

BLACKPOOL COUNCIL REPORT
of the
Deputy Chief Executive
to the
CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM
On
February 2016

CHANNEL SHIFT – 1st YEAR REVIEW

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

To advise the Corporate Leadership Team (CLT) of progress and findings on the channel shift project

- To seek the support of CLT in delivering this activity and approving the suggested recommendations for further action
- To approve the ongoing investment needed as outlined in section 8.0 of this report

2.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

- 2.1 Significant budget cuts across most UK Councils have had an impact on services delivered to residents. As a way of streamlining processes and encouraging customers to 'self-serve' and relieve pressure on face to face or telephone based customer contact points a 'Channel Shift' project was set up. The purpose was to encourage residents to embrace digital services, which are already the only point of access for many public and financial services, in order to save money and improve processes and improve financial and social inclusion for many residents.
- 2.2 At Blackpool Council the channel shift project is progressing well. The Project is being driven by representatives from Corporate Policy and Communications (Kate Staley, Ian Butterworth) Customer First (Marie McRoberts, Louise Jones, Dawn Baron and Chris Lomas) and ICT (Tony Doyle, Ian Ridsdale). This report will outline the findings, what has been achieved so far and what the next steps and recommendations for the future are.

3.0 PROGRESS TO DATE

- 3.1 In the last report to CLT in October 2014 we said the channel shift project would
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look at a number of channel shift elements they were:

- Waste/missed bins
- Fault Reporting
- ESB forms and payments
- My area

In addition to this the channel shift project has also trialled web chat within school admissions and the corporate development team has been working on a website improvement plan. Further detail in section 4.0 of this report.

3.2 **Waste – Bulky Matters - Status: Complete**

The Council's Bulky Matters service was solely managed through Customer First and relied on Customer First staff talking bookings and payments over the phone or in person. No online facility to book this service existed. The channel shift project implemented an end to end online process whereby customers can now go online book and pay for their collection of bulky items. This has resulted in 48% of all Bulky Matters' transactions now taking place online. This has happened despite very little marketing or promotion of the new online service.

Throughout the summer we ran a 4 for 3 offer when booking Bulky Matters online. This proved to be successful and helped to increase online bookings. After removal of the 4 for 3 offer online bookings dropped slightly. To increase bookings online it was agreed to extend the offer. Further consideration for an incentive to book online through offering a discounted price is being considered by the service, as part of 2016/17 fees and charges.

3.3 **Waste – Missed Bins – Status: Complete**

The 'missed bin' project allows real time information to be given to residents about their bins and their bin collection/s. Currently Customer First receive a lot of enquiries about bins. It is now possible for the residents to find out real time information about their bin collection once they have keyed in their postcode on our website.

The bin focused channel shift project has enabled us to change our service standards and not return for 'missed bins'. The in cab technology that Veolia use and the real time reporting of the information introduced as part of the channel shift project and our website enables us to demonstrate to the resident that a bin is never genuinely missed, it is either contaminated or not presented on time for collection. This means that we will not be returning for 'missed bins' which was a cost to the council. The project went live on 18th January 2016 and we have already seen steady uptake of the service.

3.4 **Fault Reporting – Fly tipping – status: Complete**

The fly tipping project enables anyone to report a fly tip through our website and a user friendly 'google like map'. This allows the reporter to instantly see if the issue has already been reported and, if so, what the current status is. The reporter receives an automatic updated on the status of the fly tip reported if they so wish.

Members of the fly tipping team are piloting in cab technology to provide real-time updates on the fly tips so that they do not need to rely on operatives coming back into the office to pass a job onto someone else to input into the system. If rolled out to the whole team, this will save time and resource for the team and will also provide the resident with a much slicker and timely service.

3.5 **ESB Forms and Payments - Status: Complete**

A significant amount of work has been carried out around payments and forms to ensure that all elements displayed through the website are consistent and compatible with modern browsers. This is now ensuring that payments through the website don't fail. The payments process has also been simplified with some payments now going straight through the Northgate system rather than through ESB. Forms on the website are being simplified, reduced and made more user friendly as we work through the channel shift projects.

3.6 **My Area – Status: Partially complete**

The My Area section of the website is being created as part of the overall website improvement plan and the changes to the website which will allow us to display channel shift options more readily. Within the 'my area' section of the website residents will be able to type in their postcode and find out what is happening in that particular area. In the first instance the search will bring back information about councilors and bin collection dates. We are also endeavoring to display local planning applications but this is proving to be more technically difficult than we first thought. This section of the website is reliant on and can only be achieved through the recent appointment of the developer. API (Application Programme Interface) integration has only recently been achievable due to the appointment of the developer.

Barriers and risks to completion: Now that the developer is in post and trained in the Contensis system and API integration we are confident this element of the project will be delivered.

4.0 **Return On Investment**

SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Managers) estimate that it costs £5 to handle each enquiry by telephone, £14 to handle each face to face enquiry but only £0.17 to handle the same enquiry online. Based on these costs and the figures for enquiries between 1 October 2014 and 30 March 2016 (excluding Bulky Matters) the following are examples of the costs that are incurred for the bin/waste/fly tipping queries and the potential savings by shifting the channel used. However we do not record 'information' type calls which will also be significantly reduced as a result of the channel shift project. Savings will be significantly more with these calls included.

Table 1 – Reduction in future expenditure

Task	Number of calls	Cost of handling by telephone	Cost for handling online	Reduced transaction cost if 50% of calls moved to online in their 1 st year	Reduced transaction cost over 5 years if all calls moved to online	Reduced transaction cost over 5 years if 70% of calls moved to online
Year 1 - Missed bin collections	2,781	£13,905	£473	£6,716	£67,161	£47,013
Year 1 - Bulky matters orders (April 12-Mar 13)	2,593	£12,965	£441	£6,262	£62,621	£43,834
Year 1 - Fly - tipping	4,219	£21,095	£717	£10,189	£101,889	£71,322
Year 1 - Estimated chasing calls	9,940	£49,700	£1,690	£24,005	£240,051	£168,036
Year 2 - Further bin issues	11,959	£59,795	£2,038	£28,878	£288,784	£202,149
Year 2 - High volume issue reporting demand	10,241	£51,205	£1,740.97	£24,732.02	£247,320	£173,124
Year 2 - Council tax	1,221	£6,105	£207.57	£2,948.72	£29,487	£20,641
Year 2 - Estimated chasing calls	9,940	£49,700	£1,689.80	£24,005.10	£240,051	£168,036
Year 3 - Channel shift work	20,000	£100,000	£17,000	£41,500	£415,000	£290,500
Year 4 - Channel shift work	20,000	£100,000	£17,000	£41,500	£415,000	£290,500
Year 5 - Channel shift work	20,000	£100,000	£17,000	£41,500	£415,000	£290,500
TOTAL REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURE				£252,236	£2,522,365	£1,765,655

Table 2 – Estimated reduction in future expenditure for face to face enquiries

	Number of visits to Customer First	Cost of handling visits (£14/transaction)	Reduced face to face failure demand by 10%	Reduced face to face failure demand by 20%
Year 1	11,088	£155,232	£15,523	£31,046
Year 2	10,538	£147,532	£14,753	£29,506
Year 3	10,011	£140,154	£14,015	£28,030
Year 4	9,510	£133,140	£13,314	£26,628
Year 5	9,035	£126,490	£12,649	£25,298
TOTAL REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURE				£140,508

*This table makes an assumption that as a consequence of roughly only 35% of calls being answered in Customer First that 10%-20% of those callers who could not get through on the phone will then walk into Customer First to have their enquiry dealt with. An assumption has also been made that the subsequent years' visits have been reduced by 5% as a result of the channel shift programme plus the demand for council services predicted to rise due to ongoing hardship and the challenges people face in Blackpool.

Table 3 – Total estimated reduction in future expenditure over 5 years

	Reduced face to face failure demand by 20% over 5 years	Reduced transaction cost over 5 years of whole channel shift programme if 70% of calls moved to online
	£140,508	£1,765,655
TOTAL REDUCTION IN EXPENDITURE		£1,906,163

5.0 ADDITIONAL WORK

5.1 In addition to the work we originally set out to achieve other work has also been carried out in conjunction with the channel shift group's work.

5.2 Website Improvements

The website improvement work follows a web improvement plan which is a 12 month improvement plan which aims to keep the website as up to date as possible. It answers issues that we recognise ourselves through customer feedback and also addresses improvement that the SOCITM report recommends we focus on.

Over the next few months the website's home page, landing pages, page article templates and news article templates will all be updated and improved. This will allow us to ensure our website is 'top task' focussed and will be able to promote the channel shift work taking place as much as possible. The web improvement work has benefitted from the developer employed through the channel shift project.

A recent analysis by Socitim on the 'Report a missed bin collection' process saw the website awarded 4 stars for this area, an improvement on 2014 when a 1 star rating was awarded.

5.3 **Web Chat**

The channel shift project has enabled web chat to be trialled within school admissions. The council now has a license to run web chat across a number of users and the service can turn it on and off depending on when they have capacity. The outcomes of the trial are now being evaluated before further roll out of the technology to other appropriate service areas.

6.0 **FURTHER WORK REQUIRED**

6.1 It is recommended that work on the channel shift project continues as there are still many more services that would benefit from the channel shift of demands. Over the next 12 months we provisionally plan to look at the following services:

- Further fault/issue reporting
- Environmental protection (including dogs)
- Highways

7.0 **FINANCIAL INVESTMENT TO DATE**

7.1 The tables below show the financial picture for the Channel Shift project to date.

2014/15 Funding	£
Funding approved by CLT for 2014/15	£123,000
Income - LGA Bid	£10,000
Income - Veolia Transfer	£1,500
Total funding 2014/15	£134,500

2014/15 Expenditure	
SOCITM	£4,975
Northgate payment system	£5,000
Pentagull 11 days	£4,400
Web developer	£43,950
Project developer	£628*
Web officer 2015/16	£31,000*
Web officer 16/17	£32,000*
Marketing	£5,000
Web chat	£219
Fly tipping	£2,400
Total expenditure 2014/15	£129,572

2014/15 funding remaining (non committed)	£4,928
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**the channel shift team were unsuccessful in recruiting to the post for a project developer this would have been a 12 month post contract for 2014/15. To ensure continuity of the channel shift programme it was agreed that the remaining finance for*

the project developer post would be rolled into 16/17 to finance the web officer post.

8.0 FURTHER INVESTMENT NEEDED

8.1 To further support the channel shift programme, investment in staffing resource and expertise would be required. The table below gives detail of future requirements of the project. Year 1 is already funded (current year).

It is proposed that costs associated with the Project Developer post be reconfigured from Year 2 through using existing resources within the current project team (resource added from Customer First) and using 1 day per week of the Marketing and Campaigns Manager. Staffing costs assume a 2% uplift.

It is proposed that evaluation is undertaken at year 3 and 6 to given CLT assurance of the project success.

8.2 Almost 40% of the current users of our website now access our website through mobile technology. Residents increasingly want to consume services, information etc. through mobile devices and App technology. They are not a generation of that uses desktops and PC's. In addition the ease of use for existing customers, lends itself to reaching more sectors of the population. Generating more opportunities to engage with both Blackpool residents and visitors of all ages.

The immediacy of an App allows for the ability to 'Push' information to the customer/visitor, based on their wants and requests. It can also provide targeted information alerts etc. such Bin collection information. An App platform would also provide the opportunity to profile the customer base [visitor and resident] to give them access to information that is relevant and appropriate.

Developing an App platform will also enable the council to have a unified approach to services developing Apps and integrate them, rather than having independent App development by services over time.

To be successful, the App platform will require support from services across the council. This will enable delivery of a rich customer experience for both residents and visitors which will in turn provide more engagement and also opportunities for Blackpool council services.

8.3 By increasing the overall investment in technical support and development the channel shift project group will be able to tackle more channel shift issues and pay for Pentagull's services to assist us in supporting the technical development of channel shift and delivering on the objectives of the channel shift programme.

	Year 1 2015	Year 2 2016	Year 3 2017	Year 4 2018	Year 5 2019	Year 6 2020
Technical support and development	£20,000	£47,500	£47,500	£47,500	£47,500	£47,500
Web officer	£30,506	£32,000 <i>agreed</i>	£32,640	£33,292	£33,959	£34,638
Evaluation costs	£5,000	-	£5,000	-	-	£5,000
Project developer	£23,657					
Marketing support and associated costs	£0	£14,000	£14,000	£14,000	£14,000	£14,000
Software development and support costs	£43,950 <i>(1/2 year)</i>	£85,000	£85,000	£44,000	£44,000	£44,000
Blackpool App license costs	£0	-	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000	£20,000
Total Investment	£123,113	£146,500	£204,140	£158,792	£159,459	£165,138

9.0 Vanguard Funding

NHS England are implementing new model of care to make health services more accessible. As part of this work there is a need to create a directory of services that will be available to GPs and health professionals. Funding, in the region of £50,000 has been allocated by the Clinical Commissioning Group for the development of this directory. This could be achieved through the redevelopment of Blackpool 4 Me using the funding available.

10.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

CLT are asked to

- Agree the continuation of channel shift
- Agree the continuation of the current group to be constituted as the core Project Board with Carmel McKeogh as the project sponsor, Marie McRoberts (Chair), Kate Staley (Annabel Southern covering maternity leave), Tony Doyle, Ian Ridsdale, Louise Jones, Ian Butterworth, Dawn Baron, Chris Lomas) Other officers to be co-opted as appropriate.
- Agree the investment as outlined at 8.0 for Year 2 and onwards of the channel shift project.
- Agree to evaluate the project and receive a further report to CLT on progress made / options for further investment.
- Agree to the integration of Blackpool 4 Me into the NHS directory of services.

11.0 CONTACT OFFICERS

Marie McRoberts
Assistant Treasurer – Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services