

PERSONNEL

26 SEPTEMBER 2005

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE STAFFING

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB960: Customer Service Centre Progress, 17 November 2004

PER76: Review of Finance Department, 1 December 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This paper outlines the current position with the Customer Service Centre and recommends an increase in FTEs: one additional Customer Service Advisor and one additional Team Leader.

For the number of advisors assessed for phase one, 12 FTEs, it was envisaged that two team leader posts would be required. In order to safeguard the position of staff at risk in phase two of the project, it was concluded that only one team leader would be appointed in the first phase. One of the 12 posts was designated as Team Leader, leaving 11 as Advisors. The Team Leader has been fully occupied with supervisory responsibilities and supporting the implementation of the first phase and has not been able to undertake work as a customer advisor.

The Centre has already experienced vacancies and currently 2.5 FTEs are absent on sick leave. Recruitment has been successful and temporary help has been engaged to provide some cover.

It is proposed to establish a second team leader post and to recruit to this immediately. It is also proposed to recruit additional part time Advisors to cover the shortfall resulting from sickness, turnover and the current Team Leader's supervisory duties and implementation responsibilities.

Once phase two of the Service Centre implementation commences the Team Leader post will be found by deleting the equivalent post from the budget within the relevant Directorate. The costs in the meantime can be funded from the current budget for the Service Centre. The costs of the Advisor post can be found from changes within the Finance Directorate.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That approval be given to an increase in establishment for the Customer Service Centre of two FTEs.

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DETAIL:

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper outlines the current position with the Customer Service Centre and recommends an increase in FTEs: one additional Customer Service Advisor and one additional Team Leader.
- 1.2 Details of the staffing requirements for the Centre were reported in CAB960 (17th November, 2004 refers). Approval was given to a total establishment of 13 FTEs, being one Customer Service Manager, one Team Leader and 11 Customer Advisors.
- 1.3 The Centre opened in June and has experienced difficulties in dealing with the volume of calls, both telephone and personal callers. This report outlines measures to remedy the position.
- 1.4 A full post implementation review is being undertaken and this will be reported to Principal Scrutiny Committee in October. Some of the initial findings have been drawn upon for this report.

2 Assessed Staffing Position

- 2.1 The number of FTEs were assessed as part of the process mapping work that was undertaken as part of implementing the Centre. This work concluded that 12 FTEs would be required for the volume of work that would be transferred from the various service areas to the Centre. The work did not specifically assess the need for cover for absence: such cover is often found from other members of staff within a section or directorate. The Centre does not operate in this way as the Advisors require significant training and it is not practical to have cover available in other teams.
- 2.2 For 12 FTEs it was envisaged that two team leader posts would be required. In order to safeguard the position of staff at risk in phase two of the project, it was concluded that only one team leader would be appointed in the first phase. One of the 12 posts was designated as Team Leader, leaving 11 as Advisors.
- 2.3 In addition, there is a Customer Service Manager who has overall responsibility for the Centre, as well as for Office Services and Telecommunications.

3 Current Staffing Position

- 3.1 The Customer Service Manager has been fully occupied implementing the first phase of the Centre, with direct and detailed involvement in all aspects of the project, including the implementation of the software system (CRM – customer relationship management).
- 3.2 The Team Leader has been fully occupied with supervisory responsibilities and supporting the implementation of the first phase and has not been able to undertake work as a customer advisor. Hence the number of advisors available to deal with the public has been 11 rather than the 12 envisaged. The Team Leader's role will

continue to be supervisory, given the number of staff that are being managed; the further work that is required to complete the implementation of the first phase and the further phases that are programmed to be undertaken.

- 3.3 The Advisors have settled into their new roles well after the initial training. However, there has been a gap between the training and the actuality, particularly in relation to calls that were designated as FAQs (frequently asked questions). FAQs were assessed with the service departments as part of the implementation and included on the CRM database. In practice, the FAQs have not always been those for which corresponding information or answers have been logged.
- 3.4 One Advisor left shortly after the Centre went live (for an attractive opportunity). Two part time staff have now been recruited to that post and will commence training shortly. Inevitably, there has been a gap in the service being provided.
- 3.5 Currently 2.5 FTEs are absent on sick leave. Temporary help has been engaged to provide some cover but this help cannot provide the same level of service as trained Advisors.
- 3.6 Before the Centre opened there was little data about call volumes (both telephone and personal callers) at different times. Experience since the Centre opened in June shows no consistent pattern and this will have been affected by the holiday period. Staff have also joined the Centre with holiday commitments which have been honoured. In addition, the Centre has been operating extended opening hours and the demand for services in these periods could not be quantified. Consequently, it has been difficult to plan staff rotas to cope adequately with callers. There have also been difficulties associated with the telephone system which have added to the problems and affected the service delivered to customers.

4 Proposals

- 4.1 In order to alleviate some of the problems being experienced, and in anticipation of further development of the Centre, it is proposed to establish a second team leader post and to recruit to this immediately. Initially, recruitment will be internal from staff designated to be at risk in the later phases.
- 4.2 It is also proposed to recruit additional part time Advisors to cover the shortfall resulting from sickness, turnover and the current Team Leader's supervisory duties and implementation responsibilities.
- 4.3 There will be further changes within the Finance Directorate following the move of Facilities to Development and as other work in connection with e-government and the Gershon requirements develops. In particular, a project for e-procurement is about to start that will bring changes to the duties of staff within Office Services, and a later project to introduce corporate scanning will also affect this area. Immediate changes will provide the budget for part of the proposed increase in FTEs; later changes may produce a reduction in FTE in the future.

5 Further Phases

- 5.1 The first phase brought several services into the Centre at the same time, in part to provide a critical mass for the implementation and to provide a range of services to give breadth to the Advisors' roles.
- 5.2 The second phase of the Centre will incorporate Benefits, Electoral Registration, Parking and Taxes. These services will be brought into the Centre in a phased

manner rather than together so that the work can be distributed more evenly, both for the Centre staff and for service areas, including Support functions.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

6 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

- 6.1 Establishing the Service Centre was a key priority for last year and included the vision that it would continue to develop to provide a first point of contact for the majority of customers' enquiries. The proposals in this paper continue to support that vision, articulated in the current strategy as *makes our residents top priority*.

7 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 7.1 The costs associated with the proposal are as follows:

Additional Staff	2005/06 (mid point wef Jan 06) £	Full Year (2 points from top of scale) £
Team Leader (Scale 4)	6,000	26,000
Advisor (Scale 3)	5,000	20,000
Total	11,000	56,000

- 7.2 Once phase two commences, the Team Leader post will be found by deleting the equivalent post from the budget within the relevant Directorate. There is likely to be a gap before this happens and the length of the gap will depend upon how quickly the second phase is implemented. However, if the second phase commences in October, deletion of an equivalent post could happen within six months, allowing for internal staff consultation, recruitment and training. The gap would cost in the order of £6,000 in 2005/06 and this can be funded from the current budget for the Service Centre. For the following year, the costs would be funded from the reduction in the service budget.
- 7.3 The costs of the Advisor post in can be found from changes within the Finance Directorate following the move of Facilities to Development and consequent changes to the Office Services section.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

None

APPENDICES:

None

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