

DUDLEY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

THE CABINET 16TH MARCH 2005

REPORT OF THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE

MARKETING OF CUSTOMER SERVICES (CATS)

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To consider the progress of the implementation of the CATS programme towards the start of a corporate customer services organisation and give support for the plans and date to launch this service to the public.

2.0 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In March 2003, the Council agreed to move ahead with a programme to make the vision of one council a reality and create a corporate customer service function. This will make it easier for Council customers to contact and do business with the Council and access its services, helping the Council meet key external performance measures, including certain Corporate Performance Assessment (CPA) and Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA) targets.
- 2.2 To create this new function, following initial scoping, a Customer Access to Services (CATS) team was formed to implement the programme in March 2004. A number of significant milestones have now been achieved towards the start of a corporate customer services function.
- Recruitment of a trained team of customer service managers and advisors. An initial team is already working in the Council, with further advisors and assistants due to join shortly and start training in readiness for the opening of the first customer contact centre. The customer services team will have more than 50 staff by May.
 - Start of new services. Requests for a number of services, initially from Directorate of Urban Environment (DUE), have been handled by customer service advisors since November 29, 2004. While the service has successfully gone live and is now taking in excess of 2,000 calls a week, this has purposefully not been marketed to the public, allowing time for organisational learning. The customer service team is currently in temporary offices on the Pensnett Trading Estate.

- New customer contact centre. The council has leased the former Instores market building in Castle St, in Dudley town centre. This also supports the regeneration of this area.
- Following a tender process, the Council has appointed award winning contact centre contractor Interdec to oversee the new centre's design and fit out. Work is progressing and the centre is scheduled for handover in mid April to the Council.
- Plans are now being drawn up to market and launch the new services to the public.
- The rollout programme continues with the CATS team working with directorates to identify further services for transfer to the new operation as well as a rollout programme for up to 50 electronic information points across the borough.
- The Council has revised and renewed its contract with specialist consultancy Modena to support the change management support process including processes for the transfer of services, establishment of the new organisation performance management improvements and organisational development.

2.3 To market the service and the centre launch effectively will require significant levels of marketing material and support. This budget would need to be drawn from corporate marketing activity. A budget forecast to cover marketing activity to promote the service outside the council at launch is estimated at £47,000. This includes advertising to promote, literature, engagement with key groups and launch events.

2.4 Services from Opening

2.4.1 From handover, customer services advisors will work from a centralised Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant location. Among the services they offer will be:

- Longer opening hours
- Choice of telephone or walk-in service
- Taking payments
- Answering general enquiries about council services
- Raising service requests - initially for a growing number of services
- Ownership to resolution of customer queries

2.4.2 Further channels including e-mail and postal requests for information and services will be added along with continuing transfer of services to customer services. The new centre (and any further borough customer contact centres opened by the council) also offer new opportunities under the Council's ongoing property review, such as the Dudley Tourist Information Centre and Box Office functions already identified by the Cabinet.

2.5. Launch Marketing

2.5.1 Accommodation, testing, service installation and staffing issues, including training of new staff, means that the service cannot start directly following handover.

2.5.2 However, once opened, this new service will require considerable engagement with and promotion to the public to raise awareness of this and how this will benefit them.

2.5.3 Planning is now underway for the launch of customer services and consideration must now be given to the appropriate level of marketing for the new organisation and service including what the new service will be called, launch timing and the focus of any launch.

2.6 Name of New Service

2.6.1 A marketing need has been identified for a clear, simple name with impact for the new service. Following a name selection process with groups that will deliver the new service, the recommended name to use across all channels (e.g. walk-in, telephone, e-mail, information point services) is Dudley Council Plus. *Appendix 1* explains how this option has been arrived at.

2.7 Service Launch Activity

2.7.1 To date, there has been very minimal active promotion of Customer Services outside the council. The opening of the new centre and its ability to handle more although still limited range of services creates the opportunity to begin fully marketing the service as it will have a "high street" presence and be more visible to the borough's residents.

2.7.2 In order to plan effectively, a recommended schedule of marketing activity has been drawn up including advertising, literature and events to promote the new service. An outline schedule of proposed activity is attached as *Appendix 2*.

2.7.3 It is recommended that full marketing activity begin from the centre's opening in May 2005.

3.0 PROPOSALS

3.1 That the Cabinet approve the proposed name for marketing of corporate customer services and the marketing actions and their timing as detailed in the report.

4.0 FINANCE

4.1 For Implementation of CATS, funding of £5.47m has been identified over the five years from 2003/04 to 2007/08 and Operational expenditure is currently forecast to total around £5.2m over the four years from 2004/05 to 2007/08. Whilst part of the costs over this period will be funded directly from the

Council's base revenue budget and capital the majority of revenue funding is assumed to be met by budget transfers from other Council Directorates.

- 4.2 Options for funding of the costs of the marketing are currently being considered.
- 4.3 Projected expenditure and funding levels will continue to be monitored as the project develops.

5.0 LAW

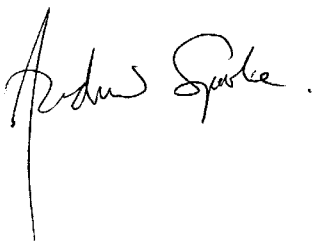
- 5.1 Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables the Council to do anything that is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its various statutory functions.
- 5.2 Section 112 of the Local Government Act 1972 requires the Council to appoint such staff as it considers necessary for the discharge of its functions on such reasonable terms and conditions as it thinks fit.
- 5.3 The CATS programme would facilitate the discharge of a wide range of the Council's statutory functions under various statutory responsibilities.

6.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

- 6.1 The report actively contributes to the Council policy on equal opportunities with particular reference to improved access to services for disabled customers.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The Cabinet agree to the proposals detailed in section 3.0 of the report.



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Andrew Sparke – Chief Executive

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BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to the Executive 29th February 2003 and the Council on 10th March 2003.
Decision Sheet reference HOPSS/20/2003. Decision Sheet reference CE/04.2003.

Appendix 1

Naming new customer services function for public launch

With launch now approaching, there is a clear need to establish what the new customer service functions will be called in marketing to the public and to ensure that this is given proper consideration, in consultation with key groups involved in the programme.

The publicly marketed name is very important to explain what the new service is about. It would be used in the following situations:

- Public-facing name for the service – what the public will see, what they will understand by it
- Service name used for a number of different contact channels
 - contact centre – face-to-face service/shop frontage
 - phone service
 - e-mail
 - post
 - information points

Branding

While the service may have its own name, any branding for this will be clearly identified as Dudley Council, using corporate guidelines and the corporate logo.

Process for selection

An initial list of names has been drawn up following a session involving a cross section of staff involved in the new service:

- CATS programme team, incorporating representatives from management, HR, accommodation
- Marketing communications
- Customer services

This group discussed various options outlined below and produced an initial short-list of names. This short list has then gone to other groups for comments on each option.

1. Council leader & chief executive
2. Customer services team

This process will help to ensure this important decision is not taken in isolation but in consultation with a number of groups involved in the new service.

Naming criteria

Some consistent criteria have been applied

- Name should reflect what the service does
- Names should fit all channels

- Any name selected, while not necessarily an individual's preferred option must be a name consultees are happy to see used
- Objections to names must be clearly given
- Does a name work from a customer viewpoint

Background

To date the new service has been called Customer Services – a name that has been given by default more than design, reflecting what has gone before it and because of a “name vacuum”. While this could still be an option for a name, this process gives proper consideration to alternatives.

Starting point

Group members were asked if: they were to explain to an alien what the new service was about, what would they say/pick out. A summary of the key points raised were:

- One centre for any enquiry
- Ask anything, we'll help
- Contact point for the council (also partners/businesses)
- Where you go to get help, advice, information, service action
- Service/access point
- The only place you'll need to go
- Customer's friend
- Customer's voice/advocate
- Front door for the council
- A very different service
- Making it easy for customers

Following this discussion, the group was asked to put forward potential names. These were then discussed individually to highlight negative and positive attributes. These are summarised as follows:

Name idea	Positive	Negative
1 Dudley Customer Services	Customer-focus	Interpretation of customer services, place for complaints; Who is a customer, will public understand this. Does a transaction have to take place? Use of word Dudley (How would further centres be named (#1) to reflect other locations without diluting Dudley Council)
2 Dudley Council Customer Services	Trust in council name/brand Customer focus	Use of council was generally agreed to be more negative than positive (#2) It's what you expect Doesn't excite or suggest new or improved service
3 One shop		One shop for what? People won't be able to buy anything Doesn't apply to other channels
4 Dudley	Council reputation	Word council (see #2)

Council Plus	Suggests new/ better /extra service Short and simple	
Name idea	Positive	Negative
5 Access Dudley		Dudley (see #1) Suggests disability issues only Name already used
6 Dudley Assist		Dudley (see #1) Help only, not action and results
7 Dudley Focus		Dudley (see #1) No clear enough about offering Party political association Confusion with Housing Assoc
8 Dudley Council Direct		Direct name already used by Housing (Dudley Borough Direct) – may cause some confusion with tenants or impression that it is a tenant only service. Suggests remote service (telephone/email) only, handled by a call centre Word council (see #2)
9 Dudley Matters		Dudley (see #1) Doesn't explain to the customer what this does
10 One contact one council	Simple Better use as a strapline with a name	One council message would be lost Word council (see #2)
11 CATS		Acronym – which when explained is lost on the customer would need explaining and linked problems with access. Too abstract – why not Dogs? Does not explain anything to the customer
12 Hotline		Crisis linked Only happens in emergencies
13 All about Dudley		Suggests information only Dudley (see #1)
14 Ask Dudley		Dudley (see #1) Suggests information only
15 Rapid	Used with branding to reinforce Council link	Suggests fast service – (the contact may be faster, the service may not) Perhaps suggests corners cut
16 Smart		Too abstract Wouldn't stand test of time
17 Connect Now	Immediacy and action	Connect links it to computers/electronics
18 Connect Direct		Suggests remote service only (telephone/email) handled by a call centre

		Name already in use
19 The Way In		Service more than just a way in
20 Contact First		Contact does not suggest service resolution Suggests remote service only (telephone/ email) handled by a call centre
21 First point		Suggest further stage are required to get what customer needs
22 Step one		Suggest further stage are required to get what customer needs
23 One	Intrigue	Too abstract Doesn't explain what the service does
24 1.gov		Too "now" Wouldn't stand test of time Lack of understanding of .gov .gov does not mean local authority

Names put forward for selection

Based on the criteria outlined earlier, the group put forward the following names for inclusion:

- **Dudley Council Customer Services**
- **Council Plus**
- **Dudley Council Plus**
- **One Contact**

It was also felt that *one contact one contact* could also be used, although this is as a strapline with a name rather than as a name alone.

Feedback on these choices, all independently opted for **Dudley Council Plus**

Appendix 2

Outline launch marketing activity

- Creation of service “look” and artwork for marketing material and integration with branding
- Customer service literature
- Promotional material for other council sites
- Advertising to promote new service
 - Press
 - Bus
 - Bus shelters
 - Radio
 - Other publications (e.g. DMBC)
- Media relations activity
- Launch events
 - Staff event
 - Key opinion formers
 - Media
 - Public launch
 - Further formal launch if required
- Direct communication to every household
- Presentation/roadshow materials
- Video for use in presentations
- Material for hard to reach groups