lengths and enable the call centre to take on more services as they would have less IT systems they would need to use. Advisor training programmes should also take less time. These benefits would need to be balanced with the cost of integration.
- Consider a single published telephone number for HDC or routing all calls to the call centre via different numbers. If the call centre was empowered to deal with more enquiries and simple enquiries and transactions were directed to the web, there could be a strong argument to move to a single published number for all HDC services that would direct customers to the call centre. This would improve customer service due to the technical infrastructure the call centre has - all calls would be answered and a good percentage dealt with first time by the call centre. The call centre staff receive significant training and are monitored to ensure consistency and excellent customer service at all times.

- Telephone customers will be told about alternative methods of contacting the Council which could save them time and money. This will be completed via 'cross selling' of services e.g. if a customer calls for a transaction that is also available online or via the automated phone line, they will be made aware of this fact for the next time they wish to conduct the transaction.
- Investigate technology that allows home-working for telephone advisors. This may enable us to have a more fluid workforce and react quickly to peaks in demand.
- Consider again combining face to face and call centre operations to maximise the efficient use of staff resources and manage peak customer demand effectively.
- Work with Leisure to look again at whether a separate call centre is the right option for Leisure calls.

#### **1.2.4 Face to Face**

This channel encompasses all of the face to face Customer Service Centres and Leisure Centres.

- Customer Service Centres are utilised for the most complex customer enquiries such as Housing and Benefits. We need face to face services to speak to customers in person about personal issues and options that are imperative for quality of life. They also need to gather evidence and information from customers to support claims.
- The Customer Service Centre in Huntingdon deals with 3330 visits per month. This is primarily Council Tax, Benefits and Housing customers but also takes payments and deals with Licensing and Planning enquiries.
- The remote Customer Service Centres (St Neots, Yaxley and Ramsey) deals with these services but also a wide range of other services. St Neots deals with 1016 enquiries per month and Ramsey and Yaxley deals with 437 per month.
- The average length of a single visit in Huntingdonshire has increased from 10:35 in 2010 to 13:15 in 2013.
- Problems resolved at first point of contact is not currently measured at the Customer Service Centres, but as our face to face facilities deal with less services than the call centre, they tend to offer a more holistic service to the customer and first time resolution rates for customers can be estimated to be very high.
- We have leisure centres at Huntingdon, St Neots, St Ives, Ramsey and Sawtry.

Face to face service through our CSC's is the most expensive customer contact channel so we need to ensure that they are reserved for the more needy residents of Huntingdonshire and to deal with complex cases. There is less scope to migrate face to face customers to cheaper channels due to the complexities of the enquiries, but there is still some scope for efficiencies such as migrating simpler transactions to self-service, such as checking in to see an advisor and making a payment. There is also potentially more we could do to use insight data to determine where in the district face to face services are most needed and then look at what technology we could use to provide face to face services in community buildings in these areas.

#### **Key Objectives for face to face channel 2013-18**

- Roll the CRM out to the Customer Service Centres.
- Investigate technology which could be made available in outlying locations to deliver services in the community. This could include self-service computers and touch screen pods in existing public sector buildings such as libraries, leisure centres, community centres and GP surgeries.
- Face to face customers to be informed of the most efficient methods of contacting the Council to save them time and money. This will be completed using self-service computers and

telephones within existing face to face facilities where customers will receive demonstrations of how web and telephone services can be accessed.

- Research ways of reducing staffing needs on reception such as self-service check in computers and/ or payment kiosks.
- Investigate alternative, more customer focused premises for our Customer Service Centre in St Neots and Yaxley.
- Investigate feasibility of integration of partner services into the Huntingdon Customer Service Centre to make it a multi-agency facility, rather than principally delivering Council services. This will encourage inter-agency working, which is more efficient for the customer and the organisations involved.
- There are no plans to close any of the remote Customer Service Centres as we are a rural district and therefore recognise that customers who live far away from Huntingdon who require face to face services need to be able to do so.

### **1.2.5 Home visits**

It is not currently possible to provide appropriate technology for all staff that complete home visits to allow them to complete their work while on the move due to constraints with the 3G network (as Huntingdonshire is a rural district). This is something that may change in the life of this strategy and should be reviewed if the 3G network is upgraded.

## **1.3 Other channels**

### **1.3.1 Email**

The email channel encompasses all emails received into the Council, whether to the generic email address received by Customer Services or directly to a Council Service Area. We receive 17,307 emails per year into the three main generic mailboxes.

- Ensure that a high proportion of customer service advisors are trained to deal with emails coming into HDC.
- Conduct detailed analysis of the emails we receive into the generic mailboxes to determine how best we can serve customers i.e. create e-forms for popular email requests, add more information to the website according to requests or make information more prominent.
- Improve the service level for emails to introduce more consistency between service levels for the different contact channels.
- Explore opportunities for improving the way we deal with emails in the new CRM system including moving to a more e-form email environment where customers will need to be more specific about what an email is regarding in order for us to route it more quickly/ accurately and offer FAQ's instead of emailing.

### **1.3.2 Social Media**

The social media channel includes all services that are accessed via a social media outlet such as Facebook, Bebo or Twitter. Social media is managed by the corporate office who have recently released a social media policy. Internationally, corporate use of social media has evolved over the past few years and is no longer purely a marketing tool for communicating with customers. For HDC, It is becoming a channel that some customers are choosing to use to do business with us. It is in our best interest to react and embrace this shift as it is an on-line channel that we can use to engage with customers, and it is also gives us an opportunity to advise customers to self-serve on our website if

they need to find information or complete a simple transaction. This will be especially useful as we increase our on-line provision of services over the life of this strategy.

### **Customer Service's key objectives for supporting the social media channel 2013-18**

- Work with corporate team to make the most of social media. Understanding the uses of social media:
  - to market and promote council activities,
  - to market and promote on-line services,
  - to respond to customer service enquiries,
  - to consult with customers,
  - to proactively communicate with customers to reduce avoidable contact.
- Create a business case for customer services to share the monitoring of social media accounts with the corporate office and look after some of the generic HDC social media accounts. Customer Service staff can then respond instantly to requests from the public and/ or advise others from back offices to reply to posts. This could involve integrating social media sites into the CRM system.
- Increase reputation of HDC by proactively using social media to post information about topical issues and signpost customers to online resources.
- Proactively market and promote new on-line services and features of our website.

### **1.4 Social media may give us an opportunity to engage with on-line users of our services which could give us resource in terms of testing new on-line provision of services and gaining valuable feedback.**

#### **1.4.1 Text Messages**

This encompasses all inbound and outbound text messaging within the Council. This is not a channel that is widely used at the moment, but could be utilised further to deliver real-time updates to customers on their outstanding service requests and to issue reminders.

#### **1.4.2 Post**

The post channel includes all inbound and outbound post received and distributed within the Council. Incoming post is a mediated channel that requires human intervention. Some of our outgoing post now does not require human involvement, but is costly to the council due to postage charges.

Post has been dealt with more efficiently at HDC since 2008 with the launch of our off-site document centre and improvements in the ways we electronically store our data. Outgoing post in particular has become streamlined as processes now involve outgoing documents to be processed by the document centre and posted out automatically with vastly reduced human contact.

This channel is impacted when the council makes improvements to processes and successfully migrates them online. For example, since the council stopped advertising post as a method of payment, we receive 10,000 less cheques per year through the post compared to 2009/10<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> In 2012/13, HDC received 20510 cheques through the post compared to 31974 in 2009/10.

### **1.4.3 Smart Phone Applications**

This channel includes all Council services accessed through devices such as Iphones, BlackBerrys and Androids.

### **1.4.4 Fax**

This channel incorporates all customer facing fax facilities operated within the Council.

## **Annexe 3 - Key Activities/ Deliverables**

### **1.1 Understanding our customers – customer insight**

*Customer Insight is understanding the organisation's customers based on their behaviour, experiences, beliefs, needs or desires.*

Councils that understand their customers are better placed to be able to meet their needs. This leads to more satisfied customers and lower costs, including 'getting it right first time' which reduces unnecessary demand because of avoidable or unnecessary repeat contact. A better understanding of our customers will also help us to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of our community being harder to reach and not being able to access services. In order to fully harness the power of customer insight we must first understand the value of the data we hold. Data and information is available from a range of different sources which can be used to find out more about the customers we serve. Some key information about our customers can be sought from a range of sources, for example;

- Council data. This comes from the Council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and other back office systems and can then be layered on GIS mapping to show patterns and areas of demand.
- Cambridgeshire Insight. ([www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk](http://www.cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk))
- Front line staff in all departments are a key source of customer insight. They speak to customers every day and receive feedback on the services that are accessed or those that are not available. This includes staff working on face to face, telephone and web basis.
- Surveys and consultation exercises.
- Customer journey mapping. This can be achieved through the tracking of real customers journeys, noting durations and applying costs to each stage.
- Complaints and Compliments. These provide direct feedback that relates specifically to the delivery of council services. It is key that the Council learns from complaints and compliments when developing services for the future.

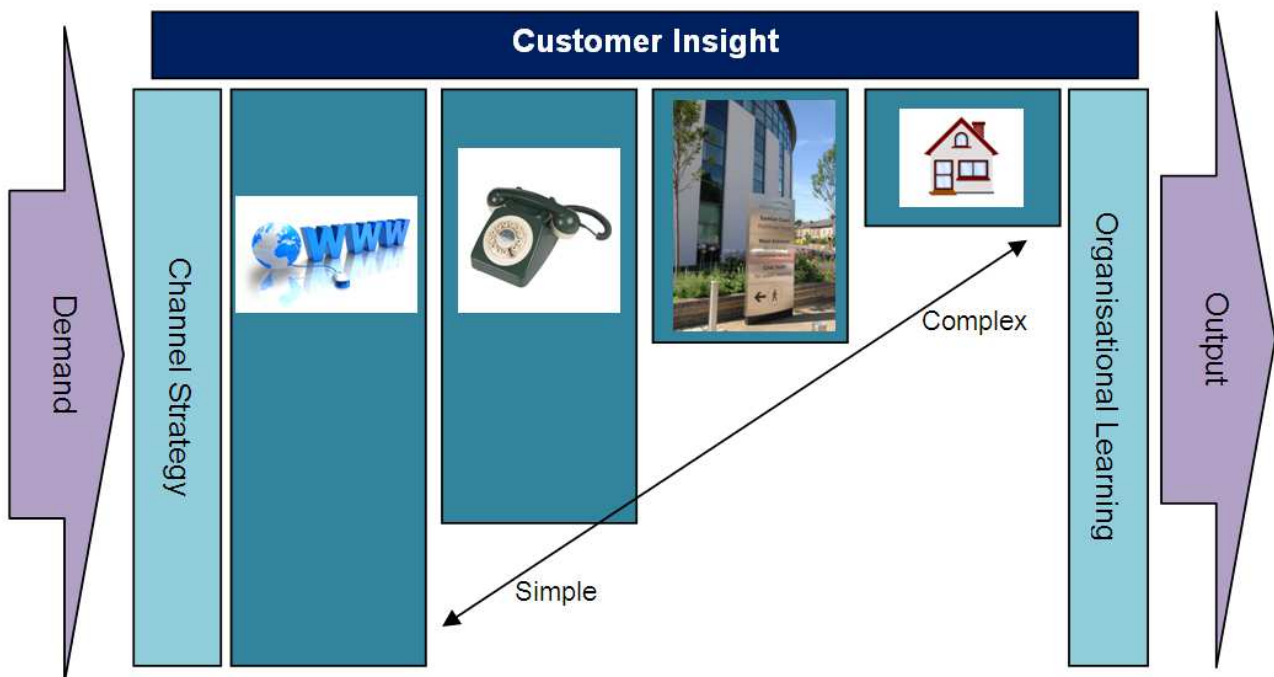
In order to ensure that customer insight is used effectively to drive the future development of the Council, it should be built into all decision and planning processes. By embedding customer insight in the processes and procedures that surround Council service developments, we can ensure that change is driven by the needs and desires of customers and not based on assumptions and perceptions of staff.

### **1.2 The Customer Service Delivery Model**

This delivery model shows how Huntingdonshire District Council plans to deliver services for its customers. The demand element of the graphic illustrates customer contact. A channel is the name given to the various ways in which customers can access the Council's services e.g. by telephone, face to face, through the website. The size of the channel's rectangles depicts the comparative volume of contacts we aspire to achieve through each channel. The Council's channel annexe document aims to encourage customers to use the most efficient and appropriate channel to access the service they require. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Marketing a range of access channels.

- Letting the customer know about other ways of accessing services e.g. when a customer calls the call centre they are made aware that the service they have requested is available online so that they could choose to use the web site in the future.
- By making sure that services are available on appropriate, efficient and easy to use access channels.
- By ensuring that customers have confidence that the same level of service is available through each channel and that requests are dealt with consistently.
- By ensuring that customers receive appropriate and timely feedback and confirmation that their request has been received. This is particularly important with self –service channels e.g. in online transactions.



For the majority of customer transactions the most efficient and appropriate communication channel will be via the Council’s **website**. As the transactions become increasingly complex they will be more suited to the **telephone**, then **face to face** at one of the council’s Customer Service Centres and finally in a resident’s **home**. Underpinning this delivery model is Customer Insight, which informs all elements of the process. It has the potential to improve customer satisfaction by tailoring services to customer need and also helps to determine which customers will have the ability to move to more efficient channels.

Through the implementation and further development of the delivery model, the council anticipates a shift in customer demand from mediated, to non-mediated channels. Mediated channels require a level of staff intervention and include the call centre, face to face contact, email or letter. Non-mediated channels are generally self-service by the customer and include the website, external websites and the automated phone payments line.

This will provide significant benefits to the customer and the Council. In the majority of cases the customer will be accessing services in a way that best suits their needs, saving them time and money



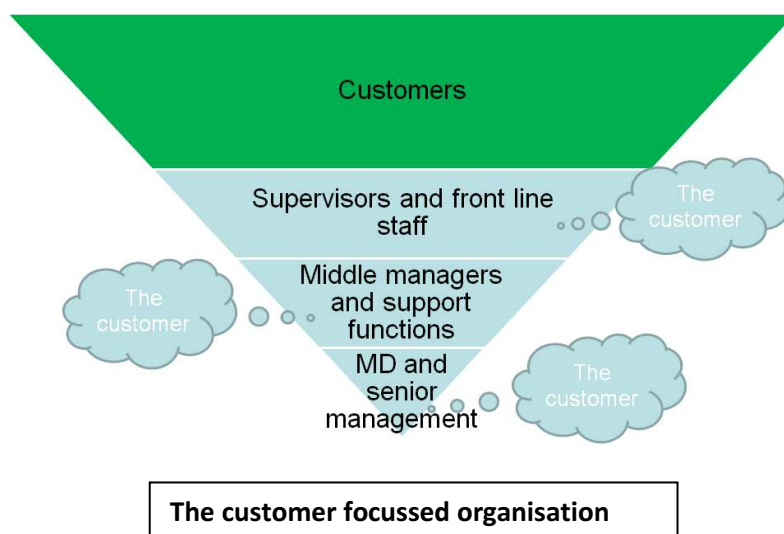
(in phone bills and travel costs). It will also save the Council money, as self-service channels are significantly cheaper than the mediated equivalent. More information about this can be found within the channel migration section in annexe 4.

Through the shift to more cost effective channels, the Council has the potential to make significant savings. In addition to the financial benefits associated with the move to non-mediated contact channels, there is an additional environmental benefit. Increasing online services will reduce the amount of paper coming into the Council as well as reducing the need for customers to travel to access Council services, thus creating a 'greener' footprint.

In order for the delivery model to be work efficiently each customer access channel must be developed appropriately. More information and a development plan for each key channel is outlined in annexe 2.

### 1.3 HDC staff are the key to delivering good quality customer service

Quality customer services cannot be provided to the public without quality HDC staff. Highly engaged and empowered staff perform better at work and also have reduced sickness levels which benefits the entire organisation and the customers.



There are some key things we can do to help our people perform as well as they can at work.

- Set clear objectives for staff to work towards. The aims and values of the organisation and service are clear and embedded.
- Continue to provide a great environment to work in and look after our staff the way we expect them to look after our customers.
- Encourage staff to view potential threats as opportunities and coach them to see the positive results of potentially negative situations.

- Engage with staff when making decisions so that they can form part of the solution and take ownership of them with managers.
- Empower staff according to what motivates them. Trusting capable staff to do more is mutually beneficial.
- Strive to remove stressors from the workplace. E.g. if there is too much work to do, help staff to prioritise workloads.
- Provide effective training and support to all staff.
- Recognise staff for great work and when they come forward with ideas for improvement.

#### **1.4 Bringing together services**

While it is important that customers appreciate the distinctions between providers of services, increasingly they are looking for simple or single points of contact. The Council already shares some elements of our customer service delivery for the benefit of our customers. Where practical, we will engage with partners and other agencies to try to deliver an improved service. This will mean customers can access a number of services in one location. The Council will need to share information with partners, and this will be encouraged.

## **Annexe 4 - Channel Migration**

### **1.1 Introduction**

At a time of financial austerity, Channel migration offers opportunities to save money and/ or cope with increasing demand without increasing resources. It also makes business sense to look at all customer processes and transactions to determine whether simplifications and improvements can be made as well as becoming more automated for the customer and the council.

Our vision is to move towards where our services will be not only be accessible online through computers and mobile devices, but customer will chose to use self-service channels first when contacting the council. We will prioritise the services which offer us the greatest savings and deliver against customer needs between now and 2018; recognising that our customers are already requesting for more services to be online. The rollout of superfast broadband across the district by 2015 will ensure that more residents have access to acceptable Internet speeds which will no doubt contribute to the success of this plan.

We will put our customers at the heart of all changes ensuring that they are as user-friendly as possible. At the same time we will not forget those who find it difficult and challenging to use the internet and strive to make provision for them to access services.

### **1.2 Purpose**

- To outline broad principles for the ways in which Huntingdonshire District Council will provide services through a range of contact channels that provide better value for money, are more accessible and are designed with the customer in mind.
- To provide an action plan that will put this into practice and eventually become business as usual. To encourage all staff within the organisation to think about how they can provide their services online; including up-to-date online content and information and publicising their online channels first.

It is important to bear in mind the target audience's access to technology, the type and complexity of the contact, their personal preferences as well as their skill sets when selecting channels. There is information about volumes of customer contact through different channels within Annexe 2.

This document acknowledges the Council is not starting from scratch; there are many good examples where channel migration has already been achieved with great success. This strategy provides an opportunity build on those successes and endorses a corporate approach for what can be achieved in a more systematic way that:

- delivers consistency,
- supports our values and behaviours,
- drives down costs and
- is sensitive to the needs and preferences of our customers.

### **1.3 Key Considerations**

#### **The need for insight**

The process of developing and implementing a channel strategy needs to be guided by insight specifically relating to:

- The customer.
- The services HDC is providing and each service area in question.
- The current delivery channels at our disposal as well as those that may be available to be/ need to be used in future.

It is also important to understand the wider online services market, as expectations of online services are driven by customer experiences of using similar services of other organisations.

- Different services can require different channels due to their nature. Different service and processes need to be looked at objectively and sensibly to decide what can be migrated to other channels.
- Channel migration and integration of systems costs money. Careful cost benefit analysis should be undertaken which will include looking at volumes and complexity. More information about integration of systems can be found in Appendix 1 of this annexe.
- Channel migration is ever- evolving; it requires continuous improvement and it needs to be constantly reviewed and monitored as well as keeping abreast of emerging technologies and developments.
- ‘Channel migration’ is a technical business term that may not resonate with customers. We will refer to channel migration as ‘self-service’ when promoting migrated services to customers.

### **Encouraging customers to use self-service**

Making services available on-line so that customers can self-serve costs money but it does have the potential to help the organisation save money as integrated processes do not need human intervention. However, savings can only be realised if we achieve the uptake we require to realise the return of investment. It is crucial that online facilities are marketed and promoted and that customers are actively encouraged to use these channels to ensure that they are worth-while.

### **1.4 Organisational challenge**

In considering a channel strategy, there is often a considerable challenge and change to existing organisational practices. HDC has already experienced this as several improvement projects involving channel migration have already been undertaken and benefits are being realised. This channel strategy is fundamentally about coordinating these efforts, understanding the benefits, learning from what we do and ensuring that we move forward in a clear and consistent manner. The channel strategy needs to become an integral part of the structure of the organisation and the way the objectives of the organisation are realised. It cannot be retro-fitted onto existing practices and so is likely to require or precipitate organisational change.

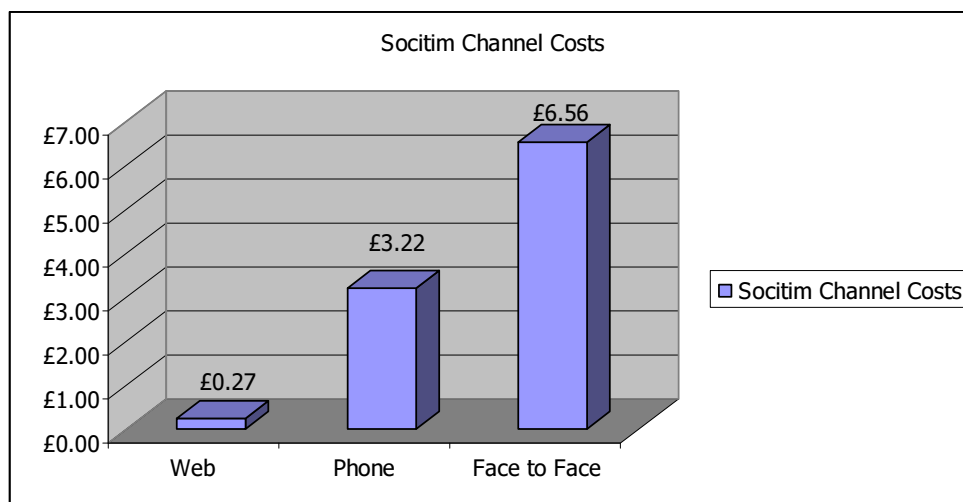
It may also require questioning current uses of existing channels and challenging this to get the most out of them. For example; social media is an emerging customer contact channel and is becoming the preferred method of contact for some customers to interact with the council, rather than to just receive information from us. It is therefore important that over the life of this strategy, we consider sharing responsibility with the Corporate Team for social media and we work together to get the most out of this important channel.

The action plan for channel migration can be found within Appendix 2.

## Appendix 1 - Integration

Integration is the key to web transactions (not providing information). You will often hear customer channel costs quoted, with a substantial difference between face to face (traditionally the most expensive) and web (potentially by far the cheapest.)

In 2011 SOCITM<sup>3</sup> released the following cost per transaction figures. These figures are widely used and accepted by government and local authorities and are also quoted by the DCLG.



However, the web figure is only this cheap if full integration is achieved with back office systems and there is no manual intervention required. If there is no integration, costs for web transactions will generally be the combined cost of web and telephony (so £3.49 in the case of SOCITM's example costs). Integration is expensive, so this will need to be carefully weighed up compared to the projected benefits we would realise.

Therefore the channel strategy's purpose is to ensure that there is a clear drive and plan within the organisation to widen and improve the choice of channel access to citizens, make sure there is a widespread awareness of the additional and improved channels and reassure customers of the efficiency and convenience of the new forms of service access.

If the strategy is implemented successfully then customers will have the ultimate choice in how they would like to access their services and if trust and awareness are built correctly then in the majority of cases customers will choose the efficient and convenient methods, which will also be the most cost effective.

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<sup>3</sup> Socitum is the membership association for all ICT professionals working in local authorities and the public and third sectors, and suppliers to those sectors.

## Appendix 2 - Channel Migration action plan 2013-18

Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
Understand where we are now in order to baseline and learn lessons	Collate baseline information about what channel migration work has been undertaken and what benefits have been realised. Monitor and manage these to ensure they continue to deliver and keep improving and continue to meet customer needs	Customer Service Manager	December 2013	
Create a business case for a channel migration project	<p>Content:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use case studies from HDC and other authorities to demonstrate how savings can be achieved through channel migration.</li> <li>• Submit an invest to save bid for project</li> <li>• Project team to be established</li> <li>• Initiate/ continue phasing out extremely manual processes where possible (e.g. postal application forms, cheques).</li> <li>• Look into what processes we could make digital by default. For example, parking fines, residents permits</li> <li>• Utilise the new CRM to introduce e-forms that are integrated with back offices to reduce re-keying.</li> <li>• Assess which processes we could offer online as an end-to-end customer transaction.</li> <li>• Investigate cost/ benefit of introducing self-service kiosks in CSC centres. Could be purely payment kiosks or also for booking in and other services.</li> <li>• Strive to become digital by default for all operations/ streetscene contacts.</li> <li>• Payments – reduce the amount of mediated payments we take at HDC</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager/ IMD	July 2014	

Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
Increase customer choice about the way they contact us by assessing each customer process against the different channels and actively promote the most appropriate channel(s) for each one.	Re-visit and resurrect the benchmarking work undertaken in MyCouncil work looking at all customer processes and volumes for each to assess: a) What channels are currently used for each process. b) Identify potential channels for each process that will improve the customer journey and make the process more efficient. Volumes will help here (80/20 rule). c) Baseline and then continuously monitor so benefits/ savings/ achievements are visible.	Channel migration Project team	December 2014	
Increase customer satisfaction whilst reducing costs by efficient customer service to the public. Improve the customer journey and experience when contacting the council.  a) By striving to resolve interactions at the first point of contact.  b) By providing self service (where appropriate).  c) By making each contact as efficient as possible.	Work with all managers of customer facing teams to get buy-in and support for this strategy and agreement to participate in activities.  Critically assess each service that is dealt with by Customer Services and investigate as to whether the hand-off point can be moved to improve customer service and increase resolved at first point of contact. (Currently at about 60%, target tba).  Encourage CSA's to occasionally use e-forms when logging SR's rather than internal CRM so that they have first-hand knowledge of what a customer uses when using e-form so they can make recommendations for continuous improvement and also gain the confidence to promote forms to customers to self-serve.	Channel migration Project team	June 2015	
Utilise social media channel as a customer service channel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with the corporate team to decide a direction for how we utilise social media together.</li> <li>Recognise social media as a customer service channel and</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager	June 2014	

Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
	monitor some accounts from Customer Service.			
Create business case for MyCouncil phase 2 project – which will include using authenticated accounts for customers to access secure information.	<p>This could help deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On-line annual canvass, even for changes.</li> <li>• E-billing for council tax.</li> <li>• Digital By Default - Housing benefit landlords – payments statements and letters.</li> <li>• Pre-populated fields in e-forms.</li> <li>• Proactive alert system.</li> <li>• Reporting system.</li> <li>• Reviewing status of outstanding SR's.</li> <li>• Relevant local information.</li> </ul> <p>Investigate joining up with CCC to offer a holistic MyCouncil service that would include county services as well. E.g. school admissions, library books renewals, reporting pot holes.</p>	Customer Service Manager/ IMD	April 2015	
Maximise the website by critically assessing the whole site.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure all information is accurate, up to date, easy to understand (plain English) and easy to find.</li> <li>• Analyse volume/ trend information to ensure that most widely used pages/ most searched for services are prominent.</li> <li>• CSA's are fully confident in using the website and it becomes their primary tool when dealing with customers. They will also then have the confidence and knowledge to 'sell' the website more to customers.</li> <li>• Keep a close working relationship with IMD's web team.</li> <li>• Utilise the Socitim 'Better Connected' report to improve the website. Use the report as evidence to show managers to encourage them to improve their own areas of the web. (IMD do this).</li> </ul>	IMD/ Customer Services staff	Ongoing	
Significantly reduce avoidable contact	<p>Critically analyse avoidable contact reports and identify trends and address these by:</p> <p>a) Identifying areas and/ or services with high levels of AC and work</p>	Customer Service Manager/ All	December 2014	



Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
	<p>with these services and IMD to address the problems.</p> <p>b) Deciding on what is considered acceptable AC. E.g. If someone calls to speak to specialist EH officer but needs to leave a message due to the specialist being out on site, is that acceptable customer service/ avoidable?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Avoidable contact reports – give advisors an opportunity to comment on them before they are published so they contain more precise information – useful for management input and decisions about AC.</li> <li>• Do more to get involved in all written information that is communicated to customers from back offices. Ensure that letters are written in plain English, benefit statements and bills are understandable etc.</li> <li>• Investigate whether more services – or more of existing services, can be done within customer service to prevent having to attempt to hand off calls to back offices that are not available to take the call. Regularly review the operational agreements to assess whether hand-over is at the right place and what benefits we could get by shifting this.</li> </ul>	HDC Managers		
<p>Become far more proactive with our customers to either prevent them having to contact us, or by encouraging the use of other channels during their contacts with us.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate ways to proactively contact customers with updates on their service requests and reported problems to avoid progress chasing.</li> <li>• Web – introduce a screen at call centre which shows google analytics – real time information about what customers are searching for at any one time so we have information about what customer’s needs are and respond proactively in the appropriate way.</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager/ IMD	December 2015	
<p>Make the most of opportunities generated by projects and initiative within the council.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Keep a close working relationship with IMD to keep abreast of all projects within IMD’s programmes and champion channel shift activities.</li> <li>• Customer service representatives must always be a part of</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager/ All HDC Managers	Ongoing	

Objective	Action	By whom	By when	Result
	projects that involve customers throughout the council and encourage channel shift.			
Promotion of self-service	Standardise the HDC email signature to ensure that they all look the same (professional) and also include the MyCouncil link for promotion of this online facility.	All HDC Managers	June 2014	
Acknowledge, catalogue and learn from past channel shift experience and manage these going forward.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ensure that all channel migration is managed, continually improved and monitored to ensure that we are still making the most of the infrastructure and channels we have put in place.</li> <li>• Ensure that not all effort we put into channel migration is centred around implementing the technology. If we are going to reap benefits, we need to continually promote online facilities and persuade customers to change their behaviour – which can be the most challenging element of channel migration.</li> </ul>	Customer Service Manager/ IMD	Ongoing	

## Annexe 5 - Achieving the customer service strategy 2008 – 2011

Huntingdonshire District Council Customer Service Strategy, approved in 2008, has been successfully achieved. In the past five years the way that customers can contact the Council, obtain services and information has been significantly improved –

- The 2008 strategy brought together the “front-office” services – Customer Service Centre, Call Centre and Community Information Centres under the management of the Customer Services Manager.
- The Call Centre provides access to many services such as Streetscene, Payments, Council Tax enquiries, Elections, Switchboard and many other services. As more services transfer to the call centre, direct dial volumes have decreased and these calls have become more focused on the complex, specialist calls, best dealt with by service experts.
- Face to face – The new purpose built Customer Service Centre in Huntingdon opened in February 2010 and is the first point of contact for all visitors to Pathfinder House. The Centre responds to enquiries about Payments, Planning, Building Control, Housing, Benefits, Council Tax and Electoral Services and many other services. There are also Customer Service Centres at St Neots, Ramsey & Yaxley which also provide a similar service. The range of services and information between these centres has been brought in line during the last few years.
- Budget savings – Customers Services like the rest of HDC have been through a budget saving exercise which involved analysis of the number of customers accessing services and the type of service used. Following this review St Ives Customer Service Centre has now closed and we have reduced staffing levels in St Neots and reduced opening hours in Ramsey & Yaxley.
- Customer Service Excellence award has been awarded to the whole Customer Service Team in recognition of continuous improvement, customer focused change and value for money.
- Levels of Avoidable Contact reduced from 1 in 3 in 2008 to 1 in 5 in 2010. (In 2012 though, it was once again 1 in 3).
- Mobile/flexible working has improved significantly with the roll out of My Office and Citrix which allows officers to access the network from most internet connected PC’s, laptops and Macs and HDC have a mobile working strategy in place.
- Continuous improvements have been made to the council’s website as a means of obtaining information about services. The Website has been developed to accommodate transactional services such as paying for services online, as well as providing access to a host of other information. Our website scored the highest customer satisfaction level of all District Council Websites in an independent survey in 2011. We’ve brought together information about a property or location into a single web page and this is called MyHuntingdonshire. This web page brings together information about planning applications, bin collection days, local councillor details and many other services that currently customers have to look across the site to find. ‘Top tasks’ have been implemented across the site, allowing speedier access to frequently used services. Also customers can ‘rate this page’ and feedback directly to officers how useful they’ve found the pages they used.

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# Customer Service Strategy 2013-2018

Our vision is to be an organisation with a reputation for good customer service amongst our peer group with excellent financial productivity by offering:

- Accessible services that provide customers with choice as to where, when and how they access services.
- Good quality services which resolve to exceed customer's expectations and resolves enquiries, where possible, during the customer's first contact.
- Reliable and continuously improving services which are cost effective, efficient and delivered through a highly trained workforce.



## Key Messages

- All customers will be served to a consistently high standard no matter how they choose to contact the council and which department they contact
- The increasing population's needs will be met by improving efficiency, not increasing expenditure.
- Empowering staff to try new things and challenge the way we work will improve efficiency and customer service.
- It is important to find out who are customers are and their needs so that we can meet them in the most effective way.
- There will be a shift in the way customers contact the council over the next five years. Many more services will be available online and customers will be encouraged to self-serve which will free up staff to help residents who require more assistance than others.

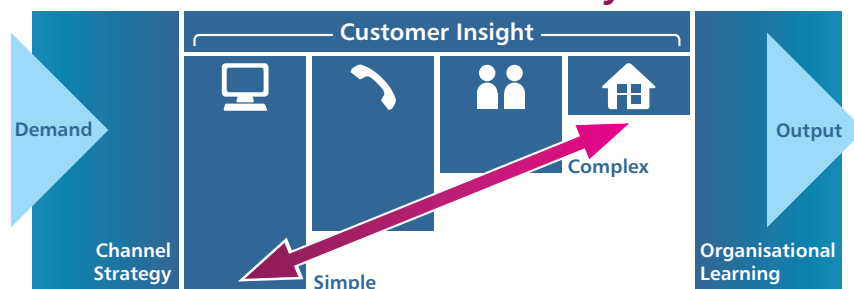
## Where do we want to be?

- ✓ Customer focused culture
- ✓ Strong embedded values
- ✓ Satisfied customers
- ✓ Highly motivated staff
- ✓ Cost effective service

## How will we do this?

- Put the customer first, every time.
- All staff to display positive and inclusive behaviours and treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- Encourage staff to come forward with innovative ideas about how we can improve and streamline services and recognise them when they do.
- Manage customer expectations by publishing service standards and measuring ourselves against them.
- Aim to always get it right first time and reduce avoidable contact by working together, empowering front-line staff, reviewing our processes and migrating services on-line.
- Strive for consistency of customer service across all customer contact channels and services.
- Create programmes of work which aim to improve customer service across the authority.
- Do more to encourage customers to use online services, ensure the website is up to date, informative and easy to use and navigate.
- Increase the provision of online services, giving customers the option to contact us 24 hours a day while generating financial savings.

### The Customer Service Delivery Model



### Bottom Line



## Further Information

- The full length customer service strategy, appendices and action plans can be found on the Customer Service Intranet page.
- The Customer Service protocols which gives all staff a greater insight into basic customer service standards can also be found on the Customer Service Intranet page.
- LGSS offers a wide variety of Customer Service training options. Please contact the Organisation Workforce Development team for more information.
- For more information or if you have any questions or concerns, please contact a member of the Customer Service management team on 01480 375882 or 01480 387094.



<b>Service area</b>	Customer Services
<b>Date of assessment</b>	July 2013 updated September 2013
<b>Name of strategy/policy/function/service to be assessed</b>	Customer Service Strategy
<b>Is this a new or existing strategy/policy/function/service?</b>	Existing
<b>Name of manager responsible for strategy/policy/function/service</b>	Julia Barber
<b>Names of people conducting the assessment</b>	L Sboui & K Sexton
<b>Step 1 – Description of strategy/policy/function/service</b>	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the strategy/policy/function/ <b>service</b> (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The vision for the Council is to offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accessible services that provide customers with choice as to where, when and how they access services.</li> <li>• Good quality services which exceed customer’s expectations and resolve enquiries, where possible, during the customer’s first contact.</li> <li>• Reliable services which are cost effective, efficient and delivered through a highly trained workforce.</li> </ul> <p>The Strategy is aligned with the Corporate Plan, Corporate Consultation &amp; Engagement Strategy, Web Strategy and Single Equality Scheme.</p> <p>The strategy aims to ensure that delivering high quality customer service is at the heart of everything the council does. Annex 2 and 4 of the strategy focuses on customer contact channels and recognises the role of different delivery channels</p>

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	<p>(telephone, online, in person etc) and managing the drive to improve customer service and reducing the cost of service management which will include encouraging online self serve where appropriate.</p>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its decisions and activities impact on different people, specifically employees and how they are affected by policies and practices. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services. The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.</p> <p><i>Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group. Adverse Impact may be unintentional</i></p> <p>Adverse impact can be measured statistically:</p>	
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the strategy/policy or function/<b>service</b></p>	<p>The Strategy makes clear that that the delivery of local government services in Huntingdonshire are built around the needs of customers alongside the need to deliver improved services through available channels within a changing financial environment. The Strategy commits to finding out more about our customers, what their needs are and how best these needs can be met and acknowledges that a better understanding of customers will help the council to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of the community being harder to reach or may not access services. There are two specific objectives relating to equality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure our services are accessible to those who cannot travel –</li> </ul>





	<p>offer mobile and flexibly delivered services where there is a clear business case, particularly in rural locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure services are accessible to all regardless of protected characteristics and that staff are sensitive to needs of all customers – ensure continued attendance on equality &amp; diversity related awareness courses</li> </ul>
<p>Who is intended to benefit from the <b>strategy</b>/policy/function/service and in what way?</p>	<p>The customer – improved and consistent customer service no matter who each customer contacts the council or how.          Employees – empowering employees to help more customers and try new things may be motivational.          The Council/ Members – putting the customer at the heart encourages us to think differently, improve processes and become more efficient. This can help either save money or save services.</p>
<p>What are the intended outcomes of this <b>strategy</b>/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>Overall the council wants to deliver good customer service and value for money for the taxpayer. More specifically the Strategy sets out where the council want to be in five years time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To ensure that the customer is at the heart of everything we do as a council.</li> <li>• To get it right first time.</li> <li>• To be clear about what we can and can't do and what we aspire to achieve.</li> <li>• To meet the rising demand of our services and the needs of our customers without costing the tax payer more money.</li> <li>• To motivate our staff to deliver excellent services and empower them to try new things in order to provide a high standard of service.</li> <li>• To work innovatively together as an authority in order to recognise</li> </ul>

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	<p>where we can improve and streamline services to reduce cost and improve efficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To engage and work with external partners to find ways of improving the way we handle customers and reduce costs by sharing resources.</li> <li>• To utilise our resources (staff, contact channels, software etc.) in the most efficient way. To shift appropriate transactions to self-service channels to free up resources for the more complex cases and residents that require more assistance than others.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Step 2 – Data</b></p>	
<p>62 What baseline <b>quantitative data (statistics)</b> do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy?</p>	<p>Minimal information currently, but customer services has recently started asking E&amp;D information during satisfaction surveys.</p>
<p>What <b>qualitative data (opinions etc)</b> do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this strategy/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>In 2012/13 - Customer satisfaction for the call centre was 97%. For the CSC, it was 95%. For the website, it was 80%.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>different racial groups</b>; this refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category.</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There is evidence of varying levels of awareness and take-up of statutory services. However, staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>



<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>younger or older people</b>?</p> <p>For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people.</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Older people can find it harder to get to services and may be less familiar with modern technology. mobile services may be very important to this group. Older people in both rural and urban areas can experience higher levels of social exclusion; they may also experience particular issues in accessing timely and responsive transport which can impede access to many services.</p> <p>Appendix 1 Digital Inclusion and Exclusion considers access to the internet by age and disability.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>gender, including transgender people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Men and women may access services in different ways and at different times. However, staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>part time/full time</b> employees?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>disabled people</b>?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Annexe 1 Digital Inclusion and Exclusion considers access to the internet by age.</p> <p>Pathfinder House is an accessible customer service centre and staff attend awareness sessions which consider disabilities and the barriers people experience and how to provide assistance.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of <b>marriage and civil partnership</b></p>	<p>N/A</p>



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<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of <b>pregnancy and maternity</b> (e.g. pregnant or breast feeding women)</p>	<p>No adverse impact identified</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on <b>lesbian, gay man, bisexual or heterosexual (straight) people</b>? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Research undertaken by Stonewall has demonstrated that many LGB people can still experience discrimination in their everyday lives. From police stations to family courts and from housing to health services, gay people remain uncertain of fair treatment, and uncertainty which is often derived from personal experience However, staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on grounds of <b>religion or belief</b>? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There is evidence of varying levels of awareness and take-up of statutory services. Staff do attend equality &amp; diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. <b>Rural isolation</b></p>	<p>Older people in both rural and urban areas can experience higher levels of social exclusion; they may also experience particular issues in accessing timely and responsive transport which can impede access to many services. The Strategy includes an objective to ensure services are accessible to those who cannot travel – to offer mobile and flexibly delivered services where there is a clear business case, particularly in rural locations.</p>



### Findings

69 The Strategy aims to balance the delivery of services that are built around the needs of customers alongside the need to deliver improved services through available channels within a changing financial environment. The Strategy commits to finding out more about customers, what their needs are and how best these needs can be met and acknowledges that a better understanding of customers will help the council to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of the community being harder to reach or may not access services. The only area where there could be potential for adverse impact is around the focus on channel migration to online services, this may exclude some people from accessing services or information about services due to age, disability, ethnicity or socio economic status. Currently information about customers in terms of their protected characteristics is not available, with careful management; the new CRM system will provide an opportunity to gather data about customers in a more systematic manner.

### Recommendations

- Use CRM system to gain a better understanding of the demographic profile/protected characteristics of customers.

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# Agenda Item 5

Public

Key Decision - No

\* Delete as applicable

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

<b>Title/Subject Matter:</b>	Materials Recovery Facility Joint Procurement	
<b>Meeting/Date:</b>	Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well Being)	– 8 <sup>th</sup> October 2013
	Cabinet	– 17 <sup>th</sup> October 2013
<b>Executive Portfolio:</b>	Councillor Darren Tysoe - Environment	
<b>Report by:</b>	Eric Kendall	
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	All	

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### Executive Summary:

This report seeks to give further information to the report considered in September in respect of a joint procurement of a Materials Recovery Facility (MRF) services for the bulking, sorting and onwards processing/sale of recyclable materials.

The procurement is being carried out by the RECAP Waste Partnership on behalf of all the partners excluding Cambridgeshire County Council who have a separate contract for recyclate collected at their household waste recycling centres.

Currently all the partners have existing contracts which are set to expire at different times and a new contract will encompass all partners for when their current contracts expire. This Council currently has a partnership contract with Fenland DC and Cambridge City Council which expires at the end of November 2014.

The recommendation in the report is to to delegate the approval of the Intention to Tender (ITT) document, for the procurement of a MRF contract, to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Executive Member for the Environment.

### 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The RECAP Waste partnership, as part of a whole system approach to waste across the county, including Peterborough, are seeking to jointly procure MRF services for the bulking, sorting and onwards processing/sale of recyclable materials. To that end a task group, of officers from all the partners, was set up earlier this year to co-ordinate the procurement.
- 1.2 The advantage of jointly procuring this type of service is that the tonnage of recyclable materials will be much greater and enable better prices to be achieved than individual councils procuring the service themselves.
- 1.3 The income which can be derived from recyclate is very much dependant on the risk which the client decides they wish to take. The high risk approach is to pay a flat processing fee to the MRF provider and then sell all the recyclate on the open market. As the market for recyclates fluctuates

considerably the income received will do the same. In this scenario the contractor accepts no risk and receives a guaranteed payment for the processing of the recyclate.

- 1.4 The low risk approach is to receive a much lower guaranteed payment for the recyclate based on a basket price which is advertised monthly in, for instance the Recycling News. This option is not without risk as the guaranteed payment is normally on a scale corresponding to the basket price. This is the current situation in the present joint contract. If the basket price drops beyond a certain point then the partners would end up paying the contractor to process the recyclate and not get any income and this could be the full processing cost.
- 1.5 The medium risk approach is to have say 50% of the recyclate on the guaranteed model with the other 50% being subjected to the open market value. In this way there will, unless the bottom drops out of the market be a guaranteed income to the partners but if prices are high then the partners will benefit from the extra income.

## **2. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.1 This Council recycles approximately 19,000 tonnes/year and therefore obtaining the best price for the recyclate is important in assisting the Council in meeting its savings target. In the low risk option the income does fluctuate with the basket price in bands but the return is small compared with that being received by other councils. The trend for wholesale recycling prices has been on a steady increase over the last 5 years, but the demand from the Chinese market has reduced which has led to the current fall in market prices.
- 2.2 A further reduction in the basket price is not thought to be a realistic scenario, as there is evidence once more of prices increasing. Even with low risk contracts there is still considerable risk if the basket price reduces falls too low, as it would involve having to pay the gate fee to the contractor and not receiving any income.
- 2.3 Moving to a medium risk strategy would provide extra reward when recycling prices are high which could offset a reduction in income if the prices fell, whilst the other 50% of the recyclate would be covered by a basket price steady income.
- 2.4 An allowance has been made in the MTP for an increase in recycling income following the award of a joint contract equivalent to £8/tonne as opposed to the £1.09/tonne received currently. It is considered this is a conservative estimate but until the tenders are received we cannot be certain what the figure will be.

## **3. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL**

- 3.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) previously recommended that the decision to approve of the ITT document is delegated to the Head of Operations after consultation with the Executive Member for the Environment and has now reiterated this recommendation. The timescale is too tight for the Panel to consider the ITT but Members will receive copies of it.



#### **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The ITT is a detailed technical specification which normally is left with officers to agree based on the guidelines provided by members. In respect of this procurement the timeline from the final draft ITT to submitting comments is very tight at 12 days and wouldn't allow for submission back through Scrutiny and Cabinet. The recommendations in the original report have been agreed by 3 of the partner authorities to date including the delegation of the decision on the ITT with the remaining authority due to make a decision by the 8<sup>th</sup> October.
- 4.2 Members will have an opportunity once the tenders have been received to review the prices and the recommendations as to whether to award or not.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

It is recommended that the decision on the ITT be delegated to the Head of Operations in consultation with the Executive Member for the Environment.

#### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

RECAP Common Paper Partners Decision-Making Processes.

#### **CONTACT OFFICER**

Eric Kendall  
Head of Operations  
Ext 8635

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Public

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title	<b>Overview and Scrutiny Involvement in identifying priority areas for Savings</b>
Meeting	<b>Cabinet – 17th October 2013</b>
Executive Portfolio	<b>Resources</b>
Author	<b>Assistant Director, Finance and Resources</b>
Wards Affected	<b>All</b>

### SUMMARY

The Cabinet considered a report entitled Facing the Future 2013 at its September meeting and made the following decisions:

- It approved the list of potential options for future service delivery and for them to be considered in respect of all the services currently delivered by the Council;
- Requested Scrutiny Chairmen to prepare proposals for a delivery review programme to be presented to October Cabinet for approval, to agree resourcing for that programme and a proposed governance structure, and
- Requested Scrutiny Panels to review all options in line with the programme and present their conclusions and recommendations to Cabinet.

This report outlines how the Review will work so that the process can be confirmed for commencement in the November cycle of meetings.

The Financial Forecast to 2019 report contained the following forecast of the savings required:

FORECAST SAVINGS REQUIREMENTS	BUDGET	MTP			
	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19
	£000	£000	£000	£000	£000
Targetted	1,377	1,852	2,050	2,090	2,090
Not yet identified	138	2,620	2,948	3,181	3,694

It is recognised that:

- The potential scale of savings required (£5.8M by 2018/19) is extreme, particularly when it was a major task to identify the first £2.1M contained in the Targetted Savings list contained in Financial Forecast to 2019 report.
- The urgency is unprecedented in that £4.5M is forecast to be needed by 2015/16 – just 17 months away – and larger savings typically require longer lead times for delivery. This is £2.6M on top of the £1.9M contained in the targeted list
- Even if the Government's draft financial settlement in December reduces the impact for 2015/16 this is only likely to be a temporary, albeit very welcome, respite.

Given the scale of the challenge, officer resources will be extremely stretched over the coming months to refine and deliver identified proposals and so Panels will focus on the most significant options for each service. There will be no time or resources available to deal with secondary items at this stage which will generally only be considered once the initial plan has taken shape and been confirmed as realistic – this may take many months.

The process will consider:

- **Service areas shared between the Panels.**

The Panels will review service building blocks (service areas) which are generally the area of responsibility of the managers reporting to Heads of Service. Exceptions are where one of these Managers has some quite discrete elements, particularly if these are of significant value. The allocation between Panels is based on each Panel having approximately the same number of service areas, focussed on particular Heads of Service/Executive Councillors Portfolio Holders to manage availability and have both customer facing and support services.

- **The information to be provided to the Panels**

A Template will be completed for each Service. It provides a range of information including:

- Statutory Duties (not optional powers)
- Service Standards and current performance
- Manpower including any vacancies
- Financial including historic spending

It expects comments to be provided on these aspects where significant and then gives a list of the areas highlighted in Facing the Future and requires the manager to highlight all those areas where they consider that there are significant opportunities.

These Templates will have been reviewed by COMT to ensure that there is adequate consistency and challenge together with a suggested priority order to reflect a mixture of potential value and difficulty of achievement i.e. big and easy comes first.

- **The Panels' Task**

It is envisaged that the manager of the service, their Head of Service, a member of COMT and the relevant Executive Councillor will attend Panel Meetings wherever possible.

The Panels' Task is to:

- Identify any options that they consider are **equally or more significant/practical** than those on the template.
- Consider whether there are any options they do not support.
- Consider the proposed priority order.

• **Workload**

The Panels have been provided with a completed form to enable Members to form an idea of the amount of work required to review each Template. It has been decided that each Panel will need two additional meetings in November and December to complete the process. With the exception of the Budget, all other not urgent items will be cleared from November and December Agendas to support this priority.

As requested by the Cabinet, the Panels have approved a programme of meetings – see Annex hereto. The process is based on undertaking all reviews in time to report back to January Cabinet. Cabinet will then, in the light of COMT's views on the overall resources available, determine an overall priority order for developing proposals.

It is envisaged that the Templates will be considered as a Part 2 item because discussion will consider areas of commercial confidentiality and staffing issues that would be subject to consultation.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the delivery review programme is approved.

**ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT 1985**

Financial Forecast to 2019  
Facing the Future 2013

**Contact Officer: Steve Couper**

Assistant Director, Finance and Resources    ☎ 01480 388103

**ANNEXS**

- A Facing the Future 2013
- B Targeted Savings Proposals
- C Proposed Building Blocks and allocation to Panels
- D Proposed Template

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**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (SOCIAL WELL-BEING)**

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>AGENDA PUBLICATION</b>	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>SENIOR OFFICERS</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS</b>
<b>5 11 13</b>	<b>28 10 13</b>	Development Management  Planning Policy  Strategic Housing	Assistant Director (Environment, Growth and Planning)	Strategic Planning and Housing
<b>19 11 13</b>	<b>11 11 13</b>	One Leisure    CCTV	General Manager, One Leisure   Head of Operations	Healthy and Active Communities
<b>3 12 13</b>	<b>25 11 13</b>	Legal  Democratic Services  Elections & Licensing  Document Centre	Head of Legal and Democratic Services	Strategic Economic Development and Legal
<b>11 12 13</b>	<b>3 12 13</b>	Environmental Health  Community Health   Economic Development	Head of Environmental and Community Health Services   Corporate Team Manager (Economic Development)	Healthy and Active Communities   Strategic Economic Development and Legal

**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ENVIRONMENTAL WELL-BEING)**

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>AGENDA PUBLICATION</b>	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>SENIOR OFFICERS</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS</b>
<b>12 11 13</b>	<b>4 11 13</b>	Facilities Management  Environmental  Building Control  Projects and Asset Management	Service Manager, Environmental Management	Environment
<b>20 11 13</b>	<b>12 11 13</b>	Refuse and Recycling including Vehicle Management  Grounds Maintenance  Street Cleansing	Head of Operations	Environment
<b>4 12 13</b>	<b>26 11 13</b>	Parks, Open Spaces and Countryside  Car Parking and Street Rangers	Head of Operations	Environment
<b>10 12 13</b>	<b>2 12 13</b>	Estates  Corporate Office remainder	Corporate Team Manager	Resources



**OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL (ECONOMIC WELL-BEING)**

<b>MEETING</b>	<b>AGENDA PUBLICATION</b>	<b>FUNCTIONS</b>	<b>SENIOR OFFICERS</b>	<b>EXECUTIVE COUNCILLORS</b>
<b>7 11 13</b>	<b>30 10 13</b>	Operational Housing Customer Services Revenues Benefits	Head of Customer Services	Customer Services
<b>14 11 13</b>	<b>6 11 13</b>	Accountancy Audit and Risk Management Procurement	Assistant Director (Finance and Resources)	Resources
<b>28 11 13</b>	<b>20 11 13</b>	ICT Network & Systems ICT Developments	Service Manager, IMD	Customer Services
<b>5 12 13</b>	<b>27 11 13</b>	(Budget)	Assistant Director (Finance and Resources)	Resources

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Public  
Key Decision - Yes

## HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

**Title/Subject Matter:** STREET NAMING AND NUMBERING –  
IMPLEMENTATION OF CHARGES

**Meeting/Date:** Cabinet – 19 October 2013

**Executive Portfolio:** Cllr Tysoe (Environment)

**Report by:** Head of Environmental Management

**Ward(s) affected:** All Wards

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### **Executive Summary:**

This Council does not presently charge for its Street Naming and Numbering services although most other adjoining Councils do. This reports sets out proposed charges for this service, which would be effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

### **Recommendation:**

Cabinet are recommended to agree that the proposed fees be charged for this service from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014.

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## **1. WHAT IS THIS REPORT ABOUT/PURPOSE?**

- 1.1 This Council carries out its Street Naming and Numbering duties as required under Sections 17, 18 and 19 of the Public Health Act 1925. Under the Act the Council has to provide street names for new streets and to number new properties
- 1.2 The Act also gives the Council the duty to maintain and replace damaged, missing or eligible street name plates

## **2. WHY IS THIS REPORT NECESSARY/BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 When a new development is proposed, the developer contacts the District Council requesting that numbers be provided for the new properties and that the relevant notifications of these numbers be sent out. If a new street name is also required, the suggestion for a new name rests with the developer although they are encouraged to discuss this with the local Parish Council. The District Council will only name the street where no name is suggested.
- 2.2 Where properties have a house name as part of their address, the owners can request that a name registered against that property is changed. The District Council checks its suitability and will then issue the notifications to the relevant authorities.
- 2.3 The Council can be requested to change the name of a street or issue a new name for parts of a street. This is also a power covered by the Act.
- 2.4 The Public Health Act makes no mention of charging for the street naming and numbering service. But other local councils are now charging for all their street naming and numbering services from the initial naming and numbering through to making amendments. Presently charging authorities include East Cambs, South Cambs, Cambridge City, Central Bedford, Corby, Luton and East Herts.
- 2.5 The maintenance of the name plates has to be carried out by the council with no recharges and a separate budget exists for this work.
- 2.6 In order to bring in new charges for services, approval of Cabinet is required.

## **3. OPTIONS CONSIDERED/ANALYSIS**

- 3.1 It is considered that appropriate charges should be made for the following services:
- Naming and numbering of new developments
  - Making amendments to naming and numbering schemes once issued if requested by the developer.
  - Changing the name of a property where the owner requires this to be notified to the authorities
  - Renaming of a street where requested by residents or a parish council
  - Supplying of plans to solicitors or other bodies

3.2 The proposed charges are shown below:

SERVICE	COST	APPROX NO. IN YEAR	EXPECTED INCOME
Existing property – name change	£50	32	£1600
Name added to numbered property	£30	10	£ 300
New Developments –naming and numbering scheme:			
1 Plot	£ 50	30	£ 150
2 - 5 plots	£ 75	67	£ 5025
6 - 10 plots	£100	6	£ 600
11 - 25 plots	£150	7	£ 1050
26 - 50 plots	£200	2	£ 400
51-100 plots	£400	1	£ 400
101 + plots	£500 +£10 Per additional property	1	£ 500
New developments - amendments to street names and numbering after developer redesign	£200 + £10 property	1	£ 300
Renaming of existing streets ( street name plates to be recharged separately)	£250 + £10 per affected property	1 + 4 properties	£ 290
Supplying of extra plans	£30	20	£ 600

3.3 Because of the legislative framework the income from these charges is not allowed to exceed the costs of providing the service. The rates shown are based on the hourly rate and average time to provide the service. These charges give an anticipated £11,215 per year, dependent on the number of applications received.

#### 4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Environmental Well-Being) has recommended the Cabinet to approve the introduction of charges for Street Naming and Numbering services subject to confirmation by the Head of Legal and Democratic Services that the Council has the power to make such charges.

#### 5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

5.1 This initiative will help to reduce the cost of running the service by providing income

- 5.2 Most developers already pay for this service throughout the County, and it is considered that this reasonable proposal will be accepted by them

## **6. WHAT ACTIONS WILL BE TAKEN/TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 6.1 Once approved by Cabinet, these charges will be advertised from the 1<sup>st</sup> January 2014 on our website and in all correspondence. The charges will apply to all applications received from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2014

## **7. LINK TO THE LEADERSHIP DIRECTION**

- 7.1 This proposal will help to reduce the cost of running the service by providing income

## **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The Head of Legal and Estates has advised that the power to charge falls under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2003. This sets out that a local authority may charge for discretionary services. Discretionary services are those services that an authority has the power but not a duty to provide. An authority may charge where the person who receives the service has agreed to its provision and the charge must not exceed the cost of providing the service.

- 8.2 The Council cannot charge for mandatory elements of the street naming services (Section 17 Public Health Act 1925) since the duty to provide this service is not discretionary, but it can charge for elements of the naming and numbering function (which are a discretionary service) by virtue of Section 64 and 65 of the 1847 Act coupled with Section 93 of the 2003 Act.

## **9. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS**

- 9.1 Officers are being urged to minimise all cost and look to reasonably maximise income. By charging for this service, income will be received for this work which helps to deliver sustainable growth.

## **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**None**

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