

Statement by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Asset Management

23 July 2013

Customer Services

We are now delivering against the 4 key priorities in the Customer Services Strategy. Key improvements include:

- A review of customer access points resulting in simple low-cost improvements for customers at all our 3 offices, including layout, cleanliness, the customer welcome and levels of information;
- Customer documents and standards developed and published including the Customer Charter, Customer feedback mechanisms, Customer Service Standards and officer guides for training;
- Introduction of phase 1 of customer satisfaction monitoring through face to face, telephony and web feedback – data so far showing high satisfaction levels of 87% in face to face, 91% via the telephone and 42% on the web. Improvement plans are in place;
- Systematic monitoring, action and improvement taken across the Council through a new complaints and compliments process;
- Action to improve resolution of enquiry at the first point of contact using Business Process Improvement with Waste and Street Scene, including special collections, assisted collections, additional bins, and complaint resolution. Further services to follow;
- A Direct debit marketing campaign through bills, face to face and telephone payments with promotion to increase take up and reduce overall costs;
- Improving our response to Freedom of Information requests – in 2012/13 we received 469 requests and responded to 90% of these within our target date.

Communities

- **Investing in Communities Fund**

In November 2012 Cabinet approved a one off allocation of £100k to develop a scheme to encourage the development of empowered and engaged communities in line with the Big Society agenda. The Investing in Communities Fund has been developed which encompasses 4 key areas of work – community asset transfer, community right to bid, parish resilience and area partnerships and will be available over the next 2 years. The scheme has been launched with a press release and information has been circulated to key contacts and is available on the Council's website. A number of applications have already been received.

- **Single Grants Process**

Action taken to deliver the Scrutiny Review into Council Grants, including a single fund to replace a number of grant schemes managed by individual services, a single point of contact and application criteria to meet the Council's Corporate priorities. The Community Grants Programme has recently been launched and provides a consistent and more streamlined approach to Council grants. In 2013-14 £50k is available for revenue projects which benefit the local community and contribute to the Council's Corporate Priorities.

- **Funding & Development Work**

In 2012 the Council agreed to fund the Development Officer post based in the Voluntary sector at Northallerton Voluntary Services Association which had previously been funded through contributions from a number of partners. The primary role of the post is to support the development of community led projects in Hambleton. For the most part this means seeking and securing funding for projects. During the past 12 months Nicky Smith has directly supported 75 local voluntary organisations to develop their projects. This has led to the submission of 65 successful funding applications, securing £1,100,242 of funding. Other work has included organising a successful funding fair and a number of training events.

- **Area Partnerships**

The £20,000 allocated in 2012/13 to the 5 Area Partnerships through the Hambleton & Richmondshire Strategic Forum was awarded to a total of 32 community-led projects and in turn levered in another £150,000 in match funding for the schemes. Organisations across the District have been awarded grants including Rural Arts North Yorkshire, the Carlton Lodge Outdoor Centre, Age UK, Village Hall Committees in Alne, Ingleby Arncliffe, Sutton on the Forest and Morton on Swale and Parish Councils in Great Ayton and Appleton Wiske. Other beneficiaries include Thirsk Toy Library, Victim Support and the Hillside Scout Group in Thirsk.

- **CCTV**

The CCTV upgrade is now complete and the new equipment is already proving its worth by providing the Police with instant playback facility and a better quality of footage. The operators have completed the first phase of training with additional training planned for the end of July - the new equipment is proving to be very user friendly. Since the installation of the new equipment in April, we have assisted the Police in making 26 arrests and carried out 99 reviews resulting in 96 evidential discs being issued.

- **Parish Liaison**

Following the Scrutiny recommendation to explore alternative methods of community engagement including a joint County/District/Parish Liaison meeting, we are currently gathering feedback from Parish Councils and Meetings to gauge the level of interest and support, frequency of meetings and topics for discussion.

Community Safety

- The Hambleton and Richmondshire Community Safety Partnership has received £55,000 from the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to support our local work - this means that we can retain the current support team and local project work until 31 March 2015. Funding for 2014/15 will be through a bidding process
- Funding is available to the community and partner organisation for the key partnership themes: Crime reduction, Anti-Social Behaviour and substance misuse, Domestic Abuse and Road Safety. Funding is from the Community Safety Partnership and the Police and Crime Commissioner. We continue to work with County partners and the PCC on developing a new and sustainable community safety structure for future years

- Reports of `all crime` in Hambleton are on a continuous downward trend over the last 3 years down from 3,460 in 2010-11, to 3,066 in 2011-12 to 2,844 in 2012-13
- Anti- Social Behaviour in Hambleton – down from 4,340 in 2010-11, to 3,535 in 2011-12 to 2,907 in 12-13 again a continuous downward trend

Councillor John Noone

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Asset Management