



Council

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Matter for Decision

Title: SERVICE REVIEW PROGRAMME FOR 2014/15

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## 1 Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members' on the organisational change which has continued to evolve within service areas since the Council wide restructuring in January 2012. This continual review is necessary to adapt to future government challenges such as welfare reform and to continue to deliver the Council's Corporate Priorities; particularly, to maintain frontline services, despite the unprecedented public spending cuts. This report sets out the progress on reviews that are underway and those that are due to be carried out.

## 2. Recommendations

That members':

- 2.1 Note the current position on the continuing and evolving programme of service reviews.
- 2.2 Authorise the Chief Financial Officer in conjunction with the Director of Services to utilise up to £35,000 from the Management of Change Reserve to invest in the services reviews.

## 3 Information

3.1 The transformation of the organisational structure over the past 2-3 years has resulted in salary savings of over a million pounds. This has enabled front line services to continue to be provided. The public spending cuts are due to continue; these will be particularly challenging for this Council in the next financial year 2015/16. In order to maintain the delivery of the Council's Corporate Priorities it is necessary to proactively review services to ensure these are structured to deliver transparency, cost efficiency and flexibility. Set out below is a summary of the current position with service reviews.

### 3.2 Current Transformation Reviews

- (i) **Customer Services** - this incorporates revenues and benefits and the frontline customer service for the Council overall. This service in particular needs to be ready to meet the challenges of the government's welfare reform. As presented at a workshop for members' in November 2013 the Council's vision to meet these challenges in the future is to ensure a consistently high level of customer care irrespective of the service they access or how they access that service; this includes dealing with the customer enquiry at the first point of contact.

Over the last 9 months, work has been underway to progress the vision. This has included the basics of understanding the needs of our customers by gathering data including the numbers and reasons for customer contacts, particularly for repeat visits. In addition, the use of IT technology to streamline processing and enable the customer to “serve” themselves is being explored. The redesigning of the Council’s website, as demonstrated at the aforementioned members workshop is underway and is due to “go live” in June 2014.

The outcome of a trial of withdrawing a customer services presence at the Wigston and South Wigston libraries and a reduction in hours at Oadby library to deliver cost efficiencies was reported to the Policy, Finance and Development committee on 25 March 2014. It was resolved to continue the trial for a further 3 months together with the reduction in the cashier’s opening hours at the main Council offices.

Since the installation of an upgraded payment kiosk within the main Council offices there has been approximately a 30% increase in use over the past 3 months.

The review has so far been led by the interim Head of Customer Services. This was an interim solution initially for a 6 month period, and extended until the end of the financial year 2013/14. The contract has not been renewed. The review will now be led by the in-house Welfare and Taxation Processing Manager. Support will be provided through an arrangement with Charnwood Borough Council whereby their Head of Customer Services will provide professional and technical support as and when needed. Charnwood has recently undergone a similar transformation of their Customer Services and will be able to provide the benefit of their experiences of such a transformation.

It is recommended that the one-off investment associated with moving forward with the transformation of Customer Services can be met through the Management of Change Reserve. There is also an approved capital project for the investment of IT technology.

The results of the review and the shaping of future policy will be reported through the proposed Customer Services Task Group.

The timescale for the review is for completion within this financial year.

- (ii) **Refuse and Recycling Services** - A trial of a new food waste collection whilst retaining weekly refuse collections commenced in October 2013. The collection to date has only involved a limited number of rounds across the borough due to highlighted operational issues that need to be overcome. These issues are mainly around suitable vehicle types and the rounds are taking longer to complete than had been anticipated. On this basis, before a decision can be made on whether the scheme can be extended across the entire borough, there needs to be further consideration of the additional revenue expenditure this will incur in terms of vehicles and collection staff. For this purpose The Waste Resources and Action Programme (WRAP) were commissioned to undertake modelling of collection scenarios as to how the food waste collection can be undertaken borough-wide within the existing revenue budgets. The key findings from the WRAP modelling were reported to the Service Delivery committee on 11 March 2014 at which it was resolved that the proposed route optimisation exercise be undertaken together with consultation with the collection staff on delivery options.

The implementation of the new food waste collection has been led to date by the interim Head of Environmental Development and Operations. This was an interim solution for a 9 month period up to the 31 March 2014. Due to the operational issues, the implementation has taken longer than originally anticipated. A permanent position for a Head of Service will shortly be advertised following approval by the Policy, Finance and Development committee of a revised pay grading for Heads of Service, In the meantime, the Director of Services will work with the existing Managers to progress the route optimisation exercise.

The results of the review and the shaping of policy will be reported to the proposed Waste Task Group together with other issues for consideration such as the implications of Leicestershire County Council's proposed reduction in their recycling credit budget.

The costs associated with the transformation of waste and recycling collections will initially be met through the grant received from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG). However the grant funding only covers a two year period and therefore the ongoing sustainability will need to be considered through the results of the review.

The timescale for the optimisation exercise is within the next 3 months and any procurement of vehicles will need to commence by October 2014.

### **3.3 Proposed Service Reviews**

#### **(i) Planning Policy, Planning Control and Building Control**

It is intended that the Planning Control, Planning Policy and Building Control services which are high profile and provide an important role in the development and regeneration of land within the borough are reviewed within the next 4 -6 months. The review will consider where the services are best placed within the Council's structure. In particular, with these mainly application led services, it is important to ensure the processes are robust and technology is fully embraced; that they are cost effective and transparent and give confidence to members and the public in the planning process.

The review will include consultation with members' and customers of the services as part of the review.

The costs of the reviews are recommended to be met through the Management of Change Reserve.

#### **. ii) Other service reviews**

With the financial challenge the Council is facing in 2015/16 other services areas across the Council will be reviewed as opportunities such as vacancies arise to see how services can be delivered in the most cost effective way and where there are synergies and cross-cutting of services. Operational reviews already planned to take place in this financial year are for Brocks Hill and the Finance department.

## **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 A Management of Change Reserve was set up to enable the Council to invest in one-off projects that would be of long term financial benefit to the Council. It is

proposed that up to £35,000 is invested in the reviews set out in this report. This leaves approximately £200,000 in the Management of Change Reserve.

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<b>Implications</b>	
Financial (JD)	The proposed £35,000 to fund these reviews can be met through the Management of Change Reserve, this will leave the Reserve with a balance of £200,000
Risk (JD)	CR1 –decreasing financial resources; CR8 – Organisational/Transformation Change
Equalities (AC)	Equality impact assessments will be carried out as necessary
Legal (AC)	No significant implications