CUSTOMER SERVICES REVIEW – PROJECT BRIEF

Introduction & background

Customer services are an integral part of the organisation's operation. It is often the first and only point of contact for service users with an estimated 140,000 visits annually to one of the council's four information offices, 40,000 switchboard calls and 155,000 telephone enquiries handled by the customer services centre. The information offices alone take in the region of £13.5 million in payments and sell more than 25,000 parking clocks each year.

Arrangements also exist with the town and parish Councils of Ringwood, Fordingbridge, Totton, and Fawley to provide information services on the council's behalf at an annual cost of approximately £90k.

Users of these services can be largely split in to two main categories; those where the interaction is transactional e.g. buying a parking clock or paying their council tax and those who are accessing services e.g. housing benefits or housing.

Customer expectations for accessing services and the landscape for local government are both changing meaning that we need to find more innovative and streamlined ways to meet these expectations and ensure the sustainability of frontline services to the customer.

There is an increasing reliance on digital technology in everyday interactions and transactions. 86% of homes are now online, with smartphones being used by 71%*. Customers now expect to access public services via new technology, when and where they want. By responding to this rising digital demand effectively, we have an opportunity to meet customer expectations and deliver savings for the future

Equally it is recognised that not everyone has the skills, access or inclination to take advantage of online delivery and communities need to be supported to increase take up of alternative channels whilst acknowledging the importance of retaining face to face and alternative contacts for the most vulnerable people and complex enquiries.

Failure demand, or avoidable contact, where resources are consumed by a failure to do something or to do something right for the customer also presents an opportunity to improve efficiency. This is often the result of poor processes and cumbersome technology which in itself could amount to significant wasted resource at the frontline.

The customer services review will assist the council in responding to customers' increasing expectations for online delivery and in enhancing access to services at customer's convenience through self-service functionality, whilst seeking to improve the efficiency of its processes and future proofing arrangements for our customers.

*OFCOM Communications Marketing Report 2016

Purpose and Objectives

The review is necessary to identify a clear customer strategy that responds to customers' expectations for digital service delivery, underpinned by the right technology and preserving the frontline by making savings in the back office; freeing up resources to help those who are unable to engage digitally.

Scope

It is intended that the project will be delivered by a small team of customer service experts and users, led by the Service Manager for Business Improvement and Customer Services and supported by a panel of elected members. The project will focus on four main areas of delivery:

1 Customer Strategy
To identify and define how we want to meet customer demand and expectations in the future and clarify the drive towards digital service delivery, where the customer is able, with a correlated reduction in more expensive access channels i.e. face to face and telephone.

2 Digital Service Delivery
To include channel shift opportunities arising from an analysis of top tasks and how this is best delivered in a co-ordinated way, linking to and informing the Digital Service Delivery review.

3 Information Offices
To include external arrangements with town & parish councils, analysis of top tasks, identification of failure demand/avoidable contact, operating resources and opening arrangements. Also included will be a review of switchboard calls to identify reason for high volumes and to make recommendations for future improvement.
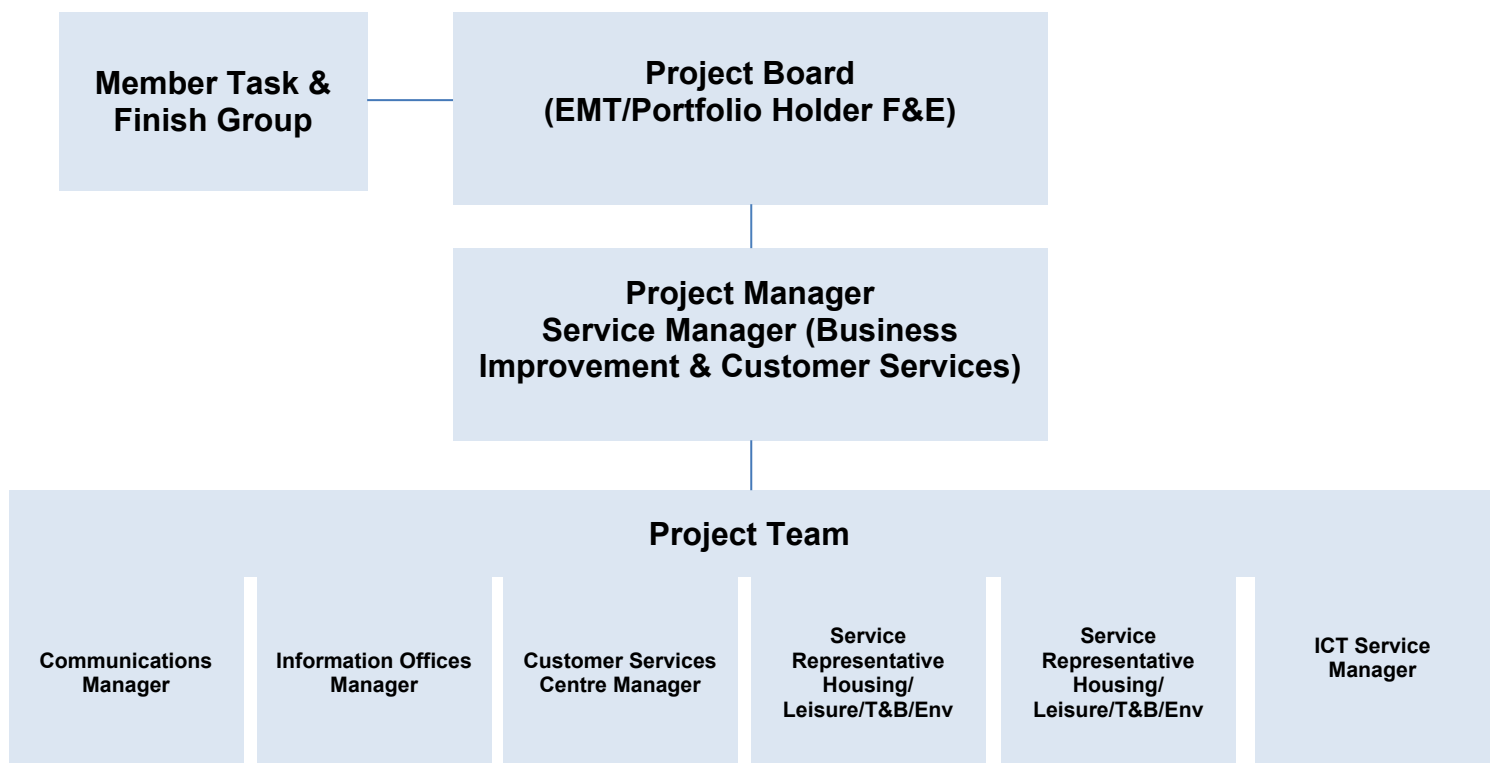
4 Customer Services Centre
To include an analysis of top tasks, identification of failure demand/avoidable contact, operating resources and opening arrangements. Also to include an appraisal of for how services are best delivered in conjunction with other services.

Assumptions

1. Any areas for improvement identified during the review will inform the business improvement work programme.
2. That investment will be available to support the findings of the review i.e. ICT infrastructure and development.

Project governance & team structure

Member Task & Finish Group	Project Board (EMT/Portfolio Holder F&E)

Project Manager
Service Manager (Business Improvement & Customer Services)

Project Team

Communications Manager	Information Offices Manager	Customer Services Centre Manager	Service Representative Housing/ Leisure/T&B/Env	Service Representative Housing/ Leisure/T&B/Env	ICT Service Manager

The project board will be responsible for agreeing the scope of the project, monitoring progress and directing the project manager at key stages.

The task & finish group will act as a member steering group for the project, informing strategic direction, identifying and appraising opportunities for future service delivery and making recommendations to the project board. Overview and scrutiny of the project will be undertaken by the Corporate Overview and Scrutiny Panel through regular progress reports.

The project manager will be responsible for delivering the project on behalf of the board, liaising with the task and finish group and co-ordinating the activity of the project team.

The project team will be responsible for the development of a detailed work programme and for the completion of that plan to achieve the project deliverables.

Key stakeholders will be engaged with and involved to inform current arrangements and future options. These will include representative from key service areas, town & parish councils and service users through consultation.

Timeline

Activities	Start	Finish	Tasks
Define	Oct 2016	Nov 2016	Detailed work plan (Work with the project team and task & finish group to determine approach and key tasks)
Measure	Nov 2016	Jan 2017	Collect data (Fact Finding to ascertain existing arrangements)
Analyse	Dec 2017	March 2017	Research alternative options, determine issues and make recommendations. Initial report to EMT/COSP March 2017
Improve	April 2017	March 2019	Implement improvements
Control	April 2017	March 2019	Monitor, assess success and refine

Anticipated Outcomes

- Clear digitally focussed customer strategy
- Improved and customer focussed back office processes
- Effective channel shift to online delivery
- Reduced demand for front line face to face and telephone service delivery
- Financial savings

A detailed work plan and risk tracker will be developed by the project team on approval of this project brief.