

## **MANCHESTER CITY COUNCIL REPORT FOR RESOLUTION**

**REPORT TO: PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

**REPORT OF: STRATEGIC DIRECTOR OF TRANSFORMATION**

**DATE: 16 DECEMBER 2009**

**SUBJECT: ESTABLISHMENT OF A CUSTOMER SERVICES  
ORGANISATION – PHASE ONE CUSTOMER SERVICES  
CENTRE**

### **PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

A report on proposals to improve the functioning and condition of the Town Hall Complex was presented to the Executive in February 2008. The report was noted and endorsed. At the same time the Council has developed a Customer Services Strategy which defines how the Council will improve access to and effectiveness of services for our customers.

This report sets out the practical arrangements required to enable these capabilities to be developed through the establishment of a Customer Services Organisation and in particular – Phase One, development of the Customer Services Centre. The Customer Service Centre will provide a single point of face to face access to all Council Services.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:

1. Agree to the principle of developing a Customer Services Organisation that in time will manage all services involving customer interactions which, will continue to lead and deliver on driving forward excellent customer services.
2. Endorse the principle of establishing a single Customer Services Centre, initially under the line management of the Programme Manager for the Town Hall Complex Transformation Programme.
3. Grant delegated authority to the Strategic Director of Transformation, in consultation with the City Treasurer and Head of Corporate Personnel, to establish posts in the new structure and progress appointments to these new roles in line with established Council policies.
4. That the Strategic Director of Transformation will consult with services regarding the numbers of staff to transfer.

5. To agree that further reports will be presented to this Committee updating them on progress in relation to the on-going development of the Customer Services Organisation.

### **FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE REVENUE BUDGET**

The Customer Service Centre structure will be funded through existing service staffing budgets. At this stage it is proposed subject to consultation with service heads to transfer staff from existing services and the funding for those posts which currently deliver customer counter services in the Town Hall Extension. There are staff that spend a percentage of their time delivering customer service or reception type duties whose budget, or part of, has not been included; however, further work is to be undertaken with these services with a view to transferring some of their budget.

### **FINANCIAL CONSEQUENCES FOR THE CAPITAL BUDGET**

There are no financial consequences for the capital budget.

### **CONTACT OFFICERS**

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### **WARDS AFFECTED**

None

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR KEY COUNCIL POLICIES**

**ANTI-POVERTY    EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES    ENVIRONMENT    EMPLOYMENT**

No

No

No

No

### **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Report to Executive – 11 February 2009
2. Customer Services Strategy – February 2009

## **1. BACKGROUND**

1.1 A report on proposals to improve the functioning and condition of the Town Hall Complex was presented to the Executive in February 2008. The report was noted and endorsed. At the same time the Council has developed a Customer Services Strategy which defines how the Council will improve access to and effectiveness of services for our customers.

1.2 Our Customer Services Strategy will help us deliver our vision of 'One Council' – a fully joined up organisation that consistently delivers the same high quality experience however customers choose to contact us, and whatever they are contacting us about.

## **2. PROPOSED ESTABLISHMENT OF A CUSTOMER SERVICES ORGANISATION**

2.1 A key objective for improved customer service is the creation of a single Council wide Customer Service Organisation (CSO), helping us deliver our vision of 'One Council', a fully joined up organisation that consistently delivers the same high quality experience however our customers choose to contact us, and whatever they are contacting us about.

2.2 The first phase in this journey is the development of a single Customer Service Centre that will see the current disparate counter services from the Town Hall Extension move into an integrated open plan environment in One First Street.

2.3 During the period of decant it is anticipated that the Customer Service Centre will mature and develop with service provision increasing over time to include all customer facing services, ultimately enabling customers to access all Council Services in a single visit.

2.4 In addition the Library and Information Service will work with colleagues in the Customer Service Centre to deliver seamless access to services both at One First Street and later in the integrated Customer Service Centre/City Library. Opportunities for integrating library staff into the Customer Service Centre are being explored with the library management team and further work will be progressed as part of the on-going development of the CSC.

2.5 Phase Two will see the development of a Corporate Contact Service. Our Corporate Contact Centre will cement our vision of 'One Council'. The Contact Centre will be equipped to resolve the majority of customer enquiries at the first point of contact.

2.6 In the interim whilst the separate phases of the CSO are developed it is proposed that the line management of the Customer Service Centre come under the Programme Manager, Town Hall Complex Transformation Programme.

2.7 As the Customer Service Organisation develops it is proposed that further reports proposing the long term direction/location of the Customer Service Organisation are brought to this Committee for consideration.

### **3. ESTABLISHMENT OF CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE**

3.1 It is proposed to establish a single Customer Service Centre, initially at One First Street which will see the bringing together of the front facing customer counter services from the following functional areas:

- Revenue and Benefits
- Homelessness
- Manchester Advice
- Planning & Building Control
- Licensing
- Cashiers Counter

3.2 The Strategic Director of Transformation will consult with service heads regarding the numbers of staff to initially transfer to the CSC in readiness for the decant to First Street scheduled for June 2010. There is a need to scope this out further with services which have limited customer facing counters in the Town Hall Extension. This will be progressed as part of the on-going development of the CSC.

3.3 It is proposed that the Customer Service Centre structure follows a model used by many other local authorities. This will be progressed as part of the on-going development of the CSC. The main principle is that there is one manager responsible for all staff and the services are delivered for Directorates through a service level agreement (SLA).

3.4 It is anticipated that subject to consultation with service heads in the first instance the current staffing numbers in each of the services transferring will be accommodated in the new Service Centre structure. The new roles have been developed to be more generic and customer focussed, and subject to consultation staff will be ringfenced or assimilated to the proposed roles as appropriate. Any potential for pay protection has been included in the costing.

3.5 There is expectation that demand for services other than those migrating in Phase One will increase as the Council promotes a one visit approach to delivering Council Services. This would suggest that more staff may be required but this increase in demand will be offset by improvements in delivery of the planned migration of services in Phase One.

3.6 Once the service demand is understood a review of staffing levels would be completed and reductions made where appropriate.

3.7 Our Customer Service Centre will lead our journey to becoming a dynamic, innovative and customer focused organisation, delivering consistently high-quality customer service through a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

3.8 Staff will be given more opportunities to develop their careers within customer services, through the Council's Customer Service Training Programme.

3.9 The aim of the Customer Service Centre will be to directly improve customer service quality and consistency through harmonised and streamlined processes, staffed by operatives with the skills to resolve a high proportion of customer enquiries at the first point of contact.

3.10 For those customers that require a deeper level of service there will be operatives with specialist skills and experiences in the key customer service areas. This approach is a long term and sustainable commitment that will add value over individual efforts, both for the Council and our customers.

3.11 During the period of decant the Customer Service Centre will mature and progress to include all customer facing services, delivering a joined up fully integrated 'one stop' customer facing provision. As these additional services are migrated and integrated further refinement of staffing structures and numbers will be required.

#### **4. FUNDING**

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4.1 The Customer Service Centre structure will be funded through existing service staffing budgets.

4.2 At this stage it is proposed subject to consultation with service heads to transfer the staff from existing services and the funding for those posts which are currently delivering customer counter services in the Town Hall Extension. There are staff that spend a percentage of their time delivering customer service or reception type duties whose budget, or part of, has not been included; however, further work is to be undertaken with these services with a view to transferring some of their budget.

#### **5. CONCLUSION**

5.1 The principle of establishing a Customer Services Organisation is key to delivering the outcomes of the Customer Services Strategy and providing excellent customer services for the residents and business's of Manchester.

5.2 Phase One – the development of the Customer Service Centre will be the start of our journey to deliver the vision of improved and accessible customer services. The bringing together of the current Town Hall extension Customer Service Teams will allow us to implement and develop a CRM system that will again underpin our vision for joined up efficient and effective service and will provide a stable platform for phase 2 development of the Corporate Contact Centre.

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#### **6. COMMENTS OF HEAD OF CORPORATE PERSONNEL**

6.1 I have worked with the Strategic Director of Transformation and her team in the development of this report and recommendations and confirm that I support the proposals contained herein.

6.2 The acceptance of the principle of the establishment of a Customer Service Organisation is critical to the delivery of a single Customer Service Centre to initially be established in One First Street.

6.3 The establishment of the Customer Service Centre is appropriate in the circumstances and the grading of post contained within this structure will be subject to Job Evaluation.

## **7. COMMENTS OF THE TRADE UNION**

7.1 UNISON agrees in principle to the new Customer Service Centre as we believe it is of paramount importance that our customer's journey is seamless.

7.2 However for this service to deliver a high quality service to the residents of Manchester, there needs to be some discrete funding allotted to:

- the setting up of the service;
- the training of staff, who will need to be customer focused and highly motivated;
- salaries.

7.3 There is an urgent need for a budget to be agreed for this service as it will/ is to be the customer face of the Manchester City Council.

7.4 We note the structure and roles have not yet been created and will have to go through the formal Job Evaluation process. UNISON has concerns that there is a potential for staff to move into the CSC and be subjected to pay protection. This is due to a number of differently graded staff delivering a similar Front of House service at Grades 3 and 4. UNISON would not expect to see staff downgraded and subject to time limited pay protection with the possibility of losing several thousand pounds in salary because of this change to service delivery. We believe this would not achieve the highly motivated workforce required to be the face of Manchester.

7.5 UNISON looks forward to working with the Lead Member for Finance and Human Resources, the Strategic Director of Transformation, the City Treasurer and the Head of Corporate Personnel to achieve a first class service for Manchester.