NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

JOINT ICT SERVICE REVIEW

MARCH 2013

Contents

Chairs Foreword

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of the Economic Regeneration, Skills and Environment Scrutiny Committee. It details the findings, conclusions and recommendations of the Committee from its review of the Joint ICT service.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders involved in the review for their advice, support and cooperation throughout the review process and in particular, the staff of the service who took the time to speak to members of the Committee.

The Committee felt that this review method had been very successful and helped it gather a wide mix of views. I therefore hope that the recommendations contained within this report, if accepted will assist the service to continue to provide a valuable service to its users which will meet future challenges.

In conclusion I would like to thank all members who participated in this review and Sue Broadhead our Scrutiny Manager for the work they undertook in gathering evidence and co-ordinating the review.

Review Panel

The review panel comprised the following members

Councillor P J Riggott (Labour) Review Panel Chair

Councillor N Barker   (Labour)
Councillor N C Dolby   (Labour)
Councillor W Lilleyman   (Labour)
Councillor B Rice   (Labour)
Councillor J Ridgway   (Labour)
Councillor M Emmens   (Conservative)
Councillor A Foster   (Conservative)
Councillor A Cooper   (Independent)

1. Recommendations

1.1 That the ICT manager ensures that following production of a yearly training plan its implementation is monitored.

1.2 That the mechanism for providing feedback at the end of a job be implemented and publicised to service users.

1.3 That consideration is given to a method where service users can provide feedback anonymously outside of the ICT annual survey.

1.4 That the service proactively moves towards joint systems between the different partners and that a clear message is sent from the leadership team that service managers should work co-operatively towards this outcome.

1.5 That the ICT service issue guidance to service managers on the steps to be taken by managers when requiring ICT input into projects including office moves.

1.6 That the service considers how it can encourage the sharing of ideas and innovation throughout the team and be able to demonstrate this has been considered and what the outcome has been.

1.7 That the service desk telephone system be enhanced to allow for monitoring of statistics such as waiting times and abandoned calls.

2. Introduction

2.1 At its meeting on 5th July, 2012 the Economic Regeneration, Skills and Environment Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review of the Joint ICT service.

2.2 It was felt timely to review the operation of the joint service as it had been in operation since 1st January, 2011 between North East Derbyshire, Derbyshire Dales and Bolsover District Councils.

3. Scope of Review

3.1 The review aimed to:
- Review the current service to ensure it is resilient, fit for purpose and providing value for money
- Establish that the service is meeting the needs of its service users
- Establish the service is equipped to meet future challenges
- Identify any areas for improvement

4. **Method of Review**

4.1 The review panel met on five occasions to consider the scope of the review, key issues they wanted to discuss and key people they wished to interview.

4.2 The Review Panel interviewed a wide range of officers who were involved with the joint service including staff employed within the service both prior to and since it became one service and service users including members.

5. **Evidence and Research**

The following documents were considered as part of the review:

- Presentation by Nick Blaney ICT Manager
- Staffing structure of service
- Performance Indicators and Key Tasks
- Satisfaction survey results
- ICT Strategy
- Members ICT Charter
- Procurement of Equipment Policy
- ICT Acceptable Use Policy
- NEDDC Business Continuity Policy
- Employees Security Policy
- ICT Storage and Back up Policy

6. **Key Findings**

Strengths

6.1 The review panel received consistent evidence that the level of commitment and dedication shown from the staff within the service was well regarded. It was generally felt that the staff had worked hard to ensure the joint service worked well and there was a desire to get the systems working together. On the whole staff stated they understood the decision taken to enter into a joint service.

6.2 The level of overall experience within the team was felt to be good, with some particular staff excelling and being much in demand. The majority had a good knowledge of some systems although there was evidence that there was the need to ensure training was provided to bring the less experienced staff up to speed.

6.3   Responses regarding training for members were very positive and members spoke of a willingness to provide them with group or one-to-one training as was required. Equally service users also commented that the training that they had received was done well.

6.4   The rollout of the new I pads had been well received by the majority of members. Most found them easy to use and convenient although it was commented that they were not as versatile as laptops. The hope was that issues outstanding would be resolved in the future.

6.5   The move to a joint service had it was felt led to economies of scale on ICT procurement. The transfer of knowledge between staff was considered to be valuable as it would reduce the need to employ consultants in the future as the skills would be available in house. One example provided was telephony renewal.

6.6   The Review Panel considered a number of procedural and policy documents in relation to the service. These clearly demonstrated the service had arrangements in place to safeguard systems. This included backup facilities to maintain the integrity of information used and security for both systems and staff using them. There was good evidence of both training and guidance for users on how to help ensure the safety of systems they used. Additionally staff responsibilities when using systems was also made clear.

Areas for Improvement

6.7   One area identified for improvement was the need to ensure a programme of training is provided to ensure that less experienced staff continued to be able to improve their skills. The Review Panel recognised the difficulties that were encountered in responding to unforeseen operational day to day issues and the pressures that this put on both managers and staff within the service. The delivery of the service is always going to be the highest priority. However, in order to ensure that staff can develop at all levels, to maintain motivation, to ensure an even spread of work and to plan for the future this has to be built into the overall work plan. This issue was raised by a large number of stakeholders who attended the various focus groups, both staff and service users. It was also commented that this would help with career development.

6.8   With regard to feedback on satisfaction with the service they had received, several service users raised the issue of how they could log levels of satisfaction. Whilst the current method of using an annual satisfaction survey was understood as a mechanism for capturing feedback the general consensus was that this was not enough. Some focus group attendees mentioned that there was a mechanism in place for logging satisfaction at the end of a job. However, following a discussion within the group it appeared that this was not well known and there was a need to publicise this more. It was felt that this would allow for

immediate feedback at the time of service which would allow more precise recollections of success and issues. Some respondents also felt anonymous feedback should be available were people wish to raise an issue but don't wish to be embarrassed.

6.9 There was a strong view expressed that the Council needs to work proactively towards system integration. Without doubt the respondents understood the levels of cost involved both monetary and in officer time. It was also recognised that this area was being progressed on smaller systems were possible. However, it was felt that the leadership both officer and member needed to send a clear message out to managers that they should proactively work towards this outcome.

6.10 Significant change had happened within the service which has led to extra demand being placed on the service for ICT support. On the whole this had worked well but there were incidences where it was felt that some managers had failed to give enough preparation to their requirements which had caused difficulties for the ICT service. It was suggested that managers needed to ensure that they have project planned well what their needs were regarding the provision of ICT facilities for any projects or moves.

6.11 Another suggestion for improvement was that there needed to be more opportunity for the sharing of ideas and innovation within the service to encourage people to be more proactive in service development. There was some evidence to suggest that some staff felt that this area needed more emphasis and outcomes from suggestions needed to be recorded.

6.12 Several stakeholders commented on the need to improve the telephone system for logging calls. Currently there were limited facilities at North East Derbyshire for monitoring of calls to establish how quickly calls are answered, what the abandonment rate of calls is and any other useful statistical information which would improve the service. It was suggested that this issue was currently under consideration. This was something the Review Panel fully supported.

7. <u>Conclusions</u>

7.1 On the whole most respondents understood the need for a joint service and accepted that it was the right decision for the delivery of ICT services. Most felt that the service was working reasonably well and that the staff were committed and helpful.

7.2 However, a number of areas for improvement were identified that it was hoped would ensure that the service continued to meet the future needs of its service users and also maintained a motivated and experienced team of staff.

8. Stakeholders engaged During the Review

Nicola Astle	Technology Officer
Jane Austen	Councillor –North East Derbyshire District Council
Liz Ball	Business Development Manager
Tom Banister	Technology Officer
Neil Barker	Application Development Officer
Nick Blaney	ICT Manager
Sarah Brittain	Member Support and Development Officer
Sandra Chandler	Systems Administrator Rykneld Homes
Stuart Ellis	Councillor – North East Derbyshire District Council
David Fearn	Councillor – Derbyshire Dales District Council
Keith Flaxman	Customer Services Advisor
Andrew Gascoigne	Senior Revenues Officer
Sarah Gordon	HR and Payroll Operations Manager
Russell Greatorex	Service Desk Technician
Ray Heffer	Councillor – Bolsover District Council
Steve Hunt	Service Desk Technician
Peter Jackson	IT Manager Rykneld Homes
Elaine McGovern	E Information Officer
Mike Rush	Service Desk Manager
Ian Spencer	Revenues and Benefits Manager
Roger Taylor	Corporate Resources Manager
P Williams	Portfolio Member IT, e-Government and Asset Management
John Windle	Councillor – North East Derbyshire District Council