

Scrutiny Committee

10 November 2015

Cabinet Member Update: Corporate Support



Lead Member: Councillor Caroline Moon

Lead Officer: Ian Parker, Director of Corporate Governance & Business Transformation (Monitoring Officer)

Cabinet Member Update: Corporate Support

Cabinet Portfolio Responsibilities

- ▶ Gateway and Customer Services
- ▶ Modernising the way the Council does its business to improve value for money and customer service
- ▶ Strategic lead for shared services
- ▶ Corporate Governance and Democratic arrangements

Cabinet portfolio links to Corporate Plan 2015/2016

Priorities:	Strong South Ribble in the heart of a prosperous Central Lancashire	Efficient, effective and exceptional council
Objectives:		<p>9. Deliver value for money in all aspects of the council's work, through challenging processes, supporting our employees and delivering exceptional customer service.</p> <p>12. Deliver and manage the Welfare Reform Agenda whilst protecting front line service delivery</p>
Key Actions:		<p>20. Seek to continually improve, ensuring that council services are fit for purpose and customer focused.</p> <p>22. Establish opportunities to develop effective collaborative working with partners.</p> <p>23. Explore all viable options for income generation and financial savings in order to deliver the Council's efficiency agenda whilst protecting front line services.</p> <p>24. Manage the transition from Housing Benefit to Universal Credit and the transfer of the fraud service to Single Fraud Investigation Service</p>
Measures of Success:	<p>10. No one stays in Bed & Breakfast accommodation longer than six-weeks at any point in time.</p>	<p>18. External assessment: - Customer Service</p> <p>19. Council Tax - 98% in year collection rate</p> <p>21. 95% of customers satisfied with Gateway</p>

Vision and Priorities of the Cabinet Member

My portfolio vision supports the Council's overall vision, and is set out in my "We're Going Digital" paper which has been distributed to all Councillors.

My vision and ambition builds upon a strong legacy of strategic modernisation, from the building of Gateway through to on-line self-service applications using cloud technology.

In an era where I can access services such as on-line shopping, booking of flights and holidays; where I can apply for a passport or renew my car tax on-line 24:7 and where the Government is committed to Digital by Default, I want to continue to expand and develop digital access to our services for customers.

My priorities are drawn from my wide-ranging and diverse portfolio, meaning I have many key priorities include dealing with the Welfare Reform agenda. To date, this Council has managed the changes very well and has not seen the problems that other Councils experience. Notwithstanding these local successes, I have been working with Officers to ensure we play a positive and active part in supporting the most vulnerable in society.

- Gateway staff have been trained to deal with the myriad of Welfare Reform changes – and importantly, this training is continuing to ensure as and when new changes emerge, our front line service is geared up and ready to provide local support
- We also have in place a contract with DWP which formally provides a partnership arrangement during the transition period to Universal Credit
- We actively encourage people to claim Discretionary Housing Payments if they find they are in hardship (even temporary or short-term hardship)
- Benefit notifications highlight availability of Discretionary Hardship Payments
- Bed and Breakfast accommodation is used rarely and over the last 12 months nobody has remained in B&B for longer than a week
- Gateway staff also provide a triage service for people presenting themselves as homeless

My ambition of wanting to see further modernisation through Business Transformation is pivotal for ensuring we can manage the finances whilst protecting essential and statutory front-line services. It is widely recognised that increased and better use of technology is vital and to this end, my priorities also include investing in technology to improve access to our services, better communications and mobile working. To achieve this, I have prioritised the following:

- Smartphones
 - Mobile working (Officers and Members)
 - G4 solution throughout the Council
- Enhancements to Customer Relationship Management system
 - Increased Self-Service
 - E-Citizen
- Enhancements to Website / CRM
 - On-line reporting
 - Anonymous
 - Named
 - E-Citizen (track & monitor)

- Use of QR (Quick Response) codes
 - Customer / public information
- Video Messaging
 - Internal
 - why do we have various Committees
 - what do they do
 - External
 - Social Media
 - Bite-size video messaging
- On-line Benefit Applications
 - Housing Benefit Applications
 - Change of Circumstance reporting

My priorities also include transformation of services, and I'm pleased to report that this years' Business Transformation Work Programme includes BT reviews across:

- My Neighbourhoods (including enforcement)
 - Mobile Working
 - Real time, direct reporting
 - Deterrence
 - Public reporting of offenses

Portfolio Achievements

I would like to formally place on record the hard work and planning that my predecessor Phil Hamman undertook during his tenure. Over the last twelve months the portfolio achievements include:

- Replacement and rollout of new desktop computers
- Accreditation from external audit for the management of Housing Benefit
- External accreditation for Customer Service – Customer Excellence Award
- Tremendous collection rates for Council Tax
- External accreditation of network security – Public Sector Network compliance
- Development of partnership working with DWP for Universal Credit
- Provision of personal budgeting support in Gateway
- Huge reduction in the use of Bailiffs to recover debt (reduction circa 50%)
- Sign up of circa 10,000 e-citizens
- Continued a local fraud and investigation service following the creation of a national Single Fraud Investigation Service

Portfolio Areas for Development / Improvement

There will always be a case for doing more Business Transformations and this is an area I have concentrated upon. However, I want to build on the strategic modernisation to ensure we get the best value for money.

We initially invested in Gateway. We then procured a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which was hosted locally. Since then we have changed the CRM supplier saving £1½m in the process, essentially moving away from a locally hosted CRM to a cloud-based product.

Cloud technology is cutting-edge and amongst its benefits is that it allows for remote access to our front line services via our website and CRM. This means the public can use their smartphones to report incidents to us. Moreover it also means that officers can respond to and update service requests in real time. Customers can track their requests in the same way you or I might track requests to Amazon. This is a fundamental development area and as such is included in my “We’re Going Digital” paper.

My focus can’t solely be upon the modernisation and technology agenda; the spectrum of my portfolio is much wider. I am keen to shape those services that support the most vulnerable in society, whether that be the homelessness service, our benefits service or those services falling under the Welfare Reform agenda.

As a Portfolio Holder, I feel that it is incumbent upon me to continue the fantastic work previous Portfolio Holders have undertaken. I want to further develop Gateway to provide more holistic support for people within the benefits system, as they migrate to Universal Credit.

I also want to investigate how the two essential services, Housing Benefit and Housing Options, can be co-located and assimilated into a single service. I firmly believe that these two services, both excellent in their own right, would achieve even greater outcomes if they provided inclusive support tailored to the individual need rather than being simply service specific. Officers have already identified the mutuality that exists within customers’ accessing Housing Options and those seeking Benefit support. I hope to come forward with a Business Transformation report in the New Year.

My Neighbourhoods (including enforcement)

- Project Initiation Document – Completed
- Baseline of the existing end-to-end process(es)
- Option appraisals using the Enablers identified in Project Scope
- Proof of concept
 - mobile working / smartphone integration to CRM and Website
- Development of mobile working
 - for Neighbourhood Officers
- Elimination of unnecessary manual processes / double handling
- Greater use of self service and other on-line applications
- Baseline of performance data v public compliance
- Greater use of data intelligence to identify offences / offenders
- Review of intervention processes (in light of option appraisal)
- Compliance with legal requirements (PACE) to be automated to allow easier and auditable prosecution
- Use of social networking to promote education and publicity

Print and Post

Report prepared for Cabinet.

This project could see letters and notifications generated within Revenues and Benefits being printed off-site, amalgamated and posted for a cost less than the postage charge from our current arrangements with the existing contractor.

Housing Benefit – Additional (including Self-Service Modules)

Report prepared for Cabinet.

This project could see the Revenues and Benefit service being made available on-line; supporting the Governments agenda to encourage e-applications, such as Universal Credit. The modules will enable Landlords and applicants to check and report changes on-line. More generally, on-line access for all residents will allow them to view their Council Tax, report any changes and manage their accounts.

Smartphones

These have been rolled out to appropriate Officers. This element of modernisation will provide access to our emails in a secure environment. It is often said that we should be looking to achieve more for less and in this case we have secured extra telephones and reduced the costs. We were paying circa £36,000 per annum, but this new deal sees those costs reduce, additional kit being procured and the building being made 4G (including at Moss Side).

The vision I set out in my “We’re Going Digital” paper recognises the Business Transformation benefits of using technology better. Already Officers are developing back office systems to make them HTML 5 compatible. What does this mean? It means a lot to technical people, but for users, Public, Members or Officers, it means that when we access our services via the website the pages displayed will render to the size of the screen available. This might seem innocuous, but if we transform services by making them mobile, these things become very important.

Likewise, it’s not always possible to have a signal throughout the Borough. Development is underway to ensure that Officers using mobile technology can ‘save’ captured data to the handset; once the handset finds a data signal, the information will be automatically sent across.

All smartphones are enhanced with the latest version of “Good Works” – this product allows access to secure email and also to the Council’s Intranet, and in the case of Councillors, will allow access to CLLR CONNECT. Whilst the technical infrastructure is being developed and rolled out by IT, the content is being reviewed and updated by PR. Additionally, the smartphones will provide us all with access to social media, including Facebook and Twitter.

Future Portfolio Challenges / Emerging Key Issues

- Government funding to Councils
- Further Business Transformation Work Programmes
- Reduction to the Administration Grant for Housing Benefit
- Welfare Reform Agenda
 - Local impact
 - Continued partnership working
 - Transition to Universal Credit
 - Cessation of Housing Benefit
- Changes to Housing (Homelessness) Legislation

Overall Cabinet Member Summary / Comments

My portfolio is extremely exciting, wide-ranging and very varied. It seems at times that most of the portfolio is reported in the news on a daily basis; whether it's a serious computer hacking incident, as reported recently by Talk Talk or changes to Welfare Reform.

However, what I have noticed since becoming a Cabinet Member, is that I inherited a directorate that is extremely effective and well managed. It's an area that is continually looking for opportunities to deliver the efficiency agenda whilst supporting customer access and service. Continuing along the efficiency agenda is not going to be easy, but I hope that I have set out in my "We're Going Digital" vision the direction I want us to take – *digital by default, digital by design*.

We have an excellent track record, which I intend to build upon. Over the years we have adopted a strategic approach to the modernisation agenda which has proved successful. Throughout these changes we have never lost sight of the customer; we put the customer at the heart of everything we do. Our satisfaction rates in Gateway are second to none and I won't compromise customer service. My portfolio covers services that support the most vulnerable in society through to delivery of the efficiency agenda; I don't see these as being mutually exclusive; my aim is to improve services in ways that utilise technology which in turn generates the financial efficiency.

Recent Scrutiny Reviews Relevant to Portfolio

Date	Review Title	Easy web-address
October 2014	Light Touch Review of the Impact of Welfare Reform	http://bit.ly/1LPQUR8

Key Portfolio Documents / Background Information