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| CAI.06 13/14 |
| Challenge and Improvement Committee |
| 11 June 2013 |

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Subject: Access to Services

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| Report by: | Alan Robinson, Head of Revenues, Benefits and Central Services. |
| Contact Officer: | Lyn Marlow Customer Strategy and Services Manager 01427 676 684 Lyn.marlow@west-lindsey.gov.uk |
| Purpose / Summary: | Provide information as requested following enquiry of member at Challenge and Improve Committee |

RECOMMENDATION(S): That members note the contents of the report and suggest future actions for local provision in this area in the light of budget constraints and that a member of the committee is nominated to work closely with the Customer Strategy and Services Manager to review local provision in more detail.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal: N/A

Financial : N/A

Staffing : N/A

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Risk Assessment : N/A

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities : N/A

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:
N/A

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

Yes No

Key Decision:

Yes No

1 Introduction

- 1.1 As part of the Customer Excellence Strategy it is appropriate that members have an understanding of the costs of service provision within the community.
- 1.2 This will enable members to have all the relevant information to hand when discussing future service provision throughout the district and enable a full understanding of resource and financial implications of services out in the community.

2 Current Service Provision

2.1 Currently customers are able to contact the council in a number of ways:

- Using the website
- Using Social Media
- Emailing
- Telephoning the Council
- A Face to Face service

The minimum costs of providing services, as determined by SOCITM (Society of IT Managers) is

Face - £8.62

Telephone - £2.83

Website - £0.15p

2.2 Services are provided in the following locations

Gainsborough – Guildhall and Market Rasen – Festival Hall

- Monday 8.30 till 5pm
- Tuesday 8.30 till 5pm

- Wednesday 8.30 till 3.30pm
- Thursday 8.30 till 6pm
- Friday 8.30 till 4.30pm

Caistor – Caistor Multi Use Centre

- Monday 9 till 1pm
- Tuesday 9 till 1pm
- Wednesday 9 till 1pm

Saxilby – High Street, Saxilby

- Monday 1.30pm till 4.30pm

Welton – The Parish Office

- Tuesday 9.30 till 12.30

Cherry Willingham – Millennium Hall

- Wednesday 9 till 12.30

Keelby – South Street, Keelby

- Thursday 9.30 till 12.30pm

In addition, staff will provide a home visiting service as and when requested and will visit approximately 36 customers in their homes each month.

3. How much does it cost per week

3.1 Costs of providing services at Caistor, Saxilby, Welton, Cherry Willingham and Keelby

Hire of Hall/Room - £78.83 weekly

Officer Time - £184.64 weekly

Weekly Average Mileage - £ 85.95

Average Number of customer's seen per week - 17

Average Cost per serve - £20.55 per person

This does not include costs such as ICT support, mobile technology and relevant support services required to provide this service. Therefore if this was included the cost per serve would be much higher.

3.2 Home visiting service costs per week

Officer time is £415.44 (based on a visit taking approximately 1 hour)

Weekly Average Mileage - £84.05

Average Numbers of customers visited per week - 9

Average Cost per serve - £ 55.49 per person

Again ICT/mobile and support costs are not included

4. A suggestion has been made that it would be appropriate to close the Guildhall 1 day a week in order to facilitate providing services out in the community. For a number of reasons this is not currently possible due to

4.1 The Customer Services team provide a face to face service for Adult and Children's Social Services and the Voluntary Services team. This cost of the service is incorporated into the rent that both parties pay to the council for managed office space.

4.2 Both parties signed contracts and the Council are committed via those contracts to providing a Customer Services during office hours to these services. In addition we are currently bidding to deliver the Universal Credit service on behalf of central government and whilst the government would prefer customers to use this service via website it is recognised that a face to face service will be required by some customers.

4.3 Staffing levels within the Customer Services Team are at the lowest level possible required to maintain a reasonable level of service and whilst we can undertake additional duties within the Guildhall, provision of duties beyond that has a greater impact.

4.4 To provide a service for ½ a day elsewhere means that additional funds would be required to pay mileage, pay rental for room or hall and kit the officer with relevant ICT. Realistically if an officer is out of the office for ½ a day till 12.30 for example, staff then take 1 hour for lunch and travel back to Gainsborough, which means they will not be available for work again till 2pm at the earliest.

4.5 Given that the cost of customers transacting via the website is much cheaper it would make sense to invest officer time in exploring how we can offer self-service opportunities in the community with additional support via Parish Councils for signposting of customer enquiries.

5. Conclusion

5.1 In light of the requirement to save £3 million in 3 years the current customer access strategy requires re-scoping

5.2 It is intended that a re-scoping exercise will be complete by the end of the summer and that comments from members of this committee can be fed into this exercise.

5.3 Attendance at surgeries differs significantly between surgeries. For example Welton is very well attended on a regular basis whilst Keelby and Saxilby, for example, are underutilised.