

		Agenda Item 6
		ES/016/11
Committee:	Executive Scrutiny Committee	
Date:	22 March 2011	
Transformation Programme Scrutiny Review: Progress Report		
Enquiries to:	Hannah Cleary, Governance Officer 01245 430526 hannah.cleary@essex.gov.uk	

Purpose of the report

This report sets out the evidence taken so far in relation to the Transformation Programme Scrutiny Review, and has been updated to include the evidence by the Committee in relation to New Ways of Working, Procurement and Property Strategy taken at the 30 November, 25 January and 15 February meetings. This report was last presented at the 30 November meeting.

Introduction

Since December 2009 the Executive Scrutiny Committee has been carrying out a scrutiny review of the Council's Transformation Programme - a significant project that aims to radically change the way public services are delivered and respond to significant financial challenge.

The Committee has taken evidence from Cabinet Members and officers on a number of the seven main Transformation themes of Efficiencies, Procurement, Customer Services, IT, Property, Commissioning and Supporting Services.

Background

In 2008 the Council identified that increased future demand for services coupled with a tightening fiscal climate would result in a funding gap of £300 million by 2013. In response the Council initiated the Essex Works Customers First Transformation Programme (Transformation Programme) to drive out the necessary efficiency savings and radically change the way the Council conducts its business.

The Committee initiated the review with two main objectives:

1. To understand the overall vision for the Transformation Programme and the methodology for its delivery

2. To ensure the governance arrangements are appropriate for a project of this importance and that the maximum benefit to the Council and to public services in Essex is derived from the Transformation Programme.

Evidence Sessions

The first evidence sessions took place in December 2009, February and April 2010, and focussed on these objectives; with subsequent meetings in June and September expanding the review to preliminarily examine property strategy, shared services and customer service development.

At the December 2009 meeting the Committee received a presentation from Councillor Sarah Candy, Cabinet Member for Finance and Change Management, Mrs Margaret Lee, Director for Finance and Mr Nick Bell, Executive Director of Finance, which focused on the financial challenges facing the Council.

At the 23 February 2010 Councillor Sarah Candy, Cabinet Member for Finance and Mr Nick Bell, Executive Director for Finance attended to assist the Committee to discuss the terms of reference and scope of the future scrutiny review into the Transformation Programme.

The scoping document ES/08/10, a document setting out the scope of the first objectives for the review was agreed by the Committee at its 23 March 2010 meeting.

An information pack by Mr Alex Corbett, Head of Transformation Intelligence was presented at the 27 April 2010 meeting and Councillor Finch, Cabinet Member for Finance and the Transformation Programme and Mr Keir Lynch, Director of People and Transformation were in attendance to give presentations.

At the 29 June 2010 meeting, the Committee heard from Cabinet Member Councillor Louis about property strategy, Graham Tombs, Executive Director of Commercial Services about the future of shared services and Mr Andy Fairchild, Director of Customer Services about customer interface development. The Committee considered report ES/20/10 – a scoping document for a Task and Finish Group to consider the Governance, Communications and Contractual Partner elements of the Transformation Programme. Councillors Butland, Young and Pummell volunteered to become Members of the Group. It was subsequently agreed by the Committee at the 26 October 2010 meeting that the communication and contractual partner elements of this scoping document would be deferred, in order for the review to remain current and to enable the Committee to keep pace with the Programme by exploring other areas that are potentially of greater significance. The Committee indicated that it wish to return to consider these topics in the future, especially with regard to communications with the public and partners.

Mr Graham Tombs, Executive Director for Commercial Services and Mr Ricky Fuller, Assistant Director, Corporate, Commercial and Property Group attended the 7 September meeting and provided the Committee with the 'appetite survey' results and

an update on the progress of the implementation of shared services.

At the 26 October meeting Mr Andy Fairchild, Director of Customer Services attended to give an update to the Committee around the progress of the new website development. Mr Keir Lynch, Director of People and Transformation also attended this meeting to provide an update on the Transformation Programme savings.

Councillor Louis, Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Commercial Services, and Mr Robert Overall, Executive Director, Environment, Sustainability and Highways attended the 30 November meeting and provided details of the Council's new property strategy, and again at the 25 January 2011 meeting to inform the Committee how Procurement activity is contributing to the savings target of the Transformation Programme.

Mrs Jenny Owen, Deputy Chief Executive and Project Lead for the New Ways of Working initiative gave a presentation at the 15 February meeting.

The first objective – understanding the overall vision and methodology of the Transformation Programme

The Transformation Programme has two main areas of focus: for the Council to become more customer focused; and to drive out efficiency savings of £300 million by 2012/13. The Council faced grant reductions, inflation pressures and increases in the older person demographic, and the Transformation Programme would allow the Council to obtain better quality services whilst reducing costs.

There were three phases to the Programme – Stabilise, One Council and One Essex. By 2013 the organisation would be highly adaptable; leaner and smaller, whilst providing value for money and customer centric services, especially to vulnerable people.

IBM had been identified as the preferred partner and would provide capacity and knowledge of public and private sector best practice in areas such as IT, procurement and customer services. The contract is flexible, and would allow the Council to look to other suppliers if it wished.

The main risks for managing such a large programme of transformation were to ensure that key services were maintained whilst dealing with radical change. Some of the processes were new to Local Government and carried a risk that they may not be successfully transferable. In order for the Programme to be successful, all stakeholders needed to accept the need for change. Robust governance and delivery mechanisms had been developed and were reported to senior officers on a weekly basis to counter the identified risks, in addition to the work carried out by the Internal Audit Team and individual service areas.

In order to deal with the financial pressures of an ageing population, increased demand for children's services and the cost of waste disposal, the Council needed to alter its approach to service delivery from a silo approach to a focus on providing commissioned, arms length services, with greater emphasis placed on traded business support services. Essex Cares, a domiciliary care provider, and Essex Legal Services had been

established as traded service models, offering services to other public sector organisations and Local Authorities, generating an income, and having the potential to develop outside of Essex.

Changes to the way services were procured had already delivered savings of £25 million with targets of a further £150 million to be saved through joint commissioning with partner organisations. Further savings of £9 million had been generated through bringing the IT provision back in house. A different system of procuring IT services was envisaged for the future - buying in the required support and server space, and making better use of technological advances in areas such as mobile technology, allowing staff to work faster and smarter. Since bringing the service back in-house, there had been an 80% decrease in log-in times at small financial cost to the Council.

In February 2010 there were 50 Transformation Programme projects underway which operated on a six month cycle to generate the required momentum. The broad themes of the projects were outlined as follows:

- Procurement projects
- Finance projects including cost savings and improvements to the financial information provided for key decisions
- IT projects to stabilise service provision
- Adults, Health and Community Wellbeing service development through re-ablement programmes and individual budgets, linked to the establishment of Essex Cares
- Highways contractual relationships
- Schools, Children and Families improvement and stabilisation, especially in relation to safeguarding services
- Partnership and shared services projects
- Improving the information provided to Members
- Developing the website as a single transactional point of contact for customers

Current service provision was reviewed to identify potential projects, which were then prioritised through dialogue between the Central Leadership Team (CLT) and Cabinet Members to identify those that were financially viable, would provide the most forward movement and deliver savings. The number of projects initiated within any six month period depended on the resources available, with the return from the first cycle of projects being good in relation to the cost of delivery. The Outcomes Board examined the business case for each project, and once approved, the Transformation Support Unit managed the delivery. A separate Project Board had been established to oversee live projects and report directly to CLT and Cabinet Members. The funds for these projects were contained within the Transformation Support Unit budget.

The Council is confident that the £300 million savings will be realised, with constant review and monitoring of the deliverability taking place.

The Executive Scrutiny Committee has largely fulfilled the original objective to understand the overall vision, and has commenced detailed exploration of other areas of the Programme.

Mr Keir Lynch, Director of People and Transformation was in attendance at the 26 October meeting to provide an update on the Transformation Programme savings.

September saw the close of Transition State 2 (TS2) that had encompassed 32 projects and planned savings of £37 million for 2010/11. Key highlights included:

- The Adults, Health and Community Wellbeing Directorate were on track to achieve savings of approximately £10 million in 2010/11, against a target of £5.75 million
- 57 of 73 libraries had successfully rolled out free 'wi-fi' access; which had received very positive feedback from the public
- Funding had been secured and an internal project team mobilised for modernisation of IT services. A procurement exercise had been completed in September to secure an implementation partner, along with the agreement of a new organisational structure
- A management review with benefits of £10 million had been agreed
- A full business case had been completed and approved for the 'e-payroll' project. A project team had been established and mobilised, with third party contract negotiations completed and approved.
- A full project team had been established to deliver Project Co-efficient, and a future Finance Directorate organisation design had been completed and approved. The new software package 'Cognos' that would support reporting, planning, budgeting and forecasting would be introduced shortly. Finance staff had received change management training.
- A management re-structure across Highways had enabled the streamlining of middle management and introduced more efficient working practices
- The Council was on track to gain agreement of the Civil Parking Enforcement solution framework that would enable District and Borough Councils to work to a standard.
- A Lighting Central Management System business case had been approved. This was an innovative approach that would lead to a reduction in the carbon footprint through the use of responsive remote control of lighting across Essex
- The Target Operating Model was a significant TS2 project. This had received a high level of input from the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) and Political Leadership Team (PLT), and had delivered a clear articulation of the Council's future operating models. It had outlined a clear definition of a commissioning organisation that reflected the Council's strategic and financial ambition. The next stages for this project were to plan the work streams necessary to drive forward the build of the end state organisation
- Transition State 3 (TS3)-work had been undertaken during the last stages of TS2 to plan for the next stage. There were 34 business cases programmed into the

forward plan including New Ways of Working (this made up 17 of the 34 business cases), property and income

The Council was moving to become a commissioning organisation, and it was necessary to reshape the management structure, as some areas currently had twelve layers of management. Three hundred roles had been identified to be moved out of the organisation delivering savings of over £10 million.

The target operating model had been approved by the Corporate and Political Leadership Teams, which moved the Transformation Programme into the third stage-TS3. A new software system, Cognos, was due to be introduced to the Finance Directorate shortly and would be a key enabler to develop and change the organisation, improving business intelligence. The Finance Directorate was currently undergoing a restructure, with some staff re-applying for roles.

The New Ways of Working (NWoW) initiative would improve the utilisation of space, technology and time, and would allow staff to work remotely. Feedback had been received from staff about unnecessary travelling time and bureaucracy and the NWoW initiative hoped to tackle these.

Mr Lynch explained that £60 million savings had been delivered in 2009/10 with a further £55 million delivered so far in 2010/11. Final business cases had identified savings of £87 million and outline business cases £101 million. The total planned benefits were £303 million.

Communications

Part of the Committee's original objective had been to obtain an understanding of the overall vision for the Transformation Programme. The Committee highlighted communication as an issue and requested that more was done to communicate effectively with Members, partners and officers. Whilst a series of 'connect' meetings had been arranged for Central Leadership Team members to meet with staff, information being available on the intranet and the organisation of road-shows, the Committee felt that more could be done to improve both the communication methods and the information available. The Committee asked about the communication strategy to engage with the public, staff, Members and partners. It was acknowledged that there had been a gap in some areas of the communications strategy, but actions were being taken to address these. A monthly newsletter was under development and the dedicated section of the intranet was being refreshed. Moves were being made to communicate more widely and clearly with staff. The Leader and Chief Executive were taking part in employee road shows where it was hoped that feedback about employee perceptions of the programme would be gleaned. A communications pack had been distributed to 150 senior managers to enable them to brief their staff. The June edition of the employee magazine 'Zest' would be running a 4-page pull out on the programme.

Steps have been taken to improve communications, with the intranet site undergoing a refresh, and newsletters for staff and Members being issued on a regular basis.

Property

The new model of service delivery would require less office space, and the merging of property resources with partners would realise significant savings from released properties and the subsequent reduction in utilities. Wireless Internet access (wi-fi) had been made available for free in all libraries, and would afford opportunities for staff to utilise this and thus free up office space. The Council planned to make further services available in libraries to make them 'one stop shops' for customers. The 'wi-fi' facilities would give opportunity to private sector businesses and Council staff to carry out duties without a permanent office base. A new property strategy was under development with the objective of reviewing the future options for the Council's property portfolio, and was likely to be completed in autumn 2010. The property strategy had strong links with the New Ways of Working and implementation of the Target Operating Model, both of which were seeking to reduce the amount of property held by the Council. This project would be tracked and managed by the existing Transformation governance structure that consisted of a Cabinet Member-led property board. Options to co-locate, dispose, or purchase property would be agreed by March 2012.

An update on the new property strategy was given to the Committee at the 30 November meeting by Mr Robert Overall, Executive Director, Environment, Sustainability and Highways. Councillor Louis, Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Commercial Services was unable to attend due to the bad weather. The Committee were advised that the overall strategy was in its early stages and the property implications in relation to New Ways of Working were being considered. It was anticipated that further information would be available in February 2011 and it was agreed that a further update around the property strategy including the mitigation of risks would be brought to a future meeting.

Shared Services

The main objectives for sharing services were to do more with less, whilst maintaining and enhancing performance standards. The Council wanted to centralise and optimise common functions such as professional support services (finance, legal and HR), transactional processing (payroll, ordering and invoicing), procurement, asset and facilities management and performance and change management.

Formal discussions had been initiated with 'One Essex' partners – District and Borough Councils, the Police and Fire Authorities, and Health. Formative discussions with other potential partners such as other County Councils that bordered Essex had also commenced.

Every 'One Essex' partner had been invited to complete a self-assessment 'appetite' template, designed to ascertain the strength of belief in sharing service. Twelve of the fourteen templates had been completed. These returns had, in the main, originated from officers, although it was unclear if consultation with Members had been taken place. Key principles for working with partners had been established and included the importance of both horizontal and vertical dialogue. Early areas of focus for sharing services included

operational services (waste), property, IT, revenues and benefits, regulatory services, civil parking enforcement, professional services, procurement and emergency planning.

Potentially significant savings could be achieved through joining up the waste collection services of Basildon, Brentwood and Castle Point. The future involvement of unitary authorities in waste collection was being explored, although some already had contractual arrangements with private sector companies that may impinge on their ability to become involved. Other opportunities with London Boroughs were also being explored. Shared services were about a coalition of the willing but arrangements would be flexible enough to accommodate late-comers, as the financial and performance rewards were worthwhile.

IBM, as the Council's contracted partner, had been commissioned to undertake a diagnostic review, which had led to the establishment of a business case for 'Project Co-Efficient' that would endeavour to deliver best practice improvements in financial professional services with forecast annual benefits of £1.3 million. The diagnostic review also delivered a further proposal to develop a business case for changes to payroll with indicative benefits of £800,000 per annum.

The partnerships had secured Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership (RIEP) funding to support a joint property review, joint civil parking review and a first phase analysis. Jacobs Ltd, a consultancy firm, completed the review into the first phase in July 2010, focussing on five areas-procurement, IT, professional services, revenue and benefits and building control. Total gross expenditure data collected from partners for these five areas amounted to £119 million, with potential savings of £12 million having been identified through the establishment of organisation clusters for the different services. There was further potential for savings from joint procurement, sharing property and other opportunities. The outcome of these reviews had been received in August and resulted in a procurement work-stream initiation. A number of reviews had been directly commissioned by the Council, including property, regulatory services and operational services (waste). A review of civil parking enforcement was already underway and being sponsored by Castle Point Borough Council.

The Committee asked about the potential cost in jobs of merging services. The average cost reduction was between 15% and 20%. Using the example of procurement, these savings would result in better value procurement of goods and services rather than a loss of jobs. The purpose of the sharing of services was not about reducing capacity; rather delivering improvements and better outcomes. No presumptions had been made about the number of posts that would be required to deliver services, but each service cluster would be analysed to assess the most efficient delivery platform; however, there may be an effect on head count in the long term future.

The Committee asked how quickly the potential savings could be realised. Each potential cluster had a differing timetable and a group of Chief Executives had been commissioned to develop a shared services programme. The sharing of professional services had already begun, with a meeting of Leaders due to take place in the near

future to drive progress. The Council's legal services had already been very successful in gaining business from the private and public sectors.

Progress on the development of shared services would be brought to a future meeting. An updated scoping document for this topic is presented for consideration and agreement at the 22 March meeting.

Customer Services

The Council is in the process of developing a new website that would enable improved customer interaction and self service. It was anticipated that this website will be available to launch in the autumn of 2010. The current website had 5,000 pages, all of which were undergoing a re-write, with a view to condensing these to 1,000. The language on the new pages would be accessible to all sections of the community, and the self-service elements would be well supported. There would be the facility to tailor the information the website provided though users inputting their postcodes.

The Council intended to obtain a deeper understanding of the general enquiries it received from customers to enable the identification of themes, allowing information requested on a regular basis to be made more readily available, avoiding the need for simpler calls and thus allowing more complex enquiries to be dealt with by the Contact Essex call centre. Progress on the website was brought to the 26 October meeting by Andy Fairchild, Director for Customer Service, who reiterated the initial scope of the project as follows:

- To re-host the website using Microsoft Sharepoint
- To condense 5,000 pages to 900
- To re-design the look and feel of the website to make it more user friendly

The homepage of the website would now include the following features:

- easier identification of and access to the services offered by the Council
- facilities to encourage self-service by users
- a 'gent involved' function that displays local Councillor information, will allow users to express their views to the Council, and details spends over £500
- a 'find my nearest' facility that allows users to find and access their local services
- a 'changes to lifestyle' section that includes information about the registration of births, deaths and marriages
- a news and events page

The website had been launched internally on 1 September; however, technical issues had arisen that delayed the wider release for three weeks. Members were able to access the new site from 8 October, all staff able to view it from 13 October, and the anticipated date for external release was 1 November. Testing of the pre-live design was continuing, with a final 'customer panel' planned for 29 October.

The feedback received so far was encouraging; 98% of staff agreed that the new site is an improvement. A short, simple campaign would be launched to promote the new website address, and user satisfaction would be tracked through the 'govmetric' system that allows visitors to rate each page. The number of pages visited per site will be tracked, although internal visits would not be counted as part of these figures.

Users of the site would be able to locate County Councillors by political affiliation, alphabetically and also view their respective registers of interest. A new management system for Committee work displayed more information about each Policy and Scrutiny Committee including membership and chairmanship details than the previous facility allowed.

Access for disabled users and those for who English is not their first language had been carefully considered to ensure the website was inclusive. The homepage offered the option to translate pages into the six languages spoken most frequently in Essex. The Disabled Employees Network had been engaged to ensure that the website was accessible to users with disabilities.

The Council was still hosting a significant number of 'micro sites' that in some cases were costly to support and did not receive many visitors. These would be brought under control with a view to closing some and moving the content to the main website.

Mr Andy Fairchild, Director for Customer Service, will be in attendance at the 22 March meeting to provide an update to the Committee.

Procurement

Councillor Louis, Cabinet Member for Major Projects and Commercial Services, and Mr Robert Overall, Executive Director, Environment, Sustainability and Highways were in attendance at the 25 January 2011 meeting to give a presentation on how procurement activity is contributing to the savings of the Transformation Programme.

As part of the Council's ambitious Transformation Programme, the Procurement Team has a key role in working with service areas to identify opportunities to realise savings through more effective procurement. Initial scoping work is undertaken with a view to delivering savings in the following financial year.

A four-year rolling programme has been put in place to achieve the £150 million with robust process and methodology developed to manage the programme and identify and deliver savings by 2012/13. The original savings target for savings realised through procurement activity was £120 million but through the scoping activities extra potential was identified.

For the financial year of 2009/10, there were £23.7 million savings delivered against a target of £12.9 million. Good progress had been made in 2010/11 with savings on target to achieve £39 million of savings against a target of £32.4 million. £54 million of savings had already been identified and planned for 2011/12, and for 2012/13 £33 million savings were currently being scoped.

The Procurement Team is working with service areas for the next two-year period to review savings within the current contexts of the impact of income reduction and activity that was dependent on continuation of grants.

At present savings beyond £150 million have not been identified but as scoping activity with service areas continues this may be a possibility. This was challenging and savings were not limitless and it was vital to sustain the savings already delivered. There are six activities underway to sustain savings:

1. Establish robust supplier relationship and contract management capabilities
2. Standardisation and consistency in procurement operations
3. Ensure full integration of procurement/commissioning skills in Target Operating Model
4. Develop 'Centre for Excellence' for procurement/commercial skills across ECC
5. Ensure adequate Procurement Resource to support transformation projects and BAU
6. Commitment by service areas including their strategies and budget

The Committee had asked about the impact of the procurement changes to markets and SMEs.

It is difficult to isolate the impact on the local market due to procurement efficiencies, as although the Council spend is large it is fragmented (3.27% of all spend in Essex comes from the Council). There are pockets where the Council spend is a significant proportion of the total market, e.g. social care. As the Council moves towards becoming a commissioning organisation there may be additional third party opportunities, as in-house services may be provided via a different delivery vehicle in the future. As part of the wider procurement strategy, the Council has been proactive in working with local companies to streamline the procurement process. The Procurement Team is working on developing a 'Corporate Impact Assessment' tool which will better assess future impact on the local economy, environment and society. This tool will determine the procurement approach and supply chain management strategy to maximise opportunities for the local economy.

The Council introduced an inflation policy in April 2010 to reduce the level of 'inflationary clauses' when procuring goods and services. This policy has meant that inflationary adjustments are routinely rejected, even where a contractual obligation exists and have resulted in approximately £1.2million savings. Template contracts have been amended to include 'best value' clauses and where inflationary adjustments cannot be rejected for valid reasons the default position is to offset any increase with other efficiencies. The Council is seeking to introduce a Supply Chain Management methodology to drive continuous improvement and cost reduction initiatives with key suppliers.

Positive feedback had been received from businesses with regard to the ease of conducting business with the Council. Better guidance for bidders had been developed along with better feedback for unsuccessful bidders. The beginning of the tender process had been simplified and the Council had been proactive in assisting the supply chain to prepare tender information. The level of public liability insurance required for each bid was based on risk. Work had also been undertaken with the Federation of Small Businesses to remove barriers for local businesses, who were pleased that such significant progress had been made in such a short length of time.

Procurement projects were governed by the overall Transformation Programme and had equality impact assessments embedded in the process.

The Committee commended the work being undertaken in relation to procurement and felt competent and significant headway appeared to have been made, including procedures and structures being put in place to continue reviewing the capacity to deliver more savings and a cultural legacy being embedded into how the Council conducts business.

The Committee also welcomed the inflation policy and asked if the Council was seeking continuous improvement from suppliers in order that it may share in the savings made. Mr Overall explained that there did not use to be an incentive for suppliers to offer efficiencies. Relationships and contracts were being re-worked to provide better value for money and increased savings.

The Committee was of the view that significant progress had been made in this area and based on the evidence available to it, anticipated that the projected savings target would be met and cultural change be embedded in the Council.

New Ways of Working

Mrs Jenny Owen, Deputy Chief Executive, attended the 15 February 2011 meeting to give a presentation on the New Ways of Working (NWoW) initiative.

Mrs Owen explained that the original objective of the NWoW project was to identify at least £20 million of savings per year by 2012/13. The NWoW approach would attempt to change the Council's culture and behaviour rather than just the work programme. Mrs Owen wished to achieve maximum staff engagement to identify opportunities for change. Staff had made over 400 suggestions for NWoW and from these, 17 projects were selected and taken forward through 13 business cases. Projects were divided into those that were large and strategic, directorate specific and those that were small and would deliver quick wins, with the Leader and Cabinet Members involved in agreeing the projects.

Mrs Owen highlighted the following three cross-cutting projects:

1. Rationalise/Re-design Corporate Services-a bench-marking exercise highlighted that the Council spent more on the 'corporate core' than statistical neighbours, and this project aimed to shrink and consolidate management structures and re-engineer business processes;
2. Rationalise Business Support-this project aimed to reduce business support and administrative roles through consolidation in 'hubs'. Job roles would be standardised and staff would be encouraged to undertake more self-service;
3. Customer Transformation Project-this project has eight sub-projects:
 - i. Handling high call volume-using a single point of contact to simplify access for customers
 - ii. Customer channel strategy-streamline the different points of access for customers including email addresses and phone numbers
 - iii. Website development-enhanced self-service options for customers including making payments, and increased use of 'fuzzy logic' searching that enhances the search results for customers when using the Council's website
 - iv. Customer change-changing the culture to provide customers with the best service experience.
 - v. Single point of access-each directorates would have its own portal that would be a single point of access for customers and would save money by making publications and application forms available online instead of as many hard copies
 - vi. Procurement exercise- software needed to be upgraded to improve the experience for customers
 - vii. Customer recognition management
 - viii. Highways improvement programme- this would provide an online channel that customers can use to access Highways services

The Committee expressed concern that some of the community may not be able to access some services online. Mrs Owen assured the Committee that there would continue to be alternative means to contact the Council, although it cost less than £1.00 per customer accessing the internet; £4.00 to access information via the telephone and £8.00 to access the Council in a face to face capacity. Response times to customers would also be included in the strategy.

The Committee asked if the Council would be consulting with vulnerable customer groups and their families about the new access arrangements and if plans were being put in place to assist in accessing the internet. A consultation with vulnerable people and their families would be part of the impact assessment, along with intelligence from customer contact being gathered to build up a holistic picture of the service user.

Mobile and Flexible Working

This would impact on the Property Strategy if staff could work from home as less space would be needed in their workplace. The Electronic Document and Records Management (EDRM) would make greater use of flexible working. Councillor Lager suggested that 35% of desks in work places were available each day. Mrs Owen informed the Committee that mobile working would provide less need for office workspace, other Local Authorities were more advanced with more staff using mobile working.

Savings

The aim was to achieve £25 million of savings by 2012/13.

Key Risks

There was a RAG status for each project which highlights any risks in delivery, the JCAD risk register would be used to store details of the risks and all projects would have equality impact assessments undertaken on them.

It was agreed that further details of the savings made and potential impact on jobs would be brought to a future meeting. The Committee asked that all Members were given the opportunity to learn more about the NWoW changes and it was agreed that the Cabinet Member would be advised of this request.
