

# Chichester District Council

THE CABINET

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## Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Project

### 1. Contacts

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### 2. Recommendations

- 2.1. **That the Cabinet approves the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Project Initiation Document (Appendix 1).**
- 2.2. **That the Cabinet notes that from 2018-2019 the annual revenue budget will include savings estimated at £177,000 as a result of this project, rising to an estimated £224,000 by the 2020-2021 budget.**
- 2.3. **That the Cabinet recommends to the Council to approve a total budget of £327,000 to be allocated from reserves to fund the one-off delivery costs.**

### 3. Background

- 3.1. During 2016 Chichester, Arun and Horsham District Councils worked together to explore the possibility of delivering services on a shared basis. The work undertaken was valuable in analysing and comparing resources, operating methods and productivity. However, Members and Officers considered that the projected scale and timing of savings and the degree of difference in the Councils operating models, resource levels and systems did not justify the costs and risks of implementation.
- 3.2. At its meeting on 10 January 2017 Cabinet resolved not to proceed with any of the shared service business cases, but instead to undertake an in-house project for those services within the shared services programme to make efficiency and financial savings to off-set the deficit reduction target for support services.
- 3.3. This Project Initiation Document (PID) provides information and detail to define the in-house project for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services.

### 4. Outcomes to be Achieved

- 4.1. This project will deliver the following outcomes:

- (a) Through the enablement of e-solutions customers will be able to update their own accounts/claims directly in the back office database. These processes will ensure the turnaround of work is increased, resulting in bills and benefit claims being processed in a timely manner and with a higher degree of accuracy.
- (b) The transfer of customer-facing staff from Revenues and Benefits to Customer Services.
- (c) The redesign of staffing structures based on a modernised service provision, achieving an overall reduction in staffing levels across both services.
- (d) A reduction in revenue costs to support the Council's Deficit Reduction Plan.
- (e) One-off delivery costs to procure new software, second temporary staff, and fund possible staff redundancies.

## **5. Proposal**

5.1. The project can be broken down into three key work-streams:

- (a) The transfer of Revenues and Benefits customer contact from the back-office into Customer Services.
- (b) A review of Revenues and Benefits processes to identify improvements, generate efficiency savings and maximise performance.
- (c) The identification of future year reductions in Customer Services staffing levels through proactively managing how customers interact with the Council.

5.2. The successful delivery of each of these work-streams will be supported by the investment in new software that will significantly increase self-serve functionality for the customer.

## **6. Alternatives Considered**

6.1. The alternative option would be to retain the existing operating models for Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services. The shared services programme has demonstrated opportunities to improve in-house processes and operating models to allow services to continue to provide a good quality service, whilst meeting the overall £408,000 savings target across all service areas.

6.2. If this project is not undertaken, the savings target will need to be achieved through efficiency savings in other service areas across the Council, and the online availability of the Revenues and Benefits service will be restricted to its current level.

## **7. Resource and Legal Implications**

7.1. Section 7 of the PID sets out the estimated costs for the Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services project, both to the delivery costs and the on-going impact on the Council's annual revenue budget.

- 7.2. The total delivery costs are estimated to be £327,000. The majority of these costs relate to IT investment and potential staff redundancies. Whilst estimated redundancy costs have been identified at £144,000, it is only when an internal restructure and recruitment process has taken place that final redundancy costs will be known.
- 7.3. The estimated annual revenue saving from this project is £224,000, of which £177,000 will be realised by the 2018/19 budget cycle. The payback period on the initial investment comes within 3 years of project initiation.
- 7.4. The Project will be managed and primarily delivered in-house, with some external support required for the proposed implementation of new IT software. Staffing requirements and responsibilities for this project are listed in Section 12 of the PID.

## 8. Consultation

- 8.1. Regular staff briefings have been held for all Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services staff and a formal staff consultation document will be provided detailing the options and the preferred approach.
- 8.2. The union has been, and will continue to be, engaged throughout the process as part of their periodic meetings with senior management, and updates will also be provided to each of the Joint Employee Consultative Panel (JECP) meetings.

## 9. Community Impact and Corporate Risks

- 9.1. Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services are all customer-facing services. The proposed changes mean that customers will more readily be able to access information online should they wish to do so. Contacting the Council by telephone or face to face visits will still be available so there will be no detrimental impact on the customer, but instead greater choice will exist in how customers choose to interact with the Council.
- 9.2. A schedule of risks is included in Section 13 of the PID.

## 10. Other Implications

<b>Are there any implications for the following?</b>		
	Yes	No
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>		X
<b>Climate Change</b>		X
<b>Human Rights and Equality Impact</b> Enhanced online provision would have a positive impact on the accessibility of council services	X	
<b>Safeguarding and Early Help</b>		X

## 11. Appendix

- 11.1. Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services Project Initiation Document

## 12. Background Papers

- 12.1. None