
OVERVIEW OF EFFICIENCY AND RESOURCES PORTFOLIO

1. Since the last meeting of Council, the following are the main areas of work under my Efficiency and Resources Portfolio :-
 - (a) **Regulation of Investigatory Powers** – Cabinet have received an update on developments in relation to the use of the Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000. Members will be aware that the provisions contained within this Act enable Council's to carry out certain types of surveillance activity, as long as specified procedures are followed, and that any information obtained as a result of surveillance activity can be relied upon in Court proceedings provided that the provisions of the Act are complied with.
 - (b) **Procurement Plan** - In accordance with Contract Procedure Rules, Cabinet have considered the Annual Procurement Plan and determined, again, in accordance with criteria, which contracts for the forthcoming year shall be delegated to the Officers and which are deemed to be strategic. Subsequent contracts will necessitate a revised Plan being brought to Cabinet.
 - (c) **Customer Services** – Customer Services within Resources Group currently answers first point of contact enquiries from the public on behalf of Housing Benefits, Council Tax, Street Scene, Housing, Parking, Highways, Planning, Bus Passes, Environmental Health and Town Hall Switchboard. Customer Services has been the focus of a two-year transformation project and £250,000 of annual efficiencies in the service have been achieved.

During the transformation, new ways of working have been introduced (aligned to high performing customer service environments in the private sector); a new staffing and management structure has been implemented (with shift patterns aligned to meet service demand); there has been extensive call coaching and training for staff; and the use of extensive call routing has allowed callers to direct themselves to the service they need.

Performance within Customer Services has improved substantially during the project and it has stabilised over the last 3 months. Abandoned call rates are currently below 5 per cent (target was to reduce to 10 per cent), 74 per cent of calls are answered within 20 seconds (the target is 70 per cent of calls answered in 30 seconds), and the average queue time for the Customer is currently 40 seconds.

Customer Services ended the year with its March performance (normally the busiest month of the year due to year end queries and annual billing) reporting that 77.8 per cent of calls were answered in 20 seconds, abandonment rate was at its lowest and

recorded at 3.9 per cent and the average wait time for calls to be answered was 30 seconds.

All of the staff have retained a positive and professional attitude during the two- year transition and have worked closely with their colleagues in service areas to undertake and drive the improvements.

Work will continue in Customer Services in the foreseeable future as part of the Council's 'Think Customer' strategy to ensure efficient and customer focussed access for customers whilst migrating calls to the cheapest form of contact to further drive down the costs of service delivery.

Councillor Stephen Harker
Cabinet Member with Efficiency and Resources Portfolio