

Statement by the Cabinet Member for Customer Services

20 September 2011

Customer Services

A report is being prepared for the Service Board meeting in September, looking at the options for payments to the Council. Over 50% of the visits to the Council are for payments and we need to assess the costs of this service and the options that may be available to provide the same level of service in different ways.

Similarly we will also be looking at the costs and functions of the Area Offices, to again assess efficiency and other possible options to provide a service.

Waste and Street Scene

As mentioned in a previous report the present recycling contract comes to an end in January 2012. Work is now underway for the issuing of tender documents for a new contract; this is being done in collaboration with Richmondshire, Harrogate and Craven Councils to allow for a greater volume of recyclate being collected and therefore hopefully secure a higher price for the product. The overall objectives of the new contract are to maximise income to the council, improve recycling performance to achieve the Council target of 50% and to provide an improved service to residents.

As part of implementing the next phase of the shared service, the RDC waste collection staff transferred to Hambleton on the 1 August and the street scene staff will transfer 1 November as different issues needed to be sorted out first.

The rising cost of fuel is causing concern in the budget, at the present time it is estimated that the end of year figure on fuel could be £61,000 over budget. The fire at Todds premises in Thirsk has also contributed to this as the collection vehicles are having to travel further to tip their loads. Efforts are being made through driver training and also working with the County Council to have more convenient tipping facilities available to reduce fuel consumption.

Revenues and Benefits

Currently the RDC Revenues and Benefits data is being transferred from the old RDC system onto the Northgate system, in line with HDC. This involves a considerable amount of manual inputting and to meet the deadline of the 30 September HDC benefits staff are helping. This has caused a dip in performance and to manage this, staff have agreed to work overtime at weekends and evenings during September. Once the deadline has been achieved all efforts will then be put into tackling the backlog.

A possible overspend on the benefits budget has been highlighted at the Board, due to an increase in the number of claimants, this increase will be reimbursed but there will be an affect on the budget until that happens, but the situation is being closely monitored.

Communications

Development of the new Council website is on target to go live before Christmas. The site is currently being built and training for web editors is planned for October, following that training there will be another 'web month' to ensure that all the content is up to date. Members will recall having an opportunity to view and comment on the suggested website prior to the Council Meeting in July.

AGENDA ITEM NO 5 (c)

Media work has continued with press releases across both Councils and design working has focussed on newsletters of various departments of the Council, mapping for the LDF and leisure related projects.

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Cabinet Member for Customer Services