REPORT TO EXECUTIVE

PORTFOLIO AREA: STRATEGY & PERFORMANCE

Date of Meeting:	26 NOVEMBER 2001		
Public	Yes		
Key Decision:	No	**Recorded in Forward Plan:**	No
Inside Policy Framework			

Title: **E-GOVERNMENT**

Report of: **TOWN CLERK & CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CITY TREASURER**

Report reference: **TC. 232/01 FN. 117/01**

Summary:

Recommendations:

- o *The Leader is asked to confirm that the Executive Member for Strategy and Performance is the Council's e-champion.*

- o *That a further report be prepared outlining a website policy and that detailed procurement options be pursued within the action plan for the Communications Unit Best Value Review.*

- *Following the above report, the Executive determines the funding bid for website development.*

- o *This report on e-government and new models for service delivery be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Corporate Resources and to be considered as part of the Best Value Review of Customer Contact and Organisational Review.*

- o *The Executive are asked to agree to the principle of an information audit and strategy and for the resource implications to be identified.*

- *It is recommended that the Executive give consideration to the partnership opportunities in delivering e-government and asks officers to take soundings about the possibilities.*

- *The Executive is asked to indicate whether it wishes to be a partner in the ISB Cumbria Information Hub project.*

- *The Executive is asked to note that there is a possible opportunity to bid for the LGF*

Private Finance Initiative but this is not considered appropriate at this time.

Contact Officer: Peter Stybelski   **Ext:** 7001

1. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Government's vision is to modernise the way the whole public sector delivers policies, programmes and services. The aim is to look at how services can be built around customer needs, not around the organisations of central or local government. All levels of government are being encouraged to make full use of the potential for electronic service delivery to improve the speed, responsiveness, quality and coherence of services, breaking down barriers between services and organisation where these slow progress. This will enable different parts of the public sector to work together more efficiently, effectively and economically, to improve people's quality of life and to meet their real needs. New technology does not do away with the need for personal contact but it should make it better supported.

2. The Prime Minister has set targets for electronic service delivery in central Government. He wants to see 25% of services, which are capable of electronic delivery being delivered in this way by 2002, and 100% by 2005. He has also set a target of 90% by value of low value procurement to be carried out electronically by March 2001.

3. Best Value legislation includes a power to prescribe national targets in relation to national performance indicators and the Audit Commission has introduced an indicator on e-government.

   A new indicator BVI 157 has been introduced and specifies the percentage of interactions with the public, by type, which are capable of electronic service delivery using paperless methods or internet protocols.

2. What Counts as Electronic Delivery?

1. Electronic means include telephone and fax, and increasingly the Internet (whether accessed through a PC, digital TV, phone or other device). Electronic access may be direct, or mediated through call centres or front offices in which the operator has access to information electronically and can seek information or complete transactions on behalf of members of the public who prefer to conduct business face to face or by telephone.

2. Many local authorities have used their website and the Internet imaginatively to provide a community information service, and to develop community access and engagement with council decision making. Some authorities have developed or are planning a major Information and Communications Technology (ICT) based revolution in information and service delivery, often associated with a comprehensive redesign of existing delivery platforms around call centres or unified and electronically based back office support for public enquiry points dealing with a range of services.

2.3 But local government and central government alike are only beginning to tap the potential for enhancing electronic government by building in shared use of data and resources, better interoperability of systems and setting up shared infrastructure. Joining up is as much a challenge within each authority as the full potential of e-government can only be achieved if it is approached on a strategic and corporate basis.

3. Which Services are Suitable for Electronic Delivery?

1. Clearly some of the services local government delivers will be difficult to deliver by electronic means, although electronic back up information about the services and feedback from the service recipient will often be helpful and relevant. There will also be a potential for assisted access for those who might otherwise be excluded.
2. The Government expects the great majority of paper-based transactions to be capable, over the next four years or so, of being made available in electronic form for those who wish to take advantage of electronic access. This includes most procurement, exchange of information, financial transactions, and applications from public for benefits, permits and so on.
3. Local Authorities have a vital role to play in reducing social exclusion and it will be important to address the opportunities for using ICT to promote inclusion.
4. The Government wishes to:

- Support **all** Councils to e-enable **all** services
- Focus on priority services
- Provide national technical, policy infrastructure
- Encourage partnership approach between Councils and other partners
- Build on DTLR pathfinders
- Support capacity building, locally, regionally, nationally

1. Priority services are defined as:

- Benefits
- Payments
- Community information / libraries
- Schools
- Democratic renewal
- Sports and Leisure
- Environmental quality
- E-procurement
- Support for Vulnerable people
- Transport

3. The National Picture

1. There are a number of nationally co-ordinated projects currently being developed, on behalf of both local and central government. These include UK Online, the National Land and Property Gazetteer, E-GIF (Government infrastructure framework) and Rolling Electoral Registration. The Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) is working on projects to help authorities manage their information using data standards, and to enable them to connect to the partners required for citizen centred services

4.2 UK Online (LGOL) is a national initiative to get every individual, business and community on-line. On-line services from Government will be one part of this,

provided primarily via the ukonline.gov.uk portal, recently launched. The portal provides a personalisable front end for citizens to tailor what they see to what they need and includes, information on the latest Government releases, information and advice on life episodes, discussion space for citizens to question government and it is possible to apply for a passport, TV licence etc.

4.3 A 'Government Gateway' to support the portal is also being developed. The Gateway will connect the ukonline.gov.uk to back office IT infrastructures in Government Departments. This aims to produce significant economy of scale benefits both in terms of the ease and efficiency of using online public services.

4. The Challenge

1. The Government view is that the Council in 2005 will have the following (a snapshot of the current position for Carlisle City Council is noted in italics):

   o Services available outside standard working hours ✗

      with some exceptions

- Internet access and e-mail free for citizens at local library ***N/A***
- Services provided via PC, iDTV, WAP and PDA formats ✗ ***PC only***
- Services co-ordinated around key life episodes via portals ✗
- Data security and authentication issues resolved ✗ ***but improving***
- Smartcards used for public transport passes, to pay for free school meals etc and to authenticate transactions ✗ ***Under development***
- Call Centres transformed into multi-agency contact centres ✗
- On-line voting and registration ✗
- Councillors on line and trained in Internet and e-mail ✓ ***mostly***
- Websites used to encourage public consultation and debate priorities and service improvement ✗
- High capacity local networks in place ✓
- Staff home teleworking enabled ✓

   1. The recent DTLR Pathfinder Study showed that nationally:

- 40% of people have PC with Internet access (the figure is similar for Carlisle)
- 65% last contacted their Council by phone (1% by mail)
- 35% of people have used a PC to get information, advice or buy products over the last 12 months
- 50% of people think new technology will make it easier to deal with the Council

3.

4. Implementing Electronic Government (IEG)

6.1 At the beginning of April the DETR wrote to the Council pointing out that they were expecting Councils to produce "Implementing Electronic Government" Statements. It also produced detailed guidelines for preparing these statements. Up to this point it had been thought that the Government had only been expecting a broad statement of commitment to the principle of electronic government. The City Council's strategy was submitted by the due date of 31 July and a copy of this important document is available on the Council website.

6.2 The IEG Statement – the Government is looking to Local Authorities to show:

- how e-government contributes to the Council's vision
- the Council's current position
- priorities for future ICT investment

- how action plans will meet 2005 target to make all services which are capable of being delivered electronically accessible in this way

6.3 The strategy is an important gateway to the Phase 2 and 3 bidding round for capital expenditure, which underpins the e-government initiative. The amount set aside for this purpose is some £300M and any Council submitting a satisfactory IEG statement will qualify for a flat grant to go some way towards funding local e-government strategies.

3. Government Response

1. The DTLR has now formally responded to the City Council's submission and the IEG Statement has been formally passed as satisfactory. The Council is therefore eligible to receive a share of the Local Government Online resources allocated to local authorities.
2. The first government target has also been met and exceeded by the City Council as 29% of all transactions are available electronically.
3. However, while the Council's IEG is satisfactory, the DTLR assessment identified some areas for improvement that are listed below:

- Member Leadership and commitment
- Developing access channels
- Front office integration

7.4 The Council must demonstrate good progress toward resolving these short-comings over the next 12 months, as future LGOL allocations will be dependent upon doing so. The Department intends to produce a national and local government strategy, which amongst other things will indicate how resources will be distributed. The allocation of resources to support effective partnership working will be announced at the same time. The Department is also producing a model IEG based on the almost 400 submitted IEGs, to help councils review their current statement and identify opportunities for further improvement.

7.5 To help local authorities the DTLR will also be holding a series of regional workshops for both Members and Officers to provide feedback on the IEG process.

3. Sharing IEG Statements in Cumbria

1. In addition to the above the Chief Executives in Cumbria have agreed to share IEG Statements to establish whether there are any emerging common issues or objectives that could be best programmed on a collaborative basis. This comparison is being undertaken by the Society of Local Authorities Information Managers (SOCITM).

4. Citizens Not Technology

1. The requirements of the IEG Statement and experience elsewhere suggests that the successful integration of e-governance requires a focus on citizens not technology.

Citizens Need

- Access to information (24 hours x 7 days per week)

- Expert advice, quickly
- Easy access to services – across departments, across authorities
- Not to get lost in telephone transfers
- Not to have to explain themselves over and over again

To Satisfy this Need Requires

- Access to common sets of information, data, policies, efficient processes
- Fast responses to frequently asked questions and to know when to pass on a specialist request, and to whom
- Customer records, shared appropriately
- Ability to make fast transactions (including payments)
- Support from a flexible, mobile workforce

Experience from Other Authorities Shows

- The most effective change is to simplify current business processes
- Electronic systems help to make services accessible
- The change is cultural and must be led from the top
- Change can be made incrementally
- Invest in quick wins first
- Budget resources are required, but this can be incremental in addition to Government grants

1. The Customer Contact Best Value Review

The Best Value Performance Plan 2002/03 contains a Corporate Review on customer contact. The review has been scoped and if it is to be successful in developing further the e-government agenda there will be a need for:

- Whole organisation culture change to e-government

- The removal of layers of complex business processes – up to 90% of contacts can be dealt with at the first point of call
- Financial issues and cost to be addressed

3. E-Champions

10.1 Best practice suggests that at Member level an e-government champion is required to advocate, support and encourage the required cultural change and to lead e-government.

2. E-government falls within the Strategy and Performance portfolio and the Leader should confirm whether or not this portfolio holder is the 'e' champion for the authority.

Recommendation

The Leader is asked to confirm that the Executive Member for Strategy and Performance is the Council's e-champion.

10.3 To provide officer support additional duties have been added to a Policy Officer post to provide management support to e-government and to work with the Head of IT and members of the Corporate Management Team.

3. Beyond the Website

1. The Council has developed a website which is, for the moment, essentially an information based tool though there is a capacity to convey substantial information.

11.2 The Communications Best Value Review posed the question as to whether the Council wishes to develop an accessible, informative and interactive website in accordance with national best practice and e-government strategy. At the moment there are several council websites:

carlisle.gov.uk (a recently developed corporate website), and several service based websites eg. historic-carlisle.org.uk (a tourism site established for some years) and sites for Tullie House and the Sands in various stages of development.

11.3 The Best Value Inspectorate have commented that the Council's website policy has not yet been developed and there are some areas for improvement. The existence of two 'carlisle' sites diminishes the power of each within the search engines and neither site is interactive. The content on carlisle.gov.uk does not encourage repeat visits or use by young people. Navigation is also difficult as it relies on user knowledge of Council structures. The initial user choices are unclear and limited. Updating and currency of content is patchy, for instance press releases are put onto the site in 24 hours.

11.4 To address the issues above, a bid has been submitted as part of the 2002/03 budget to provide additional resources to develop the website. Members will need to determine whether this is by way of the employment of additional Council staff, purchasing the services commercially by tender, or by working in partnership with another public body or provider.

Recommendation

o *That a further report be prepared outlining a website policy and that detailed procurement options further be pursued within the action plan for the Communications Unit Best Value Review.*

Recommendation

Following the above report, the Executive determines the funding bid for website development.

3. Organisational Structures to Support Modern Service Delivery

1. The IEG statement recognises the current situation, which is that customer contact, is managed locally by each service area. The client is expected to find

by themselves the Council service, which will satisfy their needs. Assistance is given by the main reception, main switchboard or published information.

12.2 Supporting, each service area is a professional base, which is able to give detailed advice and service to any client who contacts them. The objective is to give as complete a service as can be provided within their professional discipline. However, if the request for service is modified or develops in such a way that is not covered by that areas skillset, the Client is re-directed to another area of expertise. Clients must therefore navigate themselves between departments and may or may not be aware that another set of people is now dealing with their request.

12.3 One effect of this is that typically a Client will recieve a high quality of service if they are able to make direct contact with the service department. However their perception of the service rapidly declines if they have difficulty in originally establishing who to contact and the way their enquiry is handled. This leads to a variable quality of service depending on the effectiveness of the service. Even when service management is good there is inconsistency in levels of service across the board as few standards for customer care exist. This has been recognised in the Customer Contact Best Value Review scoping exercise.

Appendix A shows how services are currently delivered.

12.4 The current telephone directory shows how we currently look to our customers. The current situation has led to a multiplicity of service contact points and is one reason for the abundance of reception desks within the Civic Centre. Having multiple channels for requesting services is inefficient and leads to customer confusion. Other modern service organisation, such as the AA, banks, insurance companies all recognise this and provide a single point of contact. They make contacting them as easy as possible.

12.5 **Service Development?**

The question arises of how the current service regime may be developed and improved from the current situation. Is it possible to organically develop the current situation to improve customer service? This would involve examining each service individually and attempting to improve it, and then maintain it, to a consistent level of service. To conform to the existing model this reform would have to be carried out internally by the existing service managers on a service by service basis.

It may be difficult to achieve step change improvement in this manner. Attempting to drive through fundamental changes at an individual service level would result in an unacceptable burden to managers of those local services, and result in patchy and an inconsistent reform.

6. **New models for Service Delivery**

An alternative approach may be to individually separate the client contact and client processing aspects of all services and to join them together to form a dedicated customer care unit (CCU). This arrangement would effectively create

a front office to deal with the majority of enquiries from Clients with each service maintaining a back office function to support the new customer service unit.

7.   Such a Customer Care Unit would not merely be a super reception desk, call centre or clearing house for enquiries. Enquiries are not received and passed onto the original service unit for processing. Based on the concept that the majority of enquiries are repeat in nature then the front office ambition should be to answer the majority of these queries and only pass the exceptions to back office units. It has been estimated that 80% of all contacts with a Council can be dealt with by a standard response with only 20% needing a variation or a more specialised response.

Appendix B shows a schematic diagram of such a proposal.

This is clearly an issue with major strategic and corporate implications and should be considered further within the Best Value Review of Customer Contact and the Best Value Review concerned with organisational review.

Recommendation

This report on e-government and new models for service delivery be referred to the Overview and Scrutiny Corporate Resources and to be considered as part of the Best Value Review of Customer Contact and Organisational Review

12.8 There are a number of positive aspects to undertaking such a review at this time. The Authority has already invested a considerable amount in upgrading the technology in terms of desktop equipment, software and networks that are necessary perquisites to permit change. The change is also being contemplated at a time when the Council is undergoing fundamental change through possible Housing Stock Transfer and possible changes in Leisure and the DSO. The approach to e-government must be consistent with the response to these changes.

13. The Back Office

13.1 When considering setting up a Front Office or Customer Care Unit (CCU), consideration also needs to be given to what type of service support will be given. This function, for the purposes of this report, is known as the Back Office.

13.2 There are a variety of Information and Communications technologies in place including: Legacy Systems, Proprietary Systems and a large number of information databases updated locally which to a greater or lesser extent conform to modern information practices.

3.   There is a case for saying that the existing arrangements should remain in place. The simple relocation of the customer care element from each service to a new unit does not affect the underlying business processes, which could be carried out as before. However, this also means that any inefficiencies and problems with the service are carried forward, unaltered, into the new arrangement as well. There are however, issues with duplication of business, management and administrative processes.

4.   In the short term it will be necessary to retain existing arrangements in order to ensure the success of any CCU but the issue of reengineering of the Back Office should also be addressed within the Best Value exercises.

14. Information Management Strategy

1. There is a strong strategic case to be made for considering moving the control of information or data to a more corporate format. For clarity in this respect, it is important to underline the distinction between the terms of information and knowledge.

2. Information (or data) are the details or records of activity or fact. Information is typically, though not necessarily, stored in computer systems. It typically resides in a Service independent of any individual. Currently, each service compiles and maintains data about its' service and use of the service. Examples include:- customer accounts, planning applications and job applicants.

14.3 Knowledge is the expertise needed to deliver a competent service in a specialised area. Knowledge is the core expertise about a service and how it should be delivered. It comprises experience, formal training and a deeper understanding of a service and it's drivers than is formally recorded. Knowledge is very person specific. When that person moves on some of the knowledge is lost to the Council. Examples include:- knowledge of benefit regulations, requirements for statutory returns and banking standards.

14.4 When information is created and used exclusively for a service this may be without reference to the information needs of other services. This is unintentional but leads to different formats and inconsistent approach.

5. To resolve this, it is suggested that an information audit and strategy to be put in place and the resources implications assessed to co-ordinate the use of this valuable resource and to manage multiple databases. This would give advantage in dealing with issues such as, Data Protection, Geographical Information Services and Data Security.

Recommendation

The Executive are asked to agree to the initiation of an information audit and strategy and for the resource implications to be identified.

15. Partnership Working

15.1 Such is the impact and potential cost / benefits of e-government issues, that many authorities are considering partnership approaches.

The City Council may be too small an administrative unit to effectively introduce a cost effective, comprehensive approach to meet government targets and working in partnership with other authorities and the private sector may well be required.

Options include partnership with the County Council, the Local Strategic Partnership, other District Councils, public bodies, the voluntary sector and/or purchasing services from the private sector.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the Executive give consideration to the partnership opportunities in delivering e-government and asks officers to take soundings about the possibilities.

16.   Invest to Save Budget (ISB) Round 4

16.1 The Invest to Save Budget (ISB) is essentially 'venture capital' for the public sector funding innovative partnership working that promotes better public services. Round 4 concerns transactional e-government, citizen focus and the root causes of social problems.

16.2 The Council agreed, in July this year to submit an expression of interest in Round 4 to use electronic means to address gaps in consultation, increase citizenship in the youth market, engage community groups in community planning and address the democratic deficit.

3.   The bid has been shortlisted and is one of 154 nationally invited to submit a formal bid by 15 November 2001.
4.   The objective of the bid is to:

   o Use electronic means to address gaps in consultation
   o Increase citizenship in the youth market
   o Engage community groups in community planning
   o Address the democratic deficit

3.   The proposed partners are:

   o Parish Councils
   o Secondary Schools
   o Community Centres
   o Connexions Cumbria

3.   The benefits would be:

   o Improved Community Engagement and Citizenship
   o Increased relevance of Council and Enhanced Community Leader Role
   o Greater efficiency of process and targeted strategies
   o Flexible, Timely, Responsive Services

3.   The Implementation Plan

   o E-enable current panel
   o Advertise to encourage wider membership
   o Establish a young persons' E-Panel
   o Integrate with National Curriculum and Citizenship Areas
   o Text-Messaging alerting
   o Contact points for Community Groups

17 Invest to Save Bid Round 4 - Cumbria Information Hub

17.1 The County Council has also expressed an interest for Round 4 Invest to Save Budget in providing a 'Cumbria Hub' to channel access to service, advice and information consolidated within a single information and ICT platform

inputting client information directly into the back office. An Executive Summary of the bid presented at a meeting on Friday 8 November, is appended (Appendix C) and Carlisle and the other District Councils have been asked to give this bid their support.

17.2 The bid is wide ranging in its impact and complex to deliver across all local authorities and the voluntary sector. There is not, at this stage, a great deal of detail and the financial position is not yet clear although the bid is for £2.5M and a proportion of each Council's IEG Statement monies is requested to deliver the proposal. As the project is not yet well defined and does not have an associated risk assessment, or clear financial assessment and cost implications, officers are unable to recommend that Members give their support to this initiative.

17.3 The Council was not consulted on the proposals or the proposed partnership prior to the initial expression of interest and has not been involved in the detailed development of the bid. It is therefore difficult to comment about the concept of a Cumbria wide customer relationship management approach until the outcome of the Council's own Best Value review into customer contact is known.

17.4 It may be that this project has the potential to improve citizen access in Cumbria and develop better connections between services and also to deliver economies of scale. But until the Council has determined its own approach to customer relations management, and its preferred partner, whether this be the County Council, the Local Strategic Partnership and/or other District Council(s), the voluntary sector and the private sector and other agencies, it is difficult to commit to this initiative. Members will need to determine whether to become a partner in this bid at this stage or whether to undertake further consultation with other District Councils and partners to establish the possibilities for partnership working and that this information is fed into the Best Value Review and assessed so that the Council may make a strategic decision in this matter.

Recommendation

The Executive is asked to indicate whether it wishes to be a partner in the ISB Cumbria Information Hub project.

18 Supporting Strategic Service-Delivery Partnerships in Local Government

18.1 The DTLR is seeking applications from the Strategic Partnering Task Force to support strategic partnering partnerships with other local authorities, public sector or with private and voluntary sector organisations to deliver Best Value. Pathfinder projects are sought in three broad themes:

o Corporate Services and E-Government
o Transport and Environmental Services
o Education, Health and Social Services

18.2 Ten projects in each theme are to be supported and pathfinder authorities will be encouraged to meet and share best practice. Assistance is provided in the form of expert advice and support and would be invaluable in developing the Council's e-government agenda. In consultation with the Executive Member, an initial expression of interest was submitted by the closing date of 23 November

2001.

19. Local Government Private Finance Initiative (PFI)

19.1 The Government is further seeking to improve accessibility of information and services to local communities, integrating the provision, both across the authority and with other agencies. The Department would particularly welcome proposals for what are often called "one-stop shops" or joint service centres, ie. conveniently located shop-style premises offering a range of facilities under one roof. Authorities may also submit schemes for providing or improving other kinds of council facilities in which interaction with the public takes place (eg. general reception areas). Information and communication technology and/or office accommodation may be included, but only insofar as they directly support public interface areas. The emphasis should be primarily on enhanced face-to-face communication with the public and schemes will be judged mainly upon the effectiveness with which they achieve that objective.

Outline proposals must be received by the DTLR by 14 January 2002

Recommendation

The Executive is asked to note that there is a possible opportunity to bid for the LGF Private Finance Initiative but this is not considered appropriate at this time.

20. CONSULTATION

2.1 It is proposed that the contents of this report be the subject of consultation with staff, trades unions and the Overview & Scrutiny Resources Committee.

21 STAFFING/RESOURCES COMMENTS

21.1 The staffing and resources implications within the report will be considered within the Organisational Assessment and Customer Services Best Value Review.

22 CITY TREASURER'S COMMENTS

22.1 The City Treasurer supports and endorses the proposed initiatives set out in the report. However, it will not be clear whether there are any additional long term financial or resource costs until details are received of the allocation of government grant to support the Council's e-programme, and the further work outlined in the report is undertaken. In the short to medium term it should be possible to tailor the cost of work commissioned to accord with the availability of government grant.

23 LEGAL COMMENTS

23.1 N/A

24 CORPORATE COMMENTS

24.1 The issues exposed within this report have been discussed in a series of papers from the Head of IT Services to the Corporate Management Team.

25 ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

25.1 No direct impact.

26 RECOMMENDATIONS

- o *The Leader is asked to confirm that the Executive Member for Strategy and Performance is the Council's e-champion.*

- o *That a further report be prepared outlining a website policy and that detailed procurement options be pursued within the action plan for the Communications Unit Best Value Review.*

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P Stybelski D Thomas

Town Clerk & Chief Executive City Treasurer
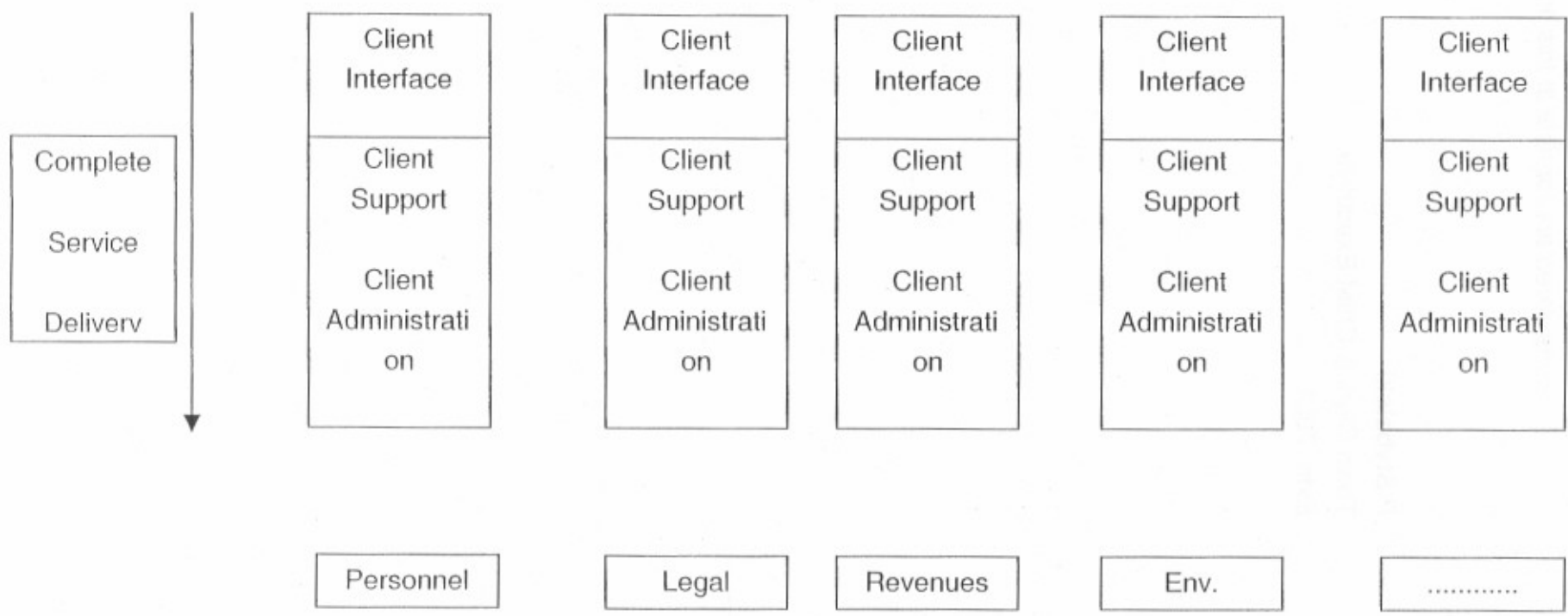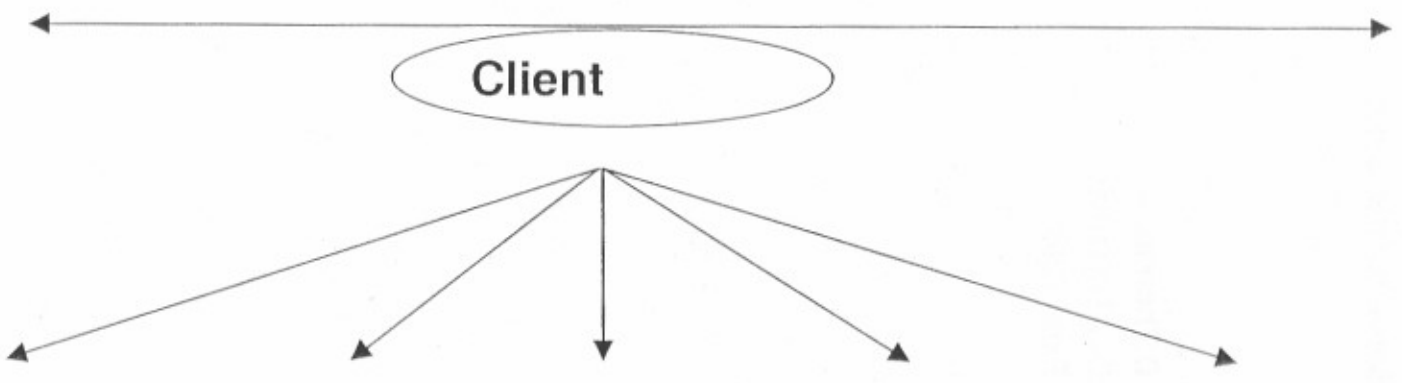
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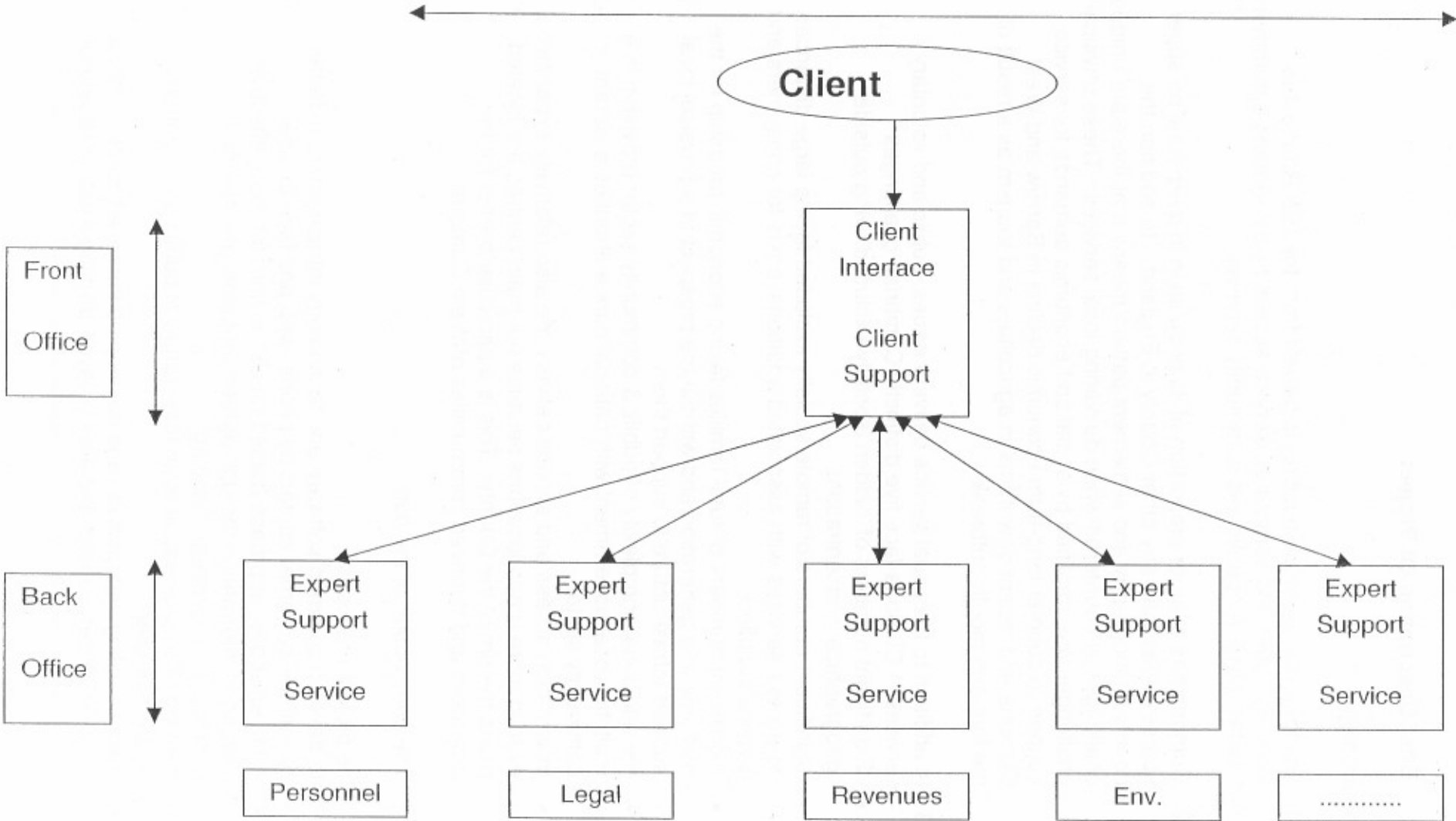
P Stybelski
Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Extn. 7001

D Thomas
City Treasurer
Extn. 7299

Current Client Service Delivery

```
                              Client

      Complete      Client        Client        Client        Client        Client
                    Interface     Interface     Interface     Interface     Interface
      Service
                    Client        Client        Client        Client        Client
      Delivery      Support       Support       Support       Support       Support

                    Client        Client        Client        Client        Client
                    Administrati  Administrati  Administrati  Administrati  Administrati
                    on            on            on            on            on


                    Personnel     Legal         Revenues      Env.          ............
```

Example Client Service Delivery Model

Client

Front

Office

Client Interface

Client Support

Back

Office

| Expert Support Service | Expert Support Service | Expert Support Service | Expert Support Service | Expert Support Service |

| Personnel | Legal | Revenues | Env. | .... |

APPENDIX C

Executive Summary for the Cumbria Hub Invest to Save Bid⁰.

0. Brief Description Of Project

The problem

0.1 Cumbria is in a unique position to benefit from the ISB Round 4 to improve public and community service access by developing a common 'contact layer' for public and community services.

0.2 Cumbria has a larger proportion of its population in deep rural or 'super sparse' areas than any other County in England. In addition the county's topography and settlement pattern means that there are unique challenges encountered when delivering local services. These physical challenges are amplified by social and economic demands for service support to counter long-term economic decline in Barrow and West Cumbria and recent downturns in agriculture and tourism as a result of the foot and mouth outbreak.

0.3 In addition to the usual service delivery issues, public and voluntary services in Cumbria face five distinctly Cumbrian challenges
   - Significant numbers of 'hidden' socially excluded living outside geographical concentrations
   - significant numbers of remote socially excluded facing large distances to access services with associated additional costs for consumers and service suppliers
   - significant numbers of rural families facing economic hardship for the first time in a generation and without the prospect of a physical local support infrastructure to support them
   - the additional complexity of public & community sector provision in a multi tier local government with national park authorities a vibrant community sector
   - Information access and service delivery are also relatively expensive even in more urban locations because our main centres are located round the rim of the County. This is a particular barrier for the urbanised and deprived communities of West Cumbria.

   The contribution of the hub

0.4 The project proposes
   - ✓ to develop common software and technology infrastructure to better coordinate customer contact by phone, web and face to face
   - ✓ a 'life episodes' approach (based on UK on line) for more effective sharing of information through agreed protocols and common approaches to process mapping
   - ✓ tracking of service enquiries across range of public and voluntary sector agencies
   - ✓ linking existing web portals (and developing improved content) into a common citizen contact and access layer, utilising existing structures,

E-gif systems and ensuring lower costs through maximum use of
legacy systems.

✓ an opportunity for ~~shared~~ 'front office' brokerage of information and
advice, customer relations and supply chain management and
collaborative training across public and community sector.

We have called this concept an information hub.

0.5   *Details of potential parties and respective contributions*

Parties	Details	Contributions
The partners at present are: - • County Council, Cumbria	**Nature of Business** County Council **Main Services** Education, Social Services, Highways, Fire, Libraries and Leisure, Economic Development, Trading Standards, Planning, Registrar, Coroners, Magistrates, Rents and Emergency Planning.	Provider of DCO Lead Partner Research past, present and future. Private sector co-ordinator Production of project initiation Project Management External and internal audit provider Protocol acceptor
District Councils, Allerdale, Barrow, Carlisle, Copeland, Eden and South Lakeland	**Nature of Business** District Councils **Main Services**, Housing, Environment/Refuse, Economic Development, Leisure, Planning and Council Tax	Members of project board Service contributors Local co-ordination Expertise Internal audit provider Protocol acceptor
• Cumbria Association of Local Councils (CALC) [Parishes]	**Nature of Business** Parished Councils **Main Services**, Open Spaces, Street Lighting Leisure, War memorials and Halls.	Representation on project board Service contributors Local opinion fulcrums Expertise Protocol acceptor
• Voluntary Sector, Cumbria Deaf Association and Citizens Advice Bureau	**Nature of Business** Charities/Voluntary groups **Main Services**, Advice and lobbying.	Representation on project board Exclusion Champions Local opinion fulcrums Expertise Protocol acceptor
• Police and Fire (Fire is part of the County Council Structure)	**Nature of Business** Emergency and public order **Main Services**, Public protection and emergency	Representation on project board Emergency and public order expertise Protocol acceptor
• Private Sector Partners – Capita, SOCITM	**Nature of Business** Out source resource provider. **Main Services**, Public sector services and consultancy	Representation on project board Service providers Technical expertise System Design Protocol acceptor

0.6   *Innovative Features*

The partners are aware of the very real need to co-ordinate service access
and delivery. The innovative aspects of this project are soundly grounded in
offering a:

• Common contact layer supporting a range of local agencies

- An agreed approach to consumer research – primarily extensive quantitative and qualitative citizen consultation through a joint (district, police, health, and county) citizen panel. This shows clearly that there is no one solution to service access but a co-ordination requirement to suit individual preferences or circumstances

- Coordination of information and service protocols across agencies

- The production of synergy between: -
    - Social inclusion
    - Effectiveness of outputs and efficiency of delivery
    - Customer relations management and the supply chain
    - Convenience of payment and cash flow
    - Image marketing and partnership

- Innovation in process, enhancing the value chain of public delivery through: -
    - Concentration on outputs not service structures
    - Enhanced co-ordination through agreed communication protocols
    - Meaningful 24/7/52 access through any medium.

- Innovation in concept placing local councillors at the centre of the supply chain giving them an opportunity to track service enquiries and to monitor the effectiveness of local provision The project will develop the role of councillors as service access facilitators, brokers and monitors and using the hub will have the potential to act as a local e-ombudsman

- Innovation in concept, through the application of: -
    - Common customer relations management systems (CRMS)
    - Common public sector marketing
    - Proactive targeting of non-users at risk of social exclusion.
    - Placing the councillor at the centre of the local government service chain
    - approach to data protection and security

- The project provides the partners with the resources; motivation and rationale to commit fully to seamless services in a win/win context that will improve public perception and increase public servants sense of worth.

0.7 Assessment of Project Benefits

Benefits - support for LSPs and other partnerships
The hub will be designed to providing a common information platform to support the Local Strategic and Cumbria Strategic Partnerships, at the same time supporting cross partnership agencies such as police, fire and health services.

Benefits – transparency in process
The hub will innovate by offering transparency at the front office stage, allowing a range of agencies by the use of common web-enabled applications to commence and coordinate service enquiries. It will also offer transparency for councillors and other mediators in monitoring progress in securing service and allow coordinated targeting of resources to the socially excluded.

Benefits – contributes to all agencies e-government programmes
Our objectives are consistent with all the county and district council's e-government statements. All partners are committed to effective and efficient service delivery concentrating on outputs rather than the agency structure of service inputs.

Benefits for the customer – a single contact layer incorporating a CRMS
Single customer contact layer ensuring a common approach to a wide range of service access issues irrespective of the channel (eg 'phone, portal, face to face) or access point (district, county, community/voluntary) Using common data sets including a CRMS for proactive service access (ie targeting) to the socially excluded, this will support uniform access and approaches to service delivery. The project enhances the partner's abilities to deliver citizen focused services given it: -

- Decentralises, devolves and customises access and information
- Expands information and service access
- Informs and engages citizens
- Promotes engagement through opinions, rather than just entitlements
- Secures more efficient services

Benefits – external replicability
The provision of low cost effective contact layer is particularly appropriate to Rural areas where transportation and geography are an important factor in the reasons for Social Exclusion. This project could therefore provide a template to improve service information and access in other parts of the UK.

Benefits –more choice
Improved choice of communication mechanisms suiting all situations/circumstances. This will result in greater convenience of access and payment and greater confidentiality and security

Benefits - potential savings
Considerable research has already been undertaken into costings for the system giving a positive Net Present Value of costs and benefits of £xxx,xxx [to be finalised] over four years. Benefits and savings should begin to overhaul costs by year two. However given the risk and sensitivity assessment this may not be the case and the NPV represents a "maximum" scenario i.e. the best case of the worst series of outcomes.

Potential savings and benefits would arise from a number of areas. By their very nature they are likely to be cross-functional and therefore difficult to

measure. However the *change in culture* proposed from each of, service provider, receiver and payer, will create motivate all sides. The estimated savings however focus on six main areas.

- Substitution savings as partners realise that this project negates the need to spend on similar localised schemes. The project thus gains inherent economies of scale.
- Savings in "nuisance" or time-wasting calls as these are routed efficiently at the contact layer
- Reductions in duplicated administration tasks, allowing for eventual redeployment in back or front office roles.
- Savings in joint procurement
- The joint trialing of electronic payment benefits both the user and receiver. The receiver is spared bad debts collection and loss of interest.
- Efficiencies will be available from existing communications costs, through reduced telephone usage, ability to negotiate better deals with providers due to larger buyer power, reduced, mail and other communications, and printing/letter writing costs.