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To: Corporate Policy Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 31 March 2011

Subject: Access & Assessment and Workplace Transformation Progress Report

Classification: Unrestricted

Recommendations

1 Members are asked to **NOTE** the actions being taken to improve access to services and to achieve the savings targets for access and assessment set over the next four years

Introduction

2 (1) The purpose of this report is to keep Members informed of the progress being made on identifying savings from streamlining and improving access and assessment processes.

(2) The report on Access & Assessment to this Committee on 12 November 2010 set out the principles from Bold Steps for Kent which specifically relate to access and assessment:

- “Moving to an integrated initial assessment framework across all services for individuals and families sat behind a single front line (the multi channel Gateway programme - physical, web, telephone access) which solves the majority of customer issues at the first point of contact. Our services will be re-engineered to deliver these savings as quickly as possible.” This includes:
 - Expanding the Gateway principles to other access points and linking them more strongly to the physical Gateway network
 - Ensuring residents can increasingly choose how they access services
 - Removing the need for individuals or families to undergo similar assessments from different agencies
 - Developing a single Gateway website and telephone number to complement the face-to-face Gateways
 - Introducing single initial assessment model to speed up access to specialist assessments, if required

(3) A savings target of £14 million has been set for access and assessment over the next four years, to be split across services, and a significant proportion of this will be through improved partnership working. The report also said that in order to ensure that residents can increasingly choose how they access services, a channel shift strategy was being developed to inform the move to providing online access to more services and to encourage people to use more cost-effective channels wherever

possible, so that the more costly types of interaction are reserved for more complex enquiries.

Progress with Access & Assessment Savings to Date

3 (1) Since the previous report to this Committee, the savings identified have increased to £8.77m, to be split over the years 2011/12 to 2014/15 as follows*:

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	Total
	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000	£'000
Savings to be achieved in KASS through review of a range of services including hospital-based services, mental health management and closer working with the Health Service	645	175	2,000	2,487	5,307
EH&W - Highways Environment, Waste & Planning	817	11	11	147	986
CFE - Free School Meals		85			85
Transfer of services into Contact Kent and income into Contact Kent from providing services for other organisations	548	838	200	200	1,786
Channel shift	80	203	24		307
Gateway saving once physical phase complete			100		100
Savings to be reinvested in Gateway – reception closures	100	100			200
TOTAL ACCESS & ASSESSMENT SAVINGS IDENTIFIED	2,190	1,412	2,335	2,834	8,771

* NB This is based on existing structures and may therefore be subject to change in 2011/12.

(2) KASS have identified where they will be looking to achieve their savings allocation of £5.307m. Much of this will be achieved through closer working with partners, particularly the Health Service, to simplify and streamline assessment processes. Other areas include a Hospital Team review, Mental Health Management, Co-ordination Managers, Finance Area Benefit Officers and Assessment & Related savings.

(3) The draft improvement plan "Putting Children First" prepared in response to the Ofsted report on the Inspection of Safeguarding and Looked After Children Services in Kent has set out a number of proposals related to access and assessment:

- To ensure, in the next six months, that all Duty and Initial Assessment Teams are providing effective initial assessment and applying consistent and safe thresholds.
- To improve, in the next twelve months, partners' understanding and engagement in relation to thresholds, eligibility, assessment processes (including CAF) and pathways between universal, targeted and specialist services
- To reduce the number of inappropriate referrals by re-engineering the Kent Contact and Access Service to include the involvement of qualified social workers and managers at the point of first decision making and

- To strengthen CAF arrangements to ensure that children with additional needs are responded to before their needs become acute and require specialist children services.

(4) Initial investigations have highlighted the value of process mapping to further identify blockages and improvements from the customer perspective. Based on the investigations carried out to date, there are concerns in CFE about whether they will be able to achieve the Access and Assessment savings targets originally expected. This is largely due to the fact that units in the Directorate have already identified areas where some of these savings could be made, but have included them in their MTP efficiency or policy savings. These savings cannot be double-counted. There will be changes made to the processes within Children's Social Care as a result of the Improvement Plan. These changes will result in improved outcomes for Children and Young people, but it is not yet possible to identify whether any savings can be achieved from the process. Further work will be required in other areas to identify specific savings.

(5) The unified communications project currently underway across the County Council will provide us with a telephone directory for all KCC staff. This in turn will provide the opportunity to ensure that the improved directory is used rather than using Contact Kent to access internal telephone numbers, with a potential saving of over £130,000 a year. It will also provide "follow me" numbers, which means that each member of staff will have a single KCC number, which can be routed to their mobile phone, home number or a telephone in any office or Gateway building, assisting mobile and flexible working.

(6) Communities have so far identified an additional £1m related to access and assessment (through the introduction of self service in libraries) but this has already been counted against policy savings proposals, in addition to the £350k savings in the current MTP which is predicated on streamlining public access by merging some front line roles. This is not therefore being counted against Access and Assessment.

(7) There is also potential to see if lessons from the Margate Task Force can be used to streamline processes elsewhere. Currently there is a multi-agency assessment form in a pilot stage as a paper form and we would hope to develop it into an online form and also identify whether the type of assessments can be extended.

(8) EH&W intend to achieve the majority of their savings target in 2011/12 through reorganisation in Kent Highway Services. The remainder of the savings will be achieved from a variety of services spread over the four year period.

(9) A bid for £100k has been accepted by the Transformation Fund. The bid was made with a view to investing in technology to make savings in future. The funding will be used to procure two single applications: a workflow web form and an authentication system. These systems will be of benefit to the whole organisation.

(10) While additional funding will be needed in the future much of this will be found from existing budgets where a need has already been identified, therefore we do not propose to bid for additional money but rather utilise the identified money more effectively.

Channel Shift Strategy

4 (1) A draft Channel Strategy has been prepared and has been presented to the Access and Assessment Board and the Member sub-group for website and Digital Kent. The paper is intended to provide Kent County Council with a platform for tackling both the channel shift agenda as well as enabling us to look at current assessment practices and back office processes. It is anticipated that following discussion at the Corporate Management Team, the paper will go out for wider consultation with a final strategy document completed by July 2011.

(2) The Channel Shift Strategy examines how Kent County Council (KCC), in partnership with public sector organisations, will enable their service users to access services in a clear and coherent way, whether it be by face to face, phone or via the web. We must be consistent across the organisation - one negative experience with one aspect of a channel can make people reluctant to use that channel again, regardless of whether it is for a different service. To the customer we are one organisation.

(3) The long-term goal is to achieve a true channel shift, encouraging more users to self-serve via the web, whilst reserving face-to-face and phone channels for the most complex enquiries or for those citizens who cannot interact with us via the web. If achieved, the channel shift will reduce costs whilst improving customer experience, ensuring that customers where possible are using the most appropriate channel for them and for their chosen transaction. The strategy is a key part of developing the Gateway concept beyond the physical locations and encompasses all access channels used by the public including phone and web.

(4) In 2010, Socitm released figures that looked at costs of a transaction across the three main access channels. They estimated that a contact costs 39p online, £3.21 by telephone and £8.23 face to face. These headline figures from Socitm suggest that transferring transactions online would deliver the organisation significant savings but it is important to note that creating meaningful online transactions could also require investment and therefore needs to be carefully thought-out and examined at all stages.

(5) Initial research into the cost of contact via Contact Kent shows that in 2009/10, the cost per contact was £2.50 during the day and £12.50 for out of hours calls, which include the screening function which can involve the full handling of a Social Services issue. These costs are based on the running costs of the service divided by the number of calls received.

(6) Further estimates suggest that 75% of public sector contact with customers may be failure demand or rework. This where a customer calls to chase up an application or a call they have already made. To reduce costs incurred in this way and to enable people to transact with us via the channel of their choice, we as an organisation need to deliver quality and consistent services regardless of the channel chosen (Web, Phone and Face-to-Face), whilst seeking to reduce the cost of transactions across each.

(7) The strategy is not proposing a 'one size fits all' approach but will place more emphasis on the citizen to self-serve wherever possible. We know there are groups who use the web for a wide range of activity such as banking, information-searching and shopping who do not transact with us (or other public services) online because the

facility is not available or is not convenient to use. Understanding who accesses our services is very important when proposing a channel shift. We need to ensure that we are collating postcode data on the people using our services to gain a better understanding of how our customers would like to access our services.

(8) There has already been extensive work carried out on profiling Kent's residents creating detailed Mosaic data (customer segmentation) based on postcodes. By inputting the postcodes of customers we can ascertain whether they are likely to transact face-to-face, by phone or via the web, as well as their propensity to migrate to alternative channels if they were available or if the person was shown how to use them. This research will help us to target our approach more effectively.

Further Areas Being Explored To Deliver The Remaining £5.2m Savings

5 (1) Concessionary Fares – It is intended that this process will use an online form and work needs to be done to ensure that an end-to-end process is procured. Currently the process is largely paper-driven. An online solution would speed up processes and in some cases enable the process to be completed without any interaction with KCC staff. This will also require a solution for determining a person's eligibility for the service through an automated system.

(2) Benefits Hub and Community Safety Hub (Abandoned Vehicles) – Benefits Hub work carried out as part of the Gateway development, has found that significant improvements and savings could be achieved by adopting a single, multi-agency hub approach for the delivery of benefits. As an example, the potential saving in staff time on a single instance of the customer journey for redundancy was £62. With a monthly average of 4,750 cases across Kent, this represents a saving of over £3.5m a year across the public sector services involved. Using a similar method of calculation, the potential saving in a case study based on retirement was estimated at £1.5m a year. This does not include the reduced cost of premises or the social return on investment, nor does it try to assess the impact these changes to the customer journey could have on the back office processes of participating organisations. Experience elsewhere however suggests that the potential for efficiency savings in the latter is even greater than in the customer-facing processes. Similarly work on a community safety hub has identified efficiencies that can be achieved, for example in the reporting and removal of abandoned vehicles.

(3) Resolving financial transaction issues – this will open up opportunities to collect payments online both for service provision and income generation. Currently there are several payment systems in existence all paying a separate fee for the provision. In addition there is considerable work being done within directorates to reconcile payments received. It is expected that a single financial transaction system will reduce current costs and increase income generation.

(4) Free school meals – currently there are two options being examined: income generation from Schools for the service and the potential for the service to be delivered by Districts as part of their current benefits assessments. Eligibility for Free School Meals is determined by entitlement to/receipt of certain benefits, of which the Districts would already have knowledge.

(5) Further transactions have been identified which have the potential to be developed into fully online processes, thereby achieving savings (the financial analysis to confirm savings is underway). These range from the Property Service Desk, School

Governor Applications, Freedom Pass applications and reporting a problem on a public right of way

(6) The Tell Us Once project has been successfully piloted in Kent. People reporting a death need only give the information to a registrar. The Tell Us Once Process will ensure that a range of other public sector bodies are informed. The approach is currently being extended to the registration of births. Tell us Once is now being rolled out nationally.

(7) Gravesham Gateway is now operational, bringing to eight the number of open Gateways (plus the two mobiles). Sheerness Gateway is expected to open in the summer of this year as is the Ashford Plus gateway which will replace the existing facility. Subject to resolution of some estate-related issues, Swanley Gateway should be open by the end of the financial year. Remaining Gateway locations, options and opportunities are kept under constant review.

Workplace Transformation

6 (1) Since its creation in 2008, WorkPlace Transformation has been a cross-directorate programme involving representation from all directorates, and with appropriate geographical involvement in relation to individual projects. In conjunction with Personnel & Development, the Programme Manager has met with representatives of the recognised Trades Unions at least twice yearly. Each project has involved the established consultation with affected staff. To date, the programme has reported to the Chief Officer Group/Corporate Management Team, and more recently to the Access & Assessment Board, as well as to this Committee.

(2) In addition to the planned closure of St Lawrence House, Dartford in this current financial year WorkPlace Transformation was tasked at short notice with closing two major office sites: 17 Kings Hill Avenue, and Kroner House Annexes. As part of the longer-term strategy for Maidstone, a former storage area in Sessions House has also been converted, and is now in office use. The one-off costs were £1,717,432, delivering annual revenue savings of £1,499,674.

(3) It should be noted that recent projects had the potential to cause significant disruption and distress. However, to take the example of the closure of 17 Kings Hill Avenue, over 900 staff were moved directly and indirectly by the project, some by a considerable distance, without a single redundancy occurring – indeed, the project was praised at a recent County Council meeting for its communication and engagement with staff.

(4) Once additional programme costs (including officer time, preparatory work for future projects, but excluding borrowing costs, which are calculated across the eight year life of the programme) have been taken into account, the costs and savings to end March 2010 are:

Total costs - £3,120,866 (approximately 50:50 capital:revenue)

Total full-year annual revenue savings - £1,849,874

(5) WorkPlace Transformation has established savings targets in the short to medium term, and a means to achieve them. The programme's prime catalysts are the lease expiry/break dates on our existing leasehold estate, which in some cases are as late as 2015. Operational and other non-office buildings have not been directly

involved in the programme; however, they increasingly form part of the overall solution. WorkPlace Transformation has been considered the “back office” complement to Gateway, and the programmes remain in close contact.

(6) If the remainder of the programme is delivered on schedule, the additional net annual revenue savings are anticipated to be in excess of £1.2m (net of all costs, including re-provision of a proportion of the space). Work in 2010/11 has suggested that this could be increased, were the organisation to choose to take a more radical approach to the release of leasehold offices. However, a number of challenges will be addressed in the coming financial year, prior to a re-visioning of WorkPlace Transformation:

(i) Children’s Social Services (CSS) Improvement Plan – the requirement to deliver improvements to the working environment (including access, parking and ICT) for CSS staff will impact directly on the potential for closing additional buildings.

(ii) Total Place – WorkPlace Transformation is now linked explicitly to the Total Place assets agenda, and now leads the discussions with district, county-wide and Whitehall partners, to identify and deliver on opportunities for property savings across Kent.

(iii) Financial Pressures and Restructuring – Current financial pressures and the corporate restructure will inevitably have an impact on the office requirements across the county.

(7) Given the nature and scale of these challenges, it would be inappropriate to speculate on the impact on future savings in the context of this report. The aim of the programme however remains to ensure that we have the right buildings in the right places for the 21st Century - for contact with Kent residents and for our staff, in conjunction with partner agencies, and to deliver real efficiencies, including reduced office costs.

(8) As part of the current restructuring, responsibility for the above services will transfer to the Customer and Communities Directorate on 4 April 2011.

Recommendations

Members are asked to **NOTE** the actions being taken to improve access to services and to achieve the savings targets set over the next four years for access and assessment.

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Background Documents:

Bold Steps for Kent: The Medium Term Plan to 2014/15
Medium Term Financial Plan 2011 – 13
Budget 2011/12