
EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE HELD ON 14 OCTOBER 2004

CROS.151/04 CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE DEVELOPMENT

Dr Gooding, Executive Director, submitted report CE.31/04 concerning the development of the Customer Contact Centre.

Details of the current situation and development since the last report to the Committee in the areas of project management, accommodation, IT and telephony infrastructure, software, mandofrms and change management were provided.

Dr Gooding then updated Members on developments following preparation of his report –

1. Overall the project was proceeding fairly well. There had been a number of difficulties, none of which were insoluable, and the 4 November 'go live' date still stood. That date had not, however, been publicised and the intention was that the Customer Contact Centre should open to the public the week commencing 15 November 2004. Importantly that would allow staff one week to familiarise themselves with the new systems and to ensure they were comfortable before going public. There would be subsequent developments in the Centre as it became further integrated with back office systems, etc.
2. There had been some delay in appointing staff due to negotiations with Business Units, but that was now resolved.
3. Delays with Capita's development of interfaces with back office systems had also occurred but agreement had been reached on how those would be addressed.
4. An additional payment of £6,000 would require to be made to Capita in respect of training and Dr Gooding would formally report that to the Committee, in writing, at their next meeting.
5. The Head of Customer and Information Services would be arranging an open day for Members so that they could visit the centre and let him have any comments.

As regards staffing the Head of Customer and Information Services advised that the Unions had been very helpful and a full structure was now in place. A great deal of emphasis had been placed on the area of staff development and staff were being trained in the main systems and issues such as team building. He was particularly happy to have a week to enable staff to settle in and was sure they would be pleased to see Members there.

Ms Mitchell, Programme Manager, commented that development of the Centre demonstrated an excellent example of corporate working with all Business Units having contributed to the project to date.

Members were requested to scrutinise the Project Plan and comment upon the performance management criteria to be used in the Customer Contact Centre, copies of which were appended to the report.

In considering the matter, Members raised the following questions and comments to which the Officers responded –

(a) *Accommodation – what were the consequences of the delay in building work?*

It had been anticipated that accommodation would be available in August well in advance of the opening date. A delay had occurred but it had not impacted on the opening date.

(b) *IT and Telephone Infrastructure – a new server may be required to host the Capita Knowledge management software. Would that be provided at no extra cost to the Council?*

Capita Knowledge would be available to staff from the 'go live' date and it was considered beneficial if it were also available to the public (in line with the Council's e-government requirement). For security reasons a new server was required, the cost of which would be met by the Council.

(c) *Software – the report stated that the additional costs to be incurred would be met from existing Budgets (for example existing IEG grant). How would that effect existing services provided from those Budgets? Also if actual figures were unknown how did Officers know that they could be accommodated from those Budgets?*

The IEG grant had been given for that purpose and it was therefore totally appropriate for the server cost to be met from that Budget. As regards interfaces with back office systems then Officers would do what they could within the resources available.

A Member asked that, in future, such Budgets should be clearly identified in order that the Committee could consider any impact.

(d) *Human Resources – was training not included as part of the overall project and was the figure of £6,000 a one-off or was it ongoing?*

IT training had been included at a fixed price for the contract. The figure of £6,000 related to a one-off particular piece of training that could be provided by Capita, and was considered to be good value. Officers also considered the use of local suppliers and in-house training providers.

(e) *Was training also being provided in the areas of team working and customer care?*

An extensive training programme was being developed, much of which revolved around the softer skills.

- (f) *Knowledge and Information Management – what was the current position as regards data protection and had the possibility of information sharing between Business Units been considered?*

The Council's Information Officer was investigating the issues surrounding data protection and freedom of information.

- (g) *Workflow Handoffs – was there not other more user friendly terminology which could have been used?*

The Customer Contact Centre – Performance Management Principles documentation had been produced by Capita.

- (h) *Would it be a seamless switch over to the Customer Contact Centre?*

Customer Services did not currently have customer relationship management and therefore it would be a 'big bang' approach. Practically, customers would see the foyer closing down and be diverted into the new Centre.

- (i) *Had the communications problems with Capita, as detailed in section 2 of the report, been rectified?*

Dr Gooding updated Members on the current position following a meeting with Capita that morning, the outcome of which was that the issues had been rectified as far as possible. He added that Mr Nutley and Ms Mitchell had worked extremely hard on the way forward.

The Chairman then made reference to the sample advert for the Contact Centre appended to the report, which had been reproduced in black and white rather than in colour. He stated that black and white was not acceptable, the Council had the facilities to produce documentation in colour and those should be utilised in the production of reports.

The Overview and Scrutiny Manager suggested that a protocol governing the production of colour copies may be required.

RESOLVED – (1) That, subject to comments made by Members as outlined above, progress made on the Customer Contact Centre be noted.

(2) That in future reports to Committee should be reproduced as compiled by the authors. In particular coloured documentation should be reproduced in colour and not black and white.