

Appendix B – Suffolk County Council’s Public Access: Post 2014 Delivery Model

Suffolk’s District, Borough and County Councils have come together to explore options for enhancing Suffolk’s citizens access to Local Authority services and transforming delivery of those functions. It is intended that the programme will build on the shared services that are being developed by some of our Councils, and other transformational projects.

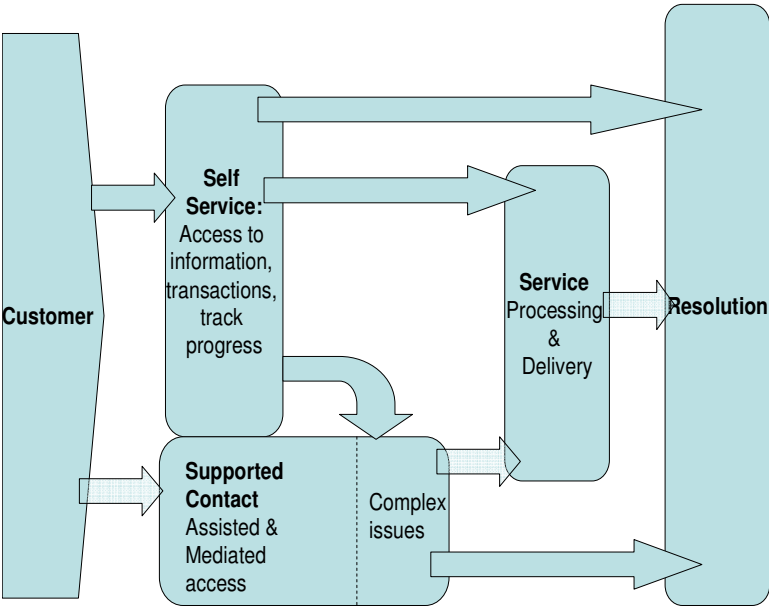
This programme has 4 core themes:

- Delivering quality services whilst reducing cost;
- Joining up services and customer access channels within and between Councils;
- Being more efficient, promoting and enabling active channel management towards lower cost options;
- Ensuring continuity of Public Access function for Suffolk County Council and Mid Suffolk District Council post April 2014 and support transition timelines for other Councils.

Following information gathering over the last two months, a vision and a number of design principles are becoming clear that will need to guide the future shape of Public Access in Suffolk. This paper brings these together and outlines a model that could be adopted post 2014 to ensure continuity of service for MSDC and SCC, but also provide the opportunity to deliver on the other three themes, and create the conditions for further development for the benefit of all Councils and residents of Suffolk. If the model is agreeable *in principle* then a detailed business case can be developed addressing issues such as cost benefit, employment, commerciality, governance systems and other practical considerations.

If this model is not agreeable to District and Borough Council partners, then Suffolk County Council will explore options for bringing the public access functions in house, in consultation with Mid Suffolk District Council

Our vision for Public Access in Suffolk:



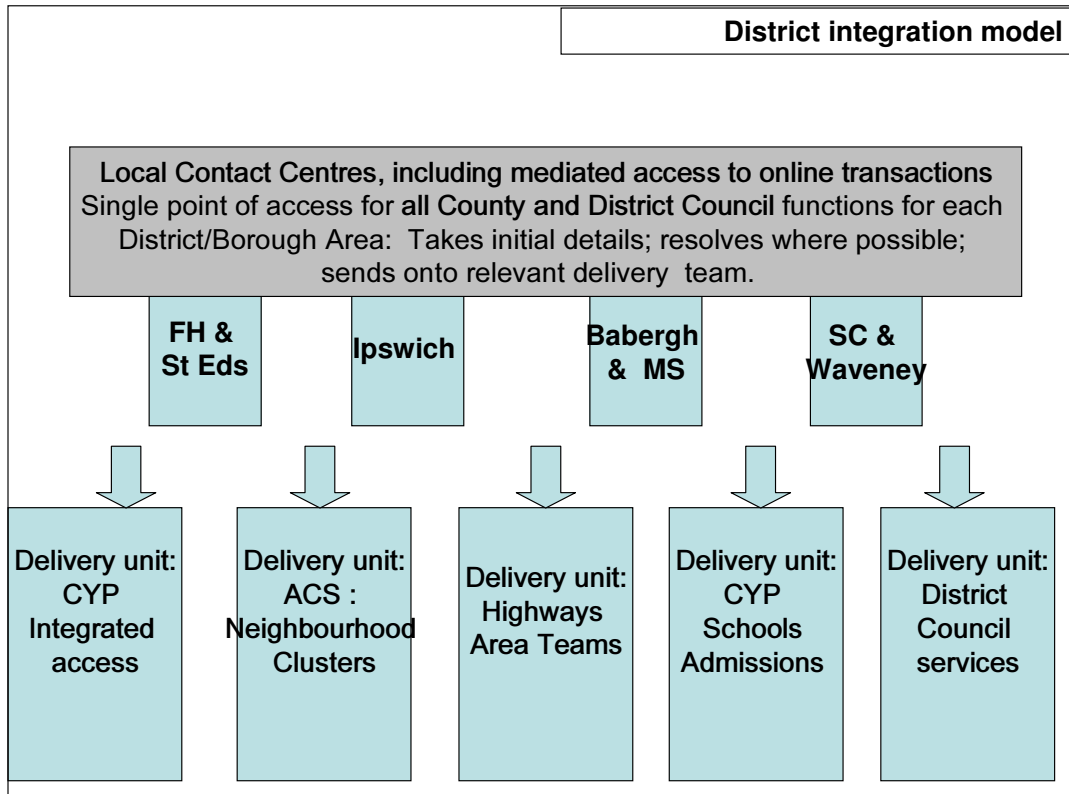
- Digital services that are user friendly, provide clear advice and information and enable transactions to be completed and tracked;
- Mediated access for those who need more assistance
- For complex issues, speedy access to the right person who will deal with the matter.
- Over time, a reduction in the need for supported contact with more transactions taking place using digital services

Design Principles

- **Place the customer at the heart of all that we do.** We will design services from the customers' perspective and recognise our customers as individuals. We will meet the needs of our diverse communities.
- **Effective use of technology.** Our websites and digital presence will be continually developed to enable people to do more on line. Our vision is that citizens will be able to apply, pay, get advice, track issues without the need to speak to a call agent. This service will be available 24/7. We will make the best use of technology to enable calls to be routed to the best person to deal with them, wherever they may be.
- **Assisted & Mediated Access.** Where a citizen is not able to access online services, then that access will be mediated through a contact centre using existing digital services.
- **Differentiate between simple transactions and complex issues.** Some services are pretty standard irrespective of the applicant – for example schools admissions. Others are so personal for an individual or situation it needs a conversation or more detailed fact find to unpick issues. It is important to understand to make this distinction and reflect it in service design. Complex cases are more likely to result in the need to speak to someone, or to provide more detailed information in an online referral or fact-find.
- **Quick access to the right person:** Customers want it to be straightforward to get to speak to the person they need to for complex issues. They do not want to go round the houses, be kept waiting for unreasonable long times or have to keep repeating their story. They need to speak to someone with the right knowledge and authority to deal with their issues. Once a customer is “in the system” they should have direct access to the relevant delivery unit.
- **Contact Centre.** There are seasonal variations in a number of services and the current contact centre model provides the capacity to deal with peaks and troughs. Moving to local service based contact arrangements will mean the ability to manage spikes is less straightforward. We need to have a contact centre model that enables us to deal with variable demand.
- **Delivery units managed within relevant service.** Existing CSD delivery functions such as Schools admissions team will probably transfer to the relevant service in SCC. Customer First Social work hub staff may be integrated into neighbourhood cluster, pending outcome of Supporting Lives, Connecting Communities Programme
- **Whole System View.** All staff need to understand the whole system they are part of. Contact centre staff should spend time with delivery staff and this can improve first contact resolution. Delivery staff should also take time to understand the contact centre.
- **Virtual Contact arrangements.** Whatever option is progressed, staff should be able to work virtually, from home, in different offices or in delivery units as well as in a traditional contact centre environment. This will be supported by management information and effective supervision.
- **Staff Employment:** We will aim to cause minimum disruption to existing staff and contracts. Staff and resources will be deployed flexibly to meet business needs. Matrix management across Councils may be used.
- **Constant review and development.** Whatever solutions are implemented to provide service continuity post 2014, there will be opportunities to review, improve and develop the scope of the public access offer.
- **No wrong door.** Whoever takes a call owns it; we do not bounce Suffolk customers around our system. Where a delivery unit recognises the need for

additional help or support for a customer they should be able to refer them straight to the unit rather than put them back to the front door again.

The Public Access group have considered a number of options including a one access point for Suffolk model. Most opportunities (and least challenges) come from a **District integration model** where contacts and calls for county and district are handled by the local district/borough council's call centre function.



Key Features:

- One contact number for Council Services within an area – eg Forest Heath & St Edmundsbury.
- This may be supported by other numbers where direct access to a delivery unit is more affective
- Local council contact points deliver face to face support for both tiers
- District/Borough staff handle all calls for their area
- Service managed by district/borough Councils with an SLA with SCC
- Management Information provided to SCC

If this model is to be developed there are a number of issues that will need addressing, including:

- Social Care calls – will there be a separate number for care calls or could they go to the integrated centre?
- What will be the technological and system requirements to make the model work?
- What level of access would customer service staff be given to line of business systems across both tiers and between Councils?

Next Steps

If District and Borough Councils agree *in principle* that this is a model that could be implemented, then a detailed business case will be developed over the next couple of months, for consideration by Councils in January/February 2013.

Further information:

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