

Agenda Item

Report to: **Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **12 June 2007**

By: **Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Resources**

Title of report: **Review of ICT Business Continuity and Contact Centres update**

Purpose of report: **To provide Members with a summary of current work to enhance the provision of business continuity facilities supporting key ICT infrastructure and applications, and the development and the implementation of service based Contact Centres.**

RECOMMENDATION: Members are recommended to note the content of this report

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

2. ICT Business Continuity.

2.1 Business Continuity for ICT services focuses on how we will ensure that the technology used to support key corporate services is maintained in the event of a 'disaster'. This could be due to the technology that supports these services failing, or to a third party event (such as a fire, flood, failure in the electricity supply etc) that impacts on the availability of the technology. This 'Disaster Recovery' planning has centred on key IT applications that support the delivery of services that are deemed to be of the highest priority, and the availability of the underlying IT infrastructure that supports all ICT services across the County.

Applications

2.2 To date two key applications have formal 'Disaster Recovery' contracts in place with Serco – 'SAP' (this being the application that provides, principally, HR, Payroll and Finance services) and 'Carefirst' (this being the application that holds the case records on all Adults and Children with whom the Authority has an involvement). This means that if these applications become unavailable for what ever reason, the back up tapes from these systems at Lewes are restored on to servers based in Serco's offices in Birmingham and 'normal service' is resumed as quickly as possible via these replacement servers. These restoration processes and plans are robustly tested annually.

2.3 An analysis of key corporate applications was undertaken in 2006 / 07 which identified a number of further 'high priority' applications that should be protected to the same degree. These are listed at Appendix 1. Cabinet have agreed project funding of £200,000 to set up and implement such 'Disaster Recovery' facilities for these applications, and an additional £100,000 per annum to test the service restoration plans and processes These facilities will be implemented in the current financial year, together with the first test cycle.

Infrastructure.

2.4 The implementation of the Next Generation Network (NGN) technology provides an enhanced level of resilience to key 'behind the scenes' ICT infrastructure components by enabling, for example, multiple network routes to any key corporate sites (to protect against the

failure of any one communications link, as set out in Appendix 2), and by enabling services to be physically located over more than one site (so if, for example, the phone system at County Hall fails, the management of County Hall telephony can be taken over by the phone system based at St. Mary's in Eastbourne). We will never arrive at a point where we have designed or 'managed out' all inherent infrastructure risks, but the design of the NGN has built in as much resilience as considered cost effective. It also brings the Schools and some District / Borough locations into the network design for the first time to enable them to enjoy the same level of resilience when they use the NGN.

3. Contact Centres.

3.1 East Sussex is implementing a design of Contact Centre that does not conform to the usual design parameter of one single large, expensive Contact Centre which can be accessed via one single phone number. Our design breaks down the needs of our customers in to key services as they would recognise them (not necessarily based around internal structures) and provides a dedicated phone number and smaller contact centre specifically designed to support each of these services. Appendix 3 provides an extract from the Case Studies produced to support the current CPA Self Assessment process and is a summary of the current position with regards to the implementation and utilisation of our Contact Centres.

3.2 Work progresses to implement further Contact Centres addressing the following services :-

- Children's Services.
- Libraries.
- Transport and Environment 'non highways' services.
- Generic Services (which will replace the County Hall Switchboard)

Work is also ongoing to re-model 'Social Care Direct' to make full use of the NGN telephony infrastructure and specialist Call Centre facilities, and fully implement Customer Relationship Management software. Trading Standards has an operational Contact Centre, but this is a regionally based one that passes calls to East Sussex Trading Standards if they cannot be dealt with at this level.

3.3 We are also reviewing how to make best use of 'customer profiling' software and databases to better understand our customer base and their preferences for interacting with the County Council. This will, in turn, enable us to respond better to their needs and individual preferences rather than providing a 'one size fits all' solution.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Report to Cabinet on 18th October 2005 : 'Update on the E-Government Access Initiatives as part of the wider 'Customer Focus' Agenda'.

Appendix 1 – Key additional Corporate Applications.

Transport and Environment.

- Highways Works Order management.
- Street Light Management.
- Passenger Transport.
- Street Works.

Chief Executives.

- Emergency Planning.

Corporate Resources.

- Service Management System.

Corporate

- Core backup and 'network management' services.
- Geographic Information Systems.
- E-mail.
- ESCC web site.
- Internet Access – Corporate and via the Peoples Network in libraries.

Appendix 3 – Self Assessment Case Study : Access to Services

Which theme(s) does this case study relate to in the self assessment and the Key Lines of Enquiry ?

Capacity, Sustainable Communities and Transport, Older People, Ambition

Brief description

At the heart of Our Promise is the commitment to being “an efficient, customer focused, accountable authority working with partners and local communities”. This translates into a number of specific initiatives aimed at providing better access to services. The case study below illustrates how we work both across the County as a whole and with communities within the County to address the issue.

What was the original problem?

Residents wanting to access services or information were faced with a confusing array of different phone numbers that they could call - we had 32 different possible numbers for Adult Services alone. We needed to simplify the number of different phone numbers available, organise them so they made sense to our residents, and ensure that as many calls as possible were dealt with at the first point of contact.

In addition to a new overall strategy for contacting the services, we wanted to increase access to council services and learning services in rural East Sussex. We needed to take services to the community.

How was this addressed?

We considered having one large corporate centre, using a single phone number, but this would have been expensive to implement and would not have guaranteed that calls could be dealt with at the first point of contact, giving the quality of service we wanted. Instead, each of our major services, as recognised by our customers, has its own individual number as part of a discrete number range (0845 60 90 19'x' – where the 'x' depends on the service, e.g. '193' for the Highways Contact Centre). We spent considerable time and intellectual rigor in testing the service hub model before implementation, not least because it is different from the normal, one centralised call centre model.

A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is being introduced in a phased way to ensure all calls are managed and completed satisfactorily. Enhanced telephony services are being installed as part of the implementation of a new Council wide phone system. Service Hubs are in operation for Trading Standards, Adults Social Care and Highways. Children's Services and Libraries will follow shortly.

To help people in rural areas access services we developed a mobile office. We identified communities with populations of between 2,000 – 4,000 across the County and consultation took place via parish councils and local businesses. The mobile office provides satellite broadband technology and virtual access to services. Two members of staff (library and adult learning) help people access services, and learning opportunities using internet computer laptops. It is promoted via parish newsletters, local shops and key local meeting places to ensure a high profile.

Were there any particular equalities/diversity issues?

Training of Service Hub staff focuses on the concept of Customer Care to ensure sensitivity to the particular needs of all service users.

The mobile office provides an inclusive service to local people, especially:

- people without transport;
- older people who are less mobile;
- those living in a rural area with restricted access to services or computers; and
- library material delivered to individual customers – for example Chinese language books for a customer who joined the library service on the vehicle.

What difference has this made?

The Service Hubs are proving to be valued by our customers and be cost effective to operate. Social Care Direct receives c. 4,000 calls per month, 87.5% are closed or referred to the correct partner agency at first point of contact. The Highways line is generating over 2,000 CRM tickets a month with enquiries now also being generated via e-mails (1,200 in January) and from our Web site (around 400 in January) - highways maintenance and street lighting issues being the main reasons for calling. We are now starting to ring back callers following resolution of their query to check that they were happy with the quality of the service that they received.

Our mobile office is proving to be very popular.

- There have now been 974 visitors to the mobile office since it was launched on 27 July. Due to public demand, the stop at Newick has been extended all day and a new stop has started at Frant.
- Customers benefit from having face to face contact with staff who can deal with their enquiries on a wide range of issues. Examples of enquiries include – careers advice, council tax, council housing, recycling, train timetables, bus passes and reporting potholes. Enquiries are running at approximately 150 per month.
- The free PCs have allowed people without their own computers to access the world via the internet and emails.