

Select Committee on Community Safety and Community Services – 8th January 2009

Report of the Director of Finance

Dudley Council Plus – Progress Report

Purpose of Report

1. To inform members of the Select Committee of progress in developing Dudley Council Plus since managerial responsibility for the service transferred to the Directorate of Finance, ICT & Procurement.

Background

2. Dudley Council Plus opened in 2005 with the aim of providing a single point of customer contact for a range of services. It provides an extended hours service for dealing with telephone and walk – in enquiries, it takes payments on behalf of directorates and it encompasses the Council's main switchboard function.
3. The main services provided at DC+ are:
 - (a) household and green waste collection
 - (b) street maintenance, cleansing and lighting
 - (c) greencare, (trees etc)
 - (d) housing non – repairs
 - (e) housing lettings
 - (f) council tax and business rates
 - (g) registrar bookings
 - (h) box office

Details of all of the services provided at DC+ are attached at Appendix A.

4. Following the receipt of an external consultants report, managerial responsibility for Dudley Council Plus was transferred to the Directorate of Finance, ICT and Procurement with effect from December 2007.

Since then we have focussed on 2 key priority areas:

- (a) **The introduction of new services:** we have increased the number of services provided from DC+ within existing staffing levels. Our services now include:
 - (i) Housing non-repairs telephone calls
 - (ii) Housing lettings service
 - (iii) Advance payments for bulky uplifts
 - (iv) Civil parking enforcement payments and queries
- (b) **Productivity and performance improvements:** we have
 - (i) installed new cash kiosks and have implemented a variety of self-service facilities including free phones and cheque receipting facilities;
 - (ii) reviewed and put into place revised management structures;
 - (iii) introduced improved performance management arrangements and

individual staff productivity mechanisms;
(iv) undertaken a full review of staff attendance and sickness absence monitoring, resulting in improved attendance levels;
(v) better focussed resources by reducing opening hours to match demand;
(vi) introduced monthly performance and activity reports for both Dudley Council Plus as a whole and for individual Directorates including useful breakdowns of enquiry types; and
(vii) introduced monthly customer satisfaction surveys reporting on results on a regular basis.

5. In terms of current activity levels, DC+ is now dealing with
- (a) around 25,000 telephone calls per month, compared to an average of about 17,000 calls per month in 2007, with an average abandonment rate of 12% (which is in line with industry standards);
 - (b) an average of about 15,000 switchboard calls per month, reduced from over 20,000 per month in 2006, with an abandonment rate of less than 5%;
 - (c) around 3,000 face-to-face enquiries per month, although this has reduced year on year since 2006;
 - (d) increasing numbers and values of cash and card payments;

and is now largely working at full capacity. Further performance information is attached at appendix B which shows that overall, good steady progress is being made.

Finance

6. Whilst there are no financial implications arising directly from this report, it should be noted that the net costs of DC+ have been reduced by about £350,000, with a mixture of budget transfers (mainly from the Housing Revenue Account) and reduced costs (including staffing vacancies).

Law

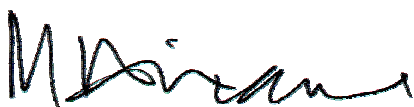
7. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972, enables the Council to do anything, which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its functions.

Equality Impact

8. This report is in accordance with the Council's equality and diversity policy.

Recommendation

9. That members of the Committee note the report.



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DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

Contact Officer: Mike N. Williams, Assistant Director of Finance
Telephone: 01384 814970
Email:mike.n.williams@dudley.gov.uk