

Customer services

Service Action Plan

2012/13

This plan is an active document that will be reported against every six months via the Service Delivery Programme performance report. All staff that are part of the Service should have an opportunity to contribute to its creation and any new staff joining the Service should be made aware of this document as part of their induction.

Introduction

Divisional Director	Ian Savigar
Lead Portfolio Holder	David Bellotti
Staffing Establishment (2012/13)	115.62FTE's

Scope of Service (size, proportions and activities)

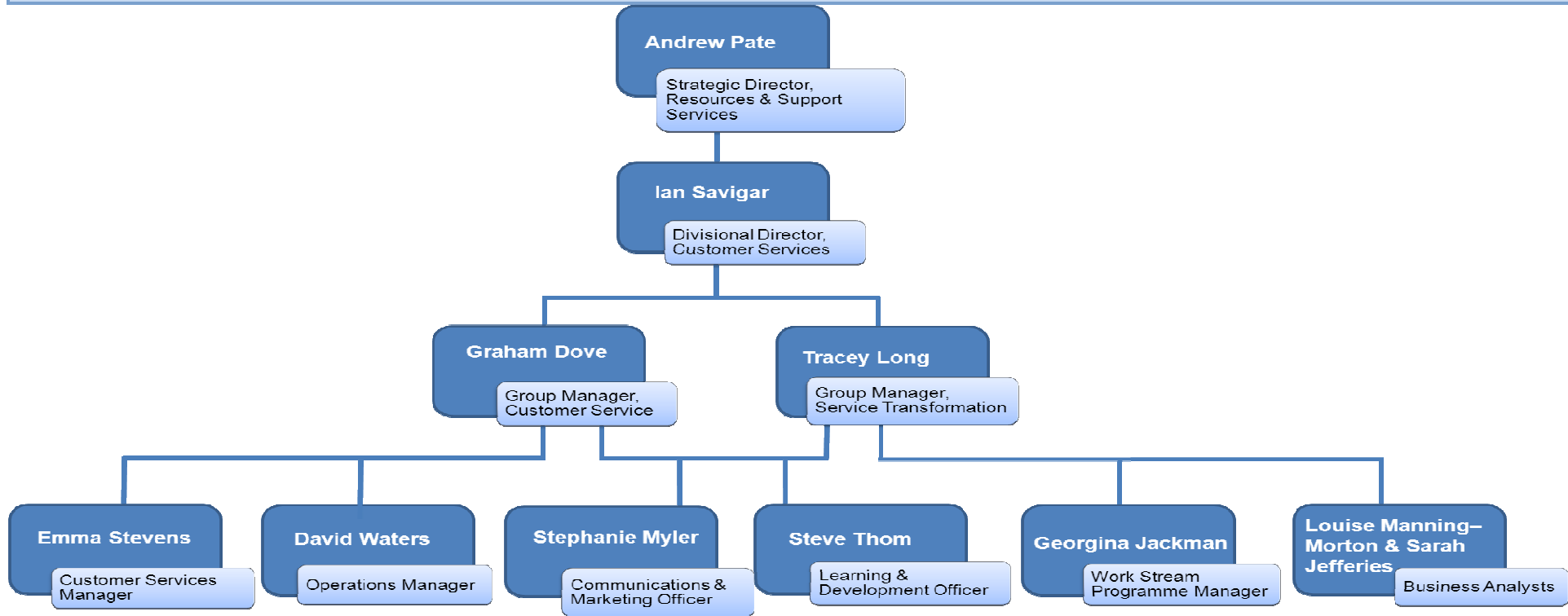
To understand our communities needs in order to deliver integrated public services to residents and visitors in Bath & North East Somerset at the right time, in the way that they need it and in a way that is cost effective for the whole community.

To administer the Revenue & Benefit Services in a customer focused way which minimises loss and maximises income to the benefit of the whole community.

Service Context

- Delivering face to face services for the council and with partners at 3 one stop shops, in our main population centres. With a current footfall of around 300- 400 customers per day.
- Providing telephony services via switchboard and Council Connect Contact Centre for a wide range of Council services. Handling 500 calls per day on average and 50 e-mails.
- Developing the council's approach to integrated public services with partners around life events such as "Tell Us Once" Bereavement service.
- Prompt and accurate payment of Housing and Council Tax Benefit to eligible applicants. Combined caseload of 12,000 applicants amounting to payments of £58 m in 2010/11 and rising.
- Prompt, accurate and effective annual billing & collection of Council Tax (net of any benefits or exemptions) once the annual budget for the council has been set. (Net collectable debit of £85.5m, regularly achieving 99% in year collection)
- prompt, accurate and effective annual billing & collection of Business Rates on behalf of National Government and also the collection of additional levies on behalf of Future Bath Plus for our Business Improvement district
- Provide accurate returns to government in order to realise benefits subsidy, satisfy requirements in respect of business rates
- Calculating the annual council tax base
- Protecting the Public Purse by preventing and detecting Fraud.

Management Structure of Service



Service Manager Functions

Graham Dove	FTE	Tracey Long	FTE
3 One Stop Shops - (ES)	37.37	Customer Service Work Stream	6.02
Contact Centre – (ES)	11.18	• New One Stop Shop Bath (project)	
Switch Board – (ES)	2	• New One Stop Shop Keynsham (Project)	
Council Tax – (DW)	21.7	• Service Reviews (Project)	
Business Rates – (DW)	3.57	• Rural and Community service (Project)	
Housing & Ctax Benefits – (DW)	10.73	• Customer Insight (Project)	
Fraud & Visiting – (DW & ES)	7	• Channel Shift plans (Project)	

N.B. As per structure chart there is also training, comms and marketing operations not included in these numbers. Tracey Long will pull in officers to operate on specific projects as and when required and also plays a role in the strategic management of the operational service. Graham Dove, monitors and administers to Corporate Complaint Process.

Customer Profile

Outline who your main customers are, e.g., service users, residents, other council services, officers, members, partners etc

All Residents liable for Council Tax, Certain Property Owners, Businesses, Students, landlords, Registered Social Landlords, Wide range of Internal Service Providers whose Customers access services through Council Connect; including Waste, Housing, Planning, Social Care, Parking, Concessionary Travel, Registra's etc... Partners include HMRC; Citizens Advice; Age UK; Job Centre; Pension Service etc...

Are there any specific customer needs that require your service to change?

Council Connect is responsive to change and events such as bad weather, legislative change, specific campaigns, seasonal variation etc... Major legislative change around Localism and Welfare Reform will have major impacts on service delivery over the next few years.

We are playing an active role in the consultation process relating to the design of Face to Face delivery models for the new Universal Credit which comes in to effect from October 2013, and we have requested pilot status for this project. This will replace the current system of Housing and Council Tax Benefits for customers on low incomes or out of work, including Pensioners.

The design of the new localised support for Council Tax will have a major impact on our local residents and in particular the most vulnerable members of our communities. We are still awaiting detailed guidance on how the new scheme may work and will have to conduct a consultation process before agreeing a policy for administering the new scheme.

In addition to changes in the Benefit system there are also planned changes to the Council Tax administration system from April 2013, which will enable greater discretionary powers around exemptions for things such as empty properties and second homes, these issues will also need consideration in 2012/13.

Business rate customers may also be impacted by proposals contained within the Localism Act, with the potential to widen discretionary powers.

Working with internal and external partners we aim to bring services together and deliver solutions around life events. There is also increased demand for better use of digital and web based solutions and we will be working closely with services and the web team to enable this demand to be met.

Service Delivery

Planned improvements to service delivery in 2012/13

- **Opening New One Stop Shop in Ground Floor of Lewis House**
 - Increased partner working
 - Integrated public services
 - Delivery around life events
- **Creating Communications Hub in Lower Ground Floor of Lewis House**
 - Co-location and future integration of Switchboard; Contact Centre and CCTV
 - Dynamic proactive and real time response solutions
 - 24/7 availability
- **Channel Shift and Service re-design implementation**
 - Increased and improved use of the Web for transactional services, signposting and information provision
 - Service re-design to take advantage of standardised, simplified and shared solutions

Areas of the Service that are to be stopped or reduced in 2012/13 (due to budget pressures / change in focus etc)

- **No plans to stop or reduce services, aim is to channel shift delivery to cheaper more efficient solutions.**

External influences / pressures that could impact on service delivery during 2012/13 (excluding budget pressures)

- **Localism agenda in relation to increased discretionary powers for Business Rates Administration**
- **Use of resources to plan for changes relating to localisation of Council Tax Support and technical changes relating to Council Tax**
- **Welfare Reform Plans - Developing plans for the administration of Universal Credits and the abolition of Housing & Council Tax Benefits via other agencies**
- **Other (Internal / External) service providers having to change the offer they deliver through Council Connect, e.g. Funding to voluntary bodies - CCTV provision etc...**

Service Costs

Explanation of Service costs (including areas of high spend and growth / investment)

The Benefit Service is described as high performing and low cost.

The Revenue Service was average cost high performing, but subsequent reductions in cost are likely to show this in the same position. Council Connect Face to Face and Telephone service are highly respected and are run efficiently.

We aim to reduce costs in each of these areas in 2012/13 as a result of continued efficiency improvements, but are aware that there may be a need to consider additional project support to manage the huge amount of change the service is facing.

The service will again lose around £60,000 in Housing & Council Tax Administration Grant in 2012/13

Specific projects such as the Customer Service re-design work will require PID funding to enable the project to deliver its target of £1million savings across the Council.

Value for Money improvements - planned efficiencies / savings to be made during 2012/13

- Electronic Billing for Council Tax should reduce costs and improve speed of delivery
- The system thinking review around Student Exemptions will realise additional efficiency savings in 2012/13 as a result of fewer enquiries as well as reduced printing and stationary costs.
- The Service redesign work being carried out as part of customer service work stream will enable rationalisation of systems and reduced support and maintenance costs.
- Co-location of customer service providers and partners will enable better working practices and reduce duplication.

Summary from Medium Term Service & Resource Plan				
MTS&RP Items	2011/12 (for comparison) £'000	2012/13 £'000	2013/14 £'000	2014/15 £'000
Opening Budget	3013	2657	2570	2508
Removal of one-offs	0	-3		
Service Proposed Base Reductions to Balance Budgets	-230	-164	-110	-105
Service Proposed Growth	70	77	48	33
Proposed Base Budget	2853	2570	2508	
Target Budget	2666			
Deficit / (Surplus)	187			
Additional Stretch Reductions	-111			
In Year Adjustments	-82			
Proposed Overall Budget	2657	2570	2508	2436

Workforce Planning

It is important that the Council continues to maintain and develop the workforce necessary to meet its future needs both in terms of the numbers employed and skills & competency required of those employees. To inform the forward Organisational Development and Workforce Planning Strategy, please complete the section below with details of actions you have taken or plan to address your service needs. The list of questions is neither exclusive nor exhaustive but intended to assist you in considering the broader issues which may relate to either your service or Change Programme Work streams.

Please also outline any identified needs that you cannot address/think will be more difficult to address.

Alternatively, if your service has developed a specific workforce plan, attach as an appendix to this Service Plan.

<p>Organisational Development: Implementation of 'future organisational model':</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>How are you developing new workforce structures/ways of working to support the 'future council' organisational model?</i> • <i>What alternative service delivery arrangements are planned/anticipated?</i> <p><i>Are you considering job redesign? If so how/what</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training staff to recognise and enable service delivery around 'life events' rather than being experts in specialist areas e.g benefits, Council Tax • Continuing with culture shift work to train staff to work in accordance with systems thinking principles / resolving enquiries at first point of contact • Yes we are considering job redesign but the detail won't be known until customer service workstream process redesign is complete.
<p>Leadership and Management Development:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>What plans do you have for developing leaders in the new context?</i> • <i>Do you have a programme to assess and develop manager competency and meet gaps?</i> <p><i>Have you identified new manager skills that will be necessary in the 'future council'</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing support through coaching and mentoring. – significant take up of both Leaders of Change and Coaching Excellence Programme • Management team continue to use systems thinking principles which includes shift from 'command and control' to a more facilitative style of management. • The majority of management team have completed Diploma in Management and we expect a new intake this year. • Management competency assessed through PDR, 1 2 1 and any development needs passed through to L&D officer and L&D programmes put in place.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Mercury' training programme set up that links management development options to competency level.
<p>Skills & Competencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Have you identified new skills/competencies that will be necessary for success in the new working environment/context?</i> • <i>Do you think you have a significant skills gap, if so what and how might it be addressed?</i> • <i>Have you identified that these skills might be missing/in short supply in the workforce as a whole?</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer focussed skills/competencies essential – particularly communication, questioning to get info in order to pre-empt customers' needs, enable them to use the most suitable access channel for their needs. • Different skill/competencies required as a result of the need to resolve queries at first point of contact wherever possible. (e.g problem solving, customer focussed in addition to being technical expert) • Difficult to say in terms of technical knowledge required as implications for Welfare Benefit reform still unknown • Our staff will need to have an increased awareness of services provided by internal and external partners • We will also need to work with our partners to make them aware of linkages around life events that can be dealt with in the one stop shop • Front line staff will need skill in making more vulnerable customers feel safe to use the One Stop Shop
<p>Recruitment & Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Do you anticipate any recruitment difficulties in the current financial climate?</i> • <i>Are you undertaking any activity with partner organisations etc to address current/future skills shortages</i> <p><i>Is removal of the default retirement age likely to impact on you workforce?</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This could become an issue – a key factor is the potential impact of welfare benefit reform. It could be difficult to retain and recruit talent without knowing what this impact will be.
<p>Identified needs that cannot be addressed at service level/may be more difficult to address at this level</p>	
<p>Equalities</p>	
<p>We are committed to the Council's core value of ensuring there is equality of opportunity through employment and service delivery. We are committed to promoting equality and eliminating discrimination on the grounds of age, disability, faith/religion or belief, gender including transgender, marital / civil partnership status, race, colour, ethnic or national origin and sexual orientation. Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) are carried out on all service changes and actions to mitigate impacts.</p> <p>Please follow the link to the appropriate EIA .equality impact assessment: financial plan</p>	

Key Service Priorities 2012/13

It is important to show how each service priority links to the new Corporate Plan, in particular the four strategic objectives and high level outcomes set out in the table below. At the end of each priority, services **must** indicate whether it will contribute to an objective and add the reference letter for each outcome it will help to deliver.

Objectives	Outcomes	Ref
1. Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone	Children and young people enjoy their childhood and are prepared for adult life.	A
	Schools develop and extend their role in the local community	B
	Youth Service works with the community to provide opportunities to support and develop young people	C
	Older people are supported to live independently.	D
	The people most in need are supported to live full active lives.	E
2. Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live	Where people feel safe	A
	There are decent affordable homes in private and social sector	B
	Clean streets and open spaces	C
	Where people are able to travel easily with reduced traffic congestion and pollution	D
	Where local people actively lead the delivery of improvements in their community	E
	Where there are opportunities to participate in sports, leisure and cultural activities	F
3. Building a stronger economy	With a broad range of job and employment opportunities	A
	With a strong local business sector, tourism, and local shopping	B
	Key development sites are delivered to increase the number of local businesses.	C
	A diverse economy with growth in the low carbon, knowledge creative, and ICT industries	D
4. Developing resilient communities	Where local people have developed their skills and use them to improve their community	A
	Where decisions are made as locally as possible	B
	Where there is easy access to public services and local amenities.	C
	Communities have adapted to changes in our climate and are not dependent on high carbon energy	D
	Recycling and reduction in waste continues to be extended	E

Priority 1:

Details of Service Priority	Open Bath One Stop Shop on 14th May 2012	
Impact on local community	Improved access to public services	
Groups of service users affected	Residents of Bath and surrounding area requiring support, advice and information about a wide range of public services.	
Key Activities (add more lines as appropriate)	Timescales	Performance Measures
Physical and Technical solutions	January 2012.	Complete on time
Partner Engagement and plans and agreements made	January 2012.	Agreed and planned on time
Open New One Stop Shop In Bath	May 2012	Open for business as planned
Communications & Marketing	Ongoing	Clear and effective
Ongoing developments	Ongoing	Learn and change

Contribution to Strategic Objectives – please indicate which of the Corporate Plan objectives and outcomes this priority will contribute to:

Strategic Objective	Contributes – Y/N?	Relevant Outcomes
1. Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone	Y	D,E
2. Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live	Y	A,E
3. Building a stronger economy	Y	-
4. Developing resilient communities	Y	A,C

Priority 2:

Details of Service Priority	Service re-design in Revenues and Benefits – (Release 1 & 2)	
Impact on local community	Improved service delivery, provision of most appropriate channels of access, improved speed and reduced cost.	
Groups of service users affected	Council Tax payers, Benefit Applicants (Residents / Owners and vulnerable)	
Key Activities	Timescales	Performance Measures
Service Redesign plan agreed	Dec 2011	Agreed Plan
Channel Shift numbers agreed	Jan 2012	TBA – around volumes and cost
Savings identified and implementation started	Sept 2012	Reduced costs per transaction
Implementation complete	March 2013	As above
Contribution to Strategic Objectives – please indicate which of the Corporate Plan objectives and outcomes this priority will contribute to:		
Strategic Objective	Contributes – Y/N?	Relevant Outcomes
1. Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone	-	-
2. Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live	-	-
3. Building a stronger economy	-	-
4. Developing resilient communities	-	-

Revenue and Benefit services are a statutory function and the performance of the team in delivering this effectively has a major impact on the Council's capability to deliver against its objectives although it cannot be said that it directly impacts those objects in its administration.

Priority 3:

Details of Service Priority	Implement and develop Communications Hub solution		
Impact on local community	Efficient, pro-active service, enabling residents and visitors 24/7 contact.		
Groups of service users affected	Residents, Visitors		
Key Activities	Timescales	Performance Measures	
Physical and technical solutions agreed and implemented	Apr 2012	Location is physically operable on time and within budget.	
Co-location of staff involved, including CCTV, Switchboard, Urban Traffic Control and Emergency Management Teams	April 2012 – Sept 2012	Consultation successful and physical moves complete.	
Re-structure of service provision	Sept 2012- March 2013	Effective and efficient structure implemented	
Revised telephony policy	Sept 2012	Agreed Policy	

Contribution to Strategic Objectives – please indicate which of the Corporate Plan objectives and outcomes this priority will contribute to:

Strategic Objective	Contributes – Y/N?	Relevant Outcomes
1. Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone	Y	D,E
2. Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live	Y	A,C,D,E
3. Building a stronger economy	-	-
4. Developing resilient communities	Y	C,E

Priority 4:

Details of Service Priority	Develop understanding and strategy for delivering Welfare Reform Changes		
Impact on local community	Major impact on distribution of welfare benefits, the aim is to make work pay but there are likely to be winners and losers within our communities, the details are still unknown.		
Groups of service users affected	Vulnerable, unemployed, low paid and elderly		
Key Activities		Timescales	Performance Measures
Developing scheme for localised support for council tax (including discretionary policy)		Timetable to be agreed for bills in April 13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation complete and scheme agreed in time for annual bills. • Meeting needs of most vulnerable
Understanding and planning for transition from Housing Benefit to Universal Credits (working age and Pensioners)		Now until 2017	Successful transition, pilot status in 2013 for face to face delivery
Developing solution for delivering Discretionary powers for Social Fund etc...		Details unknown	
Planning and implementing changes for Fraud Team		Details unknown	
Contribution to Strategic Objectives – please indicate which of the Corporate Plan objectives and outcomes this priority will contribute to:			
Welfare Reform Changes will have a major impact on our communities; the changes are a statutory duty. They will impact the most vulnerable and the growth agenda is a key driver for these changes.			

Priority 5:

Details of Service Priority	Develop service delivery around life events
Impact on local community	Improved access to service designed around the issue at hand and using closer working with partners to provide seamless solutions for customers will reduce the number of contacts required to resolve an issue created by an event in a person's life.
Groups of service users affected	Various, depending on activity

Key Activities	Timescales	Performance Measures
To be determined by Customer Service work stream priorities, building on bereavement tell us once solution implemented in 2011/12.	Release 1 – March 2012.	Requirements identified and links to other services made.
Change of Address part of Revs & Bens redesign	September 2012.	New process designed and agreed.
Other Life Events	TBA	To be agreed.

Contribution to Strategic Objectives – please indicate which of the Corporate Plan objectives and outcomes this priority will contribute to:

Strategic Objective	Contributes – Y/N?	Relevant Outcomes
1. Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone	Y	Dependant on projects
2. Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live	Y	As above
3. Building a stronger economy		
4. Developing resilient communities	Y	As Above

Appendix 1 – Key Performance Measures and Targets 2012/13

Service Priority no	Key Measure(s)	2012/13 Target(s)	Strategic Objective(s)	Outcomes(s)
1	Official Opening on 14 th May 2012	May 2012	As per priority	Effective One Stop shop service
1	Key Partners engaged and working together from new one stop shop.	May 2012	As per priority	Improved Customer experience, integrated service delivery with partners, reduced costs for all community
2	Release the Comino Document management System	By March 2013	As per priority	Cost Saving, no adverse impact for customer.
2	Cost(s) per transaction	10% reduction	As per priority	Lower costs / More efficient
3	Increased Value Demand for the service	60 – 40 split	As per priority	Efficient service, Happy Customers.
3	Resolution at first point of contact	1-2 customer touches	As per priority	Quick / One stop resolution
4	Face to face service Pilot for Universal Credits	Operational from Oct 13	As per priority	Blueprint for National Solution
4	Agreed Policy for localised support of Council Tax	Correct Bills April 13	As per priority	Maintain income stream, most vulnerable supported.
5	Reduced customer contacts	Typically 7 to 1	As per priority	Happy Customers, reduced costs

Service Priority no	Key Measure(s)	2012/13 Target(s)	Strategic Objective(s)	Outcomes(s)
-	% of Council Tax Collected within the year.	99%		Maintains cashflow
-	% of NNDR (Business Rates) Collected within the year	97%		Maintains Cashflow
-	End to End Processing Time for New Claims and Changes in Circumstances	TBA		
-	End to End times for claims dealt with at Face to Face locations	3 days		Customer sets nominal demand, if all info available processed whilst waiting.
-	No of HB/CTB transactions handled as one and done	70%? (TBA)		
-	Calls answered within corporate standards	80%		
2	Channel shift measures	TBA	As per priority	Reduced cost, improved choice