

**CONTACT CENTRE**

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**1. SUMMARY**

- 1.1** This report updates Members on progress in regard to the Contact Centre and proposes a way forward.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1** That the Council note their previous decisions to improve customer contact handling through the development of Contact Centre based customer relationship management as a strategic objective in the corporate plan and the best value improvement and development plan.
- 2.2** Notes the MGF3 bid was approved by the Scottish Executive including funding for the Contact Centre/CRM Development.
- 2.3** Notes that the Contact Centre/CRM Development fits within the Council's aspirations towards meeting the Government's forty six electronic service delivery targets.
- 2.4** Notes the Council's decision to appoint Steria to deliver the Business Case and the Contact Centre.
- 2.5** (a) Agrees to proceed with the establishment of a Contact Centre as outlined in phase 1 leading to:
- (b) All other services being included following a satisfactory business process assessment in each case.

**3. DETAIL**

- 3.1** Members will recollect that the Council identified the need to improve its customer contact handling within its MGF3 Bid submitted to the Scottish Executive in April 2004. That bid was approved by the Executive and after considerable negotiation with the Executive around the detailed terms of the MGF3 proposal the Council began the process of implementing MGF3 in early 2005.

- 3.2** The Council established a Customer First Board on 22 March 2005 to oversee all MGF3 projects and at that time the Contact Centre Project Board which had been set up to deliver the Contact Centre began reporting to that body.
- 3.3** The Council approached the delivery of the Contact Centre on the basis of meeting the terms of the Government's targets for electronic service delivery across a range of forty six indicators and also to improve customer contact which anecdotally at that time and now clearly identified within the Steria report was not in a satisfactory form.
- 3.4** A proposal was put to the Council to seek a partner to deliver the Contact Centre project and this was approved on 3 November 2005. Thereafter the Council developed a very detailed tender specification and as a result of a rigorous tender process identified Steria as their preferred partners in May 2006. Steria's brief was to look at an initial six services to develop a business case for a Contact Centre that could deliver improved customer service and cover its costs and also to identify a timetable and plan to take the Council from those initial six services to address all forty six electronic service delivery targets identified by the Government. Steria were also tasked with identifying areas of service process improvement that can be delivered by the Council in partnership with Steria and thereafter by a team of Council Officers who would be trained in business process re-engineering during the inception of the first six services. The six Services are -
- Council Tax
  - Frequently Asked Questions/General Inquiries
  - Roads and Lighting Faults
  - Leisure Bookings
  - Online Payments
  - Library Catalogue
- 3.5** The Business Case has now been submitted to the Strategic Management Team and after a number of detailed discussions the Strategic Management Team has recommended that the Council progress with the Contact Centre as detailed in the recommendations in this report.
- 3.6** The Steria Business Case Executive Summary is attached hereto and the full Business Case both of which are commercially confidential, is deposited in the Members' Room and provides a very detailed analysis of the reasons for progressing the development. Members will recollect that in terms of the Best Value Improvement and Development Plan one area of concern highlighted by Audit Scotland was the customer contact arrangements of the Council and the need to develop a modern customer strategy. The Council already has in place a customer

strategy and this will be refined by the Council and Steria during the development of the Contact Centre to take account of the new customer contact arrangements that will be put in place.

- 3.7** The overall proposal provides for a development of a dispersed Contact Centre supported by customer relationship management software and integration to back office services to provide business efficiencies. These business efficiencies will be released gradually over the coming years by reductions in staffing levels which will be managed by normal staff turnover and will not therefore require any compulsory or voluntary redundancies.
- 3.8** The eventual aim of the Council is to ensure that all of its customer contact is undertaken by trained customer service teams of staff who are focused on delivering high quality customer services and supporting the work of frontline services in delivering the operational service activities which customers expect from this Council.
- 3.9** The level of integration which will be undertaken within the first six services will be substantially greater than any identified across Scotland at this time and will therefore place the Council towards the top of the Government's service delivery targets rather than towards the bottom quartile as it was when it was assessed in the previous year.
- 3.10** If the Council does not progress the Customer Contact Centre proposal outlined in this report then it is likely that it will be the subject of severe criticism from Audit Scotland for failing to implement its commitments within its best value improvement and development plan and the Corporate Plan. It is likely to be at the bottom of the Government's indicators in terms of integrated customer relationship management/electronic service delivery and there are no other proposals to improve and modernise customer contact handling and business process improvement without the development of this project.
- 3.11** The funding set aside for the development of this project is sufficient to deliver the initial stages of the project which will create the foundations to allow a rollout of development across other services which will be delivered incrementally over the next number of years on the basis that departments will be satisfied on the business process re-engineering assessment for progressing an activity into the Contact Centre/Customer Services organisation environment.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1** This proposal is a vital element of the Council's best value improvement and development plan and Corporate Plan and will put the Council in a position to meet and thereafter continue to meet its electronic services delivery targets over the next 12 to 18 months. It will also ensure that business improvement and process change is given a clear focus which should allow the release over a number of years of efficiency savings. Most importantly of all customer contact and customer service will be improved, performance management of customer contact will become clearly auditable and this will allow the Council to set and monitor targets for service delivery within the areas developed for the Contact Centre.
- 4.2** It is intended that the following timetable would apply for the initial six services-
- November 2006 – commence installation of Hardware and Software
  - March 2007 – Council Tax go live
  - April – August 2007 – remaining 5 services go live on an incremental basis
- 4.3** Appendix 1 attached to this report indicates some of the linkages anticipated by the development of this project showing the CRM solution as the hub around which all other developments interlink.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS**

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| Policy    | The Council has given a commitment within its best value improvement and development plan and corporate plan to deliver a Customer Contact Centre and this project will begin to meet that commitment. |
| Financial | The Modernising Government Fund budget of £815,000 set aside for the Contact Centre is sufficient to meet the costs of the delivery of the first six services.   |
| Legal     | None.  |
| Personnel | There is no proposal to create any redundancies arising from this project. There will be a need to look at job scoping and descriptions as part of the development of this project.                    |

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Opportunities      The development of integrated multi channel access to Council services including telephone, email and eventually text message will broaden the opportunities for members of the public to make contact with the Council while maintaining the facility of face-to-face personal contact.

For further information contact Charles Reppke on extn. 4192

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Appendix 1– Current MGF Programmes (Technical Links)  
Annotated for Argyll and Bute Council

MGF PROGRAMMES – TECHNICAL LINKAGES

