

**CUSTOMER FIRST & ACCOMMODATION
ADVISORY GROUP
(Report of the Advisory Group)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Advisory Group met on 26th July 2006 and Councillors I C Bates, S J Criswell, P J Downes, K Reynolds, T V Rogers and L M Simpson were present.
- 1.2 An apology for absence from the meeting was submitted on behalf of Councillor P L E Bucknell.
- 1.3 Councillor I C Bates was elected Chairman and Councillor L M Simpson appointed Vice-Chairman of the Advisory Group respectively.
- 1.4 Terms of reference for the Advisory Group were approved.

2. HEADQUARTERS AND OTHER ACCOMMODATION

- 2.1 By way of a report by the Head of Technical Services, the Advisory Group were acquainted with progress achieved on the Headquarters and Accommodation Project since the Spring. In a presentation by the Director of Operational Services, specific reference was made to the current position in the following key areas –
 - ◆ the Development Agreement;
 - ◆ the acquisition of land for and design of the Operations Centre;
 - ◆ options for securing best value in terms of the future use and disposal of Castle Hill House; and
 - ◆ the outcome of the space planning exercise.
- 2.2 Having regard to the overall capital cost of the project, the Advisory Group were assured that whilst the position necessarily would fluctuate as the project progressed, this should be contained within the approved MTP provision. The financial position would continue to be reviewed as the project progressed and as further detailed design and cost information became available.
- 2.3 With regard to the Operations Centre, the Advisory Group were informed that whilst the design should deliver a BREEAM “very good” rating, consideration had been given to an alternative construction strategy, at less cost, which could result in a “good” rating. Notwithstanding the difficulty in attaining an “excellent” rating for what substantially would be an industrial building and the potential for achieving this by way of investment in biomass boilers, the Advisory Group were strongly of the view that the Council should strive to achieve, at the very least, a “very good” BREEAM rating for the new Operation Centre.
- 2.4 Bearing in mind the requirement to name the Centre for mailing purposes, the Advisory Group indicated their support for research to commence on the history of the site in order to arrive at an appropriate name for the new building. Accordingly, it was

RECOMMENDED

that the Director of Operational Services, after consultation with the Executive Councillor for the new Headquarters and Information Technology, be authorised to determine an appropriate name for the new Operations Centre.

3. CONTINUATION OF CHANGES TO CALL CENTRE HANDLING ARRANGEMENTS

3.1 The outcomes of a three-months trial of changes to call handling arrangements at the Call Centre were presented to the Advisory Group by the Acting Call Centre Manager. The trial comprised –

- ◆ an increase in operational lines from 10 to 30 and the introduction of call queuing;
- ◆ the introduction of an announcement to advise customers that calls might be recorded for training purposes; and
- ◆ the introduction of an announcement, played after 30 seconds, asking the customer if they wished to be held in a queue or to leave a message.

3.2 Having commended the contribution these arrangements had made to the services offered to customers on a day of industrial action during March, the Advisory Group

RECOMMENDED

that the Cabinet be requested to approve the continued use of call queuing as described in the report by the Head of Information Management.

4. UPDATE

4.1 The Advisory Group received and noted a report by the Head of Information Management on progress achieved in five key project areas included within the Customer First programme.

4.2 Progress was reported on the five priority areas identified by the Customer First team as follows –

- ◆ the roll out of services to the call centre and of EDM to services;
- ◆ the implementation of a transactional web site; and
- ◆ IT and business analyst input to the Customer Service Centre project.

Having also noted improvements programmed over the next 6 – 18 months, progress on other projects in the programme and performance figures for the Centre during June 2006, the Advisory Group requested that the Overview and Scrutiny Panel (Service Support) undertake to monitor the performance of the call centre on a regular basis.

5. VISIT TO OPERATIONS CENTRE

- 5.1 The Advisory Group suggested that a seminar and a site visit for all Members should be arranged once construction of the Operations Centre was underway.

Councillor I C Bates
Chairman of the Advisory Group

