

**NORTH WEST LEICESTERSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**CABINET – 4 MARCH 2014**

Title of report	<b>IMPROVING OUR CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME UPDATE</b>
Key Decision	a) Financial Yes b) Community Yes
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Purpose of report	To update Cabinet on progress with the Improving our Customer Experience (ICE) Programme.
Reason for Decision	To note the progress of the ICE Programme
Council Priorities	Value for Money
Implications: Financial/Staff	As contained within the report
Link to relevant CAT	The Programme is being undertaken with a project management methodology, reporting to a Programme Board led by the Chief Executive. Detailed progress reporting will be provided to the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT).
Risk Management	A risk assessment for the programme has been undertaken. Risks are identified through a risk register, with planned mitigations and actions to minimise impact. They are routinely reviewed and updated to ensure appropriate control.
Equalities Impact Assessment	EIAs will be undertaken for those individual projects where it is appropriate.
Human Rights	None discernible from the body of the report
Transformational Government	Programme is anticipated to deliver significant improvements to service delivery
Comments of Head of Paid Service	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Section 151 Officer	Report is satisfactory
Comments of Monitoring Officer	Report is satisfactory

Consultees	ICE Programme Board
Background papers	<p><a href="#">Developing a customer service vision for North West Leicestershire (Cabinet 17 July 2012)</a></p> <p><a href="#">General Fund and Special Expenses Revenue Budgets 2013/14 (Cabinet 5 Feb 2013)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Medium Term Financial Strategy - 2014/15 to 2017/18 (Cabinet 11 June 2013)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Improving our Customer Experience (Cabinet 5 March 2013)</a></p> <p><a href="#">Improving our Customer Experience Programme Update (Cabinet 24 September 2013)</a></p>
Recommendations	<b>THAT CABINET NOTES THE PROGRESS OF THE ICE PROGRAMME</b>

## 1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In July 2012, Cabinet agreed a strategic approach to the improvement of customer services. In addition Cabinet approved, through the General Fund budget paper in February 2013, a further transfer to the Value for Money Fund to support investment in projects aimed at delivering future savings.
- 1.2 In March 2013, Cabinet endorsed the Improving our Customer Experience (ICE) Programme as one of the Council's drivers for securing improvements in customer experiences and budget savings. In addition, Cabinet agreed through the Medium Term Financial Strategy report at the June 2013 Cabinet meeting to set aside £250,000 from the Value for Money Reserve for the ICE Programme, in addition to £70,000 already agreed in the capital programme.
- 1.3 In September 2013, Cabinet noted an update on the development of the ICE programme, setting out the programme governance structure, workstreams, key projects and budget.
- 1.4 The ICE programme aims to significantly improve our customers' experience of service delivery, so they receive services that they value, in the most efficient and accessible way, when they need them. The programme will focus on providing technological improvements to enable our staff to provide an improved service, open up income generating opportunities, and developing digital service delivery to enable customers to interact with the Council in ways that are convenient, efficient and cost effective.
- 1.5 Longer term cultural change for the organisation and its personnel will ensure continuous improvement, enabling the Council to maximise opportunities presented by new and emerging technologies.
- 1.6 The ICE programme is expected to run over 3 years on a task and finish basis. Phase 1 of the programme (the current phase) will be completed once the first tranche of technology improvements have been delivered. Phase 2 will embed technology and focus on customer and staff communication to drive channel shift. The programme will leave an improved technological infrastructure to allow staff to serve customers more efficiently and customers to have access to a wider range of self-service options; delivering dynamic services that utilise technology and support customers to become more independent of the Council.

## **2. ICE PROGRAMME GOVERNANCE STRUCTURE UPDATE**

2.1 There are four workstreams reporting monthly to the ICE Programme Board, which is led by the Chief Executive:

- 2.1.1 Customer Services Improvement workstream – Lead: Head of Legal & Support Services
- 2.1.2 Web & Self Service Improvement workstream – Lead: Head of Housing
- 2.1.3 Systems Improvement workstream – Lead: Head of Community Services
- 2.1.4 Delivering Excellence workstream – Lead: Head of Legal & Support Services

2.2 As the projects set out for the Customer Services Improvement workstream have been delivered, this work stream is now being evaluated by the Customer Services Team Manager; it is anticipated that this workstream will be closed down once the planned customer improvements are being consistently delivered.

2.3 Programme benefits and impacts continue to be monitored both through the Programme Board and the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), with any resultant decisions being taken through the Programme Board, CLT or Cabinet as appropriate to delegated authority levels. It is likely that the programme governance structure, specifically the workstreams, will continue to be refined as the programme progresses into phase 2.

## **3. WORKSTREAM PROGRESS UPDATE**

### **3.1 Customer Services Improvement workstream**

This workstream has focused on making it quicker and easier for our customers to contact us by telephone and at the Council offices by making a number of technological improvements targeted to improve the efficiency of Customer Services processes. Improvements implemented in October 2013 include call recording, call centre wallboards, telephony improvements, a front desk queuing system, CCTV for reception and improvements to the call centre environment.

Early results are encouraging:

- More of our customers get through first time at busy times without getting an engaged tone and having to try again later. More efficient call handling has reduced the number of rejected calls to an average of 2% between April and December 2013. This is a significant improvement on the 27% of calls rejected in 2011/12 and 6% in 2012/13.
- General customer satisfaction is also improving, and this is reflected in the number of compliments received from customers on the quality of Customer Services staff. 20 compliments have been received about Customer Services between April 2013 and January 2014. 8 of these compliments were received in December 2013 and January 2014 alone, reflecting an increase in staff morale and performance.

As we continue to increase efficiency, we expect to further improve our customer experience by reducing queuing times for our customers (both in the office and on the telephone), reducing the duration of phone calls and face to face appointments, and allowing more issues to be resolved at first point of contact.

### **3.2 Web & Self Service Improvement workstream**

This workstream will give our customers online access to an increasing range of self-service options at a time and place of their choice through changes to the Council's website, which is being re-designed to make it easier to find information and enhanced to support smart phones and tablet computers. The same computer system (the Customer Gateway) that offers self-

service options to our customers via the website will also be used by Customer Services Officers, giving them quicker access to other Council ICT systems. This will improve our customer experience by reducing the duration of phone calls and face to face appointments, and allowing more issues to be resolved at first point of contact.

- Website improvements are in progress and expected to be ready for final testing in March 2014 and launched in April 2014.
- Development of the Customer Gateway is on track and it will be implemented in Customer Services in April 2014 to allow the first phase of self-service options to be tested internally before being added to the website for customer use in May 2014.

Once implemented, the Customer Gateway system will collect data to provide an accurate and complete picture of all customer contact, whether that is via the website, telephone or visit to the Council offices. This will allow us to target future service improvements to those groups of customers who will benefit the most.

This workstream will also review correspondence mailed to our customers in order to identify opportunities for using methods such as email or text messages where this is our customers' preference.

### 3.3 Systems Improvement workstream

There are two separate threads to this workstream:

- A new waste management system will be delivered which will make it quicker and easier for customers to request services such as replacement bins or bulky waste collections, either on the phone or via the website, as well as reducing operating costs by helping us manage assisted collections, missed bins and other planning processes more efficiently. The new system is at the final stage of procurement; it is anticipated that the contract will be awarded in March 2014 and phased delivery will start in April and complete in September 2014.
- Customers will be offered more electronic payment options to reflect changing demands and customer preference. These will include an option to set up Direct Debits online for services such as trade waste collection or Lifelines and a single easier to use card payment system for use by all services. It is anticipated that these improvements will be delivered by December 2014.

### 3.4 Delivering Excellence workstream

Our customers expect us to focus improvements on the services and issues that are important to them. This workstream will ensure that the ICE Programme does this by undertaking customer consultation and reviewing feedback to help deliver customer-focused improvements. The workstream will also make sure that changes are made in a cost effective and timely manner and our customers and staff are kept informed by overseeing strategic and financial planning for the Council and the communications plan for the ICE programme.

- Strategic and financial planning for 2014/15 is nearing completion, and the proposed Council Delivery Plan is also at this meeting of Cabinet for consideration. As part of the improved planning process, Team Managers have drafted their plans for the coming year with a specific focus on outcomes for customers, which should lead to increased customer satisfaction. These plans have addressed areas for improvement identified from customer satisfaction and complaints monitoring.
- Staff communication is currently being targeted on Customer Services at team meetings in order to build on and further explain the wider messages given to all staff at the Chief Executive Roadshows and briefings to Trade Unions. Customer communication is being planned as part of the preparation for the launch of the redesigned website and will continue through phase 2 of the programme.

#### 4. BUDGET UPDATE

4.1 The ICE Programme budget covers the costs of the Phase 1 projects set out in section 3 of this report as follows:

<b>Strand</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>Expenditure/ Commitments to 28/02/2014</b>
Customer Services Improvement	£55,000	£52,000
Web & Self Service Improvement	£190,000	£78,800
Systems Improvement	£95,000	£92,000
Delivering Excellence	£20,000	£1,200
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£360,000</b>	<b>£224,000</b>

4.2 The budget for the programme is currently on track, and it is likely that all workstreams will complete under budget. Some significant expenditure is yet to be undertaken for longer term projects.

4.3 Programme funding has been previously agreed (by Cabinet in February 2013) from the Value for Money Reserve (£250,000), with additional contributions from the Capital Programme (£70,000) and Service budgets (£49,000) bringing the total available budget to £369,000. (Note that the available funding exceeds the expected costs following a downward revision of cost estimates.)

4.4 It is anticipated that a return on investment will be generated by year 3 of the ICE programme (2016/17). The majority of expected savings will be derived from efficiency gains in customer services. Firstly, increased use of self-service options will reduce the number of calls taken by Customer Services Officers. Secondly, improved systems will simplify systems access reducing the time taken on each telephone call. The combined effect of these changes will be a lessening of the demand for temporary and agency posts in Customer Services.