

E-GOVERNMENT WORKING GROUP

| | |
|--------------------------|---|
| Notes of Meeting: | 12 th October 2005 |
| Members Present: | Councillor Nadarajah Councillor Wilks Councillor Carpenter (observer) |
| Officers Present: | Ian Yates Marion Fox Rebecca Chadwick |
| Apologies: | Councillor Mike Williams Councillor Kirkman Kevin Legg |

1. Notes of the Meeting Held on 26th September 2005

The notes of the working group meeting held on 26th September 2005 were circulated. As only one member had been present, the working group ratified the conclusion of that meeting, subject to the inclusion that at the customer services centre, speakers be placed within the waiting area rather than behind the operatives.

2. Cash Collection Update

The "Moving Towards a Cashless Office" report, having been updated from the last meeting, was circulated. The transaction cost at paragraph 3.4 had been revised. The main addition to the paper was a cost benefit analysis at paragraph 7 and the officers gave further details on how the costs and savings for cash collection and banking hall services had been calculated. It became apparent that various amendments were required to reflect the real savings to the tax payer, particularly a further look at a breakdown of the supplies & services savings and the addition of a "Gershon" column. This was investigated during the meeting and the potential savings recalculated. How Gershon cashable and non-cashable savings could be achieved was clarified and this was discussed in light of cash collection. The group considered the cashable savings alongside the costs of moving to a cashless office. It was noted that enhanced customer service would not be able to be provided if the cash offices remained as they were. Considerable non-cashable savings would be achieved because the area cash offices could be converted into customer service centres thereby eliminating the need to procure new premises. Refurbishment costs, however, would be required.

Paragraph 7.4 regarding the general benefits of changing payment options was discussed and amendments made accordingly.

Marion Fox spoke about the consultation questionnaire referred to at paragraph 5. There had been a very high response already and analysis

would be provided after the closing date of 18th October 2005. It was noted that as questionnaires were being collected at cash offices, responses might be biased. CMT had also commented that specific consultation with tenants might be required in case their contracts were affected. Further specific consultation would also be required on the introduction of any specific alternative payment options. Members discussed this with the officers and it was agreed that consultation with the tenant compacts should be arranged if any changes were to be made.

The approach to consultation and communication to the public was discussed. A general message was that the Council would be offering an increased choice in payment methods. The 'first day of the month' rush to pay bills could be decreased and providing payment at the local shops could enable people to pay other non-Council bills as well as utilities bills in one visit. Potential for negative media coverage was also considered. It was suggested that significant customer focus was required, especially for those members of the public who may have concerns. Whether to continue with one cash payment point at the customer services centre was considered but generally rejected.

The working group discussed making a recommendation to the Engagement DSP. The option of making no changes to cash collection was analysed first but it was considered that there would be no benefits from doing this. The introduction of 'allpay' alongside cash payments would incur considerable costs without savings. It would also not be financially viable to hold a pilot. The option to stop cash payments before the opening of the customer services centre with the introduction of 'allpay' and an increase in direct debit dates was considered and endorsed by the group. This is because it would prepare the ground for the customer service centre. In light of Large Scale Voluntary Transfer, it would also enable tenants to move to a more efficient payment method and there would be less impact on them when the stock transferred. It was requested that a project delivery timetable be included with this recommendation. It was suggested that the lead member from Matlock Borough Council could be invited to help with any presentations or communication.

The group also discussed making a presentation to Council, which would provide a general update on the modernisation agenda. It was agreed that this take place on 27th October 2005 and that the Portfolio Holder be asked to introduce it.

Conclusions:

(1) To recommend to the Engagement DSP that they recommend to Cabinet that:

- **cash payments stop before the opening of the customer services centre;**
- **Allpay be introduced and direct debit payment dates be increased;**

- **A full Council decision be made on this by mid December 2005.**
- (2) This recommendation be presented by the working group to the DSP at its meeting on 17th November 2005.**
- (3) The Resources and Assets Portfolio Holder be involved in the preparation of this recommendation when final Gershon savings are calculated.**
- (4) The Corporate Director of Communications and the Communications Manager be invited to the next meeting of the working group to consider potential consultation and communication requirements.**

3. Project Update

Ian Yates reported that the Council had presently achieved 87% of the BVPI 157 100% target. He was confident that the final target would be achieved. An IDeA support officer had met with officers at the Council and said that authorities having met 90% would not require inspection. This did not, however, reflect the views expressed by the ODPM. Current work involved looking at refreshing the website content under Crystalmark English guidelines and service managers taking ownership.

Key areas of work on priority outcomes were: e-procurement, GIS and a unique reference number system for acknowledgement of e-mails. There would be a formal update on this at a future meeting.

The Environmental Health Service (EHS) go-live still had a few issues but these were being resolved. It had been suggested that calls should be recorded and therefore this was being included in the relevant service plan. Awareness training for advisors on equalities information was also being worked on, as this had been unpopular with the public. Ian Yates also agreed to provide information on the time taken to respond fully to enquiries. He added that customer service standards monitoring did not have a standard for responding to a request on the telephone and this would be looked into. EDRMS mail scanning was currently being piloted in EHS. The process was explained.

Further updates were provided on waste collection and the development of the back office split with Revenues Services.