Cabinet

Grand Jury Room, Town Hall
17 March 2010 at 6.00pm

The Cabinet deals with
the implementation of all council services, putting into effect the policies agreed by the council and making recommendations to the council on policy issues and the budget.

Information for Members of the Public

Access to information and meetings

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Private Sessions

Occasionally meetings will need to discuss issues in private. This can only happen on a limited range of issues, which are set by law. When a committee does so, you will be asked to leave the meeting.

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www.colchester.gov.uk

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET
17 March 2010 at 6:00pm

Leader (& Chairman):	Councillor Anne Turrell (Liberal Democrats)
Deputy Chairman:	Councillor Martin Hunt (Liberal Democrats)
	Councillor Nick Barlow (Liberal Democrats)
	Councillor Lyn Barton (Liberal Democrats)
	Councillor Tina Dopson (Labour)
	Councillor Beverley Oxford (The Highwoods Group)
	Councillor Paul Smith (Liberal Democrats)
	Councillor Tim Young (Labour)

AGENDA - Part A
(open to the public including the media)

Pages

1. **Welcome and Announcements**

   (a)   The Chairman to welcome members of the public and Councillors and to remind all speakers of the requirement for microphones to be used at all times.

   (b)   At the Chairman's discretion, to announce information on:

   - action in the event of an emergency;
   - mobile phones switched off or to silent;
   - location of toilets;
   - introduction of members of the meeting.

2. **Urgent Items**

   To announce any items not on the agenda which the Chairman has agreed to consider because they are urgent and to give reasons for the urgency.

3. **Declarations of Interest**

   The Chairman to invite Councillors to declare individually any personal interests they may have in the items on the agenda.

   If the personal interest arises because of a Councillor's membership of or position of control or management on:

   - any body to which the Councillor has been appointed or nominated by the Council; or
   - another public body

then the interest need only be declared if the Councillor intends to speak on that item.

If a Councillor declares a personal interest they must also consider whether they have a prejudicial interest. If they have a prejudicial interest they must leave the room for that item.

If a Councillor wishes to make representations on an item on which they have a prejudicial interest they may do so if members of the public are allowed to make representations. In such circumstances a Councillor must leave the room immediately once they have finished speaking.

An interest is considered to be prejudicial if a member of the public with knowledge of the relevant facts would reasonably regard it as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Councillor's judgement of the public interest.

Councillors should consult paragraph 7 of the Meetings General Procedure Rules for further guidance.

4. Have Your Say!

(a) The Chairman to invite members of the public to indicate if they wish to speak or present a petition at this meeting – either on an item on the agenda or on a general matter not on this agenda. You should indicate your wish to speak at this point if your name has not been noted by Council staff.

(b) The Chairman to invite contributions from members of the public who wish to Have Your Say! on a general matter not on this agenda.

5. Minutes

To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2010.

6. Call-in Procedure

To consider any items referred by the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel under the Call-In Procedure. At the time of the publication of this Agenda there were none.

7. Resources and Business

i. Revenues and Benefits Fundamental Service Review   1 - 65

See report by the Executive Director and the draft minute of the Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel of 2 March 2010.

11. **Exclusion of the Public**

In accordance with Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 and in accordance with The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2000 (as amended) to exclude the public, including the press, from the meeting so that any items containing exempt information (for example confidential personal, financial or legal advice), in Part B of this agenda (printed on yellow paper) can be decided. (Exempt information is defined in Section 100I and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972).

	Cabinet			**Item**
				7(i)
	17 March 2010			

Report of	Executive Director	Author	Charles Warboys
			☏ 282350
			Georgina Blakemore
			☏ 282284

Title	Revenues and Benefits Fundamental Service Review

Wards affected	All

> **This report concerns the Fundamental Service Review of Revenues and Benefits Services and the business case arising from this review**

1. Decision Required

1.1 To approve the business case resulting from the Fundamental Service Review of Colchester Borough Council's Revenues and Benefits service.

2. Reasons for Decision

2.1 The Council's vision as set out in its Strategic Plan is of "Colchester: a place where people want to live, work and visit." This vision is supported by three objectives - to listen and respond, shift resources to deliver priorities, and be cleaner and greener - and by nine priorities for action to improve the quality of life in the borough.

The business case will deliver across the Strategic Plan's vision, objectives and priorities as the Revenues and Benefits services are key to achieving them. This is particularly so in the case of helping local people of all ages to get services, support and financial help across a range of housing, social and economic needs so that they can make the most of opportunities in their community.

2.2 The Council's Revenues and Benefits services have contact with every household in the borough (all 74,000 homes are liable for Council tax), every business (5,200 businesses) and provide payments to ensure people are able to receive the financial support they require to remain housed (14,000 people are in receipt of benefit / 74,000 homes = 19%).

2.3 With such a significant contribution, both strategically and operationally, to this number of residents and businesses, the service is keen to take this opportunity to further shape its delivery around the three drivers of Fundamental Service Reviews: an improved customer experience, efficiencies and effectiveness.

3. Alternative Options

3.1 The alternative option would be not to approve the business case or to ask for changes to be made to the proposals set out in the business case. In either scenario, the delivery of improved customer excellence, and greater efficiency and effectiveness in the Revenues and Benefits services could be delayed or not delivered. The business case is the result of considerable research, analysis and consultation on the part of a core project team and staff in the services.

4. Supporting Information

4.1 The Revenues and Benefits service is undertaking a fundamental service review (FSR) as part of the Council's change programme. This FSR began work in November 2009.

4.2 The effects of the economic downturn have seen workloads increase across the Benefits service with examples of activity increasing by 140% amongst certain customer types. An increase in caseloads, the complexity of the work and difficulties with existing technology are everyday challenges for the staff within the service. The borough's population is also expected to increase by 6% by 2011, and by 31% by 2021, which will create more demand for Revenues and Benefits services.

4.3 Customers told us that they rate their contact with staff more highly than their experience of the process. Customers were complimentary about staff helpfulness, but customer satisfaction declines significantly over time as the process continues. The FSR aimed to identify ways to enhance the customer experience, save time and improve performance.

4.4 The FSR has had sponsorship from the Executive Director for Customer Excellence, and has built on the experience of previous fundamental reviews. It has used a dedicated core project team, comprising service resources and the Corporate Support Team, over a condensed and concentrated period of time from November 2009 to February 2010.

4.5 Please see the Executive Summary shown on pages 3 and 4 of the business case for a two-page overview of the FSR and the proposals for the new service.

4.6 The high level opportunities for change have been grouped into three core themes:

- How it works – improved customer journey and how the process works
- Enabling the change – through ICT and cultural change
- Service delivery model – internal refocus or external options.

This illustration shows the 'As Is' or pre-FSR position, and how we want to bring these together in the 'To Be' stage, as we implement the findings of the business case:
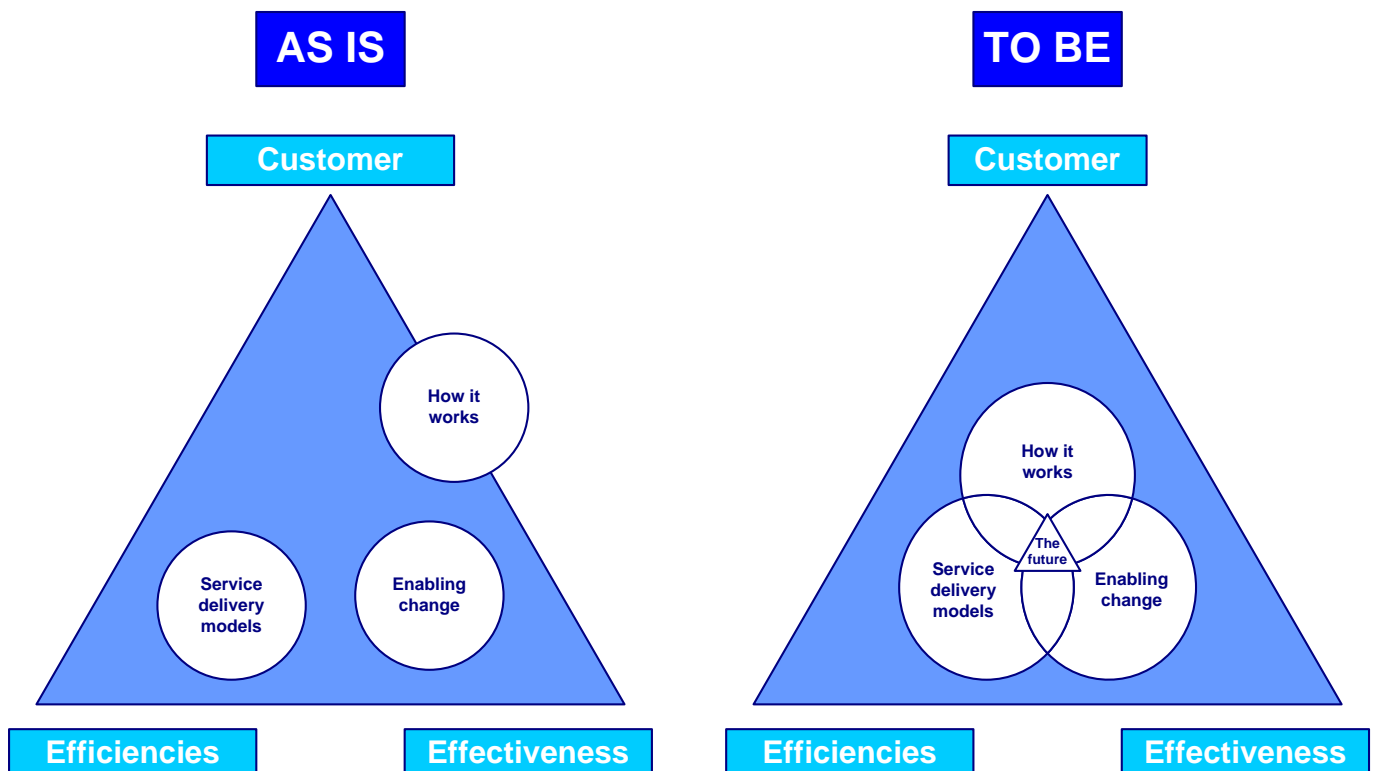
4.7 The emerging issues for the three core themes can be summarised as:

Theme 1 - How it works – improved customer journey and how the process works

- Customer Information

  Aims to help prevent customers from taking unnecessary journeys through a process that they do not qualify for by improving customer understanding through education and clear information. Also to enable customers to access the relevant information to answer their own queries, reducing the current average of four contacts per case to one, or zero where possible.

  An illustration of how customer contact could change as a result in shown on the next page. There is the potential to eliminate 65,500 avoidable customer contacts – a reduction of 40%. The illustration shows that the introduction of e-claims will enable a significant shift from face-to-face to online contacts, but a range of contact methods will continue to be offered along with supported help to complete the e-claim.

- More Upfront

  Aims to enable customers to self-serve, establishing needs at the first point of contact and giving expert advice at that point, with faster assessment, claim award and processing of changes – with reduced duplication and rework processes.

- Risk Assessment

  Aims to use risk and verification assessment techniques to focus on the cases with a high risk of fraud, enabling the lower risk cases to be processed more quickly.

Theme 2 - Enabling the change – through ICT and cultural change

Aims to build on and join up existing ICT options, and introduce new ICT options such as e-claims which could enable more than 80% of claims to be completed online, either by the claimant or with supported help – and an online benefits calculator which could reduce claims by up to 26% by eliminating claims from people who do not qualify. Customers are becoming more familiar with online applications, such as Homechoice or DVLA car tax renewals, and the changing profile of claimants has led to a significant increase in those having a strong preference for internet or online communication. A range of supported help from staff will continue to be offered to customers if wanted.

We will also take part in a DWP trial of fraud risk verification software involving 10 councils, following a successful pilot in Lambeth and Glasgow.

Cultural change aims to make the most of our customer focus, flexible working and communication skills. This includes a greater degree of multi-skilling within the service, and potentially across other services to bring customer queries together, for example Housing and Benefits issues could be addressed as a whole to help the customer and put them at the heart of the solution.

Theme 3 - Service delivery model – internal refocus or external options

Aims to seek out all possible efficiencies for the Council first through internal refocus. However, in the long term we are not discounting other delivery models such as outsourcing, shared services or 'centre of excellence'.

4.8 Key factors for success in delivering this business case are:

- ICT capital investment to generate revenue savings and deliver corporate benefits
- Upfront investment to deliver full implementation benefits
- Achieving maximum efficiencies in-house before external delivery options are developed.

4.9 How will customer contact and the access channels they use change? - from As Is (now) to To Be (following implementation plan)

Channel changes overall - indicative

Total change
40% reduction in customer contact

Channel changes overall - indicative			
	As Is	To Be	Difference
Phone	81000	22600	-58400
Face-to-Face	21000	2700	-18300
Online - no touch	4300	36000	31700
Self-serve @ CSC	0	11600	11600
Visit	600	600	0
Post	40000	8000	-32000
DWP	15900	18500	2600
Third Party	2700	0	-2700
Total changes	165500	100000	65500
Percentage change			Total 40% decrease

Channel changes - overall summary

- 72% decrease in phone calls
- 8-fold decrease in face-to-face contact
- 8-fold increase in online contact
- 11600 switch to self-serve at CSC
- No change in visits
- 5-fold reduction in post
- 6% increase in direct contact from DWP
- 100% decrease in third party contact (switch to online/self-serve)

**Total change
40% reduction in customer contact**

5. Proposals

5.1 The business case aims to deliver the following over a phased implementation period:

- improvement in benefit processing time (NI 181) from 15 days to 5 days.
- overall reduction in customer contacts by 65,500 a year - achieved by improved customer information (including education, channel management, insight, and communication). Positive impact on avoidable customer contact.
- net savings of around £450,000 (£118,000 of this is already accounted for in existing service budgets, of which £70,000 relates to admin grant reductions over 2010/11 and 2011/12).

  These opportunities are heavily dependent on implementation of two enablers – ICT and culture change. Timelines can only be confirmed through implementation planning, and costs will also become more detailed at that stage.

5.2 The principles of the new service are to:

- move work to the front of the process, as this will remove delays for the customer once they are into their 'journey' with us to resolve a query or access a service
- improve the level, accessibility, quality and timeliness of customer information
- encourage and support customers to use different access channels
- use a fraud risk assessment rating (high/medium/low) to ensure verification and evidence requirements are tailored to the customer
- join up the processes 'end to end' across all services (Customer Service Centre, Resource Management, internal and external providers) to make them as efficient and effective as possible, with an improved experience for the customer.

5.3 The project team is working on options for internal service delivery. This includes the implementation plan and the service structure to be put in place to deliver the benefits of the new design. Structural changes proposed include bringing staff and skills together into a corporate debt team and a professional support unit, and removing the split between revenues and benefits officers so that multi-skilled officers can do both streams of work. The implementation planning will include short term projects which can begin within three months, such as introducing e-claims and an online benefits calculator.

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 The Council has a Strategic Plan for 2009 – 2012. As shown in 2.1, the business case will help towards the Strategic Plan's vision, objectives and priorities as the Revenues and Benefits services and how these are delivered are key to achieving these goals.

7. Consultation

7.1 This review has included consultation throughout the development of the business case. Four workshops have taken place with staff from the service to seek their input into what works well now, what could be improved and how, and to test out early ideas emerging from the business case. There have also been two workshops with staff from other services whose work impacts on Revenues and Benefits such as Legal, Housing, Human Resources and ICT, and two workshops with key external partners to consider their views about the opportunities and findings of the business case stage of the review.

7.2 There have been two briefings with Unison to date. This will continue with a regular schedule of meetings throughout the implementation stage.

7.3 Many of the opportunities identified in the business case require significant further work to bring them to the point of delivery. Internal colleagues and external partners will continue to be involved in their development.

8. Publicity Considerations

8.1 Revenues and Benefits Services have contact with every home and business in the borough. The review has been driven using customer insight gained from using Mosaic and Touchstone project work to make sure the review will lead to services that offer a better customer experience at every level. The overall aim is make it quicker and easier for customers to contact us across a range of access methods, and to have their query or issue dealt with as promptly and efficiently as possible.

8.2 A communication plan will be drawn up following the approval of the detailed business case to communicate the changes to the public as widely as possible.

8.3 Information about this report has been provided to the local media on the purpose of the review and the predicted improvements for our customers in the quality, consistency and speed of service they will receive once the changes recommended are implemented.

9. Financial implications

9.1 There are significant savings to be made, but these are dependent on:

- the principle of significant capital investment being required upfront in order to deliver the full implementation, together with recognition of a need to prioritise ICT projects on a corporate basis in order to deliver the level of revenue savings and improved customer journeys which have been identified. The development of a new ICT strategy has already started.
- the strategy of driving as much efficiency as possible (subject to the investment required) from within the service before external delivery options are developed further.

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 The screening stage for an Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out, and is available by clicking this link, or on our website www.colchester.gov.uk/diversity.

10.2 This report is about the business case at a strategic level, and whether the principles identified in the business case should be developed further. Subject to approval of the business case, detailed Equality Impact Assessments will be carried out as part of the implementation planning stage of the review. These will be an integral part of any changes to services - an assessment of any potential direct or indirect discrimination needs to be made alongside specific proposals as they are developed.

11. Other Standard References

11.1 There are no specific Human Rights, Community Safety or Health and Safety implications.

12. Risk Management Implications

12.1 The high-level risks associated with this review have been identified in section 8 of the business case and are being actively managed. It is acknowledged that the changes identified to service delivery are significant, and will need to be carefully phased and planned in terms of capacity, ICT and cultural change requirements and with appropriate timescales.

12.2 A full risk register and risk management plan will be developed as part of the detailed implementation plan, and in consultation with the Council's Risk and Resilience Manager.

Background Papers

The business case with appendices is provided with this report. The Equality Impact Assessment screening document is available online (see 10.1) or in the Members' Room.

Revenues and Benefits - Fundamental Service Review

Business Case – Scrutiny and Cabinet reports March 2010

PROJECT SUMMARY SHEET

Service	Resource Management	
Service teams	Revenues and Benefits	
Head of Service	Charles Warboys	
Project sponsors	Pam Donnelly and Charles Warboys	
Programme Manager	Georgina Blakemore	Corporate Support Team
Core Project Team	Paul McMorris, Finance Manager	Service Team
	Lynne Hutton, Benefits Manager	Service Team
	Rick Godfrey, Control Manager	Service Team
	Karen Stoddart, Training and Policy Officer	Service Team
	Chris Malby, Technical Control Team Leader	Service Team
	Louisa Giddings, Benefit Fraud Investigations Team Leader	Service Team
	Jackie Davis, Project Support Officer	Corporate Support Team
	Chris Reed, Policy and Projects Officer	Corporate Support Team
	Mandy Jones, Research and Engagement Manager	Corporate Support Team
	Jane Swift, Performance and Resource Planning Officer	CSC
Corporate Team	Sean Plummer, Finance Manager	Finance
	Lee French, ICT Manager	ICT
	Michelle Tarbun, HR Business Partner	HR
Timescale	2 November 2009 to 12 February 2010 - full business case completed	
Governance	Initial business case	EMT 7 Dec, SMT 8 Dec, Leadership Team 16 Dec 2009
	Full business case	EMT 19 Jan, SMT 25 Jan, Leadership Team 3 Feb, SOSP 2 Mar, Cabinet 17 Mar 2010
Committed efficiency and effectiveness savings	£118k over 2 years. (£25k built into 2010/11 base budget, and £23k service saving option for 2010/11, and £70k Admin Grant 2011/12)	Service budget

Revenues and Benefits - Fundamental Service Review

Business Case – Scrutiny and Cabinet reports March 2010

Contents

Please also see appendices. The Equality Impact Assessment screening is published on www.colchester.gov.uk/diversity or click this link

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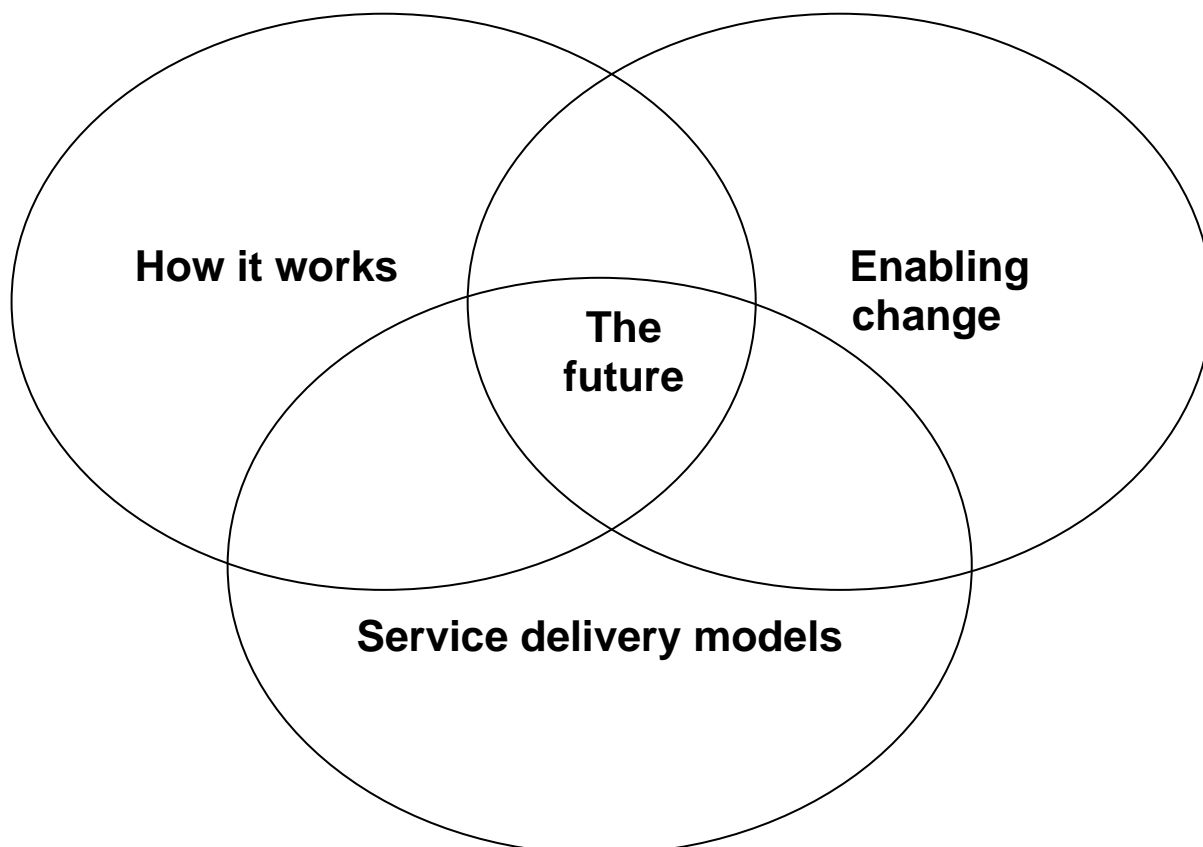
1. Executive Summary

The Revenues and Benefits service is undertaking a fundamental service review (FSR) as part of our change programme, to further shape its delivery around the 3 drivers of FSRs: customer, efficiencies and effectiveness.

The approach being tested is more intense - in time to deliver and in resources, both in-service and corporate. The scale of improvement is attributable to the fundamental nature of the approach – as opposed to 'business as usual' incremental change.

To deliver the opportunities and benefits, there are 2 enabling factors:
- joined-up and effective use of IT
- change management for people and organisational culture.

The changes to the service cannot be delivered without the enabling work being put in place. Any implementation times stated refer to time after any enabling work is delivered.

A service has been designed that has customer needs at the forefront.

The new service will deliver the following improvement at full implementation:

- improvement in benefit processing time (NI181) from 15 days to 5 days

- overall reduction in customer contacts by 65,500 a year - achieved by improved customer information (including education, channel management, insight, communication). Positive impact on NI14 avoidable contact

- a reduction of around £300,000 in the cost to deliver the Benefits service by removing paper, using risk-based assessment and improving processes by moving work up to the front of the customer journey

- a reduction of around £150,000 in the cost to deliver the Revenues service by improved processes, automation and self-service for customers

- an improved customer experience across the service by more effective channel management and expert advice at the frontline, with the customer getting their query or claim resolved quickly and simply at the first point of contact.

There will be a staged approach to implementation with as many savings being delivered in the short and medium term as possible. The full implementation timescale (1 year minimum) is based on the assumption that all enabling projects relevant to the theme are in place, so the 1 year starts after the enabling work has been completed. The savings can therefore be delivered early if corporate priorities and other resources are shifted, for example Connected Customer.

Of the savings identified above, there is an existing reduction in budget of £118,000 as shown on the front page summary of this document.

Resources to deliver the service in-house are being identified, although a final structure has not been proposed at this point due to the organisational design needing to incorporate the service, the CSC and potentially other CBC service areas.

A clear strategy is in place to drive out efficiencies first, alongside proposals for alternative delivery models such as outsourcing, shared services or centre of excellence.

Other structural changes proposed are:

- a corporate debt team to be created giving a joined-up customer centric approach to Council debt, resulting in improved co-ordination of debt recovery and increased income

- removal of the split between revenues and benefits officers so that multi-skilled officers can do both streams of work

- creation of a professional support unit which includes control, ICT, training and communications.

The illustration below sums up the business case - from the 'AS IS' start point, and how these elements will be brought together by achieving the 'TO BE' vision of the future of the service.
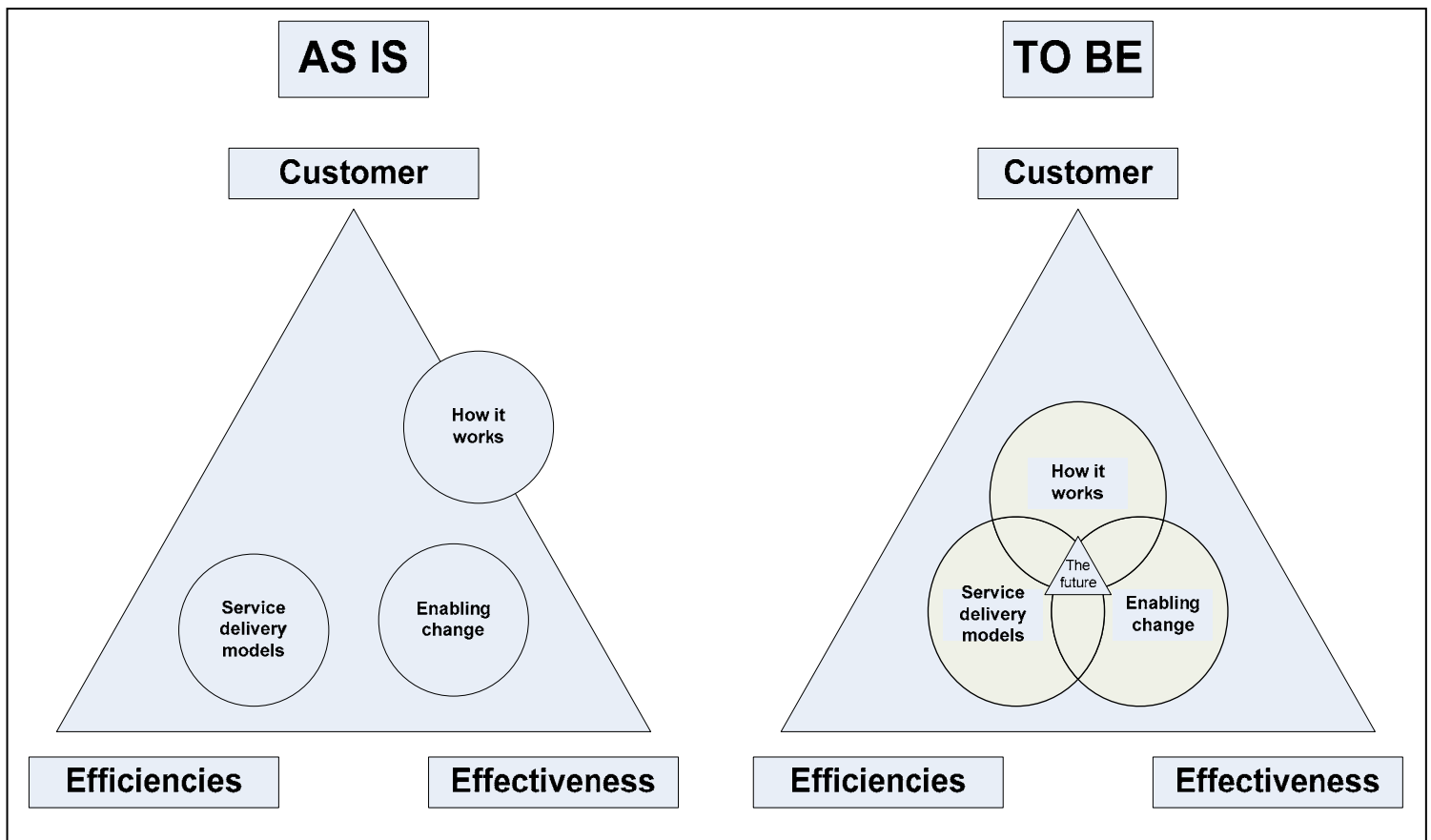
2. Opportunities

The service has contact with every household within the borough (all 74,000 homes are liable for Council tax), every business (5,200 businesses) and provides payments to ensure people are able to receive the financial support they require to remain housed (14,000 people are in receipt of benefit/74,000 homes = 19%). With such a significant contribution, both strategically and operationally, to this number of residents and businesses, the service is keen to take this opportunity to further shape its delivery around the 3 drivers of FSRs: customer, efficiencies and effectiveness.

The effects of the economic downturn have seen workload increase across the service with examples of activity increasing by 140% amongst certain customer types.

Customers have told us that they rate their contact with staff more highly than their experience of the process. Customers were complimentary about staff helpfulness, but customer satisfaction declines significantly over time as the process continues.

Examination of our processes has highlighted areas where communication has in-built delays and customers have to make many contacts with us before work can be progressed. Analysis shows that 65,500 customer contacts are potentially avoidable.

An increase in caseloads, complexity of the work and difficulties with existing technology are everyday challenges for the people within the service. Added to that is the organisational split of front office (CSC) and back office (Revenues and Benefits) where customers experience hand-offs and therefore delays that could be avoided by more joined-up working.

The review has identified a range of 16 opportunities and their implications - see Appendix A. In summary, there are 3 themes with related work packages:

Theme 1 - How it works

- Work package 1 - customer information
- Work package 2 - risk assessment
- Work package 3 - more upfront.

Theme 2 – Enabling change

- Work package 4 - ICT
- Work package 5 - culture change.

Theme 3 - Service delivery models

- Work package 6 - internal refocus
- Work package 7 - external options.

These are described in more depth in section 7 – The future.

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3. Purpose of the review

Outcomes and success criteria

The review outcomes and success criteria are:
- Streamlined processes providing faster and more efficient delivery
- Greater responsiveness to customers' needs
- Higher satisfaction among customers and stakeholders
- Reduction in costs
- Higher levels of staff motivation and satisfaction
- Improved knowledge skills in up-front services
- Improve detection of fraud
- Increase income through collecting more of the revenue due to us
- Delivery against measures within the Strategic Plan action plan
- Helping Colchester be a place where people want to live and work.

WWW improvement programme

Fundamental Service Reviews are a critical part of the Way We Work programme, aiming to use the customer's experience to drive change in the way our services are delivered. The Fundamental Service Review (FSR) approach is to align services with key elements of the programme - customer excellence, people, flexible working, and place shaping - to work towards Strategic Plan priorities.

Customer excellence, efficiencies and effectiveness are the key drivers of any FSR. The decision to undertake a FSR is driven by any combination of the 3 variables.

However, each review to date has had its own drivers, timescales, priorities, levels of engagement, and expectations. We have learnt from the experiences of these reviews, and each will continue to have a differing approach. This will be evidenced by the adoption of the most appropriate delivery model for the service, and its successful implementation, monitoring and measuring of performance improvements.

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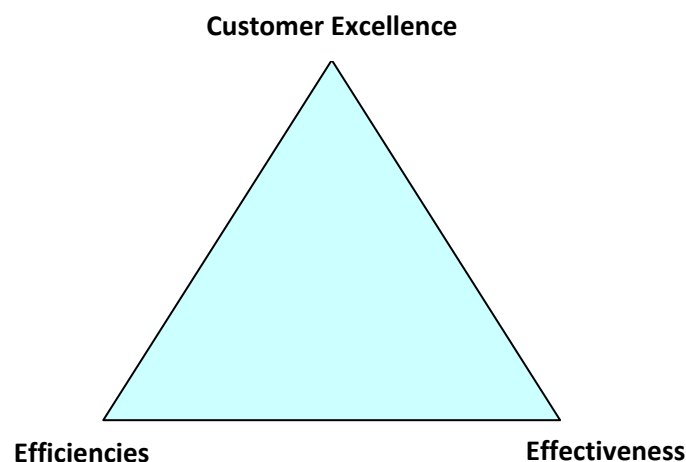
The Revenues and Benefits Approach

The Revenues and Benefits review has built on the experience of FSRs to date and has used a dedicated core project team, comprising of service resources and the corporate support team over a condensed and concentrated period of time.

The service resource commitment has been considerable and the advantages over a longer, less intense, less resourced review is speed of progress, greater momentum and increased cross-service working. Additional resources outside the core team have been used to ensure accuracy and where workshops have taken place (staff, stakeholders and corporate technical support), the output has been consistent with the issues identified by the core project team, and potential solutions also have demonstrated commonality.

There have been high engagement levels in this FSR so far through the core project team. However, one key difference is that the engagement sessions with staff and stakeholders for the new service will be taking place after the business case proposals are going through the approval process.

Validation of the new service will therefore be focused on implementation challenges and 'how to', rather than validating the proposals themselves. This decision is based on the quantity and quality of input, which the service and CSC have contributed via the project team, would not then require further validation from a wider group; and that the issues and potential solutions identified in the first workshops were very closely matched.

There is no doubt that the engagement of staff and stakeholders is very important for buy-in, and particularly implementation. Following the excellent example of this in the Housing FSR, there will be engagement events in mid-February to capture any additional ideas, but particularly to engage in how we implement successfully.

There is a challenge to be overcome with future reviews in ensuring participation and engagement across the wider corporate team including HR, ICT and Finance, where tight timescales for workshop events and other contributions can clash with their existing commitments and priorities.

The more intense approach has enabled faster progress, and there is potential to continue this approach into basic implementation planning whilst the business case is being agreed.

There are also potential benefits to managers working through an intense period, as it does seem to ease their own transition along the change curve. The team environment created in an intense project team approach is supportive, challenging but open, and does encourage working together toward solutions that are joined-up.

The last observation is less about the more intense approach but more about it being the third FSR to be undertaken, the commonality of issues being uncovered, and the corporate approach required going forward to the solutions being implemented. Examples of emerging corporate themes would be within ICT, and CSC / Infopoint.

The corporate support team is working across reviews to join up the learning, and identify where the focus needs to be to ensure an excellent customer experience delivered efficiently through effective solutions.

4. Current policy, legislative and wider context

The Welfare Reform Bill published in January 2009 sets the broad context:

"When times are tough, it is more important than ever that we provide people with the extra help they need".

Key policy issues focus on:
- removing barriers to paid work, which is seen as the best route to independence, health and wellbeing for most people
- personalising the support people get to the barriers they face
- a simpler benefits system
- minimising fraud and error
- devolving power to private, voluntary and public providers.

Central Government has stated its commitment to building a strong, healthy and prosperous society, where everyone has the opportunity to make the most of their skills and potential.

The Revenues and Benefits service clearly plays a significant role in the financial aspects of achieving these aims. There will always need to be capacity to ensure that the links between this wider context and the local delivery of the service.

- **How the recession is affecting benefits**

A new **Testing Times** Audit Commission report provides detailed findings of how the recession has affected benefits services. It describes key issues and strategies Councils are using to lessen the impact of the downturn.

In 2008/09, caseloads increased in all council types and regions. Applications for discretionary housing payments increased in 69% of councils surveyed. 82% reported higher demand for debt counselling.

70% have changed their strategy or operational plans to address increases in demand. Changes have included reviewing job roles and activities, more use of telephone interviews and IT solutions, and increased debt counselling.

The Council's innovative 'taking the service to our customers' approach, including benefits takeup events at Colchester's market with 20 local welfare agencies, is highlighted as a case study in the report.

- Supporting people into work: the next stage of housing benefit reform

Central government is currently consulting on the next stage of reforms to support people into work. This consultation states that:

"Housing Benefit helps 4.5 million households across Great Britain afford a decent home. It is not only a crucial part of the support we provide to low income households, whether they are in or out of work, it also guards against homelessness, supports mixed communities, and helps the building of

affordable homes for the future by ensuring a steady stream of income for social sector landlords."

"Our challenge now is to reform Housing Benefit further so that it can help people into work. We want Housing Benefit to support independence and aspiration; we need it to be fair, affordable and sustainable."

- **Putting the frontline first: Smarter Government** – central government plans announced in December 2009 stated:

"Switching transactions to online channels frees up staff to provide personal support and advice. For example, since the online benefit adviser service was launched in April last year, it has saved an estimated 690,000 calls.

So during the next year we will set out service by service how transactions with government will move online as rapidly as possible, starting with student loans, jobseekers allowance, working tax credits and then child benefit. In 2011 we will move to exclusive online vat returns and employer tax returns.

Our aim is - within the next five years - to shift the great majority of our large transactional services to become online only - and this has the potential to save as a first step £400 million, but as transaction after transaction goes online billions more."

Shared services – current policy developments

- **Force Councils to share back office functions?**

Ministers should introduce legislation to force Councils to share back office functions and cut costs, according to a report by Deloitte. A legal duty for Councils to share services would remove the need to build political consensus and address cultural resistance to the concept, the report said.

The report, Stop, start save. Shared service delivery in local government looks at shared standardised processes such as payroll, financial administration and other transaction-driven back office processes.

It states "The potential for significant savings is hampered by the strong desire to protect the sovereignty of individual authorities. In light of budgetary constraints, Deloitte believes there is a compelling case for legislation that would require local government to share back office functions."

"Sharing back office services would not erode local government democracy as Councillors are held accountable for the outputs of their authorities rather than managing support processes. The report also argued that shared services between Councils have rarely succeeded at scale and that local government has failed to deliver the level of savings achieved in the private sector."

- **Our neighbours**

Mid Suffolk has announced plans to share its revenues and benefits services with 3 other Councils. Uttlesford and South Cambs have explored a joint service approach.

5. Understanding the customer experience

Our customer insight also includes Mosaic, Touchstone, caseload analysis and customer contact data. Please also see Appendix C.

The Council's Research and Engagement Team used Mosaic, a modelling tool, to help identify the key characteristics of our Revenues and Benefits customers and gain a better understanding of our customer base.

Touchstone is available to us through our corporate membership of the Institute of Customer Service, and provides us with immediate qualitative insight through conversations with customers who have recently contacted our services and is also complemented by a statistical analysis. A cross-service team carried out a Touchstone project in November 2009 with customers who had recently contacted the CSC.

The CSC carried an analysis of the caseload and customer contact data – see Appendix B.

- **Mosaic**

There has been a significant increase in claims from customer groups we would not normally expect to be claiming benefits. There have also been increasing numbers of proven fraud cases amongst owner-occupiers with large amounts of consumer debt. They also account for the largest increase in the number of Council tax summonses since 2008, followed by single people and childless couples. These groups have changed the overall profile of customers contacting the CSC, and e-communication such as internet and online is their strong preference for contact – not making visits to our offices or reading printed leaflets.

- **Touchstone - summary of customer views**

The chart below shows that customers rated their contact with staff more highly than their experience of the process. Indicators of customer satisfaction relating to contact with staff ranged from 93% to 78%, whilst those relating more to process ranged from 65% to 37%.

The majority of customer comments on staff were very complimentary with staff seen as polite, friendly, helpful and understanding.

The chart below shows that customer satisfaction with process issues declines significantly over time, where customers are needing to contact us more than once and their enquiry is still ongoing.

Indicative levels of satisfation at different stages of the customer journey: Revenues and Benefits service

The lowest ratings were for timeliness and being kept informed. Common themes for customers included:
- not knowing what was happening with their claim or how long it will take
- feeling stressed by claims taking a long time to process and worrying about outstanding rent or Council tax
- being passed from one department to another or their problem being passed on to another department
- that staff knew what they were doing but the process and forms were confusing
- a lack of consistency with experiences vary depending on member of staff or in relation to the different benefits
- customers found benefits letters confusing and contradictory
- customers contacting us repeatedly to find out what is happening with their claim.

Caseload analysis and customer contact data

There was an increase of 14% in housing and Council tax benefit claims between 2006 and 2009, and an increase of 26% in Customer Service Centre contacts for the same period. This is based on the volumes of customer contacts and live claims for the month of October each year.

35% of all CSC calls relate to Revenues and Benefits. Of these calls, 71% are from customers who are chasing progress, asking for clarification or making changes. In 2008/09, the total customer contacts for Housing and Council Tax Benefit came to 62,504 – made up of 33,010 phone calls and 29,494 visits.

6. Current service position

Current pressures on the Revenue and Benefit services

- The local impact of the credit crunch has resulted in an increased number of customers accessing Council services. This includes a significant increase in the benefit caseload and customers requiring help and advice in paying their Council tax and business rates.
- There has been a 140% increase in this level of activity as a result.
- The need to meet challenging national and local performance targets.
- The Channel Migration Strategy shows that an increasing proportion of the Council's customers are under economic pressure and that more are now in need of assistance. In addition, staff are finding that they need to spend an increasing amount of time on individual customer interactions as customers' problems are now increasingly complex, and this is linked to the 'different type' of customer who have never claimed before and do not understand how the benefits system works.
- There has been a 9.1% increase in caseload (number of claimants in October 2009 v October 2008). Previous year-on-year increases have been between 1% and 2%. Please see Appendix D for an analysis of housing and Council tax benefit claims for the last 4 years. Highlights include a 28.5% increase in claims from private tenants which equates to a 30.1% increase in the value of payments made to them – totalling £10.2 million in 2009 compared with £6.3 million in 2006.
- Of the 9.1% increase in caseload, 12.6% are increasingly complex cases, adding about a third to the processing time. This relates directly back to the 'different type' of customer mentioned above – namely first generation homeowners with high levels of consumer debt, older professionals who have been made redundant, and upwardly mobile people claiming for the first time.

The longer-term impact and changes go wider than the current economic situation, and include:

- The borough's population is expected to increase by 6% by 2011 and 31% by 2021 which will create more demand for Revenues and Benefits services.
- The time it will take for claimants to return to the wage levels they experienced before the recession.
- We are experiencing year-on-year reductions in the Revenue Support Grant and the Benefits Administration Subsidy, despite an ever-increasing workload.
- Potentially, savings could be matched by a reduction in subsidy/grants, and therefore there would be no net budget saving to CBC.
- For 2010/11 we have been notified of a reduction in our Administration Grant of £70,000. This is income lost to the Council. Cabinet has agreed to allocate an additional £70,000 to the Service in its 2010/11 Budget as one-off funding. This will allow the Service to implement the recommendations of this report which will recoup this funding, plus considerably greater savings from 2011/12 onwards. This means however that the full savings from the project will not be translated into an equivalent saving in the Council's net Budget.

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How Revenues and Benefits works currently and what it costs

This section gives an overview of our performance, our people resource, the numbers of customers and workflow.

Current performance

The service performance overall is on target – see half-year performance report to Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel 9 December 2009.

In January, Resource Management was the first of our services to achieve the new Customer Excellence Standard following an independent assessment. This Standard replaces the Charter Mark, which the service has held since 1994.

However, there are concerns around speed of processing and increasing pressures on teams due to volumes, population changes and the economic situation. Three-quarters of new claims where the claimant has provided all necessary information are processed within 7 calendar days of receipt. Where delays are experienced this is caused by having to 'chase' the claimant for information. The latter cases have a disproportionate effect on the figures for average processing time.

The key indicators for Revenues and Benefits are shown in Appendix D.

The focus is on quantitative measures as the national focus for these services is about 'the numbers'. The measures are not focused on the customer – so the in-service focus for performance is very much about processes.

Current resource commitment

A current profile of activity, resource allocation and spend is summarised here:

Activity	Notes	Resource Commitment FTE*	** Staff Cost £000s	Other Direct Cost £000s	** Direct Income £000s
CSC		15.1	337.4		
Assessments		27.6	735.2	46	1
Fraud and Visiting		7	209.7	8	
Billing		5.3	136.5	144	259
Enforcement		3.6	87.3	9	367
Control		4.9	125.4	124	2
Admin and Scanning (now corporate)		8.7	196.2	189	6
Team Leaders and Managers		12.6	501		
Total		84.8	2,328.7	520	635

* fulltime equivalent staff

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Current customer numbers and flow of work

The service, including the CSC, handles a total of 165,500 customer contacts a year:

Total customer contacts	By service area		
165,500	Revenues – 83,000	CSC	61,256
		In-service	21,744
	Benefits – 82,500	CSC	62,504
		In-service	20,000

Within both services, this shows a significant amount of work being received direct into the back office – this is 41,744 in-service customer contacts.

Of the total number of contacts, the resulting amounts of work are as follows:

	Number of customer contacts	Resulting in work (new or changes)	Potentially avoidable	Difference as %
Benefits	82,500	45,000	37,500	55%
Revenues	83,000	55,000	28,000	65%
Total	165,500	100,000	65,500	

This chart shows that 65,500 contacts do not result in a new piece of work or change to the existing work – namely 37,500 in Benefits and 28,000 in Revenues. This means that these 65,500 contacts could potentially be avoidable.

7. The future

The proposals for the new service are presented as 3 themes of work:

- How it works (customer journey and process)
- Enabling change
- Service delivery.

There are many interdependencies within and across the 3 themes with the full business benefits only being realised at the point of full implementation.

The business case describes the journey of change to how the service works, what needs to be in place to enable the change to happen, and then how the service itself is delivered.

There is significant opportunity to both improve the customer experience and reduce the cost of the service, one example being the 65,500 customer contacts identified in the initial business case that did not result in back office work.

THEME 1 - How it works

Many opportunities have been identified to improve both the customer journey and the service efficiency and effectiveness.

Within this theme of work are 3 work packages:

- Customer information
- Risk assessment
- Moving more upfront.

CUSTOMER INFORMATION

By providing our customers with clear and accessible information we will decrease volumes of work, educate and enable customers to use appropriate channels, decrease duplication and rework caused by unclear communication.

This work package also focuses on improving customers' understanding and involvement through education, and using customer insight to identify the best use of education resources. In benefit claims we have identified an opportunity to increase who else can help which will involve partners working with our customers to complete an online benefit calculator and subsequent claim form if they qualify.

Overall we are aiming to discourage customers from taking unnecessary journeys through a process that they do not qualify for by education and clear information. Communication generated from within the service will be clear concise and accessible. We will provide the tools and the training to partner organisations to ensure customers can be helped through processes they qualify for online.

A range of channels will help to offer the variety and choice which our customers need and expect. Our customer base is increasingly diverse – some people will always prefer an assisted journey with a person speaking to them, whether that is face-to-face or phone; but others want a 'no touch' option such as e-mail or online self-serve at a time of their choosing.

The Touchstone project highlighted customers' frustration with having to make repeated contact with us to find out what was happening with their claim or query. While more than 85% of customers were happy that staff took adequate time, listened, were friendly and polite, and treated them fairly – only 37.7% felt that they were kept well-informed.

A customer currently has to contact us 4 times about their case on average, rather than just once. Having to make repeated contacts and feeling uninformed about progress can be difficult and stressful for customers, and is also an additional pressure on staff resources and their ability to help the customer.

The chart on page 11 of this report shows how customer satisfaction declines significantly over time (also see appendix C). This is followed by the common themes for customers including finding our process and forms hard to understand, and our benefits letters confusing and contradictory.

The Mosaic project shows that the profile of our customer base has changed. The 'new' groups - owner-occupiers with large amounts of consumer debt, and well-educated single people or childless couples, often living in newly-built private housing estates - have changed the overall profile of our customers. Phone or e-communication such as internet and online is their strong preference for contact – they do not want to visit our offices or read printed leaflets.

Business benefits

- promotes self-help
- reduces queries
- reduce duplication
- reduction in assessing unnecessary claims
- reduce footfall in CSC
- collaborative approach with stakeholders
- focused effort
- will not use 'blanket' approach to customers
- better access to services
- clear, concise literature
- interactive website that guides customer through the process.

The numbers

The initial business case identified that 165,500 revenues and benefits contacts each year are made by customers across the service and the CSC. Of these, 65,500 contacts did not result in an item of work and could therefore be avoidable. All of the opportunities identified in customer information directly reduce avoidable customer contact. Please also see Appendix E.

Implementation will reduce overall customer contacts by 65,500, leaving 100,000 contacts linked to items of work to be processed.

The difference in channel usage from As Is to To Be is shown in the table and bar graph below:

Channel Management

Channel changes overall - indicative			
	As Is	To Be	Difference
Phone	81000	22600	-58400
Face to Face	21000	2700	-18300
Online - no touch	4300	36000	31700
Self-serve @ CSC	0	11600	11600
Visit	600	600	0
Post	40000	8000	-32000
DWP	15900	18500	2600
3rd Party	2700	0	-2700
Total changes	165500	100000	65500
Percentage change			Total 40% decrease

Channel changes - overall summary

- 72% decrease in phone calls
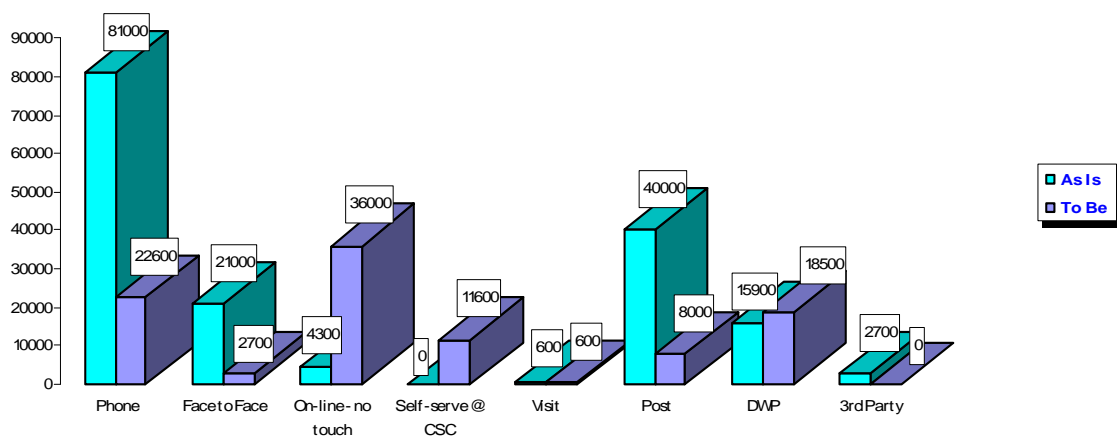- 8-fold decrease in face to face contact
- 8-fold increase in online contact
- 11600 switch to self-serve at CSC
- No change in visits
- 5-fold reduction in post
- 6% increase in direct contact from DWP
- 100% decrease in third party contact (switch to online/self-serve)

Total change

40% reduction in contact

Channel Management

Channel changes overall - indicative

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In addition, processing work in the benefits team will be reduced by 26% as non-qualifying claimants will not enter the system at all. This will be due to an online calculator being completed prior to the online claim form that will identify the non-qualifiers before the claim reaches the benefits team.

	As Is	To Be
Claims entering benefits system	9,646	7,146
Claims with benefit entitlement	7,146	7,146
Claims that do not qualify for benefit	2,500	0*

*In the 'To Be' world, it will not be possible to access the claim form without the claimant or an advocate working their way through the online calculator first.

The money

Savings

Customer information work package – opportunity for savings	
opportunity – gross	£170,992
Cost to implement*	- £42,000
Net saving =	**£128,992**

*note – this does not include the internal programme management resource as this is part of our corporate priorities discussion. If internal resource is not available we will need to increase the £42k cost

The £170,992 saving opportunity from improved customer information is:

- £19,811 gross saving due to 26% reduction in volume due to non-qualifying claims. (As-Is – even though the claims did not result in a payment, they still absorbed benefits officer time to review the case, input in the system, update case notes and finally notify the customer)
- £151,181 gross saving through eliminating the avoidable customer contacts across both revenues and benefits.

Implementation costs

IT Costs
- interactive online presence simplifies and guides customers through the process - including FAQs and system-generated alerts to prompt customers to update their case information
- systems connected to third parties
- clear letters to customers
- automated phone routing (eg press 1 for claim).

This is based on the assumption that Connected Customer (including case tracker) will be a corporate ICT cost, and is therefore not included in the work package numbers. The basis for Connected Customer is currently being worked up into a business case for consideration by Senior Management Team.

Internal Resource
- training
- liaison with partners
- project to deal with design of all communications.

External Consultancy
- to show best use of templates
- aid web design.

Internal Project Resource
- to educate staff and stakeholders about channels for claiming.

How the approach will work

- targeted information
- redesign of communications
- better signposting
- the Council website will be more interactive and provide solutions for the customer without the need to contact the Council.
- frequently asked questions (FAQs) to give information to customer
- online calculators – incorporating interactive questions and solutions for staff and customer
- tracking system so customer will always know at what stage they are at
- tailored online forms.

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RISK ASSESSMENT

Prevention of fraud and ensuring data accuracy is high on the list of priorities for the Revenues and Benefits service. Government grants and subsidy can be affected by inaccuracies, non-compliance and fraud recovery can also earn income. A result of this and legislative rules, there is a 'one size fits all' approach to provision of evidence and levels of verification of evidence provided. Risk is not assessed upfront on an individual customer basis and asking for the right evidence and waiting for it to be provided is the main reason for delays in claims being processed.

The key element enabled by technology is real-time verification software. This scores risk at the end of the assessment and will request an appropriate level of evidence for the customer. The net effect will be significantly less evidence needed overall (potentially none for low risk categories), which removes a large percentage of delays and aids automation and self-serve channels. Fraud resources are also more targeted toward high risk cases therefore more effective. This project has been piloted at 2 authorities and is being extended and developed.

The Touchstone project (appendix C) showed that 37.7% of those customers felt that they were kept well informed throughout the process. Common customer themes were 'feeling stressed' by claims taking a long time to process and worrying about outstanding rent or Council tax bills, and that they were being passed from department to department.

Business Benefits

- no multiple contacts for evidence
- reduced contact with CSC
- reduced processing time
- claim more responsive to customer
- more appropriate evidence
- no duplication (providing evidence to several bodies)
- complete claims coming in as verified by RSL
- gateway remains secure.

The numbers

Two Councils have piloted risk verification software on benefit claims. Statistics from Lambeth and Glasgow suggest that the risk profile is:
- 57% case volume – low risk. This means that potentially no evidence is required so low risk cases could be assessed over the phone with the customer
- 20% case volume – medium risk where evidence is gathered and claim assessed
- 23% case volume – high risk. At this point the case is put into the visit channel where the evidence can be gathered at home, and also potentially assessed given the mobile assessment opportunity.

Our numbers are based on applying low, medium and high risk ratings to new claims only. There is the potential for further savings if applied to changes of circumstance as well.

The money

Risk assessment work package – opportunity for savings	
opportunity – gross	£60,000
Cost to implement*	- £37,000 set-up plus £17,000 on-cost
Net saving =	**£23,000 net saving in year 1**

*note – this does not include the internal programme management resource as this is part of our corporate priorities discussion. If internal resource is not available we will need to increase the £37k cost

Savings

Total gross saving for new claims across risk and more upfront is £78,927; therefore risk verification software delivers 76% of the gross saving for new claim processing.

Risk software is also a major enabler for the more upfront package which is set to deliver a gross saving of £447,631, by enabling channel switching where for example, low risk claims can be assessed at first customer touchpoint.

By completing high risk claims via visits, efficiencies can be gained by gathering all information and evidence at one point. Currently 23% of claims processed are defective, ie no payment is made due to a deadline being reached before claim is completed. This causes inordinate numbers of queries for the CSC as well as avoidable rework time for the assessment team. Risk assessment, along with better customer information and education, and more done upfront will substantially reduce this 23% statistic, and will deliver the process efficiencies and cost savings set out above.

23% of potentially valid claims would now be paid, as they did not become defective. We would therefore be increasing the overall benefit paid out by the Council to customers. This would help us to achieve our life opportunity goals for customers – opening the benefits system up to a wider number of people, who need this revenue stream to maximise their income sources.

Implementation costs

IT Spend
- Risk and Verification Portal software - £35k year 1 and £17k annual cost thereafter.

Internal Resource
- collaboration with stakeholders to set-up initial process/procedures
- verification training for RSLs.

How the approach will work

- a risk analysis associated with the different processes
- a system that will identify whether the risk is high, medium or low to enable a judgement as to what evidence needed from the customer
- the risk to be delivered to the assessment in real time.

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MOVING MORE UPFRONT

There is a significant opportunity to be realised by moving more work up toward the front of the process and/or the customer first point of contact. This includes enabling customers to self-serve, establishing needs at the first point of contact and giving expert advice at that point, completing benefit calculators online and fully automating claim forms leading to faster assessment and claim award.

The customer contacts and resulting back office work will be seamless and timely with all evidence or information required being present prior to being put into a processing environment. Enabling customers to self-serve has high levels of dependency on joined-up ICT, such as Connected Customer.

There are also significant opportunities to enable officers to work with customers at their home, in partner sites and community facilities and all of this enabled by technology. The key elements enabled by technology are: basic e-claim form, Connected Customer (self-serve), integrated achieve forms, full system access off-site and an Idox / Academy solution that is fully integrated.

The Touchstone project (page 11 and appendix C) shows how customers would benefit from more being done upfront. It would really help in addressing issues raised such as customers not knowing what was happening with their claim, how long it would take to get an answer, inconsistency and long processing times leading to stress and worry.

Business Benefits

- improved customer journey
- can resolve own issues (encouraging self-help)
- reduction in contact with the CSC – helps with NI 14 avoidable contact
- improved accuracy of information received
- reduced staff costs
- enhanced service
- immediate result
- quick access to information
- faster process
- reduction in reconsiderations/appeals.

The numbers

Benefits new claims

Standard Claims - 83% standard claims to be completed online (either by customer at home, customer with a third party) or self-serve at CSC. Guide customers away from sending new claims in via post (currently 57% volumes) – slower to process due to scanning and workflow process, documents can get lost causing peaks in queries, cost to return documents. To Be – online forms plus visits for vulnerable, high risk claims and also where the customers request a visit.

Benefits change of circumstances

8% reduction in volume. Mainly due to reduction in Nil Assessment Adjustments. These are changes (eg correction of name) that do not affect the payment amount. More upfront and Customer Self-serve will reduce basic inputting errors. There will also be a 50% reduction in Reconsiderations. Benefits changes (channel shifts) - 14% aided and processed where possible in CSC; 27% self-served at CSC or online at home.

Revenues

Scanning volumes – drop of 70,417 due to automated forms.
Moves - 87% volume of moves being completed upfront, currently only captured upfront – CSC capture the change, update the system and issue the customer with their updated bill. Discount and Exemptions, Arrangements and pre-checking for reminders/summons runs account for the rest.

The money

Savings

More upfront work package – opportunity for savings	
opportunity – gross	£447,631
Cost to implement*	- £178,000
Net saving =	**£269,631**

*note – does not include the internal programme management resource as this is part of our corporate priorities discussion. If internal resource is not available we will need to increase the £178k cost

Benefits

£18,927 New Claims – relates to reduction in inputting time from the data in the e-calculator feeding through into the systems. Reduction in queries pended due to assessment only being started when all evidence is received.

£266,376 Changes - which include:
•   £106,810 saving on changes forwarded by the DWP where processing time is reduced by 50% (from 60 minutes to 30 minutes) due to the ETD module which will pre-populate key fields reducing inputting time.
•   £63,376 of queries resulting in a change that can now be actioned on the front line.
•   66% cost reduction (£45k) in handling changes over the phone where CSC can now action the system change in real time, compared to previously gathering information which was then sent to the benefits team to action
•   The remainder cost savings are achieved through promotion of more self-serve options for changes – 27% to be handled either online or using the self-serve terminals in the CSC.

Revenues

£17,298 Direct Debit saving because done upfront (CSC can now complete and update the system in real time) or customer completes the form online which interfaces directly into the system. Currently 69% handled via CSC who capture data which is then passed back to the control team to effect the change.

£69,536 Scanning - saving due to move to e-claims/forms and automatic loading forms into Idox; reduced volumes due to lower evidence required and more items being processed upfront therefore reducing volumes passed to back office.

£75,495 Change of Circumstances – 70% due to moves (£52,489) with the remainder attributed to arrangements discounts and exemptions. This saving is from moving more upfront, enabling the frontline officers to gather the information and update the relevant systems in real time. Currently the information is gathered and sent to the Control and Billing teams to effect the change.

Implementation costs

IT spend
- to enable home visits
- software to enable self-serve
- freephone
- Connected Customer
- hardware – scanners and barcodes to manage gathering and routing of evidence
- Decision Tree – support frontline officers in terms of providing expertise and ensuring consistency amongst staff dealing with customer queries.

Internal project resource
- to manage change/engage staff
- to promote self-serve
- to monitor the movement of resources from Revenues and Benefits to CSC
- interactive IT system to provide expertise to 'skill' staff
- training to multi-skill staff
- one system log-in to promote flexibility.

The review assumes that the redesign of the CSC will incorporate self-serve areas and the technology – and any associated costs - are not shown here.

How the approach will work

- an intelligent form that will record all information relating to Revenues and Benefits
- integration of intelligent online forms with Capita and Idox
- hub of self-serve terminals will be available in the CSC
- assisted self-serve
- experts on the frontline to answer more complex queries
- floorwalkers available to assist customer with self-serve
- staff able to deal with a query and assess at the same time either face to face or over the phone.

THEME 2 – Enabling change

In order to deliver the proposed changes and realise the significant benefits, effort and attention has to be paid to the enabling theme. This will require a joined-up corporate approach to prioritising work, particularly around ICT who will have significant involvement as the business case and strategy evolves.

Within this theme of work are two work packages:
- Joined-up ICT
- Cultural change (organisational readiness).

JOINED-UP ICT

ICT has featured heavily in many of the opportunities, both customer journey and process-related. The current ICT strategy has delivered many benefits to the service overall, funding the e-claim specifically and delivering a flexible working solution that officers can use to work in people's homes, partner sites and in the community. It is recognised that there are improvements still to be made.

The development of a new ICT Strategy is about to start.

Within existing processes and work practices there are problems ranging from small quick fixes to large corporate solutions required. Many of the problems translate into access to programme, project or supplier consultant expertise.

On the positive side many of the solutions are not new software or products – they are more about better use of or sharing of existing expertise and solutions. This has also been reflected in the experiences of FSRs in Planning, Protection and Licensing and in Housing.

Corporate Solutions

FSRs are focused on delivering significant improvements in the customer experience, efficiency and effectiveness, and we have identified a joined-up approach to ICT as a key enabler.

Requirements include enabling customers to self-serve, facilitating information sharing between services and partner organisations, having a single view of the customer, improving workflow, reporting capabilities and the functionality of our communication channels. (A detailed summary of the links between the opportunities identified, the ICT requirements and the benefits of the joined-up approach is included in Appendix F).

At service level, progress can be made towards implementation using existing solutions. However, opportunities such as the full introduction of a risk-based approach would also require investment in Risk and Verification Software.

It is apparent from this and previous FSRs that many of these ICT solutions are also required within other service areas, and there are many interdependencies between the different ICT solutions. Delivery of all the necessary ICT requirements to deliver the full business benefits is unlikely to be achieved by the services in isolation, but be dependent on corporate solutions and approach to joining up ICT.

Business benefits
In line with the FSR approach, the benefits of a joined-up approach to ICT for the Revenues and Benefits Services are summarised below:

Customer
- enables customers to self-serve or complete form at first point of contact
- one single view of customer, less duplication, easier to share information
- channels, services and information targeted to customers needs
- customers get decisions more quickly, journey less stressful
- reduced likelihood of debts accruing.

Efficiencies
- reduction in contact levels, fewer repeat enquiries, less duplication of effort, information and resource
- effort released and targeted where needed
- savings from eliminating paper forms
- improved end-of-year process resulting from customer choice of payment profile
- fewer overpayments, lower recovery costs.

Effectiveness
- joined-up approach between back and front office, maximising the expertise of both CSC and service staff at the front end
- helps reduce need for contact with other CBC services such as debt, rent arrears recovery, housing advice or partner organisations
- customers to play a pro-active role in managing claims and updating information.

The numbers

All of the numbers relating to numbers, efficiencies and percentage reductions are incorporate within the 'how it works' theme.

The money

A significant capital investment associated with ICT for improving revenues and benefits service delivery, and for generating revenue savings is required. The extent of the capital investment is yet to be determined fully, although working figures have been used to scope the opportunities.

Corporate ICT is evaluating the detail as this proposal is being developed. The implementation planning will include firmer costings for each ICT improvement.

What the new approach will look like

The detailed requirements from this and other reviews could be grouped into key themes which form the basis for a programme and project-based approach with a clear focus on the business solutions required to improve the customer experience, efficiency and effectiveness.

Identifying the ICT enablers for each business solution will enable us to identify delivery priorities and investment needed across the Council to delivery its business solutions.

Suggested themes include:

- Channel development, implementation and promotion

Maximising use of resources to give customers the ability to use a communication route which best meets their needs and preferences. Helps to ensure customer experiences the same high levels of service and delivery however they choose to contact us, improve customer satisfaction, achieve efficiencies and manage the increased demand for access.

- Web development

Key to improving customer information, enabling self-serve options and a joined-up approach to service provision.

- Systems development, integration, access

Key to ensuring information can be shared across Council services, enabling process and workflow improvements, enabling customers to 'tell us once' in line with central government's initiative. Increasing emphasis on joined-up, partnership working, efficiency, and personalisation places greater emphasis on the need to be able to share information across service and organisational boundaries.

- Personalisation

Enabling services and information to be tailored to customer's needs, interests and preferences in line with their expectations of excellent customer service. This means needing to provide information only once, having one customer record which can be viewed by customers and staff, customers being able to adapt/customise their 'home page', preferred mix of channels and update personal information. Up-to-date customer insight is needed to enable this

- Workflow

Efficient workflow is key to process improvement, avoiding double handling, improving customer journeys and reducing the total time it takes to deal with a piece of work or customer enquiry. It also helps to make processes easier to manage, improving ability to identify problems and build in appropriate controls

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- Data management

Consistency of reporting, avoid unnecessary reports, collecting or retaining unnecessary information. Ensuring openness and transparency through freedom of information and protecting personal data. Intelligent reporting – targeted reporting to ensure efficient and effective performance management, particular around key issues such and channel management and customer experience.

- Payment methods

As with any other channel, our payment methods need to enable customers to pay in the way they choose but also balance this with the Council's need for efficiency. Need to effectively manage changes in technology and the wider environment such as the abolition of cheques by 2018.

- Procurement

A joined-up approach across the Council or with other organisations would help to ensure an efficient and effective mix of systems and products avoiding duplication of effort, costs and resources in terms of research, procurement and introduction of new systems or adaptations/upgrades to existing systems.

- Stakeholder management

Is key to developing and implementing an effective ICT strategy, achieving buy-in and securing the necessary resources. It also provides the potential to maximise the use of knowledge and expertise of stakeholders.

How the approach will work

- Fundamental Service Reviews identify ICT requirements
- Requirements form the basis for work packages, which form the basis of a Corporate ICT Strategy
- Strategy Development and implementation sits within the Way We Work programme
- Corporate ICT Strategy should be developed by cross-service project teams with the engagement of internal and external stakeholders to ensure that customers really are at the heart of service provision across the Council.

CULTURAL CHANGE

Officers within the service and the CSC will require support, coaching and some training and development in order to effectively deliver the service being designed. The shifts toward more upfront will mean officers who have been working in a transactional performance-driven culture will have a shift in emphasis towards their customer-based skills, and existing customer-facing officers may need to develop deeper service knowledge to help a customer further into a process.

There is an existing culture of 'skills silos' as Revenues and Benefits are split. Even within Benefits, officers work in specific areas so for example visiting officers will have a high level of customer-facing skills, but less knowledge of assessment.

There will be a greater degree of multi-skilling not only across the service but potentially cross-services as well in the longer term.

The cultural change programme (Way We Work) has a strand of work dedicated to 'people' from within which support will be sought.

Managers will also require help, support and coaching to manage change for themselves and lead change with their teams.

There will need to be a change management programme to ensure a smooth and successful transition. The previous FSRs have both faced people and culture challenges, and have used HR Business Partners for the support required in change, consultation and recruitment processes. It is important that a transparent, fair and consistent approach is used, and that learning is transferred across reviews.

Such fundamental change does give services the opportunity to address any existing issues such as any grading discrepancies or competitive pay arrangements - either external or internal.

Business benefits

- faster, smoother implementation
- achieve and sustain the change
- supported, valued people skilled to deliver their services
- efficient service delivery, making best use of resources
- cross-Council working delivering high quality, customer-focused service within efficient, effective customer-centric structures
- focus on performance by improving the customer journey.

The money

A budget for training, coaching and development to support the implementation plan will be built into the overall costs as they emerge.

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How the approach will work

- change management plan for taking people (team and managers) through the implementation
- support from HR Business Partners in any reorganisation and structural design, ensuring learning is carried across from previous FSRs
- the training and development plan for ensuring that people have the right skills for multi-skilled roles
- staff will work across services to bring customer queries together, for example Housing and Benefit issues would be addressed as a whole to help the customer and put them at the heart of the solution
- there is a need to increase people's trust and confidence in the technology itself, and develop their skills to use it
- flexible working enables staff to work in different ways, different locations and at different times to suit customer needs, and to better match their work/life balance
- the Way We Work change programme will continue to keep 'our people' and 'our customers' as key themes, building on the successes to date.

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THEME 3 - Service Delivery

How the service is delivered and by whom is integral to this FSR. Once designed, the 'how the service works' theme requires a delivery model.

The project team has worked on outlining views on pooling, centre of excellence and outsourcing models. Internal service delivery design will include a management structure based upon the 'TO BE' service design.

The delivery model is designed to ensure that efficiencies are taken whilst the service is firmly internal. The incremental approach to implementation will ensure that the direction of travel is always toward improvement.

However, whilst assessing whether any major investment is required, this will be compared back to an outsourced cost model. This means that any major investment is always weighed up against the alternative of using an outsourced delivery model, therefore saving the investment needed.

This theme has two work packages:
- Internal refocus
- External options.

INTERNAL REFOCUS

There are two main features to this section of the business case.

Firstly, what the new service should look like to deliver the 'how it works', and how that service delivery is managed both in terms of the number of managers and where the accountability is for the customer experience. The delivery of revenues and benefits has to be seamless across both the service teams and the CSC.

Support functions will be grouped and merged into one team as a Professional Support Unit (PSU), in line with other FSR structures in Planning, Protection and Licensing (now Environmental and Protective Services) and in Housing.

This approach ensures that efficient support is available across the front and back office within Revenues and Benefits – with longer term opportunities to look at PSUs on a more corporate basis. The elements of the PSU would include ICT, control, central scanning, communications, admin, training, project support, and FSR implementation.

Secondly, there is an opportunity to take a more joined-up approach to corporate debt and look to pull Council officers who deal with other debt issues together. From a customer view, this will provide a joined-up Council debt plan to address all of their Council debt issues. From an organisational viewpoint, it will focus resources on a customer – 'one Council: one debt', not 'many debts: many Council contacts' – where currently lots of duplication of effort and officer time is spent, with multiple appointments made and so on for different debts being dealt with separately.

Business Benefits

- reduction in staff/management costs
- shared resources
- reduced duplication and officer time
- quicker turnover (no waiting for another team to deal)
- single point of contact
- consistent response
- simpler organisational structure
- better accountability
- streamline procedures/processes
- staff able to follow case through to completion
- customer-driven process
- better co-ordinated approach to debt
- consistent and targeted enforcement.

The money

Internal refocus will include a new service structure which is anticipated to reduce the number of staff and managers. Management savings are not shown in this report as structure remains in the design phase.

The corporate debt team is expected to be cost-neutral as a minimum, but requires further cross-service work.

Internal restructure is dependent on both the enabling work packages being delivered, as roles will change significantly for example team leaders will only have capacity to increase their training responsibilities if Idox issues are fully resolved.

Work is underway to firm up the opportunity to restructure. The views of Leadership Team will be sought as this work evolves.

The training function which is retained in service will deliver a £50,000 saving and is an implementation dependency, as such fundamental change will create a training need.

How the approach will work

- a single generic Revenues and Benefits team that will see the process through end to end
- reconciliation, system queries and the testing of new software/releases will be dealt with by single team within the PSU
- automatic indexing done using barcodes/OCR
- training co-ordinator role will be introduced based within the PSU
- Revenues, Benefits and CSC Team Leaders will attend training courses and cascade training to staff
- use of external trainers to deliver training to larger groups and invite any organisations to attend to offset costs
- to bring together debt collection in a structured, customer-focused and efficient team.

EXTERNAL OPTIONS

The medium-term opportunities to outsource work have been identified at this stage are:

- Council tax 14 day letters
- Business Rates (NNDR) administration.

The intention once the service design is complete is to cost an equivalent service via an external provider to gauge the opportunity. All efficiencies will be taken prior to any outsourcing arrangement being considered. Meetings have and continue to take place with third-party providers both operationally and strategically, to gather information and learning about best practice and alternative models.

Experience to date has shown no immediate service improvement can be delivered by an outsource partner arrangement. The Council's Revenues and Benefits technology is potentially ahead of the outsource providers, although they are looking at technology improvements along the same lines identified in the review.

The overriding reason for looking to an external provider at this point would be to save any upfront investment required to deliver the full savings. It should be noted the investment would also enable other services to deliver a more efficient customer-focused and effective service.

Sharing services and CBC Centre of Excellence are longer term opportunities, where research has indicated a leadtime of 18 months. However both models will be considered as internal service delivery is costed.

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8. Risks

The following list of risks will be verified and added to at the engagement events in February where staff, managers and stakeholders (internal and external) will be asked for risk within implementation on the proposed service design:

- align corporate ICT priorities and costs
- skills, capacity and availability of resource for programming changes and then delivery of the programme
- join up Revenues and Benefits seamlessly – expressly the frontline and processing aspects of the service
- culture change on how we work at all levels, especially when cross-service working is to be achieved
- change of skill-set requires time – changing from a technical focus to customer skills, and customer-skilled improving technical knowledge
- resource availability for implementation planning, and then for implementation
- the effect on performance and outcomes during transition – for example, while staff learn new roles and ways of working.

9. Next Steps / Implementation

The full business case has the following route for governance and approval:

Executive Management Team 19 January 2010
Senior Management Team 25 January
Leadership Team 3 February
Strategic Overview and Scrutiny Panel 2 March
Cabinet 17 March 2010.

Whilst the business case is going through approval, outline implementation planning will be undertaken by the project team with input from all stakeholders.

There will be a medium-term implementation plan to ensure there is improvement through 2010/11, although there will be a need for investment as well as delivery of the £48k budget savings.

Longer term implementation will be dependent on the delivery and timeline of the enabling work packages.

Revenues and Benefits Review - Full Business Case

Appendices – SOSP and Cabinet March 2010

The opportunities identified are under 3 headings:

- customer focus
- enabling change
- service delivery.

- **CUSTOMER FOCUS OPPORTUNITIES**

A1 - Customer Insight

We will use our current customer data and Mosaic modelling to target information for specific customer groups to broaden our understanding of our customer. By doing this we can direct resources better and deliver more relevant information in a more efficient manner. Through effective targeting we will change customer behaviour to encourage self-help and responsibility.

A2 - Clear Customer Information

We will create clear accessible information for our customer will ensure that we get the right information at the right time and avoid unnecessary contact. We will provide better quality letters and written material to make it a simpler and shorter customer journey.

We will have all our information available to our customers in a clear and accessible language, in a way that enables them to tailor this to their needs.

The Council website will be more interactive and provide solutions for the customer without the need to contact the Council. We will look at ways for customers to self-help by giving better signposting to other options via the website.

A4 – Channel Management

By adopting a proactive approach to managing the communication routes ie channels by which our customers contact us, we have a significant opportunity to improve the customer experience in a way which best reflects the diversity of their individual needs and preferences.

B1 - Who else can help?

We will work more closely with other agencies to avoid duplication of effort, information and resource. We will enable our stakeholders to help their customers by using the on-line forms on behalf of the customer.

B2 - Prevention/Place Shaping

This is about distinguishing between preventing avoidable contact and preventing/addressing the underlying needs through place shaping.

Place shaping looks at the borough having a solid economic base with good levels of employment, standards of living, life opportunities, and affordable decent homes – all of which help to reduce the number of people who have to claim. It also looks at our

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role in supporting customers through difficult circumstances and helping them to maximise their income.

C1 - On-line automated claims and assessment

We will create a self-serve culture where customers will be encouraged to access all their information on the website or in the CSC. The customer will be able to self-help by making their claim for their benefit, discount or exemption on-line as well as making payments and payment arrangements.

C2 - Risk Assessment

We will have software that provides a risk assessment at the point of entry of each claim to determine the likelihood of verification errors being present. This will give us greater control over what particular evidence the customer needs to give us that is proportionate and appropriate for the level of risk posed by each claim. This will enable quicker processing and payments for the customer.

We will also extend verification of evidence to third parties such as Registered Social Landlords (RSLs).

C3 - Mobile Assessment

We will enable Revenues and Benefit Officers to visit the customer in the home, to scan/index any evidence on site, and assess their claims. This has a link to self-serve and will mean reduced contact with the CSC as well as giving and quick efficient service to the customer.

E1 - Corporate Debt

We will create a corporate team to deal with debt recovery and enforcement. We will develop a consistent approach to the way we deal with our debtors and develop a fair debt policy.

- **ENABLING OPPORTUNITIES**

To deliver the opportunities and benefits derived from the Fundamental Service Review, there are two enabling factors:

- joined-up and effective use of IT
- change management for people and organisational culture.

F1 - IT Opportunities

- one single record for all CBC customers
- technology so customer can fully self-serve
- workflow definer in Idox to provide a effective workflow process
- an Idox test system to improve training and efficiency.
- achieve forms will be more robust and able to feed direct into back office systems - reduction in manual indexing
- forms completed on-line automatically update Capita systems (including LACI/LAIDS from DWP)
- an interactive system with built in expertise enabling more upfront work with customers and releasing capacity from the 'back' office – 'Decision Tree'
- interactive questions and answers enabling the CSC and the customer to resolve at first contact
- have user profile that would log you into all required systems
- barcodes/Optical Character Recognition software

G1 – People and Culture

We will support staff through the process of change to enable the delivery of the opportunities. We need to have effective change management in place, as service improvement will not happen unless the people and the culture change too. This is about building capacity and capability.

We need to 'keep an eye on the horizon' - an awareness of changes developing in the public and private sector, and see how we could use them as opportunities for CBC, its customers and its services.

Our people need to have the freedom to challenge processes, and be enabled to bring in changes, attitudes and practices which make sense on a daily basis. We need to bring people who 'get' the 3 drivers of customer, effectiveness and efficiency together to move things along faster and across services.

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- **SERVICE DELIVERY OPPORTUNITIES**

H2 – Multi-skilled officers

We will enable our staff to be more flexible within our structure by making them multi-skilled. We will give them an interactive system with built in expertise enabling more upfront work with customers and releasing capacity from the 'back' office. The officers will be able to support the customer through their journey to its resolution

H3 - Service Structure

We will change the service structure to be more flexible and responsive to customer needs. We will explore the potential to work generically effectively pooling skills and experience. By linking resources and processes together we will give a more efficient service.

This will mean:
- a generic Revenues and Benefits team that will see the process though end to end
- one Case Officer to deal completely with the customer
- other similar services grouped together such as Benefits and Housing
- post opening done by one team
- training and policy functions to be spread throughout the service
- Control Team functions – such as reconciliation, testing of software done by one team
- experts on the frontline with the CSC and our internal stakeholders.

I1 – Centre of excellence

We will create a Centre of Excellence where we will provide a service to other local authorities. This will improve our reputation and boost the local economy.

I2 - Outsource

We will consider whether outsourcing all or part of the service will provide a fresh approach to service delivery. We will identify areas that could be included and think about the benefits or implications of this option.

I3 – Pooling of Resources

We will work more effectively with our partners to share resources and skills. This will enable us to provide a more flexible and proactive approach to changing priorities. We will be able to share intelligence to deliver a more efficient and effective service.

	October 2006	October 2007	October 2008	October 2009
Caseload HB and CTB	11 870	11 972 (1% increase)	12 592 (5.2% increase)	13 747 (9.1% increase)
HB	8 629	8 831 (2.3% increase)	9 369 (6.1% increase)	10 294 (9.8% increase)
CTB	3 241	3 141 (3% decrease)	3 223 (2.6% increase)	3 453 (7.1% increase)
Passported claims (1)	not available	not available	8 361	8 982 (7.4% increase)
Standard claims (2)	not available	not available	4 231	4 765 (12.6% increase)
Working Age claims (16-59)	6 424	not available	7 029	8 091 (15% increase)
Elderly claims (60+)	5 446	not available	5 563	5 656 (2% increase)
HB Working Age	5 734	not available	6 434	7 304 (13.5% increase)
HB Elderly	2 895	not available	2 935	2 990 (1.8% increase)
CTB Working Age	690	not available	595	787 (23% increase)
CTB Elderly	2 551	not available	2 628	2 666 (1.4% increase)

(1)Claims in receipt of Income Support, Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based) or Guarantee Pension Credit. (2)All other claims not receiving any of the above

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Tenancy Types

	Oct 2006	October 2007	October 2008	October 2009
Council	4 171	4 129 (1% decrease)	4 165 (0.9% increase)	4 253 (3% increase)
Housing Association	2 176	2 228 (2.4% increase)	2 317 (4% increase)	2 542 (9.7% increase)
Private	2 313	2 474 (7% increase)	2 837 (14.7% inc)	3 646 (28.5% increase)

Council Tax

	Oct 2006	October 2007	October 2008	October 2009
Owner Occupiers	3 166	3 141 (0.7% decrease)	3 212 (2.2% increase)	3 456 (7.5% increase)
Tenants	7 382	7 526 (1.9% increase)	7 829 (4% increase)	8 710 (11.3% increase)

Value of Payments

	Oct 2006	October 2007	October 2008	October 2009
Council Tenants	£6 397 949	£6 705 264 (4.8% increase)	£7 227 224 (7.8% increase)	£7 529 305 (4.2% increase)
HA Tenants	£4 364 892	£4 326 826 (0.8% decrease)	£4 731 554 (9.4% increase)	£5 285 551 (11.7% increase)
Private Tenants	£6 364 318	£6 756 183 (6.2% increase)	£7 810 150 (15.6% increase)	£10 215 308 (30.1% increase)
Council Tax	£8 132 333	£8 544 591 (5.1% increase)	£9 213 573 (7.8% increase)	£10 350 986 (12.3% increase)
Total	£25 259 492	£26 332 864 (4.2% increase)	£28 982 501 (10.1% increase)	£33 381 150 (15.2% increase)

The chart below shows a 23% increase in customer service centre contacts (visits and phone calls) from 48,075 to 62,504 between 2006/07 and 2008/09.

Customer Service Centre contacts for Housing and Council Tax benefits 2006/07 to 2008/09

Year	Visits	Calls
2006-07	26461	21614
2007-08	25341	24394
2008-09	29494	33010
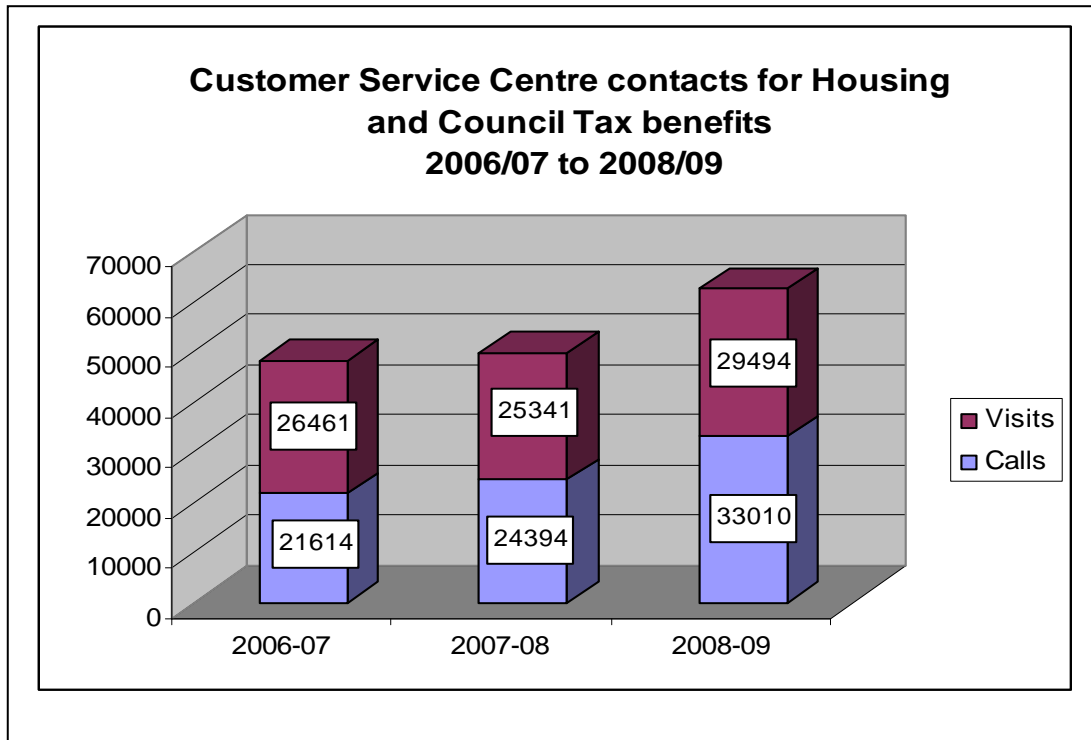
This chart shows the split of activities for the 62,504 customer contacts for 2008/09.
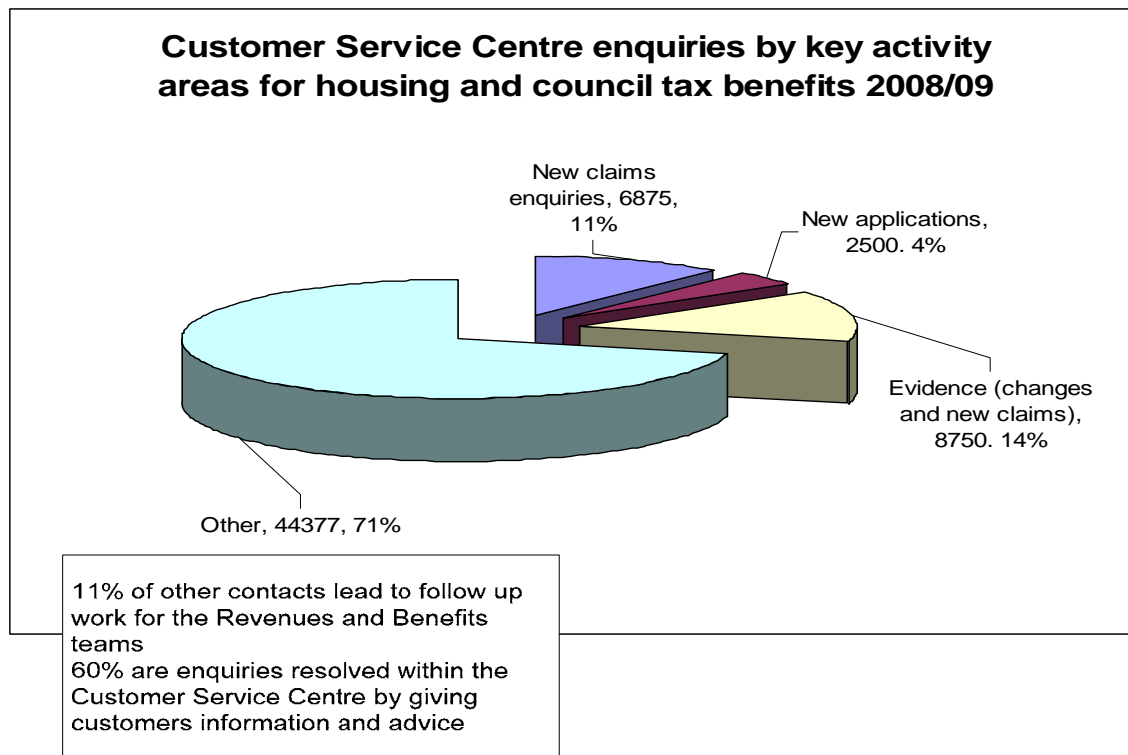
Customer Service Centre enquiries by key activity areas for housing and council tax benefits 2008/09

- New claims enquiries, 6875, 11%
- New applications, 2500. 4%
- Evidence (changes and new claims), 8750. 14%
- Other, 44377, 71%

11% of other contacts lead to follow up work for the Revenues and Benefits teams
60% are enquiries resolved within the Customer Service Centre by giving customers information and advice

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Our customer insight also includes Mosaic, Touchstone, caseload analysis and customer contact data.

The Council's Research and Engagement Team used Mosaic, a modeling tool, to help identify the key characteristics of our Revenues and Benefits customers and gain a better understanding of our customer base. A cross-service team carried out a Touchstone project in November 2009 with customers who had recently contacted the Customer Service Centre (CSC). The CSC ran a report on the caseload and related data.

Caseload analysis and customer contact data
The chart below shows an increase of 14% in housing and council tax benefit claims between 2006 and 2009, and an increase of 26% in CSC contacts for the same period. This is based on the volumes of customer contacts and live claims for the month of October each year.
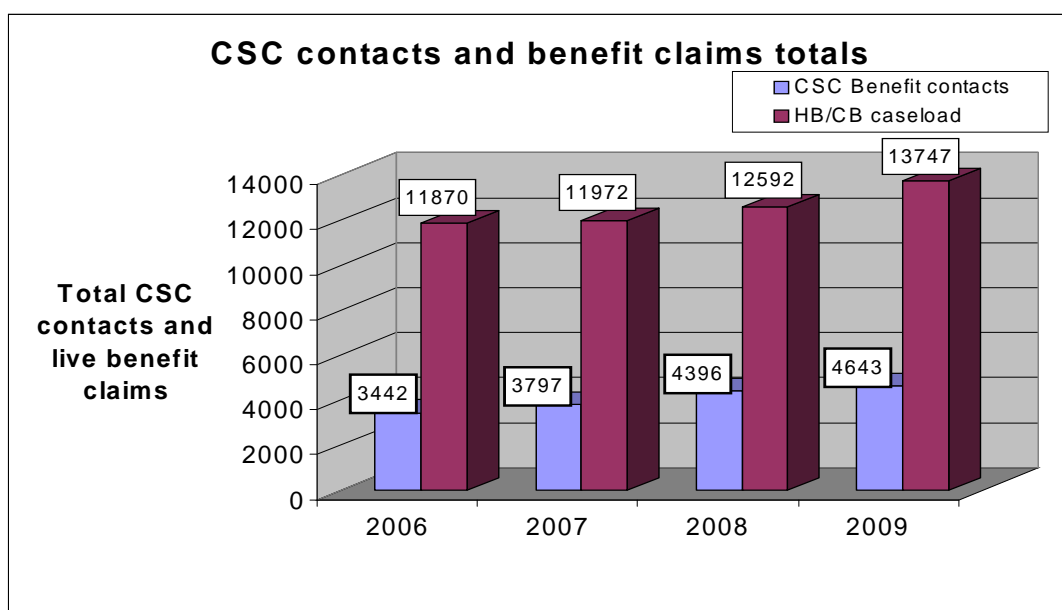
The table on the right shows that 71% of CSC customer enquiries for housing and council tax benefit relates to other enquiries such as changes, clarifications or chasing progress. 35% of all CSC calls relate to Revenues and Benefits.

Customer Service Centre contacts for Housing and Council Tax Benefit			
	2006-07	**2007-08**	**2008-09**
Calls	21614	24394	33010
Visits	26461	25341	29494
Totals	48075	49735	62504

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Mosaic - analysis of claimant data

1. The key findings from Mosaic in terms of the overall profile of housing benefit and council tax claimants are:

- A significant increase in claims from customer groups we would not normally expect to be claiming benefits (see diagram below)

- An increasing number of proven fraud cases amongst owner occupiers with large amounts of consumer debt (Mosaic type B13). The same group also has the largest number of overpayments followed by residents living in social housing (H47)and other residents living on council estates (H46)

- Owner-occupiers with large amounts of consumer debt (B13) also account for the largest increase in the number of council tax summonses since 2008, followed by singles and childless couples.

Housing Benefit
Changes in claimant numbers and differences in communication preferences

Communication preferences (C16)
Receptive
Right of centre press
Telemarketing
Unreceptive
Internet, TV, Posters

Communication preferences (C18)
Receptive
Telephone advice lines
Right of centre press
Unreceptive
Posters, telemarketing, TV

This chart shows the increase in claimant numbers by Mosaic type since January 2008.

The largest increases have been amongst Mosaic Types C16, C18 and C21.

Communication preferences amongst these groups are significantly different to those of claimants who would normally make up the largest group of claimants

Benefits claimants expected to make up the largest proportion claimants:
Residents living in council estates now mostly owner occupiers (H46)

Residents living in social housing (H47)

Communication Preferences (H46)
Receptive
TV, Radio, Posters
Unreceptive
Newspapers, Magazines

Communication Preferences (H47)
Receptive
TV, Telemarketing, Posters, Direct Mail
Unreceptive
Internet, Magazines, Broadsheet newspapers

Change in claimant numbers from January 2008 to present by Mosaic type

Self reliant couples approaching retirement (C16)

Middle aged, middle income families with children (C18)

Young adults (D21)

Communication Preferences (D21)
Receptive
Internet, telephone advice lines, radio, social networks, centre left broadsheets
Unreceptive
Magazines, TV

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Mosaic - analysis of Customer Service Centre contact data

2. The key findings from Mosaic in terms of the overall profile of customers contacting the CSC show a large overall increase in the numbers of customer service contacts for benefit related requests

The significance of changes in profile is that the increasing numbers of customers contacting us amongst Mosaic types B13, E31 and E32 have significantly different communication preferences to customers we would usually expect to be contacting the CSC and in particular have a preference for internet contact - see diagram below.

Profile of Council Tax and Benefit claimants contacting the CSC (1/9/2009 – 11/11/2009)

This chart shows that overall the largest number of contacts have been made by:
Owner occupiers many with large amounts of consumer debt ((B13)
Singles and childless couples in newly build private estates (E32)
Well educated single and childless couples (E31)
Residents living in social housing (H47)

Significantly this shows that singles and childless couples (E31 and E32) are making contact with the CSC at higher levels than those who are claiming benefits
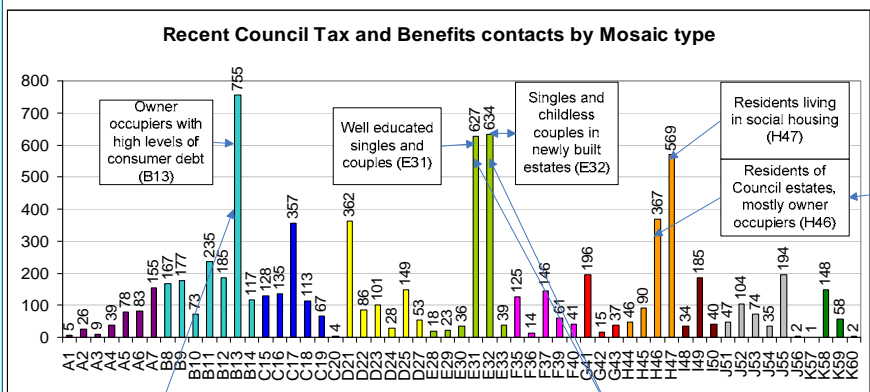
Recent Council Tax and Benefits contacts by Mosaic type

Owner occupiers with high levels of consumer debt (B13)

Well educated singles and couples (E31)

Singles and childless couples in newly built estates (E32)

Residents living in social housing (H47)

Residents of Council estates, mostly owner occupiers (H46)

Benefits claimants expected to make up the largest proportion claimants:
Residents living in council estates now mostly owner occupiers (H46)

Residents living in social housing (H47)

Communication Preferences (H46)
Receptive
TV, Radio, Posters
Unreceptive
Newspapers, Magazines

Communication preferences (H47)
Receptive
TV, Telemarketing, Posters, Direct Mail
Unreceptive
Internet, Magazines, Broadsheet newspapers

Communication preferences (B13)
Receptive
Internet, TV, radio, direct mail

Unreceptive
Heavyweight magazines, newspapers

Communication preferences (E31,32)
Receptive (E31)
Internet, telephone advice lines, heavyweight magazines, broadsheet newspapers
Unreceptive (E31)
TV
Receptive (E32)
Internet, radio, telephone advice lines, centre-left broadsheets
Unreceptive (E32)
TV

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Touchstone - project findings

Touchstone is one of a range of products and services we are able to benefit from as a result of our corporate membership of the Institute of Customer Services (ICS). Touchstone provides us with immediate qualitative insight through conversations with customers who have recently contacted our services and is also complemented by a statistical analysis. The analysis shows that 91% of customers contacting us about Revenues and Benefits do so by phone (49%) or face to face (42%), with the remaining 9% as follows - 6% letter, 2% e-mail and 1% website.

Themes emerging from our analysis of customer comments on contacting us include:

- Customers are prompted to contact us when they need to return claim forms, bring in additional evidence, have documents scanned, have received letters from us, have an appointment or have been advised by another organisation such as Job Centre Plus to contact us.
- Customers choose contact methods related to their personal circumstances, for example, calling in to see us if they are coming into town anyway or they live/work in or near town or phoning if they don't live in town or have young children.
- For some customers, contact preferences were also related to trust issues eg "I phoned because I just wanted to get it done", calling in to ensure details don't get lost and being able to get a receipt.
- Other reasons for contact preferences included – 'the quickest way', a preference for 'traditional methods', the 'cheapest way', not having access to a computer or preferring to call in if English is not their first language.

Summary of customer views

The chart below shows that customers rated their contact with staff more highly than their experience of the process. Indicators of customer satisfaction relating to contact with staff ranged from 93% to 78%, whilst those relating more to process ranged from 65% to 37%. The majority of customer comments on staff were very complimentary with staff seen as polite, friendly, helpful and understanding.

Proportion of customers stating "fully agree"; "very knowledgeable"; "fully explained"**

The chart below shows that customer satisfaction with process issues declines significantly over time, where customers are needing to contact us more than once and their enquiry is still ongoing.

Indicative levels of satisfation at different stages of the customer journey: Revenues and Benefits service

The lowest ratings were for timeliness and being kept informed. Common themes for customers included:

- Not knowing what was happening with their claim or how long it will take
- Feeling stressed by claims taking a long time to process and worrying about outstanding rent or council tax
- Being passed from one department to another or their problem being passed on to another department
- That staff knew what they were doing, but the process and forms were confusing
- A lack of consistency with experiences vary depending on member of staff or in relation to the different benefits
- Customers found benefits letters confusing and contradictory
- Customers contacting us repeatedly to find out what is happening with their claim.

APPENDIX D - **CIPFA Benefits Administration Benchmarking Club 2009 (draft report)**

In August this year CIPFA distributed a draft report detailing the latest data available from the Benefits Administration Benchmarking Club which compares Colchester Borough Council's performance with that of 132 other club members. The report was issued in draft format to give authorities quick feedback on their current performance and the opportunity for club members to ensure that the figures they have provided are as intended.

From 2008/09 the National Indicator dataset has two indicators for Benefits Administration – The "Right Benefit" indicator NI 180 and the "Right Time" indicator NI 181. The DWP in consultation with Local Authorities were unable to supply an indicator that sufficiently measured accuracy and are now aiming to do so for 2011/12.

Performance against National Indicators for 2008/09
This report shows Colchester's performance against the national indicators compared to the average for Benchmarking Club members as follows:

Indicator	Colchester	Average
NI 180 "Right Benefit"	28.1	27.9
Notes: This displays the number of change in circumstances processed per 1000 caseload, per week for 2008/09 as provided by the DWP HoBOD website. The data covers the period June 08 to March 09 and is considered to be most 'official' figures available and are provided on a consistent basis. HB/CTB circular A4/2008 states that a higher value equates to better performance but reminds members that this measure is "likely to be sensitive to the make up of each LA's caseload"		
NI 181 "Right Time"	13.1	13.2
Notes: This displays "the average processing times (in days) for new claims and change events as collected in the benchmarking questionnaire. Circular A2-2008 points out that this may be "affected by the proportions of new claims to change events.		

Performance against Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit Performance Measures formally collected prior to 2008/09
CIPFA consider the previous measures to provide comprehensive information for local authorities which are still worth collecting and comparing where authorities have the data available. The table below compares Colchester's performance for 2008/09 to that of the average for Benchmarking club members:

Performance Measures			2007/08		2008/09		Changes	
		(units)	Value	Avg	Value	Avg	Value	Avg*
PM1	Speed of processing claims	days	25.8	24.9	31.6	24.7	5.8	-0.6
PM2	New claims outstanding over 50 days	%	na	7.0	na	8.7	na	1.3
PM3	New claims decided within 14 days	%	87.7	89.0	na	86.6	na	-3.4
PM4	RA paid on time within 7 days	%	88.5	91.4	na	92.3	na	0.0
PM5	Speed of processing change of circs	days	13.8	10.6	11.6	9.8	-2.2	-0.8
PM7	Overpayments recovered as a % identified	%	69.2	74.6	61.8	72.2	-7.4	-2.0
PM8	Overpayments recovered as a % outstanding	%	22.5	31.4	19.6	31.9	-2.9	1.1
PM9	Overpayments written off as % outstanding	%	3.4	5.5	5.0	4.8	1.6	-0.8
PM11	Data-matches resolved within two months	%	82.4	96.7	na	94.7	na	-3.4
PM16	Successful sanctions per 1000 caseload	/1000	3.0	4.9	na	4.9	na	0.2
PM17	Applications for reconsideration/revision	%	88.2	79.7	na	77.7	na	-3.0
PM18	Appeals submitted in 4 weeks	%	84.6	69.6	32.7	60.9	-52.0	-7.9
PM19	Appeals submitted in 3 months	%	100	88.3	91.8	89.6	-8.2	0.6

*Average change may not match the difference between he 2007/08 and 2008/09 averages because not all authorities have supplied figures for both years and the average change is only calculated for authorities that have given both.

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LA error overpayments 2008/09	Rate	
Subsidy received at rate of	100%	
Group comparison	Rate	Number of authorities
	100%	111
	40%	6
	0%	10
	na	6

Subsidy Audit Last Audit	Y/N	
Was your last audit qualified?	Yes	
Group comparison	Y/N	Number of Authorities
	Yes	63
	No	69
	na	1

Two below in text boxes

LA error overpayments 2008/09	Rate			**Subsidy Audit** Last Audit	Y/N	
Subsidy received at rate of	100%			**Was your last audit qualified?**	Yes	
Group comparison	Rate	Number of authorities		Group comparison	Y/N	Number of Authorities
	100%	111			Yes	63

Overpayments identified during the year		**%**	**Average**
LA error	93	8.4	11.1
Eligible error	1000.1	90.5	87.9

Below in text box

Overpayments identified during the year		**%**	**Average**
LA error	93	8.4	11.1

15

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Channel Management

Channel Management
Changes for Revenues and Benefits Services
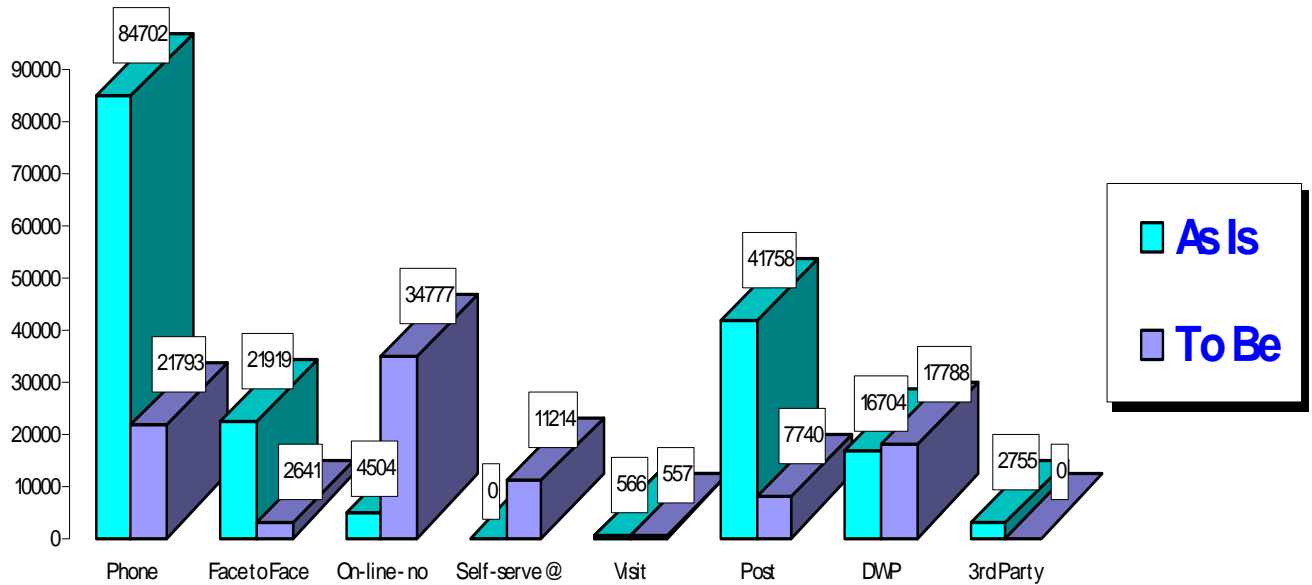
Channel Management

Channel changes overall			
	As Is	**To Be**	**Difference**
Phone	84702	21793	62909
Face to Face	21919	2641	19278
Online - no touch	4504	34777	30273
Self-serve @ CSC	0	11214	11214
Visit	566	557	9
Post	41758	7740	34018
DWP	16704	17788	1084
3rd Party	2755	0	2755
Total changes	**172908**	**96510**	**76398**
Percentage change			**44% decrease**

Channel changes - overall summary

- 74% decrease in phone calls
- 8-fold decrease in face to face contact
- 8-fold increase in online contact
- 11,214 switch to self serve at CSC
- 2% increase in visits to customers
- 5-fold reduction in post
- 6% increase in direct contact from DWP
- 2,755 switch to online contact

Total change – 44% reduction in contact

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Channel Management

Channel Management - Changes for Benefits Services

Legend: As is / To Be

Chart values:
- Phone: As is 32942, To Be 9441
- Face to Face: As is 17125, To Be 1280
- On-line - no touch: As is 3069, To Be 7827
- Self-serve @ CSC: As is 0, To Be 3620
- Visit: As is 81, To Be 72
- Post: As is 6267, To Be 0
- DWP: As is 16704, To Be 17788
- 3rd Party: As is 2726, To Be 0
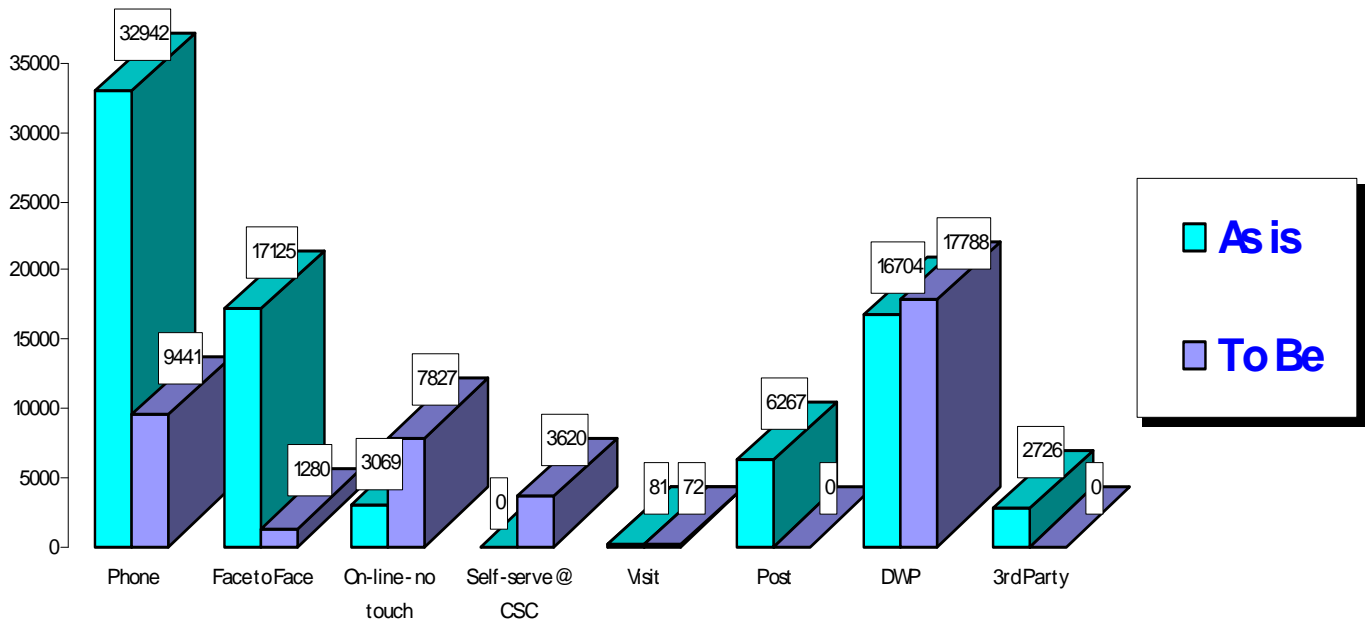
Channel Management

Channel changes - Benefits			
	As is	**To Be**	**Difference**
Phone	32942	9441	23501
Face to Face	17125	1280	15845
Online - no touch	3069	7827	4758
Self-serve @ CSC	0	3620	3620
Visit	81	72	8
Post	6267	0	6267
DWP	16704	17788	1084
3rd Party	2726	0	2726
Total changes	**78914**	**40028**	**38465**
Percentage change			**49% decrease**

Channel changes - Benefits Summary

- 71% decrease in phone contact
- 13-fold decrease in face to face contact
- 61% increase in online contact
- 3,620 switch to self serve at the CSC
- 13% decrease in visits
- 6,267 switch to other channels
- 6% increase in direct contact from DWP
- 2,726 switch to online contact

Total change – 49% reduction in contact

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Channel Management

Channel Management - Changes for Revenues Services

Channel Management

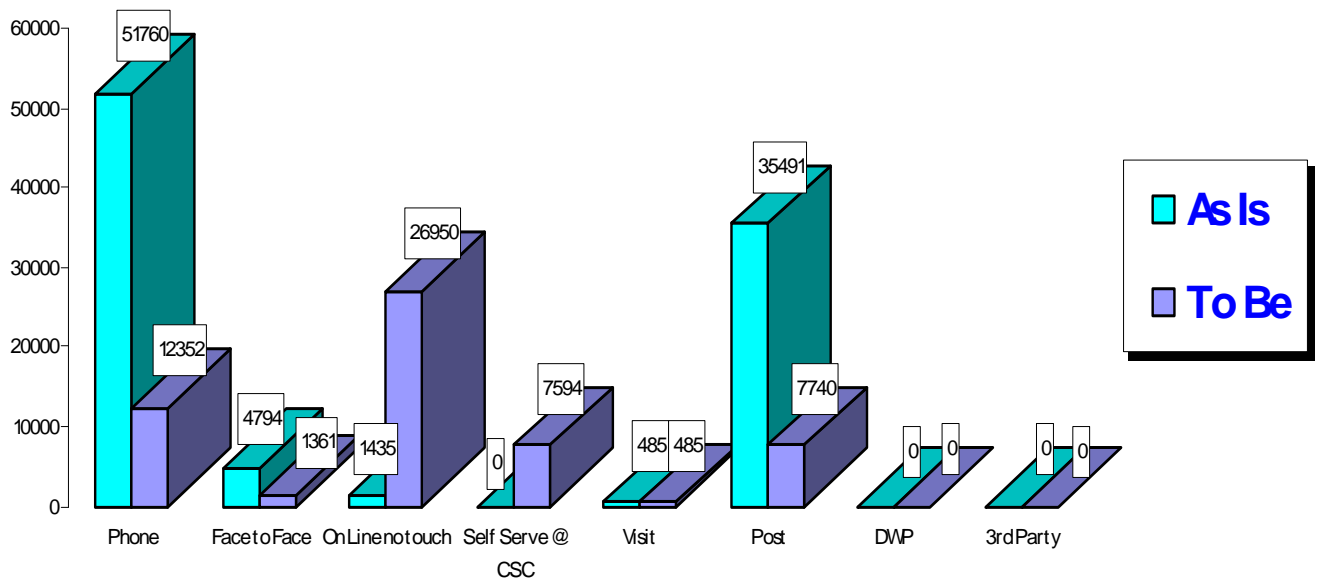| Channel changes - Revenues			
	As Is	**To Be**	**Difference**
Phone	51760	12352	39408
Face to Face	4794	1361	3433
Online - no touch	1435	26950	25515
Self Serve @ CSC	0	7594	7594
Visit	485	485	0
Post	35491	7740	27751
DWP	0	0	0
3rd Party	0	0	0
Total changes	**93965**	**56482**	**37483**
Percentage change			**40% decrease**

Channel changes - Revenues Summary

- 76% decrease in phone contact
- 72% decrease in face to face contact
- 95% increase in online contact
- 7,594 switch to self serve at CSC
- No change
- 78% decrease in post

Total change – 40% reduction in contact

18

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Channel Management

Channels for changes to existing claims
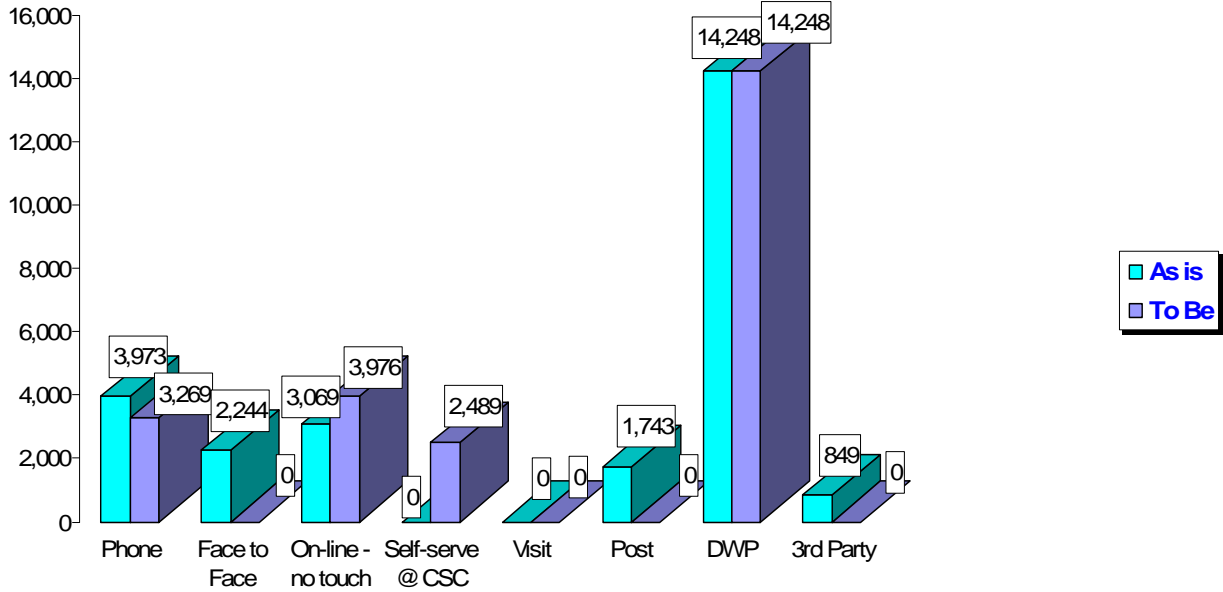
Channel Management

Channels for changes to existing claims			
	As is	**To Be**	**Difference**
Phone	3,973	3,269	-704
Face to Face	2,244	0	-2,244
Online - no touch	3,069	3,976	907
Self-serve @ CSC	0	2,489	2,489
Visit	0	0	0
Post	1,743	0	-1,743
DWP	14,248	14,248	0
3rd Party	849	0	-849
Total changes	**26,127**	**23,982**	**2145**
Percentage change			**8% decrease**

Channel changes – existing claims

- 18% decrease in phone contact
- 2,244 switch to other channels
- 30% increase in online contact
- 2,489 switch to self serve at CSC
- No change
- 1,743 switch to other channels
- No change
- 849 switch to online contact

Total change – 8% reduction in contact

19

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Channel Management

Channels changes for queries
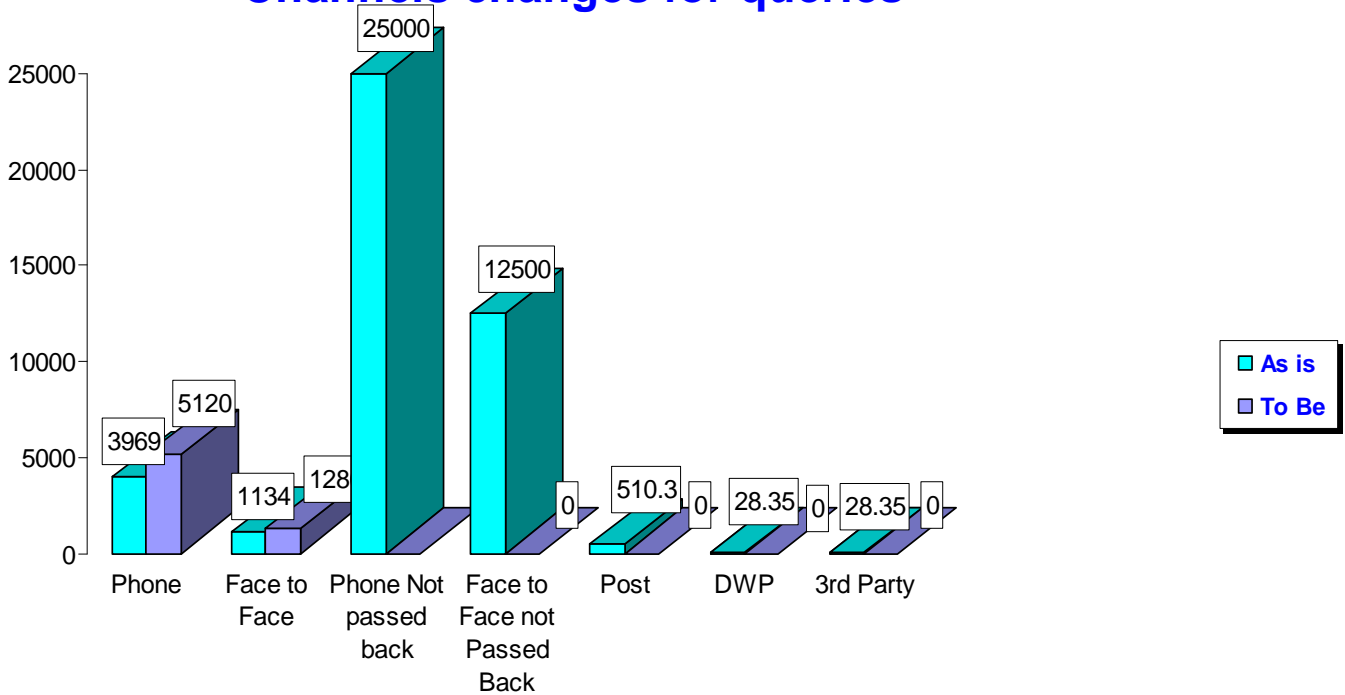
Channel Management

Channel changes for responding to queries			
	As is	To Be	Difference
Phone	3969	5120	1151
Face to Face	1134	1280	146
Phone Not passed back	25000	0	-25000
Face to Face not Passed Back	12500	0	-12500
Post	510.3	0	-510
DWP	28.35	0	-28.35
3rd Party	28.35	0	-28.35
Total changes	**43170**	**6400**	**36770**
Percentage change			**85% decrease**

Channel changes – queries

- 29% increase in phone contact
- 13% increase in face to face contact
- 25,000 phone calls resolved at front end
- 12,500 face to face enquiries resolved at front end
- 510 switch to other channels
- 28.35 switch to online contact
- 28.35 switch to online contact

Total change – 85% reduction in queries

20

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Channel Management

Channel changes for reconsiderations

Chart legend: As is, To Be

Values shown: Phone 0/0, Face to Face 12.05/0, On-line - no touch 0/92, Self-serve @ CSC 0/28, Visit 0/0, Post 216.9/0, DWP 0/0, 3rd Party 12.05/0
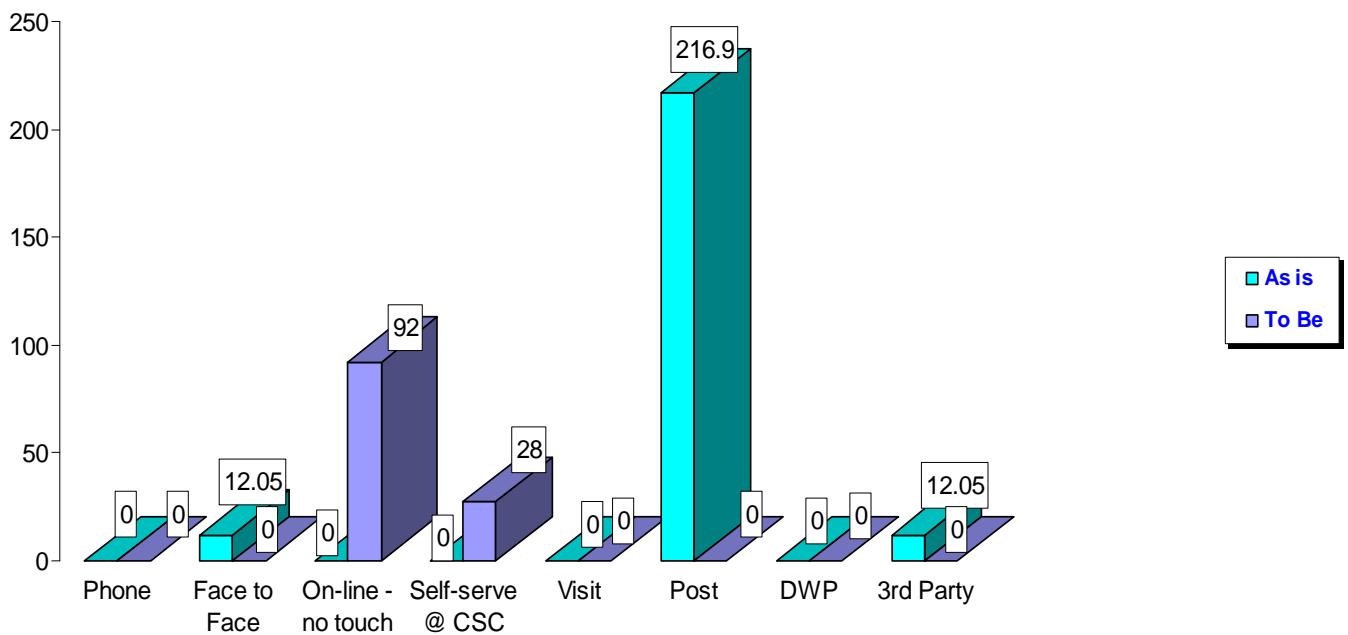
Channel Management

Channel changes for reconsiderations			
	As is	To Be	Difference
Phone	0	0	0
Face to Face	12.05	0	-12
Online - no touch	0	92	92
Self-serve @ CSC	0	28	28
Visit	0	0	0
Post	216.9	0	-217
DWP	0	0	0
3rd Party	12.05	0	-12
Total changes	241	120	121
Percentage change			50% decrease

Channel changes – reconsiderations

- No change
- 12.05 decrease in face to face contact
- 92 switch to online contact
- 28 switch to self serve at CSC
- No change
- 216.9 decrease in enquiries by post
- No change
- 12.05 switch to online contact

Total change – 50% reduction in contact

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Extract from the draft minutes of the Strategic Overview ad Scrutiny Panel 2 March 2010

57.   Fundamental Service review (FSR) – Revenues and Benefits Service

The following officers attended the meeting for this item;

> Ms. Pam Donnelly, Executive Director
> Mr. Charles Warboys, Head of Resource Management

Mr. Charles Warboys presented the report on the FSR of the Revenues and Benefits Service.

Mr. Warboys said this review, the third to be considered by the panel, did have some key differences from the previous reviews, primarily because the process was developing. Specifically the timescale for this review was much shorter, commencing at the beginning of November 2009 and there had been a dedicated project team, with officers from both Corporate Management and Resource Management undertaking an intensive review.

What was before the panel was a report for comment, which would then be presented to Cabinet on 17 March 2010, and though work continued on the detail within the report in regards to savings and staff structure, Mr. Warboys remained confident about the information being presented.

Mr. Warboys said the service was responsible for the management of Council Tax, Business Rates and Benefits claimants for which there was now 14,000, with the economic downturn realising not only an increase in caseload, but an increase in the volume of complex cases due to for example, an ever increasing number of claimants in part time employment.

The review had involved thorough consultation, internally with internal stakeholders and Unison, and with external organisations such as Family Mosaic, Citizen's Advice Bureau, Age Concern and key local social registered landlords, resulting in encouraging feedback.

Mr. Warboys spoke about the three core themes of the review, and emerging issues, saying the themes are ambitious, but can be achieved. The themes being;

How it works –improved customer journey and how the process works:
- Customer information
- More upfront
- Risk Assessment

Enabling the change – through ICT and cultural change
Service delivery model – internal refocus or external options

In response to Councillor Young, Mr. Warboys spoke of the shared services model mentioned within the report, explaining that there was continuous dialogue with other Essex authorities with a view to sharing a service or part service and that would reduce costs due to an economy of scale. That said, this was for the future, with Colchester's present aim to deliver a first class service ourselves, and if in the future we can demonstrate a five day turnaround in benefit claims, this will itself attract future business from other authorities. It was added that what shouldn't be ruled out was the possibility of another authority carrying out a service on Colchester's behalf.   Ms. Donnelly added that the FSR process leads you to a point of real dialogue about the opportunity for shared services, putting us in good stead for being 'fit for purpose'.

In respect of benefit claimants and the need for personal contact or human intervention, Mr. Warboys confirmed to Councillor Willetts that the benefit claim process can be very complex and so there will always be a need for personal dialogue, especially when dealing with vulnerable people, and the Council will continue to offer a range of contacts and support to respond to all enquiries thereby balancing the needs for all claimants. What we will have in place is a structure that we believe will be needed for now and the immediate future, but will be reconsidered at the next stage of an ongoing process. Ms. Donnelly said the new service will be effective and efficient, that customers were consulted and showed a desire, especially vulnerable and new customers, victims of the economic downturn, for retaining personal communication as a really important requirement of the new service.   Mr. Warboys confirmed that consultation had included visiting wards and providing two recent market stalls in Culver Street.

Mr. Warboys also confirmed that work was being done in conjunction with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and Registered Social Landlords to look at simplifying customer letters. Ms. Donnelly said the intention was to improve the quality of information provided that would itself reduce the need for customer contact, and release any resource from this improvement to improving communication with harder to reach groups and individuals. Councillor Taylor had doubts about achieving what he believed to be a very ambitious target. In response, it was said that the new approach would require more visiting but would be complemented by a risk based approach that will require less information. Ms. Donnelly assured members of the robustness of the process, saying the review had revealed a significant scale of opportunities. Mr. Warboys said the structure put in place would mitigate against the potential impact of foreseeable changes to the benefit system.

In response to Councillor Cook, Ms. Donnelly said the estimated number of potentially avoidable contacts to the Revenues and Benefits service, 37,500 and 28,000 respectively, would be as a result of the new approach, where clearer details to potential customers at the outset would avoid the need for late and unnecessary contact.   Mr. Warboys said a new service to be provided would be the on-line calculator that would allow potential claimants to input income information and allow for a quick track solution to claims, a filter system that would avoid those people who will not be entitled to benefit

going through the application process. It was hoped this new service would be introduced in April / May 2010.

Councillor Arnold said he endorsed what he believed was a thorough review.

Ms. Donnelly confirmed that at the end of the planned programme of FSRs, an overview of progress on implementation would be undertaken.

Councillor Arnold said the panel's group spokespersons would consider the future review options at the next scheduled briefing.

RESOLVED that the panel reviewed and endorsed the Revenues and Benefits business case and the draft Cabinet report resulting from the FSR.

	Cabinet	**Item**
Colchester logo	**17 March 2010**	**8(i)**

Report of	**Head of Life Opportunities**	**Author**	**Gareth Mitchell** ☎ **506972**
Title	**Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement**		
Wards affected	All wards		

This report concerns the Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement

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1. Decisions Required

1.1 To approve the Council signing the Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement with partner organisations

1.2 To authorise the Chief Executive to sign the Memorandum of Agreement on the Council's behalf

2. Reasons for Decisions

2.1 On February 15 2010 the Council received a letter from Cllr Peter Martin of Essex County Council (Appendix 1), in his capacity as Chair of the Essex Children's Trust Partnership Board, asking the Council to consider and sign the Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement (Appendix 2).

2.2 This request follows a decision to implement new Children's Trust arrangements in Essex in keeping with the provisions in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, and formalises the emerging partnership arrangements for the Children's Trust in which the Council is already an active participant.

3. Alternative Options

3.1 To not approve the Council signing the Memorandum of Agreement. This would mean the Council would be deciding not to fulfil its statutory duty to cooperate under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 by working within the Children's Trust arrangements being established in Essex.

3.2 To delay approval for the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement in order to clarify issues raised in the Memorandum of Agreement.

4. Supporting Information

4.1 The Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement is an underpinning agreement outlining each partner's commitment as a member of the Essex Children's Trust.

4.2 The Memorandum of Agreement is the means by which the Council and its partners will establish the partnership of all those agencies under the 'Duty to Co-operate' provisions in Section 10 of the Children Act 2004, The Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and

Learning Act 2009 and all those co-opted by agreement of the Children's Trust Partnership Board.

4.3 Under this agreement each partner agrees to cooperate in the making of 'arrangements for improving the well being and safeguarding of all children and young people' in Essex.

4.4 Although Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 and Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 empower the Trust to 'pool' funds and resources, the Memorandum would require that a separate agreement is drafted for this to take place.

4.5 Despite the power to 'pool' funds and resources, the preferred approach in Essex is to 'align' rather than 'pool' funds and resources. Alignment of funds is by agreement of all relevant partners who will retain accountability to their own organisation for the delivery of that element of any such aligned funds. The memorandum reflects this preference.

4.6 The Essex Children's Trust is not empowered by the Memorandum to hold property or employ staff members other than that which is already held by partner organisations and that will remain in their ownership.

4.7 The Essex Children's Trust is not empowered by the Memorandum to enter into or bind partners into contracts for the benefit of the Trust. Any necessary contracts will be entered into by each relevant partner in compliance with their own constitutional rules. The Trust Board may recommend contracts but each partner will be required to gain agreement to these in line with their own constitution and will remain formally accountable to their own organisation for their delivery.

5. Proposals

5.1 Cabinet approves the Council signing the Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement with partner organisations

5.2 Cabinet authorises the Chief Executive to sign the Memorandum of Agreement on the Council's behalf

6. Strategic Plan References

6.1 "Addressing younger people's needs" is one of the nine priorities for action identified in the Council's Strategic Plan 2009-12.

6.2 In Essex, the Children's Trust is the partnership vehicle through which priorities for children and young people will be identified and addressed.

7. Consultation

7.1 The Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement is an underpinning agreement outlining each partner's commitment as a member of the Essex Children's Trust. It complies with national legislative requirements and has been subject to informal consultation between relevant partners.

8. Publicity Considerations

8.1 The Essex Children's Trust has a Communications Strategy which outlines and plans delivery of publicity activities for the Trust.

9.   Financial implications

9.1   There are no specific financial implications arising from this proposal.

9.2   Legislation provides the potential for funds to be "pooled" as part of the Children's Trust arrangements.   As outlined at 4.4 and 4.5, however, this would require a further, separate agreement from the Council and the memorandum specifies that the preference in Essex is for "aligned" rather than "pooled" funds.

10.   Equality, Diversity and Human Rights implications

10.1   Equality, Diversity and Human Rights considerations sit at the heart of the work of the Essex Children's Trust and are woven into the priorities and actions in the Essex Children and Young People's Plan 2009-11.

10.2   This report concerns governance and administrative arrangements and the Council's compliance with national legislation and therefore it is not relevant to complete an Equality Impact Assessment.

11.   Community Safety Implications

11.1   The links between the Essex Children's Trust and the Safer Essex Partnership are strong and are reflected in the Memorandum of Agreement on page 14.

12.   Health and Safety Implications

12.1   There are no Health and Safety implications of this proposal.

13.   Risk Management Implications

13.1   The formalising of the partnership arrangements for the Essex Children's Trust through the approval of this Memorandum of Agreement will provide an important governance framework for the Council's engagement in one of its strategic priority areas where it has statutory duties.

Background Papers

Appendix 1   Letter from Cllr Peter Martin, Chair of the Essex Children's Trust Partnership
                      Board
Appendix 2   Memorandum of Agreement – Essex Children's Trust

Essex County Council
Schools, Children and Families
PO Box 11, County Hall
Chelmsford
Essex CM1 1LX

For the attention of: Date: 12 February 2010
Children's Trust Board Members   Our Ref:
                                          Your Ref:

Dear Partners and Colleagues

RE: Consideration and signing of the Essex Children's Trust Memorandum of Agreement

I am writing to you with a reminder that as agreed by partners at the inaugural meeting of the Essex Children's Trust's Partnership Board on 27th November 2009 the Memorandum of Agreement now needs to be considered and signed by each relevant partner.

The Memorandum of Agreement is an underpinning agreement outlining each partner's commitment as a member of the Children's Trust.

I would like to clarify in this letter for all partners the powers that legislation gives Children's Trusts, as outlined in the Memorandum of Agreement, and to what extent the partnership will utilise these in Essex.

The following points of clarification may assist you in the process of agreement and signing:

- The Memorandum of Agreement is the means by which we will establish the partnership of all those agencies under the 'Duty to Co-operate' under Sect. 10 of the Children Act 2004, The Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Act 2009 and all those co-opted by agreement of the Children's Trust Partnership Board. (page 6, section 1 of Memorandum)
- Each partner agrees to co-operation in the making of 'arrangements for improving the well being and safeguarding of all children and young people' in Essex. (see page 6 section 2, 3, 4, 5 of Memorandum)
- Although Sect.10 of the Children Act and Sect.75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 empowers the Trust to 'pool' funds and resources, the Memorandum would require that a separate agreement is drafted under Sect.10 or Sect.75 for this to take place. (see page 7, subsection 8.1, 8.2 of Memorandum)

- Despite the power to 'pool' the preferred approach in Essex is to align rather than pool funds and resources. The memorandum has been amended to reflect this preference. (see page 7, section 8 of Memorandum)
- The Children's Trust in Essex is not empowered by the Memorandum to hold property or employ staff members other than that which is already held by partner organisations and that will remain in their ownership. (see page 7 subsection 8.3 of the Memorandum)
- The Essex Children's Trust is not empowered by the Memorandum to enter into or bind partners into contracts for the benefit of the Trust. Any necessary contracts will be entered into by each relevant partner in compliance with their own constitutional rules. The Trust Board may recommend contracts but each partner will be required to gain agreement to these in line with their own constitution and will remain formally accountable to their own organisation for their delivery. (see page 8 section 10)

To enable the Essex Children's Trust to go forward as a constituted body it is important that the Memorandum of Agreement is considered by each relevant partner as listed on the agreement and that an agreement to sign is endorsed by each organisation's Executive Board or equivalent.

District Councils and PCTs that are represented by agreement by other attending members will still need to sign the Memorandum of Agreement and have this agreed at their own Executive. It is intended that the Memorandum of Agreement will be signed by the relevant partners at the next meeting of the Children's Trust's Partnership Board on the 5th March 2010.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Peter Martin
Chair of Essex Children's Trust Partnership Board

Please reply to: Roger Bullen, Head of Partnerships & Business Support
Telephone: 01245 438848
Email: Roger.Bullen@essex.gov.uk
Essex County Council

MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

ESSEX CHILDREN'S TRUST

SCHEDULE 1

Agreement dated …………………………………..

Between the Partners "the Partners" listed below:-

Essex County Council whose principal office is at County Hall, Market Road Chelmsford acting as (i) a Children's Services Authority under Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 (ii) as a Local Authority under the Local Government Act 1972; and (iii) the responsible authority for various functions including education, family services, youth offending services, housing and Agencies providing services under S114 of Learning and Skills Act 2000 (Connexions).

Note: The Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Bill that received Royal Assent on November 12th 2009 extended the existing duty to cooperate to promote children's well-being to also include: *all maintained schools, academies, Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education Colleges, Pupil Referral Units and Jobcentre Plus.*

The Bill places a shared duty on **all** the members of the Children's Trust Board to prepare, publish and monitor a strategic Children and Young People's Plan for Essex and to have regard to it in their own plans and services. Guidance to Children's Trusts will be consulted on during December 2009 to March 2010 when it will then be published and at this time the Memorandum of agreement will be redrafted to include all provisions of the Bill.

'The Partners':

Children's Lead Member

…………………………………………………………..
And

Executive Director Children Schools and Families, Essex County Council

…………………………………………………………..
And

Chief Executive, Essex County Council

………………………………………………………….
And

Director of Commissioning, Essex County Council (Joint Commissioning Board Chair)

…………………………………………………………...
And

ECT Memorandum of Agreement (Final)   1

Director of Children's Commissioning and Business Delivery PCT (Joint Commissioning Board Co-Chair)

…………………………………………………………….
And

Chief Executive, Braintree District Council

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And

Chief Executive, Harlow District Council

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And

Chief Executive, Basildon District Council

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And

Chief Executive, Brentwood Borough Council

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And

Chief Executive, Castle Point Borough Council

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And

Chief Executive, Chelmsford Borough Council

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And

Chief Executive, Colchester Borough Council

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And

Chief Executive, Epping Forest District Council

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And

Chief Executive, Maldon District Council

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ECT Memorandum of Agreement (Final)   2

And

Chief Executive, Rochford District Council

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And

Chief Executive, Tendring District Council

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And

Chief Executive, Uttlesford District Council

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Director of Public Health

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And

Chief Executive, North East Essex PCT

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And

Chief Executive, South East Essex PCT

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And

Chief Executive, Mid Essex PCT

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And

Chief Executive, South West PCT

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And

Chief Executive, West Essex PCT

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And

Non-Executive Directors of PCT's

……………….……….……….……….………………...
And

ECT Memorandum of Agreement (Final)   3

Chief Executive, North Essex Partnership NHS Foundation Trust

………………..………….……….………………….
And

Chief Executive, South Essex Partnership University Foundation Trust

………………..………………………………………...
And

Chief Probation Officer

………………..………………………………………...
And

Independent Chair ESCB

………………..………………………………………...
And

Assistant Chief Constable Essex Police

………………..………………………………………...
And

Lead Member for Children and Young People
Essex Police Authority

………………..…………………………………………..
And

Assistant Chief Fire Officer Essex Fire Service

………………..………………………………………...
And

Chief Executive of Learning and Skills Council (LSC)

………………..………………………………………...
And

Senior Representative Job Centre Plus

………………..………………………………………...
And

Essex Police Authority

………………..………………………………………...
And

Representatives from the Voluntary Sector

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………………………………………………………………...

……………………………………………………………

And

Schools Reps (Primary Secondary Special Schools

Chair of ASESME

………………………………………………………...

Chair of EPHA

………………………………………………………...

Chair of APC

………………………………………………………...
And

Senior Representative – Strategic Health Authority

………………………………………………………...
And

Schools Forum

………………………………………………………...
And

Further Education College Representative

………………………………………………………...

Whereas

1. Section 10 Children Act 2004 ("section 10") requires Essex County Council as the Children's Services Authority to make arrangements for improving the well-being of children in its area which relate to their:

    a) Physical and mental health and emotional well-being;
    b) Protection from harm and neglect;
    c) Education, training and recreation;
    d) The contribution made by them to society; and
    e) Social and economic well-being

2. Section 10 authorises the entering into agreements by the Children's Services Authority, other bodies named as partners therein and other bodies considered appropriate by it.

3. Section 10 also authorises it and its partners to provide staff, goods services or other resources and to establish and maintain pooled funds.

4. In pursuance of Section 10, it is recorded that Essex County Council had established partnership working with various bodies prior to this Memorandum of Agreement having been entered into. This Memorandum of Agreement is

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intended to set out the partnership and collaborative working arrangements for going forward under Section 10.

5. Essex County Council has published a plan pursuant to Section 7 Children Act 2004 (Children and Young People Plan 2009-2011) (which will be reviewed and amended on an annual basis)

6. The Government has issued Statutory Guidance on Interagency Co-operation to 'Improve the Well-being of Children': Children's Trusts (Every Child Matters Change for Children) which expected that children's trusts would be in place in all areas by 2008. The essential features of a children's trust are described in the Statutory Guidance.

7. By this Memorandum of Agreement the parties hereto have agreed to create this partnership arrangement to be known as the Essex Children's Trust and in doing so have had regard to all matters referred to in Section 10 and to statutory guidance issued by the Government on Interagency Co-operation to Improve the Well-being of Children: Children's Trust (Every Child Matters Change for Children).

Now Therefore

1. The Essex Children's Trust is hereby created as a partnership arrangement between the parties to this Memorandum of Agreement (the members of Essex Children's Trust Partnership Board) pursuant to Section 10, Section 111 Local Government Act 1972, Section 242 of the NHS Act 2006 and Section 2 Local Government Act 2000 and will come into effect on the ………….. for a period of two years, incorporating an annual review.

    Note: The Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Bill received Royal Assent on the 12th November 2009 and will extend the existing duty to cooperate to promote children's well-being to also include: *all maintained schools, academies, Sixth Form Colleges, Further Education Colleges, Pupil Referral Units and Jobcentre Plus.*

    The Bill also places a shared duty on **all** the members of the Children's Trust Board to prepare, publish and monitor a strategic Children and Young People's Plan for Essex and to have regard to it in their own plans and services.

2. The purpose of the Partnership is to improve the well-being of children and young people in the administrative area of Essex County Council and in particular as provided for in Section 10 Children Act 2004 and in the relevant Statutory Guidance in connection therewith.

3. The Essex Children's Trust will encourage, assist and monitor the activities of bodies established by Essex County Council and other bodies with whom Essex County Council chooses to work either through this Memorandum of Agreement or otherwise through other arrangements made by or to be made by Essex County Council under Section 10.

4. The Essex Children's Trust will support and promote the implementation of plans published pursuant to S.17 Children Act 2004 as may be amended from time to time.

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5. The Essex Children's Trust will also co-operate with and assist where appropriate the voluntary sector and community services which provide or which are to provide services in Essex County Council's administrative area.

6. Any or all of the Partners may provide staff, goods, services and accommodation and other resources or assets to be used in connection with or for the purposes of the Essex Children's Trust.

7. The Partners understand and support the requirements of and expectations for the implementation of Integrated Processes in Essex and will operate within and adhere to the agreed Essex Information Sharing Protocol.

8. Any or all of the Partners may provide funds for the purposes of the Essex Children's Trust that may be pooled. Any or all of the Partners may contribute money to a pooled fund either for general purposes or for specifically named purposes.

8.1 Despite the powers afforded to the Essex Children's Trust under Section 10 of the Children Act and Section 75 of the National Health Service Act 2006 to 'pool' funds and resources by separate agreement, the preferred approach in Essex is to align rather than pool such funds and resources. Alignment of funds is by agreement of all relevant partners who will retain accountability to their own organisation for the delivery of that element of any such aligned funds

8.2 In any case where a pooled fund is created a Supplementary Memorandum of agreement will be made by contributing partners clearly recording and setting out:

a) The contributions to be made by individual partners with timescales for those contributions to be paid over;
b) The arrangements for managing the fund by a named partner;
c) The auditing arrangements for the fund;
d) The functions or matters on which the fund may be expended or the purpose for which the fund may be used along with any timescales that apply;
e) Any other matters which the parties feel need to be set out in the Supplementary Memorandum of Agreement to ensure that governance and probity are maintained throughout.

8.3 In any case where Section 75 National Health Service Act 2006 applies then a Supplementary Memorandum Agreement will be made so as to comply with the requirements of that Section and the NHS Bodies and Local Authorities Partnership Arrangement Regulations 2000.

8.4 The Essex Children's Trust will not directly employ staff or directly hold any land, property or other assets other than through or by the individual Partners to this Memorandum of Agreement (which in the case of staff, land, property or other assets or resources will continue to be in the ownership or control of the Partner in question).

9. An inaugural meeting of the Essex Children's Trust Partnership Board will be held on the date it comes into force and thereafter Partnership Board meetings will be held in line with a schedule of meetings to be agreed at that inaugural meeting and thereafter Partnership Board meetings will be held three times per year in line with the terms of reference in schedule 2 to this agreement.

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9.1 Any two partners may at any time where necessary call a meeting between scheduled meetings giving all partners at least 14 days written notice of the meeting and giving the time and place of that meeting.

9.2 Discussions taking place at any such meetings will be recorded and copies of them circulated to all Partners and submitted to the next meeting for approval as a true and accurate record.

9.3 The partners will each arrange for their representation at each meeting by a senior representative from within their organisations with sufficient authority to commit resources and actions on behalf of their organisations (except in the case of Essex County Council, this will be two senior representatives– the Executive Director for Schools, Children and Families and Lead Member for Children's Services). The nominated senior representatives are listed in Schedule 1 to this Memorandum of Agreement. If on any occasion the nominated senior representative cannot attend, they shall be permitted to nominate a substitute representative to attend on their behalf.

9.4 No representative person may represent more than one partner at any meeting unless by prior agreement between the relevant group of partners and the Children's Trust Partnership Board. In such cases where a decision that requires the agreement of all partners within that grouping is sought that the representative partner retains the discretion to take this decision to those partners for agreement.

9.5 The quorum required at any Children's Trust Partnership Board meeting will be 50% of the membership plus one.

9.6 Children's Trust Partnership Board meetings will be chaired by the Lead Member or his / her nominated representative.

9.7 Children's Trust Partnership Board decisions shall be by a majority vote of those present and eligible to vote at the meeting on the basis of one partner one vote (other than within an agreement of representation as described in 9.4). In the case of an equal vote the chairperson shall have a casting vote to determine the matter.

10. Execution of Contracts: The Essex Children's Trust Partnership does not have the legal capacity to bind the individual Partners nor to enter into contracts for its own benefit and any such contracts will have to be entered into by the relevant Partner and in compliance with the relevant Partner's constitutional rules. The Essex Children's Trust Partnership can make recommendations to the individual Partners but the actual decision to enter into any such contract has to be in line with that Partner's constitutional rules. Therefore, members of the Children's Trust Partnership Board will remain formally accountable to their organisations' governance bodies / structures and the Children's Trust Partnership Board will not have executive powers, other than those delegated to individual members by their organisation.

11. Any change to the parties to Essex Children's Trust or the Children's Trust Partnership Board shall be by voting in accordance with clause 9.7 above

12. This agreement may only be varied by an agreement in writing signed by all partners.

SCHEDULE 2

> **Essex Children's Trust Partnership Board**
> **Terms of Reference**

1. **Purpose**

   To provide the county-wide strategic lead of the Children's Trust in Essex by bringing together within a statutory partnership those authorities with the duty to co-operate and other organisations co-opted in order to secure improvement in the well-being of children and young people in Essex, as defined by Section10 of the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Apprenticeships, Skills, Children and Learning Bill 2009).

   > *'A strong integrated governing board is the cornerstone of a Children's Trust. It should include representatives of all key partners at senior level, determined to drive whole-system change through clear leadership and effective action, and have appropriate arrangements in place to ensure the voices of children, young people, parents and front line workers are heard'.*

   Children's Trusts: Statutory guidance on inter-agency cooperation to improve well-being of children, young people and their families[1]

2. **Responsibilities:**

   The key responsibilities of the Essex Children's Trust Board are to:

   - Act as the strategic executive and decision making body of the Trust.
   - Agree and promote a vision for children and young people in Essex expressed within the Essex Children and Young People's Plan.
   - Secure the agreement and sign up of all members to the Essex Children and Young People's Plan and ensure they meet the statutory duty to have regard for and align their own plans to it.
   - Ensure the delivery of the overarching vision, priorities and actions relating to children and young people in the Sustainable Community Strategies and Local Area Agreement and alignment between them and the Essex Children and Young People's Plan.
   - Ensure that the Trust, as a key thematic partner, is firmly positioned within the Essex Strategic Partnership, integrating children and young people's issues with those of the wider community.
   - Oversee and agree the development of the Trust; its structure, governance and strategy.
   - Oversee and ensure through the Joint Commissioning Board and the Infrastructure Implementation Group that effective working relationships exist between:
     a) the Local Children's Trust Boards and the Implementation Groups;
     b) both the Local Children's Trust Boards and the Implementation Groups with the Joint Commissioning Board;
     c) the Joint Commissioning Board and the Children's Trust Partnership Board itself.

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[1] http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/everychildmatters/resources-and-practice/IG00346/
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- Establish and engage in a robust and effective working relationship with the Essex Safeguarding Children's Board.
- Agree actions to address the findings of self assessment and evaluation processes such as the annual reviews of the Essex Children and Young People's Plan, Performance and Progress Reports and any other forms of self evaluation.
- Agree the action plans to address the findings of inspection and regulation relevant to the Trust, including the Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- Oversee and agree proposals where it is appropriate to align pool or share financial, capital and staffing resources.
- Oversee and agree proposals from the Joint Commissioning Board for delegated authority and commissioning activity to the Local Children's Trust Boards.
- Ensure the development and delivery of an integrated approach to children's services delivery across the County that is focussed on safeguarding, early intervention and prevention and organised around the child rather than professional or organisational boundaries.
- Support and challenge Local Children's Trust Boards with their role of performance management and leadership of local activity to deliver improved outcomes across the County and establish a framework for them to work within to ensure consistency with local flexibility as appropriate.
- Develop the broad coalition required to tackle issues such as child poverty and influence infrastructure planning at a local, county and regional level, embedding facilities for children, young people and their families in local housing, regeneration and transport plans.
- Contribute to the development of Children's Trusts nationally and ensure that all partners at County and local level are informed of national and regional developments.

3.   **Aim:**

The Essex Children's Trust Board's primary aim is to improve outcomes for children and young people across the County, ensuring the successful implementation of the Essex Children and Young People's Plan. It will improve outcomes in the following areas by:

- **Be healthy:**

  - Tackling health inequalities and helping children and young people make informed healthy choices, with access to the services they need;
  - Improving child and adolescent mental health services;
  - Providing effective support for parents and carers

- **Stay safe:**

  - Strengthening the services and processes that keep children and young people safe from neglect and abuse;
  - Ensuring all children, young people and their families feel safe and secure where they are cared for, play, live and go to work;
  - Strengthening Corporate Parenting

- **Enjoy and achieve:**

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o Enabling all children and young people to aspire, learn, achieve highly and realise their potential

- **Make a positive contribution:**

  o Providing all children and young people with opportunities for a fulfilling and enjoyable childhood. We will aim for a sustainable legacy by maximising the potential of the 2012 Olympic and Para Olympic Games

- **Achieve economic well being:**

  o Reducing the impact of poverty and the recession on the lives of all children, young people and their families

- **'Narrowing the Gap':**

  o Improving the life chances of 'looked after children', young carers and all other children and families at risk of poor outcomes

4. Activities

The Children's Trust Partnership Board will oversee and ensure the achievement of the shared priorities and strategic direction of the Trust.

5. Partnership Structure and decision making

The Children's Trust Partnership Board is part of the partnership landscape within Essex; this includes the Essex Partnership, the Essex Children's Safeguarding Board, Local Strategic Partnerships (LSPs), the Safer Essex Partnership.

The Trust as a whole consists of a number of Implementation Groups and Local Children's Trust Boards set up to take forward the responsibilities of the Trust at both a countywide and local level.

Progress reports to the Children's Trust Partnership Board are brought via the Joint Commissioning Board.

The diagram attached as appendix 1 shows the structure of the Trust and the relationship of the Trust to other key partnership bodies.

The decision making of the Trust Board will be based on the consensus achieved through both consultations with partners and amongst those members attending the meeting. The quorum required at any Children's Trust Partnership Board meeting will be 50% of the membership plus one. Children's Trust Partnership Board decisions shall be by a majority vote of those present and eligible to vote at the meeting on the basis of one partner one vote (other than within an agreement of representation as described in 9.4 of schedule 1). In the case of an equal vote the chairperson shall have a casting vote to determine the matter. Decisions made by the Trust Board may also require agreement by partner organisations own political or executive leadership.

5.   **Membership and frequency**

Membership of the Trust Board will consist of the strategic leaders of all partner organisations, executive and non-executive members of PCTs and Health Trusts, District Councils, Lead Elected Members of the County Council, nominated representatives from the Voluntary and Community Sector and others as determined by the Trust Board.

Joint Commissioning Board Members will be invited to report to the Trust Board but will not automatically be full members of it.

The Trust Board will meet at least twice annually with a third date set aside for a wider partnership conference to review progress, share future challenges and address other issues as decided by the Trust.

The board will also have the option to call additional meetings to address specific issues that require Children's Trust Board agreement, decision or action.

Agendas and supporting documents will be issued at least two working weeks before the meetings.

Minutes will be produced and circulated within ten working days of the meeting. Essex County Council, as the responsible Local Authority, will provide administrative support for the working of the Children's Trust Board.

6.   **Accountability**

The Children's Trust is constituted as defined by Section 10 of the Children Act 2004 and The Apprenticeships, Children, Skills and Learning Bill and as such is a statutory partnership that brings together partners who have a duty to co-operate to secure improvement in the well being of children and young people.

The Children's Trust Board reports to the Essex Partnership and has a relationship of challenge and support with the Essex Children's Safeguarding Board that scrutinises the Trust's shared duty to safeguard. The Trust also has close links to the Safer Essex Partnership. Members of the Board are responsible for ensuring that they communicate and take forward the decisions of the Board through their own organisations.

7.   **Review**

The Local Children's Trust Board terms of reference will be subject to an annual review to ensure that it continues to be fit for purpose.

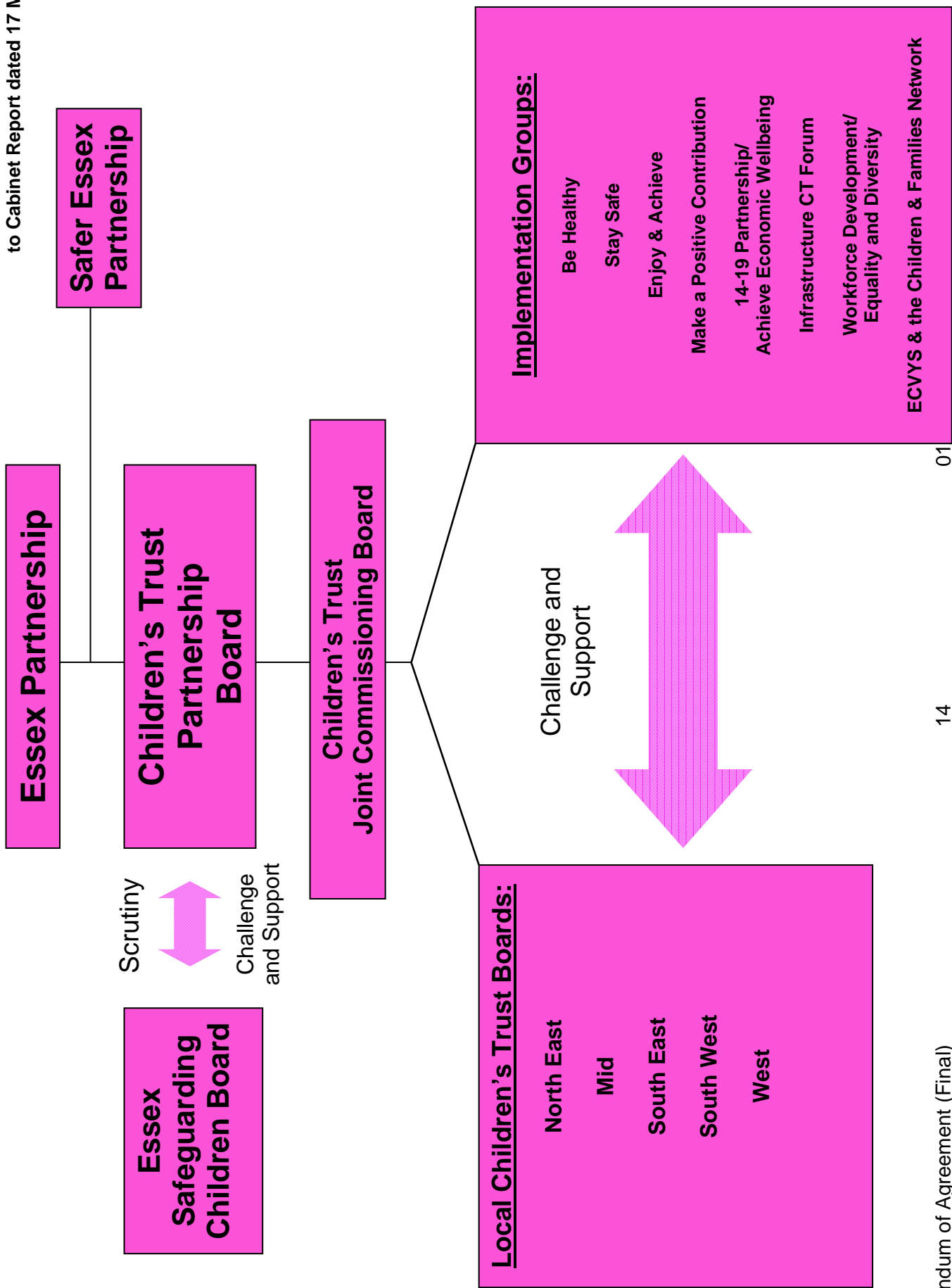8.   **Commitments and expectations of the Trust Board members:**

- Represent their agency at a strategic level.

- Contribute to the development of the Trust and its strategy.

- Act as the strategic executive of the Trust and agree key decisions.

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- Oversee and agree proposals where it is agreed appropriate to align pool or share financial, capital and staffing resources.

- Contribute to and agree the Essex Children and Young People's Plan and its subsequent annual reviews.

- Advocate on behalf of the Trust within members own host agency and other local and national bodies.

9. In addition, the ECT and LCTBs may adopt the Nolan Committee's principles of public life. If adopted, all LCTB members will have regard to these principles in relation to LCTB business.

Nolan Committee's Seven Principles of Public Life	
Selflessness	Holders of public office should act solely in terms of the public interest. They should not do so in order to gain financial or other benefits for themselves, their family or their friends.
Integrity	Holders of public office should not place themselves under any financial or other obligation to outside individuals or organisations that might seek to influence them in the performance of their official duties.
Objectivity	In carrying out public business, including making public appointments, awarding contracts, or recommending individuals for rewards and benefits, holders of public office should make choices on merit.
Accountability	Holders of public office are accountable for their decisions and actions to the public and must submit themselves to whatever scrutiny is appropriate to their office.
Openness	Holders of public office should be as open as possible about all the decisions and actions that they take. They should give reasons for their decisions and restrict information only when the wider public interest clearly demands.
Honesty	Holders of public office have a duty to declare any private interests relating to their public duties and to take steps to resolve any conflicts arising in a way that protects the public interest.
Leadership	Holders of public office should promote and support these principles by leadership and example.

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Safer Essex Partnership

Essex Partnership

Children's Trust Partnership Board

Children's Trust Joint Commissioning Board

Essex Safeguarding Children Board

Scrutiny

Challenge and Support

Challenge and Support

Implementation Groups:

Be Healthy

Stay Safe

Enjoy & Achieve

Make a Positive Contribution

14-19 Partnership/
Achieve Economic Wellbeing

Infrastructure CT Forum

Workforce Development/
Equality and Diversity

ECVYS & the Children & Families Network

01

Local Children's Trust Boards:

North East

Mid

South East

South West

West

14

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Appendix 2: Essex Children's Trust Board Membership

Essex Children's Trust Board Membership
Chair: Children's Lead Member
Executive Director Children Schools and Families
Director Children's Commissioning LA (JCB Chair)
Director Children's Commissioning PCT (JCB co-chair)
Chief Executive of County Council
Chief Executives of District Councils x2
Chief Executives of PCT's
Non-Executive Directors of PCT's
Chief Executives of the two Mental Health Trusts
Chief Probation Officer
Independent Chair ESCB
Chief Executive of Learning and Skills Council (LSC)
Assistant Chief Constable Essex Police
Lead Member for Children and Young People Essex Police Authority
Assistant Chief Fire Officer Essex Fire Service
Children's Services Adviser: GO East
Senior Representatives from the Voluntary Sector x 2
Senior Representative Strategic Health Authority
Senior Representative Job Centre Plus
Schools' Forum
School Representatives (Primary, Secondary and Special Schools)
FE College Representatives

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE
POLICY REVIEW AND DEVELOPMENT PANEL
HELD ON 1 MARCH 2010

29.   Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Appraisal Task and Finish Group //
Progress Report

Paula Whitney addressed the Panel, pursuant to the provisions of Meetings General Procedure Rule 5(1). She referred to the options appraisal undertaken at the end of 2009 and asked the Panel to bear in mind the introduction of food waste collections and the supply of a sufficient quantity of containers would both have a significant positive impact on recycling activity. She did not support alternate weekly recycling of materials, especially in respect of garden waste in the Spring and Summer months. She also supported kerbside collection and separation and voiced her concerns regarding the adequate availability of vehicles with flexibility to be used for the collection of various materials.

Councillor Chillingworth attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. He stated that he was very supportive of the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group and he felt it was particularly important to obtain the views of local residents. He agreed that the introduction of a weekly collection of food waste was crucial with the other area of concern being whether the residual waste was to be collected weekly or fortnightly. He felt that issues relating to the delivery of the Courier had been unfortunate in terms of the impact this may have had on the consultation. He requested the Panel to endorse the findings of the Task and Finish Group and he welcomed the opportunity for trials to be introduced and for the Group to then continue its work.

The Panel considered a report by the Head of Street Services summarising the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group. The group had been asked to narrow down the range of options presented in the original options appraisal to a number that they could consider in more detail and the following criteria were considered to be important in their considerations:
- To identify options that remained reasonably close to the way in which the service was currently delivered;
- To include at least one wheeled bin option by way of comparison.

The Group had agreed that the following four options would be taken forward for further consideration:
- Option A – fortnightly residual, garden waste and recycling collections with weekly food waste collections;
- Option B – fortnightly garden waste and recycling collections with weekly residual and food waste collections;
- Option C – fortnightly residual and garden waste collections with weekly recycling and food waste collections;
- Option D – fortnightly separate residual and garden waste wheeled bins with recycling boxes and weekly food waste collections.

Further modelling work had been undertaken on each of the options to ensure that the latest information was being analysed. The group also received information regarding the performance levels being achieved by the highest performing authorities and details on the types of collection schemes being used.

It was agreed by the group that the four options would form the basis for a public consultation alongside questions relating to investment by the Council to reduce waste going to landfill, increasing recycling rates, enforcing recycling standards, introducing food waste collections and the frequency of residual waste collection.

Councillor Barlow, the Chairman of the Task and Finish Group attended the Panel to assist members in their discussions. He explained that his participation in the Task and Finish Group had been one of his best experiences as a Councillor. The meetings had sometimes been long but a large amount of work had been accomplished. He wished to place on record his thanks to all the members of the Group, to residents for responding and participating in the consultation and to officers for the work they put in and their dedication to the process.

Chris Dowsing, Colchester Borough Council Strategic Waste and Sustainability Manager, undertook a formal presentation including details of the 'Express Your View on Waste' consultation which took place between 2 November 2009 and 15 January 2010 (11 weeks). The consultation was then extended for two weeks until 29 January 2010. A total of 1,171 people responded to the survey either through the Courier or online; 821 of whom left comments. A further 128 comments were received via the comments slips available at the launch event, Customer Service Centre and Essex University. It is estimated that 45% of surveys were completed online.

The results of the questions posed in the Consultation showed that:

- 91% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should be investing money to reduce waste going to landfill.

- 84% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should be investing money to increase recycling rates.

- 70% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that the Council should enforce recycling standards across the Borough.

- 83% of respondents stated that they would be satisfied or very satisfied with a weekly food collection service.

- 50% of respondents stated that they would be satisfied or very satisfied with fortnightly collections of remaining waste. 44% however were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The Task and Finish Group wished to explore how the Council could more strongly encourage participation in recycling services. Responses to the consultation showed that there was strong support for the Council enforcing recycling standards across the Borough. There are many ways that this could be achieved and the Group wished to explore this area in more detail.

The Task and Finish Group therefore wished to continue their work so that a programme could be devised that would take into account their recommendations as well as ensuring best practice could be explored and applied or modified. This would help to ensure that any schemes that improved participation levels and increased levels of recycling introduced in the Borough would be suitable and achieve high levels of customer satisfaction.

The Panel congratulated the members of the Task and Finish Group on the work they had undertaken, discussed the findings of the Group and gave particular consideration to the following issues:-

- Many comments on the consultation were very complimentary of the current service and did not wish to see it change;
- Possible methods to address the potential problem of disposable nappies in residual waste sacks;
- The need to ensure electronic consultation methods were fully functional prior to a consultation launch;
- How the use and amount of clear plastic sacks for residual waste would work in practice;
- The likely amount of resources to be directed to education and support for residents in respect of recycling;
- The methods to determine the locations for the recycling trials and the likely cost of implementing these;
- The views of the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services on Essex County Council's Waste Strategy and the location of Mechanical Biological Treatment (MBT) facilities in the County;
- The need to ensure the work of the Task and Finish Group is adequately communicated to the public by means of, for example, prompt and regular publication of the notes of the meetings.

Councillor T. Young, Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services attended and, with the consent of the Chairman, addressed the Panel. Councillor Young praised the Council's refuse service, paid tribute to the work undertaken by the Task and Finish Group and offered his support for its continued work but on a time limited basis, confirmed the need for the Group to research and determine trial locations and repeated his opposition to the siting of an MBT facility in Colchester.

RESOLVED that the recommendations of the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Task and Finish Group, as set out below, be endorsed:

(i)   The work of the Waste Prevention and Recycling Options Task and Finish Group be continued and a new work programme developed to allow recommendations to be made to the Cabinet on future waste and recycling services;

(ii)   The Task and Finish Group look specifically at ways of strongly encouraging participation in the Council's recycling collection schemes.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services be authorised to establish trials to test the acceptability and performance of different collection systems, including food waste collection.

Colchester

	Cabinet	**Item**
		10(i)
	17 March 2010	

Report of	**Monitoring Officer**	Author	**Andrew Weavers** ☎ **282213**
Title	**Review of Local Code of Corporate Governance**		
Wards affected	Not applicable		

> **This report recommends that Cabinet approves an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance**

1. Decision(s) Required

1.1 To approve the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance and to recommend to Council that it be included in the Council's Policy Framework.

2. Background

2.1 Governance is about how the Council ensures that it is doing the right things, in the right way, for the right people, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner. It comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which such bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and, where appropriate, lead their communities.

2.2 The Council strives to meet the highest standards of corporate governance to help ensure it meets its objectives. Members and Officers are responsible for putting in place proper arrangements for the governance of the Council's affairs and the stewardship of the resources at its disposal.

2.3 Cabinet at its meeting on 18 March 2009 approved the Code and subsequently the Full Council at its meeting on 22 April 2009 included it within the Council's Policy Framework. The revised Code is subject to an annual review which is dealt within this report.

2.4 The Council approved a Local Code of Corporate Governance several years ago which has been updated. The attached revised Local Code of Corporate Governance has been developed in accordance with guidance issued in 2007 jointly by CIPFA (The Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy) and SOLACE (The Society of Local Authority Chief Executives) entitled "Delivering Good Governance in Local Authorities".

2.5 This Guidance identified six Core Principles against which local authorities should review their existing corporate governance arrangements and develop and maintain a local code of governance. The principles are;

- Focusing on the purpose of the Council and outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area;

- Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles;

- Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour;

- Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk;

- Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective; and

- Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.

2.2 The six core principles each have a number of supporting principles, which in turn have a range of specific requirements that apply across the range of Council business.

2.3 Attached to this report at appendix 1 is an updated Local Code of Corporate Governance which has been prepared in light of the Guidance and the six principles. It has been the subject of consultation with officers and was considered by the Standards Committee at its meeting on 5 March 2010. A draft minute of the Standard's Committee's consideration of this item is at appendix 2.

2.4 The Code takes each of the principles in turn and elaborates on how the Council will meet its aims, what source documents or processes evidence the aims and in addition highlights any further or ongoing work. This in turn links into the Council's Annual Governance Statement.

2.5 The following changes to the Code are highlighted for the Cabinet's information:

The items highlighted were shown as "Further work ongoing" and have now been completed and are now "Source documents/ processes". Some items appear more than once as they relate to more than one of the Core Principles.

Core Principle 1

Source documents / Processes	Further work ongoing
Place Survey	Strategic Plan Action Plan
Annual Monitoring report	"Council Achievements" section on web site
Audit Commission Annual Letter, Comprehensive Area Assessment, Organisational Assessment and Use of Resources Assessment	Annual review of key lines of enquiry under Audit Commission's Use of Resources Assessment.
Partnership Strategy and Register	Fundamental Service Reviews
Performance Dashboard and Performance report	

Core Principle 2

Source documents / Processes	Further work ongoing
Partnership Strategy and Register	Strategic Plan Action Plan
	Review of Financial Procedure Rules

Core Principle 3

Source documents / Processes	Further work ongoing
Safeguarding Children Policy	Strategic Plan Action Plan
Equality Scheme	Annual review of Whistleblowing Policy and Gifts and Hospitality
Partnership Strategy and Register	Annual review of Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy

	Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy

Core Principle 4

Source documents / Processes	Further work ongoing
Equality Impact Assessments	Annual review of Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
Equality Scheme	Fundamental Service Reviews

Core Principle 5

Source documents / Processes	Further work ongoing
Colchester Learning Managers and Customer Excellence awards	Strategic Plan Action Plan
Audit Commission Annual Letter, Comprehensive Area Assessment, Organisational Assessment and Use of Resources Assessment	
Mosaic and Touchstone	
Consultations	
Equality Scheme	

Core Principle 6

Source documents / Processes	Further work ongoing
Partnership Strategy and Register	Strategic Plan Action Plan
Equality Scheme	"Council Achievements" section on web site
Place Survey	

Some new "Source documents/ Processes" have been included which are now recognised to contribute toward the Core Principles but were not included in the previous version of the Code.

2.6 Progress has been made during the year in strengthening the Council's governance arrangements. This includes the work of this Committee which is reflected both in the changes to the "Further work ongoing" column and also inclusion in the "Source documents/ Processes" column.

3. Strategic Plan References

3.1 Governance forms parts of the Council's commitment to customer excellence which underpins the Council's Strategic Plan vision.

4. Financial Considerations

4.1 None.

5. Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications

5.1 No particular implications.

6. Publicity Considerations

6.1 The Local Code of Corporate Governance will be included in the Constitution and will be placed on the Council's website.

7.   **Consultation Implications**

7.1   None.

8.   **Community Safety Implications**

8.1   None.

9.   **Health and Safety Implications**

9.1   None.

10.   **Risk Management Implications**

10.1   None.

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

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Issued March 2010

COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL

CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

INTRODUCTION

"Governance is about how local government bodies ensure that they are doing the right things, in the right way for everyone, in a timely, inclusive, open, honest and accountable manner.

It comprises the systems and processes, and cultures and values, by which local government bodies are directed and controlled and through which they account to, engage with and where appropriate, lead their communities".

Delivering Good Governance in Local Authorities (CIPFA/SOLACE 2007)

The CIPFA/SOLACE guidance "Delivering Good Governance in Local Authorities" identified six Core Principles against which local authorities should review their existing corporate governance arrangements and develop and maintain a local code of governance. These principles are;

- *Focusing on the purpose of the Council and outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area*

- *Members and officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles*

- *Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour*

- *Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk*

- *Developing the capacity and capability of members and officers to be effective*

- *Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability.*

This Code of Governance has been prepared in accordance with the Guidance and will be reviewed by the Accounts and Regulatory Committee and the Standards Committee on an annual basis.

Additionally authorities are required to prepare and publish an Annual Governance Statement in accordance with this framework under Regulation 4(2) of the Accounts and Audit (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2006. The Annual Governance Statement is a key corporate document. The Chief Executive and the Leader of the Council have joint responsibility as signatories for its accuracy and completeness.

Issued March 2010

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COLCHESTER BOROUGH COUNCIL: CODE OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Core Principle 1 – Focusing on the purpose of the Council and outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area

Our aims in relation to focusing on the purpose of the Council and outcomes for the community and creating and implementing a vision for the local area are to:

1.1 Exercise strategic leadership by developing and clearly communicating the authority's purpose, vision and its intended outcome for citizens and service users

1.2 Ensure users receive a high quality service whether directly, or in partnership, or by commissioning

1.3 Ensure that the authority makes best use of resources and that tax payers and service users receive excellent value for money

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
1.1.1 Develop and promote the Council's purpose and vision	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Service Plans Sustainable Community Strategy Local Area Agreement Communications Strategy Consultation – "Knowing Your Community" Policy Framework Performance and reward system links to strategic objectives Council website – www.colchester.gov.uk Place Survey	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Strategic Plan Action Plan – progress is reported to scrutiny on a half yearly basis
1.1.2 Review on a regular basis the Council's vision for the local area and its impact on the authority's governance arrangements	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Medium Term Financial Strategy and Capital Programme Sustainable Community Strategy Local Code of Corporate Governance Annual Governance Statement and Assurance Framework Place Survey	Local Code of Corporate Governance updated as required by CIPFA Guidance

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
1.1.3 Ensure that partnerships are underpinned by a common vision of their work that is understood and agreed by all parties	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Sustainable Community Strategy Local Area Agreement Public Service Partnership Partnership Strategy Partnership Register Place Survey	Research is currently being undertaken into establishing the Council's partners key values and vision
1.1.4 Publish an annual report on a timely basis to communicate the authority's activities and achievements, its financial position and performance	Statement of Accounts Council's website www.colchester.gov.uk	Strategic plan actions and annual monitoring of delivery "Council Achievements" – new section set up on the Council's website. Plans to add a performance section underway
1.2.1 Decide how the quality of service for users is to be measured and make sure that the information needed to review service quality effectively and regularly is available	Performance Dashboard which is underpinned by an on-line performance management system. Customer Excellence. Consultation – "Knowing Your Community" Mosaic and Touchstone customer research tools Place Survey Annual Monitoring Report Audit Commission annual audit letter and recommendations Comprehensive Area Assessment – organisational assessment and Use of Resources judgements	Govmetric Fundamental Service Reviews – Housing Review, Revenues and Benefits ,Street Services

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In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/processes	Further work ongoing
1.2.2 Put in place effective arrangements to identify and deal with failure in service delivery	National Indicators Performance Dashboard and Performance Report Local Area Agreement Complaints Procedure Internal Audit Process Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel Executive Director for People and Performance Performance Management Board Customer Service Centre responsible for web site management Audit Commission annual audit letter and recommendations Comprehensive Area Assessment – organisational assessment and Use of Resources judgements	Group monitoring of summary service plan delivery
1.3.1 Decide how value for money is to be measured and make sure that the authority or partnership has the information needed to review value for money and performance effectively. Measure the environmental impact of policies, plans and decisions.	Use of Resources Assessment Performance Dashboard Local Area Agreement Local Authority Carbon Management Nottingham Declaration Strategy and Action Plan Audit Commission annual audit letter and recommendations Comprehensive Area Assessment – organisational assessment and Use of Resources judgements	Value for money methodology as described in Value for Money section of Use of Resources Carbon Management programme Sustainability assessments for Local Development Framework Annual review of Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) set out under the Audit Commission's Use of Resources guidance. These include specific KLOE's around value for money and performance KLOE 3.1 looks at effective use of natural resources and impact on the environment (new for 2009/10)

Core Principle 2 – Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles

Our aims in relation to Members and Officers working together to achieve a common purpose with clearly defined functions and roles are to:

2.1 Ensure effective leadership throughout the authority and being clear about executive and non-executive functions and of the roles and responsibilities of the scrutiny function

2.2 Ensure that a constructive working relationship exists between authority members and officers and the responsibilities of members and officers are carried out to a high standard

2.3 Ensure relationships between the authority, its partners and the public are clear so that each knows what to expect of the other

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
2.1.1 Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of the executive and of the executive's members individually and the authority's approach towards putting this into practice	Constitution (Cabinet terms of reference) Record of decisions and supporting materials Member/Officer Protocol Member Training and Development Senior officer training	The Constitution will continue to be reviewed on a rolling basis.
2.1.2 Set out a clear statement of the respective roles and responsibilities of other authority members, members generally and of senior officers	Constitution (Statutory Officer positions, Terms of Reference for Committees, Member roles) Protocols on planning, the representational role of Members, Chairmen, Officer/Members Schemes of Delegation Conditions of Employment	Development of a protocol to cover the working arrangements between Portfolio Holders and senior Officers.
2.2.2 Make the chief executive or equivalent responsible and accountable to the authority for all aspects of operational management	Chief Executive designated Head of Paid Service Constitution (Head of Paid Service responsibilities) Conditions of Employment Schemes of Delegation Job Accountability Statement / Person Specification Signature on Annual Governance Statement	The Constitution will continue to be reviewed on a rolling basis. Support for this from Executive Director People and Performance

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
2.2.3 Develop protocols to ensure that the leader and chief executive (or equivalent) negotiate their respective roles early in the relationship and that a shared understanding of roles and objectives is maintained	Constitution Member/Officer Protocol Regular 1:2:1's	The Constitution will continue to be reviewed on a rolling basis.
2.2.4 Make a senior officer (usually the section 151 officer) responsible to the authority for ensuring that appropriate advice is given on all financial matters, for keeping proper financial records and accounts, and for maintaining an effective system of internal financial control	Head of Resource Management has been appointed as the Council's Chief Financial Officer (S151 Officer). Constitution Job Accountability Statement / Person Specification S151 Officer Protocol Report template includes financial implications before report considered by Members	Review of Financial Procedure Rules
2.2.5 Make a senior officer (other than the responsible financial officer) responsible to the authority for ensuring that agreed procedures are followed and that all applicable statutes, regulations are complied with (usually the Monitoring Officer)	Legal Services Manager has been appointed as the Council's Monitoring Officer Monitoring Officer Protocol Report template requires that Legal Services are consulted before a report considered by Members	
2.3.1 Develop protocols to ensure effective communication between members and officers in their respective roles	Member / Officer Protocol Planning Procedures Code of Practice Outside Bodies advice given to Members Member and Officer Codes of Conduct	
2.3.2 Set out the terms and conditions for remuneration of members and officers and an effective structure for managing the process including an effective remuneration panel (if applicable)	Pay and conditions policies and practices Independent Remuneration Panel Terms of Reference and Reports Regular liaison meeting with Unison	

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
2.3.3 Ensure that effective mechanisms exist to monitor service delivery	Performance Dashboard National Indicators Local Area Agreement Executive Director for People and Performance Complaints Procedure Heads of Service monitoring Service Plans Performance Management Board Performance system Scrutiny Panels	New performance management framework to reflect changes in relation to Local Area Agreements, Comprehensive Area Assessments and new National Indicators. Customer insight work
2.3.4 Ensure that the organisation's vision, strategic plans, priorities and targets are developed through robust mechanisms, and in consultation with the local community and other key stakeholders, and that they are clearly articulated and disseminated	Strategic Plan 2009-2012 underpinned by a review of all existing consultation work. Specific consultation with hard to reach groups. Medium Term Financial Strategy National Indicators Performance Dashboard Local Area Agreement Website Communications Strategy Courier	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Strategic Plan Action Plan – progress is reported to scrutiny on a half yearly basis
2.3.5 When working in partnership ensure that members are clear about their roles and responsibilities both individually and collectively in relation to the partnership and to the authority	Constitution Individual Partnership Agreements Service Level Agreements Advice given to members in relation to outside bodies Partnership Strategy Partnership Register	Research is currently being undertaken into establishing the Council's partners key values and vision

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In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
2.3.6 When working in partnership: • ensure that there is clarity about the legal status of the partnership • ensure that representatives or organisations both understand and make clear to all other partners the extent of their authority to bind their organisation to partner decisions.	Constitution Individual Partnership Agreements Service Level Agreements Advice given to Members in relation to outside bodies Partnership Strategy Partnership Register	Research is currently being undertaken into establishing the Council's partners key values and vision

Core Principle 3 – Promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour

Our aims in relation to promoting values for the authority and demonstrating the values of good governance through upholding high standards of conduct and behaviour are to:

3.1   Ensuring authority members and officers exercise leadership by behaving in ways that exemplify high standards of conduct and effective governance

3.2   Ensuring that organisational values are put into practice and are effective

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
3.1.1 Ensure that the authority's leadership sets a tone for the organisation by creating a climate of openness, support and respect	Constitution Chief Executives and Leaders blog on the Council's intranet Performance Dashboard Leadership days Standards Committee has an overall view of conduct issues established by their terms of reference Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Increased numbers of Independent Members appointed to Standards Committee Member/Officer Protocol Whistleblowing Policy Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy Freedom of Information Policy statement and publication scheme Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer Protocols Planning Procedures Code of Practice Officer Register of Gifts and Hospitality Officer voluntary register of interests Member's Register of Interests Website and Hub	Best Councils' survey work Quarterly briefing for staff Annual review of Whistleblowing Policy and Gifts and Hospitality Annual review of Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
	Corporate Roadshows by Chief Executive for staff Executive Management Team shadowing Hub and Spokes Officers focus group Portfolio Holders monthly sessions with senior officers	
3.1.2 Ensure that standards of conduct and personal behaviour expected of members and staff, of work between members and staff and between the authority, its partners and the community are defined and communicated through codes of conduct and protocols	Members and Officer Codes of Conduct Performance System Complaints procedures Anti-fraud and Corruption Policy Member/Officer Protocols Member Development Programme Officer training on Member/ officer relationship Whistleblowing Policy Information and Communication Technology (ICT) Security Policy Safeguarding Children's Policy	Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy Annual review of Whistleblowing Policy Annual review of Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy
3.1.3 Put in place arrangements to ensure that members and employees of the authority are not influenced by prejudice, bias or conflicts of interest in dealing with different stakeholders and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice	Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Equality and Diversity training for Members and Officers Financial Procedure Rules, Contract Procedure Rules Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Whistleblowing Policy Registers of Interests (Officers and Members) Services and processes are underpinned by Equality Impact Assessments Equality Scheme Officer induction and training	Annual review of Whistleblowing Policy Annual review of Anti Fraud and Corruption Policy

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
3.2.1 Develop and maintain shared values including leadership values both for the organisation and staff reflecting public expectations and communicate these with members, staff, the community and partners	Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Strategic Plan 2009-12 Administration's vision, 3 objectives and 9 priorities in place and being shared Way We Work Programme - organisational values for People, Customer Excellence, Place Shaping and Flexible Working Performance Dashboard Customer Excellence	Strategic Plan Action Plan – progress is reported to scrutiny on a half yearly basis People Strategy actions
3.2.2 Put in place arrangements to ensure that procedures and operations are designed in conformity with appropriate ethical standards, and monitor their continuing effectiveness in practice	Contract Procedure Rules Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Whistle Blowing Policy Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Monitoring of the above takes place by the Standards Committee ICT Security Policy	Reporting through to Standards Committee on a regular basis
3.2.3 Develop and maintain an effective Standards Committee	Agenda and Minutes Terms of Reference Regular meetings The number of Independent Members and Parish Representatives exceeds statutory minimum Local Assessment of complaints Framework implemented Annual Report Work programme	Annual review of the Local Assessment Framework by the Standards Committee. Annual Report

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In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
3.2.4 Use the organisation's shared values to act as a guide for decision making and as a basis for developing positive and trusting relationships within the authority	Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Strategic Plan 2009-12 Administration's vision, 3 objectives and 9 priorities in place and being shared Way We Work Programme Performance and Reward Customer Excellence Leadership days Portfolio Holder sessions with Senior Managers	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Strategic Plan Action Plan – progress is reported to scrutiny on a half yearly basis
3.2.5 In pursuing the vision of a partnership, agree a set of values against which decision making and actions can be judged. Such values must be demonstrated by partners' behaviour both individually and collectively	Values agreed with each partner Partnership Register Partnership Strategy	

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Core Principle 4 – Taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk

Our aims in relation to taking informed and transparent decisions which are subject to effective scrutiny and managing risk are to:

4.1 Being rigorous and transparent about how decisions are taken and listening and acting on the outcomes of constructive scrutiny

4.2 Having good quality information, advice and support to ensure that services are delivered effectively and are what the community wants/needs

4.3 Ensuring that an effective risk management system is in place

4.4 Using their legal powers to the full benefit of the citizens and communities in their areas

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
4.1.1. Develop and maintain an effective scrutiny function which encourages constructive challenge and enhances the organisation's performance overall and of any organisation for which it is responsible	Scrutiny is supported by robust evidence and data analysis Agenda and Minutes Work programme Successful outcome of reviews Training on developing meaningful work programme Training for scrutiny chairman Scrutiny of partners and joint projects	Individual skills for successful scrutiny training in for members in conjunction with Ipswich and Tendring District Council
4.1.2 Develop and maintain open and effective mechanisms for documenting evidence for decisions and recording the criteria, rationale and considerations on which decisions are based	Constitution Decision making protocols Record of decisions and supporting materials Report template Decision list published	Meetings Factory on website
4.1.3 Put in place arrangements to safeguard members and employees against conflicts of interest and put in place appropriate processes to ensure that they continue to operate in practice	Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Member and Officer Registers of Interests Declaration of Interests at meetings Code of Conduct guidance and training provided to Members and Officers	

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
	Planning procedures Code of Practice Standards Committee have responsibility for these issues Monitoring Officer reports on these issues Politically restricted posts Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy	Annual review of Anti- Fraud and Corruption Policy
4.1.4 Develop and maintain an effective Audit Committee (or equivalent) which is independent or make other appropriate arrangements for the discharge of the functions of such a committee	Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel Terms of Reference Accounts and Regulatory Committee Audit awareness training Agenda and Minutes	
4.1.5 Put in place effective transparent and accessible arrangements for dealing with complaints	Complaints procedure Local Assessment Framework	Customer insight work
4.2.1 Ensure that those making decisions whether for the authority or partnership are provided with information that is fit for the purpose – relevant, timely and gives clear explanations of technical issues and their implications	Website Report templates dealing with key aspects Report by Head of Service with necessary technical expertise included Training and professional development Equality Impact Assessments	
4.2.2 Ensure that professional advice on matters that have legal or financial implications is available and recorded well in advance of decision making and used appropriately	Report template requires that consultation is undertaken with Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer before report considered by Members Record of decision making and supporting materials S151 and Monitoring Officer Protocols Equality Impact Assessments	

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
4.3.1 Ensure that risk management is embedded into the culture of the organisation, with members and managers at all levels recognising that risk management is part of their job	Risk Management Strategy part of the Policy Framework Corporate Risk Manager Corporate/service planning Cabinet Member with accountability for risk management Finance and Audit Scrutiny Panel monthly monitoring role of top 5 risks and regular review of whole risk register Performance Management Board quarterly risk review Risk Registers- Strategic, Operational and Project Risk and Control self assessment completed by all managers Training for Members and Officers	Currently developing Members training session. Officer training as and when required through Group Management Teams Fundamental Service reviews look at different ways of delivering services, with risk taken into account
4.3.2 Ensure that arrangements are in place for whistleblowing to which staff and all those contracting with the authority have access	Whistleblowing Policy Information for contractors Monitoring Officer Constitution	Annual review of Whistleblowing Policy
4.4.1 Actively recognise the limits of lawful activity placed on them by, for example the ultra vires doctrine but also strive to utilise powers to the full benefit of their communities	Constitution Monitoring Officer Report templates Equality Impact Assessments Equality Scheme	

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
4.4.2 Recognise the limits of lawful action and observe both the specific requirements of legislation and the general responsibilities placed on local authorities by public law	Availability of professional legal advice Monitoring Officer Protocol S151 Officer Protocol Report templates Constitution Equality Impact Assessments Equality Scheme	
4.4.3 Observe all specific legislative requirements placed upon them, as well as the requirements of general law, and in particular to integrate the key principles of good administrative law – rationality, legality and natural justice into their procedures and decision making processes	Monitoring Officer Protocol S151 Officer Protocol Procedure Rules Report template Constitution Format for quasi judicial committees "Have Your Say" leaflet Planning Procedure Code of Practice Equality Impact Assessments Equality Scheme	

Core Principle 5 – Developing the capacity and capability of Members and Officers to be effective

Our aims in relation to developing the capacity and capability of Members and Officers to be effective are:

5.1 Making sure that Members and Officers have the skills, knowledge, experience and resources they need to perform well in their roles
5.2 Developing the capability of people with governance responsibilities and evaluating their performance as an individual and as a group
5.3 Encouraging new talent for membership of the authority so that best use can be made of individuals' skills and resources in balancing continuity and renewal

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
5.1.1 Provide induction programmes tailored to individual needs and opportunities for Members and Officers to update their knowledge on a regular basis	Member training and development Member and Officer Induction programmes Refresher courses Briefings Officer Development Plan (individual and corporate) Appraisals for officers People Strategy Personal Development Plans Learning and Development Strategy/Annual Plan	Member skills development
5.1.2 Ensure that the statutory officers have the skills, resources and support necessary to perform effectively in their roles and that these roles are properly understood throughout the organisation	Appraisals Training Induction Monitoring Officer and S151 Officer Protocols Employee Policies Learning and Development Strategy/Annual Learning and Development Plan	

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
5.2.1 Assess the skills required by Members and Officers and make a commitment to develop those skills to enable roles to be carried out effectively	Appraisals for officers SMART objectives Personal Development Plans for officers Member training and development People Strategy Learning and Development Strategy/Annual Learning and Development Plan	Member skills development
5.2.2 Develop skills on a continuing basis to improve performance including the ability to scrutinise and challenge and to recognise when outside expert advice is needed	Appraisals for officers Personal Development Plans for officers Member training and development Member scrutiny training People Strategy Colchester Learning Managers and Customer Excellence awards	Member skills development
5.2.3 Ensure that effective arrangements are in place for reviewing the performance of the authority as a whole and of individual members and agreeing an action plan which might for example aim to address any training or development needs	Performance Dashboard and Performance Report Performance management and appraisals for officers SMART objectives People Strategy Investors in People Assessment Comprehensive Area Assessment Annual Audit Letter Use of Resources Organisational Assessment	

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In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
5.3.1 Ensure that effective arrangements designed to encourage individuals from all sections of the community to engage with, contribute to and participate in the work of the authority	Equality Impact Assessments on services and policies Knowing your community on web site Voluntary Sector Compact Mosaic and Touchstone Public meetings Equality Scheme Strategic Plan Consultation Local Development Framework consultation Life opportunities and Community development work Neighbourhood Action Panels Consultations (eg waste survey carried out using a range of communication methods to encourage participation)	
5.3.2 Ensure that career structures are in place for Members and Officers to encourage participation and development	People Strategy Internal Recruitment Process Internal Secondments	Human Resource Plans Member skills development

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Core Principle 6 – Engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability

Our aims in relation to engaging with local people and other stakeholders to ensure robust public accountability are to:

6.1 Exercise leadership through a robust scrutiny function which engages effectively with local people and all local institutional stakeholders, including partnerships, and develops constructive accountability relationships

6.2 Take an active and planned approach to dialogue with and accountability to the public to ensure effective and appropriate service delivery whether directly, in partnership or by commissioning

6.3 Make best use of human resources by taking an active and planned approach to meet responsibility to staff

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
6.1.1 Make clear to themselves, all staff and the community, to whom they are accountable and for what	Constitution Community Strategy Stakeholder identification Targets and Performance Monitoring Website and intranet Consultation Strategy Communications Strategy Satisfaction Surveys	
6.1.2 Consider those institutional stakeholders to whom they are accountable and assess the effectiveness of the relationships and any changes required	Stakeholder identification Statutory provisions Stakeholder surveys Consultation Strategy Communications Strategy Partnership Strategy Partnership Register	
6.1.3 Produce an annual report on scrutiny function activity	Annual Report	

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
6.2.1 Ensure that clear channels of communication are in place with all sections of the community and other stakeholders including monitoring arrangements to ensure that they operate effectively	Communications Strategy Web sites Equality Impact Assessments Courier Safeguarding Children Policy	Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy
6.2.2 Hold meetings in public unless there are good reasons for confidentiality	Constitution Access to information rules	
6.2.3 Ensure arrangements are in place to enable the authority to engage with all sections of the community effectively. These arrangements should recognise that different sections of the community have different priorities and establish explicit processes for dealing with these competing demands	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Web site - "Knowing Your Community " section Consultation strategy Communications strategy Community strategy Equality Scheme and Equality Impact Assessments Place Survey Corporate business plan Service Plans Budget Consultation Meeting	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Strategic Plan Action Plan – progress is reported to scrutiny on a half yearly basis
6.2.4 Establish a clear policy on the types of issues they will meaningfully consult on or engage with the public and service users including a feedback mechanism for those consultees to demonstrate what has changed as a result	Statement of Community Involvement Customer Excellence Customer insight project team Partnership framework Communication strategy Consultation Strategy Budget Consultation meeting Strategic Plan consultation Mosaic and Touchstone	Govmetric

In order to achieve our aims we have/will:	Source documents/Processes	Further work ongoing
6.2.5 On an annual basis, publish a performance plan giving information on the authority's vision, strategy, plans and financial statements as well as information about its outcomes, achievements and the satisfaction of service users in the previous period	Statement of Accounts Strategic Plan 2009-12 Website www.colchester.gov.uk Performance Dashboard and Performance Report Place Survey (every 2 years)	Strategic Plan 2009-12 Strategic Plan Action Plan – progress is reported to scrutiny on a half yearly basis "Council Achievements" – new section set up on the Council's website. Plans to add a performance section underway
6.2.6 Ensure that the authority as a whole is open and accessible to the community, service users and its staff and ensure that it has made a commitment to openness and transparency in all its dealings, including partnerships subject only to the need to preserve confidentiality in those specific circumstances where it is proper and appropriate to do so	Constitution Customer service standards Voluntary Sector Compact "Have Your Say" at meetings Freedom of Information Act Publication Scheme Member and Officer Codes of Conduct Way We Work Programme Whistle Blowing Policy Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy Monitoring Officer Protocol Communications Policy Data Protections Policy ICT Security Policy	Annual review of Whisteblowing Policy Annual review of Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy
6.3.1 Develop and maintain a clear policy on how staff and their representatives are consulted and involved in decision making	Investors in People Facilities and Recognition Agreement with UNISON	

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Extract from the draft minutes of the Standards Committee meeting 5 March 2010

20.   Review of Local Code of Corporate Governance

The Committee considered a report from the Monitoring Officer reviewing the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance.

The Committee noted the updates to the Local Code of Corporate Governance and that a number of new documents had been included in the Code. For example the Partnership Strategy and Register, the Safeguarding Children Policy and Single Equality Scheme had now been approved and were now included. These inclusions strengthened the Code.   The Committee also welcomed the reference to the Annual Reviews of the Whistle Blowing Policy and Gifts and Hospitality Register and the Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy which it had requested.

RESOLVED that the contents of the updated Local Code of Corporate Governance be noted.

RECOMMENDED to Cabinet that the updated Local Code of Conduct be approved.

PETITIONS, PUBLIC STATEMENTS, QUESTIONS

(i) Have Your Say speakers

Date of Meeting	Details of Member of the Public	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
Cabinet 27 January 2010	Nick Chilvers	2010/2011 Revenue Budget	Verbal response from Portfolio Holders for Resources, Diversity Culture and the Arts ands Communication, Customers and Leisure at the meeting. Written response sent by Portfolio Holder for Resources, Diversity Culture and the Arts on 12 February 2010.	12 February 2010
Cabinet 27 January 2010	Mr Treloar	Commissioning of graffiti removal work	Verbal response from Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services at the meeting and written response sent by the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services on 11 February 2010.	11 February 2010
Council 17 February 2010	Bob Russell MP	BSF investment in Colchester's secondary schools	Written response sent by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy on 1 March 2010.	1 March 2010

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Date of Meeting	Details of Member of the Public	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
Council 17 February 2010	Peter Cross	A new system for housing allocations.	Written response sent on behalf of the Portfolio Holder for Neighbourhoods on 24 February 2010.	24 February 2010.
Council 17 February 2010	Marcus Harrington	Anti-Social Behaviour in Colchester High Street	Verbal response from the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services at the meeting and written response sent by the Portfolio Holder for Street and Waste Services on 26 February 2010	26 February 2010
Council 17 February 2010	Will Quince	Flying a Union Jack from Rowan House	Verbal response from the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy at the meeting and written response sent by the Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy on 15 March 2010.	15 March 2010
Council 17 February 2010	Andy Hamilton	Roman Circus and Visual Arts Facility	Verbal response from the Portfolio Holder for Resources, Diversity, Culture and the Arts at the meeting and written response sent by the Leader of the Council on 10 March 2010.	10 March 2010

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Date of Meeting	Details of Member of the Public	Subject Matter	Form of Response	Date Completed
Council 17 February 2010	Paula Whitney	Reducing Carbon Emissions	Verbal response from the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Sustainability and the Environment at the meeting and written response sent by the Portfolio Holder for Planning, Sustainability and the Environment on 1 March 2010.	1 March 2010

(ii) Petitions

None received

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