

SUBMISSION TO STRATEGIC OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

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Agenda item: 4

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SUBMISSION BY THE PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Update on Progress in Delivering the Improvement and Efficiency Strategy

1. Purpose of the report

- 1.1 To provide Members with a progress update in delivering the Council's Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Council developed its Improvement and Efficiency Strategy as a strategic priority within the Strategic aim to 'Deliver through Improvement'. As such the actions in the Strategy bring together many of the activities that are designed to improve the way services are delivered and to maximise the value for money achieved by seeking to ensure activities are as efficient, effective and economic as possible.
- 2.2 The Strategy was approved in Spring 2008 and subjected to scrutiny through a Task Group drawn from this Committee that was chaired by Cllr White. Since then work has progressed on a variety of fronts to deliver the actions within the Strategy.
- 2.3 The activities within the Strategy divided on a thematic basis comprising of:
- ❖ Major projects (Business Change, Options Appraisal and Shared Services)
 - ❖ Improved Financial Management
 - ❖ Process Improvement
 - ❖ Technological Deployment and Enhancement
 - ❖ Customer Focus and Effective Channel Delivery
 - ❖ Procurement
- 2.4 The Programme of activities is risk assessed and where appropriate individual projects have their own risk assessments.
- 2.5 The work that was initially envisaged and which was supplemented by projects being added as and when they arose is now 90% completed. The remaining 10% represents activities that are now unlikely to happen due to changes in priorities or actions for which minor pieces of work need to be finalised in order that projects can formally close. In terms of realising the benefits of the work, what has happened in practice is that the projects have become part of the Expenditure Review proposals and the savings made have contributed towards the savings of nearly £4.6million over the past 3 years and another £3.4 million that will be achieved in the coming two years.
- 2.6 The position allows the authority to take stock of what its business requirements are terms of a new Strategy or absorbing the activities within other programmes of work. Given the significant work currently underway to ensure delivery of the Budget Reduction Programme it is proposed that the ongoing improvement work be amalgamated within that delivery plan, as this is what has happened in practice. This has the advantage of simplifying the management process under one plan that seeks to deliver savings and improve customer service. Any work that remains outstanding will be incorporated/ transferred into the revised management arrangements.

2.7 Nevertheless it is worth recapping some of the most recent successes that the Strategy has helped to deliver.

Major Projects

The operational delivery of the joint waste and recycling services with Tamworth BC has been completed extremely successfully and delivered both financial and service benefits. The Council's print services are being delivered through a temporary partnership with Walsall MBC which again has delivered significant financial benefits.

More information is contained within the Shared Service Report which is also being presented to this Committee.

Improved Financial Management

The work undertaken through the partnership with Solihull MBC to support the Council's financial systems has successfully given us access to up-to-date systems at an affordable level of cost.

Process Improvement

A bulk printing service for the ad-hoc revenues and benefits notification letters is being introduced to streamline processes and reduce administrative burden within teams.

The implementation of the Employee Authentication Service for access to the DWP Customer Information Service ensures employees operate within the requirements of the data sharing protocol issued by central government. A device for the transfer of documents between DWP and Revenues and Benefits is streamlining the process of passing information between different agencies.

Technology Deployment and Enhancement

The re-procurement of ICT support services was completed, delivering a cost saving for the same standard of service. It also provides a springboard to further explore opportunities for ICT improvement and efficiencies. From a technology perspective we have implemented a number of new laptops for Members based on their requirements from the comprehensive review of Members' ICT. A review of telephone lines in operation across the council has identified areas of cost savings and the implementation of the Citrix system at the leisure centres has enabled new working practices regarding the deployment of staff and removed the need for new on-site servers removing the need for investment and the release of physical space.

The resilience of the server room has been improved to ensure there is a good working environment for the new ICT support provider. As part of the change to the ICT support provider a comprehensive inventory of the Council's IT assets has been compiled and opportunities to consolidate and remove devices from the estate and improve process effectiveness will be exploited. Many updates have been applied to each PC to ensure that software is optimised and running versions of software packages appropriate to the business whilst ensuring the risk from external threats such as viruses and hacking is reduced.

Customer Service and Effective Channel Delivery

A major achievement in relation to Customer Services has been the Lichfield Connects team taking on the customer enquiries role for the Joint Waste Service providing the service for both Lichfield DC and Tamworth BC residents. This has been made possible by both Councils using the same underpinning Customer Relationship Management system which has been enhanced to enable joint working. Whilst initially there was a high demand in terms of calls following the service changes, the level of service given has remained consistently high and will improve in the longer term as the new in-cab Bartec system will assist in responding to customer enquiries and reduce customer contact.

In terms of overall customer care, work is ongoing to see how we can enhance the use of the web as a channel for delivering customer services and develop self service options for

customers and we are working closely with the County Council regarding the joint delivery of services.

Procurement

Work on collaborative procurement continues with support from the West Midlands Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (WMIEP). Spend is being looked at across the Staffordshire authorities to identify opportunities for cost savings and improved processes. The development of an improved approach to carbon reduction and cost savings is progressing, looking closely at how we manage our energy and again working in collaboration with others. We have had significant savings in our spending on utilities by changing the arrangements in place and working more closely with Staffordshire County Council.

3. Recommendation

- 3.1 That Members agree to the change of approach to scrutinising the delivery of the Improvement and Efficiency agenda.

4. Community Benefits

- 4.1 The Strategy was designed to maximise efficiency and value for money which in turn means more resources can be directed to what the Community sees as important.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The Strategy was designed to help the Council meet the current financial pressures. The savings benefits have been captured within the Expenditure Review, which overall has made savings of nearly £4.6million over the past 3 years and another £3.4 million that will be achieved in the coming two years. The table presented at **APPENDIX A** provides an overall view of the wider saving achieved during the life of the current Council and reflects the consolidated savings achieved through a variety of means including the Improvement and Efficiency Strategy.

6. Strategic Plan Implications

- 6.1 The activities within the Strategy were designed to deliver a number of the critical tasks outlined in Priority 9 of the Strategic Plan.

7. Risk Management Issues

- 7.1 The following risk has been identified as relevant to this report.

Risk Description	Likelihood / Impact	Status	Risk Category	Countermeasures
That the benefits of having a stand alone Improvement and Efficiency outweigh those of merging the actions with those of the Budget Reduction Strategy.	Low / Medium	Tolerable	Financial/ Managerial	The options have been considered and it is believed that amalgamating the various within a single set of actions will bring a greater benefit in enabling officers and Members to focus on a single action plan.

Background Documents:

Improvement and Efficiency Strategy 2008

APPENDIX A - Savings achieved to date during the life of this Council

Total Savings showing the amount taken out of the budget over the Expenditure Reviews 2007-11	Approved 3 Year Medium Term Financial Strategy 2010-13					
	2008/09 £m	2009/10 £m	2010/11 £m	2011/12 £m	2012/13 £m	Total 2008/09 to 2012/13 £m
Expenditure Review 2010: Total Savings Achieved to date			1.068	1.030	1.156	3.254
Expenditure Review 2009 Savings	0.80	0.822	1.236	1.253		3.391
Expenditure Review 2008 Savings	0.372	0.463	0.550			1.385
Total Cumulative Savings	£0.452m	£1.285m	£2.854m	£2.283m	£1.156m	£8.030m