TITLE: **SUPPORT SERVICES PROVISION – MARKETS, TOWN CENTRES AND TOURISM / PLANNING**

Committee: Regulatory & Support Services Committee

Date: 30th March 2015

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1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To provide an update on how Support Services are implementing a 'business partnering' approach with Council departments.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 Members are asked to note progress made.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Support Services are looking to take a 'business partnering' approach with Council departments to ensure they receive the service they require to achieve their objectives.

3.2 Support Services consists of Customer Services, Financial Services, HR & Facilities, Legal Services, ICT and Performance Management.

3.2 The 'business partnering' approach is being trialled with two areas:

- Markets, Town Centres and Tourism – to support the team achieve its commercial objective.

- Planning Service – to provide the service requirements identified as part of the review of Planning carried out by the Director of Regulatory Services.

4.0 ARGUMENT/CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Supporting Markets, Town Centres and Tourism

4.2 Markets, Town Centres and Tourism are focusing on running as a commercial service, with an objective to generate sufficient income to cover all of their direct costs by March 2018.

4.3 The Director of Support Services met with the team in February to understand what they require from Support Services to achieve their commercial objective. Below is a high level summary of Support Service provision identified.

4.4 To support the service maximise its income:

  i. The tourism website needs to be more commercially focused, have an online shop, the web content needs to be updated faster and the team

requires more user permissions to make changes to the website such as upload adverts:

- Additional website training has started to be rolled out along with user permissions. This will help the team to be less reliant on the Web Team and able to make changes themselves when required.

- The Team Leader has been given access to a website analytical tool so they can understand what pages are being visited and numbers of visitors clicking on adverts etc.

- Initial scoping has taken place regarding an online shop and early indications are that the current CRM system will be able to do this.

- A longer term project is being proposed as part of the Customer Transformation Programme to completely review the Tourism website.

ii. Allow access to social media sites for marketing and information purposes – Facebook can now be accessed and the Team Leader is looking at setting up a Twitter account.

iii. Customers sometimes need to send across files that are too large to email (such as photos) – relevant staff have now been given access to Dropbox where they can view customer files.

iv. Provide WiFi throughout Oliver Cromwell's House so staff and customers can access it – WiFi will be available by the end of April 2015.

4.5 To support the service run more efficiently:

i. The Team have access to limited financial information and some of the financial process are very manual and not customer focused:

- Relevant members of the team will be given access to the required financial system so they can look up information by the end of April 2015.

- Electronic invoices will be introduced by the end of July 2015.

- The Team will be set up to take Trader payments without having to transfer them to Customer Services by end of April 2015.

- A new way of presenting budget information as 'profit and loss' will be introduced by April 2015.

ii. There is a requirement for a database system to help manage the Markets – an initial meeting has taken place and early indications are that the CRM system will be able deliver what is required.

4.6 Supporting the Planning Service

4.7 A number of meetings have taken place with the Director of Regulatory Services to understand what Planning require from the Support Services. Below is a summary of the key areas identified by the Director of Regulatory Services.

4.8 Dual Screens: Due to the nature of work carried out within Planning departments, many authorities have provided officers with two monitors connected to their desktop. This helps the officers to work more efficiently and reduce mistakes as

they often need to work from more than one document or system at a time. For example, having two screens would allow officers to:

- View plans on one screen whilst updating the system on the other.

- View consultation responses whilst writing the report or viewing the plans.

Eight workstations have so far been set up in Planning and they have been well received with feedback that they have sped up responses to customers. The intention is to roll out dual screens to the remaining members of staff in the team by the end of March 2015.

4.9 Tablets: When Planning officers visit a site they take paper plans, complete paperwork which then gets typed up when back in the office, and take photos using a camera. To improve the efficiency of the service, the team are trialling the use of a Tablet. Potential benefits include:

- Reduction in duplication e.g. planning officer currently completes a paper checklist onsite that is then typed up when they return to the office. The tablet would enable the checklist to be completed electronically.

- Access to plans without having to take paperwork on site.

- Increase in productivity of officers and reduced mileage as they could update the system, upload photos and check emails without having to return to the office.

The trial will be completed by mid-April and, if relevant, a business case will be developed.

4.10 Caseload Management System: In order to manage workload more effectively, the planning department want to investigate the use of a case management system. Some of the benefits include:

- Increasing visibility for management of applications and workload – providing an overview of what stages applications are at, whether they are hitting deadlines and workload of individuals.

- Increase in efficiency and reduction in complaints by prioritising and reallocating workload according to urgency

- Where staff are off work, the status of their workload can be seen and reallocated out to other officers

- More comprehensive reporting

Potential solutions will be identified and a business case produced and returned to Regulatory and Support Services Committee.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS/EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 A business case will be investigated and agreed at committee before any new systems are purchased.

5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required at this stage.

6.0   UNDERLINE APPENDICES

        None

Background Documents	**Location**	**Contact Officer**
None	Room 105, The Grange, Ely	Richard Quayle Director (Support Services) (01353) 616303 E-mail: Richard.quayle@eastcambs.gov.uk