DERBY CITY COUNCIL

SERVICE ACCESS REVIEW

FINAL REPORT

'Service access review to improve how citizens access services, including accommodation, telecommunications and E-Government.'

Version - Final
 10 March 2004

Derby's Approach to Best Value

Best Value Reviews help Derby City Council find out how good our services really are. They are an opportunity for us to tackle the real issues facing our services. We use them to identify the things we need to do to deliver real service improvements in the future.

Year 4 reviews started in April 2003 and have followed a format, which addresses issues raised by the Audit Commission in Best Value inspections as well as by the Improvement and Development Agency - IDeA.

This report aims to capture the key elements of the review, concentrates on the issues identified during the scoping phase and considers options to address these issues in the future.

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Introduction

1. 'It is 2007, a resident of Derby can access Council services by a telephone or internet up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He or she can also visit one city centre location or one of a small number of local neighbourhood bases with extended opening hours.

    The service provided is consistent, co-ordinated and pro-active. Customer Service employees will be able to identify if the customer needs extra help or advice, will help sort out problems and take personal responsibility for them.

    The Council makes sure that services are responsive and accountable to all citizens by regular reporting and consultation.'

2. That is our vision for Derby. The Service Access review started in January 2003 has reviewed the Council's current arrangements in relation to service access and considered the steps needed to deliver its vision by 2007.

3. The scope of any Best Value review is very important and particularly so in the case of this review, which by its very nature is cross-cutting and potentially wide ranging. The Review Team took advice from the Audit Commission when setting the scope of the review and Cabinet accepted the recommendation that the review should identify:

    - the most effective methods of providing the public with a good, easy, City Centre point of access to Council services
    - the procedures, information and infrastructure that are needed to support all methods of access
    - the means of developing a customer service culture within the methods of access identified.

    The Review Team acknowledges the development of integrated services in the city's area and neighbourhoods. The review has however focussed on developing service access solutions within the city centre with a view to rolling these out into the areas and neighbourhoods at a later stage.

4. Project management arrangements were established to make sure that the review was completed on time. A Review Team was formed with cross-departmental representation as well as a forum of frontline employees. A Review Board chaired by the Deputy Leader was established to oversee the process and included the Chair of the Derby Citizen's Advice Bureau, representing the Council's customers. Details of these arrangements are set out in Section 1 - Introduction.

5. The report identifies a number of issues which the Council needs to address as it seeks to deliver its vision for service access. However, there are also many areas of good practice that exist across the Council and some examples of this are included in Section 1 – Introduction.

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Baseline Information

6.   Establishing existing service access arrangements across the Council was a key element of the review and from a very early stage it was clear that the lack of management information in relation to customer service was going to be a significant issue for the Review Team to address.

7.   A survey of Business Units provided the review with some information but as only 19.4% of Business Units keep any type of management information about their customers the figures provided can only be used as an indication of access levels.

8.   The Baseline Assessment considers the various types of access to the Council including physical access, telephone access, electronic access and access by letter. The review has also considered the issue of complaints and also access for disabled people.

9.   The Council has a number of reception facilities across the city centre operating in an un-coordinated manner, with different standards and in some cases, different opening hours. In most cases, a member of the public visiting the wrong reception facility has no option but to move on to the correct one as employees do not have the information available to deal with their enquiry.

10.   Telephone handling arrangements are also un-coordinated. The use of numerous 'hotlines' operating to different standards, and with no appropriate monitoring, provides the Council's customers with relatively poor levels of customer service. Pockets of good practice exist and the introduction of call-centre technology in areas such as Revenues and Benefits is already starting to demonstrate considerable improvement.

11.   Corporate standards for responding to customer enquiries by letter or e-mail are not widely publicised and most members of staff do not know they exist. Complaints handling has improved considerably with the appointment of a Corporate Complaints Officer but there is no system in place for the Council to capture basic feedback from customers whether good or bad.

Challenge

12.   Challenging the way the Council provides access to its services has been a fundamental element throughout the review process from scoping the review, preparing the baseline assessment, consulting stakeholders, comparing the service with best practice authorities, assessing competitiveness as well as considering alternative options for future service delivery.

13.   A key element of challenge for the review was a 'Challenge Event' held at the Assembly Rooms in Derby in September 2003. Over 60 stakeholders including councillors, members of the Council's Citizen's Panel, employees and representatives from neighbouring local authorities attended the event.

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14.   There were a number of key issues arising from the challenge work that are developed throughout the report. These are…

- The need for a strong vision for customer service from the very top of the organisation.
- The need for cultural change across the organisation focussed on improving customer service.
- The need to develop a post within the Council with responsibility for customer service.
- Development of corporate customer service standards that are used by all departments and that are monitored for compliance.
- Introduction of a programme of customer service training for frontline staff.
- The need for a single easily identifiable location within the city centre where the public can access all Council services.
- Providing electronic service delivery, ESD, across various delivery channels for, and, supporting access to services both directly through Council and partner's employees.
- The development of Customer Relationship Management, CRM, system which is ultimately deployed across the whole Council.
- Current telephone arrangements, particularly the use of 'hotlines' need to be addressed to meet the changing needs of users and to reflect any changes to direct contact facilities.

Compare

15.   Comparing a service such as this when there is limited or no cost or performance information to allow comparison with others is difficult. However, the Review Team has taken the opportunity to look at the work of other authorities and the many examples of good practice which exist.

16.   Members of the Review Team visited Derbyshire County Council, Three Rivers District Council, High Peak Borough Council, London Borough of Havering, London Borough of Lewisham, Sunderland City Council, Liverpool City Council and the London Borough of Ealing. All these authorities appear to have developed service access solutions that meet the geographical and social needs of the communities they serve.

17.   When comparing current service access arrangements in Derby with the authorities visited, the Review Team considered the following issues…

- Culture
- Customer Service / Service Access Strategy – A Vision
- Corporate capacity
- Service standards
- Telephone handling
- Face-to-face contact
- Customer service training
- Electronic Service Delivery.

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18.   The authorities visited had in general appeared to have successfully implemented or were implementing a customer service strategy, backed-up by solutions for voice and face-to-face contact which met the needs of their users. This included identifying the benefits from the technological and ESD solutions used by these councils. The comparison work did identify a number of issues that the Council needs to address before implementing similar solutions for Derby. These include…

- Securing chief officer and member commitment and involvement at an early stage.
- Accepting that a call/contact centre approach is a major cultural shift.
- Recruiting employees that are enthusiastic to serve the public and have strong customer care skills.
- Making sure that there is an effective training and development programme for employees.
- Communicating effectively and managing expectations.
- Getting the right balance of expertise, including external help where necessary.
- Re-engineering the back office services - this is essential and managers and employees at all levels need to 'buy into the vision'.

Consultation

19.   Consultation has been a key element of the review. Consultation activities have included…

- Two focus groups with members of the Derby Pointer Panel as part of the scoping stage of the review.
- A postal survey of 610 older people.
- face-to-face survey of 100 benefits customers waiting in the benefits reception area.
- A face-to-face survey of over 500 members of the public both visiting Council reception areas and also on the streets of Derby.
- Consultation with the Derby Youth Forum.
- Consultation with the Minority Ethnic Communities Advisory Committee – MECAC.
- Consultation with the Disabled People's Advisory Committee – DPAC.
- Consultation with Members though the Challenge Event.
- Consultation with employees through the Frontline Employee Workshops and the Frontline Employee Forum.

20.   The surveys show that, in general, customers feel that staff are polite, helpful and knowledgeable although there is room for improvement and the introduction of service standards would enable customers to know what level of service they could expect when contacting the Council. Customer care training would also help to improve service levels even further.

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21.   Staff consultation showed the need and clear support for developing technological solutions to assist in better service delivery.

22.   A summary of the findings of the consultation is included in Section 5 of the report.

Compete

23.   As part of the review, the Review Team has looked at various options for future service delivery. These include…

- Stopping all or part of the service.
- Creating a public-private partnership through a strategic contract or a joint venture company for example.
- Transferring or externalising the service to another provider.
- Market-testing of all or part of the service.
- Restructuring or repositioning the in-house service.
- Re-negotiating existing arrangements with the current providers.
- Delivering the service jointly with others.

24.   The Service Access review is complex in that it covers many services spread across the Council. This could make it difficult to identity alternative forms of service delivery and those capable of providing it. The Review Team acknowledges that an external market does exist for many of the services covered by the review and in looking at other authorities has considered this element.

25.   From the very start of the review, it was clear that a key area of weakness for the Council is the lack of reliable and accurate management information about the levels of customer activity and transactions and the costs associated in providing this service either centrally or within departments. This has made it very difficult for the Review Team to accurately determine how competitive the services provided by the Council actually are.

26.   It is clear that from the work done on compare, the most common option is to keep customer service in-house. However, alternative options such as partnerships and outsourcing can have significant benefits and should be considered in the medium to long-term once the initial phases of the Improvement Plan have been implemented.

Options Appraisal

27.   The options considered by the Review Team aim to meet the objectives of the scope of the review and provide the Council with improvement options that address the issues identified during the course of the review and that provide a course of action that contribute to the Council's Vision, Objectives and Priorities and deliver a better service to customers.

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28.   A key factor that the Review Team has had to address as part of the option appraisal process is the Council's developing Accommodation Strategy which will be considered by the Council's Cabinet in full in July 2004.   This Section is primarily based on the assumption that the Council's Accommodation Strategy will ultimately lead to the provision of a new administrative building within the city centre. On the basis that this strategy is not adopted, an alternative set of options are outlined in the summary of options shown at paragraph 7.26 on page 82.

29.   The Options Appraisal considers a number of options including…

   •   Maintaining the status quo.
   •   Implementing change on an incremental basis capitalising on the strength of our workforce.
   •   Step-change – introducing a customer contact centre as soon as possible.
   •   Working in partnership with others either in the public, private or voluntary sector.

30.   The Review Team has concentrated the Options Appraisal on looking at the options that the Council can deliver. The option of continuing the way access to services are provided now is not a long-term option for the Council or for customers, particularly if the new accommodation strategy is adopted in July 2004. The relocation of the Council's administrative offices to a single city-centre location will necessitate the redevelopment of current service provision.

31.   The accommodation strategy provides the Council with a real opportunity to radically re-shape service access over the next three years to ensure high quality customer service and access solutions which meet the needs of customers in the 21st century. We will continue to build on the firm technological infrastructure already being developed to support ESD. Moving to the new building will provide a number of opportunities to introduce further technological improvements to support improved service delivery.

32.   There are many service improvements that the Council can do in the interim however, and these can be driven and progress monitored by the appointment of a Corporate Customer Services Manager. This is a key third tier officer post and the recruitment process is to begin in February 2004 in advance of the completion of this review recognising the importance of moving forward to deliver the Council's vision as soon as possible.

33.   The proposed solutions to improve our service access for customers, provide a balance of short, medium and long-term activities that can both be financed and implemented within the current resources available to the Council.

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Conclusion and recommendations

34.   The Review Team has established a vision of service access for the Council. It reflects the Council's objective of working in partnership with others to make the Council's services integrated, responsive, customer focused and cost effective, concentrating on the needs of the community rather than those of service providers. It also supports the Council's priority of making sure that we respond to people's needs appropriately, on time and first time, by developing a customer focussed culture and using new technology and investment in the Council buildings to provide modern working environments for service delivery and employees.

35.   This review has established that, although access to services is in many respects good, the Council will have to achieve a considerable 'step-change' if it is to achieve its vision for Derby outlined above.

36.   To achieve the vision and address the issues identified through the review, the Review Team recommends…

Vision and strategy

R1   The Council should develop a clear vision and strategy for customer service – see page 55 paragraph 4.5.2 and page 87 paragraph 8.4.

R2   Chief Officer Group should nominate a Customer Services Champion and Cabinet nominate a portfolio holder each with responsibility for customer service – see page 87 paragraph 8.6.

R3   A customer care training and development programme initially for frontline employees should be developed. This should be rolled-out to all employees in due course – see page 81 paragraph 7.22 and page 88 paragraph 8.8.

R4   The Corporate Induction for new employees should include a session on the high customer service standards expected across all services of the Council – see page 81 paragraph 7.22 and page 88 paragraph 8.8.

R5   The existing Good Service Guide should be updated and re-launched and a copy provided to each employee – see page 81 paragraph 7.25 and page 88 paragraph 8.9.

R6   Achievement and Development interviews should include a section on how employees are contributing towards the Council's vision for customer service – see page 88 paragraph 8.9.

R7   A clear set of customer service standards should be developed, agreed and then widely publicised across the Council – see page 56 paragraph 4.54 and page 88 paragraph 8.10.

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R8   Monitoring and review arrangements for the customer service standards should be put in place to ensure consistency and agreement across the Council – see page 88 paragraph 8.10.

R9   Departmental Business Plans should include a section demonstrating how the Department is contributing to the customer service vision and strategy – see page 88 paragraph 8.11.

Corporate Capacity

R10   The recruitment process for the Corporate Customer Services Manager should proceed as quickly as possible with a view to having the new postholder in post by July 2004 – see page 56 paragraph 4.53, page 81 paragraph 7.20 and page 88 paragraphs 8.12 – 8.14.

R11   A Corporate Customer Services Group should be established to carry on the work started by the Review Team – see page 89 paragraph 8.15.

R12   Each department should nominate one or more 'Customer Services Champions' to act as a link for the Corporate Customer Services Manager and Corporate Customer Services Group – see page 89 paragraph 8.15.

R13   The Frontline Employee Forum established as part of the review should continue to meet to carry forward the work that the group has started and to contribute to the implementation of the improvement plan and strategy – see page 89 paragraph 8.16.

Integrated Delivery Solutions

Telephone Handling

R14   Rationalisation of the hotlines should be completed as soon as possible, and by no later than October 2004, to reduce them to manageable levels and make access to service simpler and easier for customers – see page 78 paragraph 7.10 and page 89 paragraph 8.19.

R15   The call-centre technology already introduced in some areas of the Council, such as the Revenues and Benefits service, should be extended across the Council with a view to developing a 'virtual call centre' solution – see page 78 paragraph 7.10 and page 89 paragraph 8.21.

R16   In line with the Accommodation Strategy, the Council should look towards developing an integrated call and contact centre in the city centre – see page 78 paragraph 7.11 and page 89 paragraph 8.22.

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Face-to-Face Contact

R17   Reception areas should be standardised to ensure a consistency in the information available, opening times and level of service delivered – see page 90 paragraphs 8.23 – 8.24.

R18   The plans to address Disability Discrimination Act – DDA - issues in reception areas should be progressed as soon as possible – see page 78 paragraph 7.12 and page 90 paragraph 8.25.

Management Information

R19   All departments must drive up standards and start monitoring the levels of customer contact by voice, face-to-face, electronically and by letter – see page 80 paragraph 7.19 and page 90 paragraph 8.28.

R20   Departments must put systems in place to start monitoring the amount of resources being committed to customer service – see page 80 paragraph 7.19 and page 90 paragraph 8.28.

R21   A system of recording formal and informal feedback from customers, whether good or bad, should be introduced across the Council – see page 90 paragraph 8.29.

R22   Local performance indicators for customer service should be introduced at a Corporate, Departmental and Business Unit level to enable customer service activity to be monitored and reported. Departments and Business Units must include these performance indicators within their annual Business Plans – see page 90 paragraph 8.30.

R23   All departments must introduce regular and consistent consultation with customers so that the Council can monitor public satisfaction to make sure that customer service is continually improving across the organisation – see page 91 paragraph 8.31.

R24   The Corporate Customer Services Group should develop mechanisms for regular and consistent consultation with hard to reach groups to make sure that any future service development meets their needs – see page 91 paragraph 8.31.

Business Process Re-engineering

R25   There is an urgent need for Business Process Re-engineering specialists within the Council and the work proposed under the Building for Excellence Programme should proceed as soon as possible. This needs to be closely linked to the government's modernisation and e-government targets and will be an integral part of delivering the Council's vision for improved service access to customers - see page 80 paragraph 7.18 and page 91 paragraphs 8.31 – 8.32.

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Information Technology

R26   The e-government and e-Derby related projects being developed through the e-Derby programme, in partnership with others, must continue to focus on the needs of customers, end users, employees and other stakeholders to deliver an integrated and joined-up approach to services – see page 91 paragraph 8.35.

R27   The implementation of a CRM solution must enhance the customers experience in a way that builds on the existing developments and improvements in customer service across the council - see page 80 paragraph 7.17 and page 91 paragraph 8.36.

Working with others

R28   The Corporate Customer Services Group should revisit the options appraisal and compete element of the review once the initial management information, cultural and structural issues have been addressed – see page 83 paragraph 7.28 page 92 paragraph 8.38.

SECTION 1   INTRODUCTION

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1.1   Derby City Council is committed to improving the way the public can access
        our services. As part of its programme of Best Value reviews and in response
        to the findings of the Corporate Assessment element of the Comprehensive
        Performance Assessment - CPA, the Council's Cabinet agreed that a review of
        Service Access be completed by February 2004.

1.2   Also in response to the findings of the CPA, the Council has embarked on a
        change management programme. 'Building for Excellence' as it is known has
        three main aims…

        • Creating a modern, high quality customer interface.
        • Implementing business change, harnessing new technology and modern
          approaches to work.
        • Continuing with the modernisation of the organisational structure to improve
          service quality and performance and enhanced accountability.

        The Service Access Review is therefore a key element of the Building for
        Excellence initiative.

1.3   In June 2003, the Audit Commission completed a Stage One inspection of the
        Service Access Review. As a result of the inspection, the Review Team
        decided to narrow the scope of the review and the Council's Cabinet agreed
        this on 5 August 2003. At the same time, the Review Team also defined what it
        meant by Service Access. The revised scope and definition for the review are
        outlined below.

1.4   **Definition**

        Service Access - the processes by which the public's requirement for
        information and services is linked with the information and services offered by
        the Council.

1.5   **Revised Scope**

        To identify:

        • the most effective methods of providing the public with a good, easy, City
          Centre point of access to Council services
        • the procedures, information and infrastructure that are needed to support all
          methods of access
        • the means of developing a customer service culture within the methods of
          access identified.

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1.6   These issues were developed following scoping exercises with the Council's Chief Officer Group as well as the Review Team. Two focus Groups with the Council's Citizen's Panel – the Derby Pointer Panel were held to gauge stakeholders views of the issues and the feedback received confirmed that these were issues that the public wanted the Council to review.

1.7   Best Value reviews are complex processes to manage and control. This is particularly true of the Service Access review that affects all departments within the Council and to a greater or lesser extent all the services provided by the Council.

1.8   Project management arrangements based on the principles of the Prince2 methodology were used to manage the review process. This reflects the overall project management arrangements of the Building for Excellence programme.

1.9   The structure of the review is outlined below in Figure 1.

Figure 1
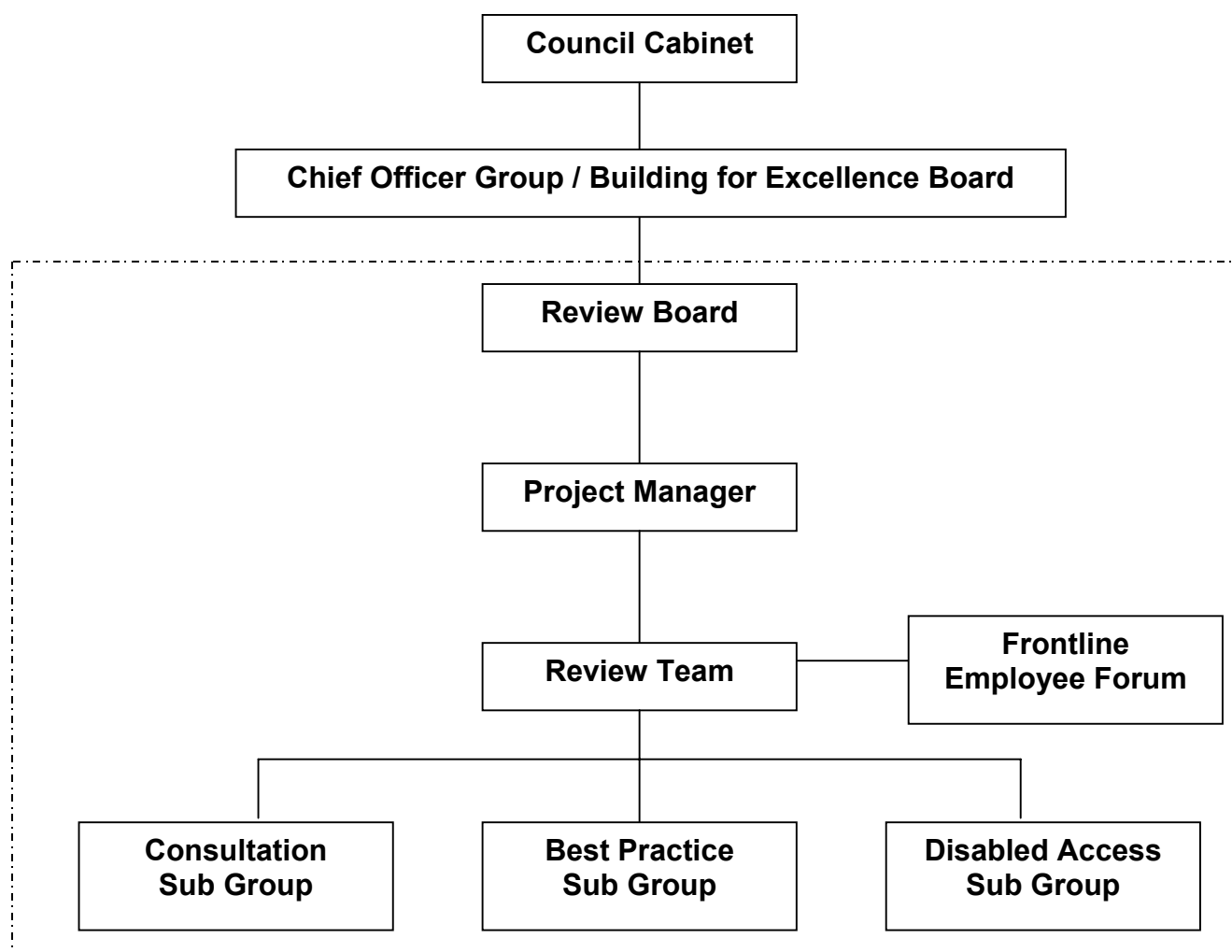
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1.10   The Review Board was responsible for the overall direction and management of the review.   The Board was chaired by the Deputy Leader of the Council and included the Review Team Leader and a representative of Stakeholders – the Chairman of Derby Citizen's Advice Bureaux. The Project Manager for the review supported the Board.

1.11   The review was led by the Director of Corporate Services and the Building for Excellence Programme Manager – previously the Council's Strategic Review Manager provided project management support.

1.12   The Review Team consisted of departmental representatives from across the Council. Sub-groups were formed to look at specific aspects of the review including consultation, good practice, competition and disabled access issues.

1.13   Following an event early in the review involving frontline employees, a Frontline Employee Forum was established to support the work of the review and to provide input and comment. The outcomes from the Forum are described in later parts of this report.

1.14   The review has followed the guidance outlined in the Council's Best Value Toolkit and has followed the five stage model for reviews. This is…

Stage 1 – Scoping and Terms of Reference
Stage 2 – Baseline Assessment
Stage 3 – The 4Cs
- Challenge
- Compare
- Consult
- Compete

Stage 4 – Options Appraisal
Stage 5 – Final Report and Improvement Plan

1.15   In 2003, the Council commissioned independent consultants Donaldsons to complete a review to determine the Council's accommodation needs for the next 10 to 15 years. An action plan is being developed and will be presented to the Council's Cabinet in July 2004. The Accommodation Strategy has a significant impact on the outcomes of this review and this is reflected in Section 7 of the report – Options Appraisal.

SECTION 1   INTRODUCTION

1.16   A considerable amount of work has gone into the review and it is very easy to think when reading this report that the Council has not made much progress in developing access to services for its customers. However, a lot of areas of good practice exist across the Council and the following paragraphs highlight some of these. These are only examples but provide an insight into the range of initiatives already under way across the Council to improve customer service.

1.17   Waiting times at the Council House reception are very short and it is very rare for customers to have to wait for more than three minutes to be seen.

1.18   The Housing Benefit enquiry counters were relocated in 2003 to be nearer the main entrance in the Council House. Subsequently, a queue management system as well as seating has been installed to improve the experience for customers waiting to be seen.

1.19   The Housing Benefit counter service has been extended into four Registered Social Landlord offices on a pilot basis for the receipt of housing benefit application forms.

1.20   Reception and interview facilities have been improved for the Derby Advice service. The service uses a customer 'contract' which confirms the advice that has been given and sets out what the Council has agreed to do.

1.21   2003 also saw the introduction of call-centre technology into the Benefits service. Customer complaints about the service have almost been eliminated as a result of this and the relocation of the enquiry counters outlined above. The introduction of the call centre has reduced the pressure on the main switchboard and the management reports generated by these new systems are enabling the Council to drive-up customer service.

1.22   Improvements have been made to public areas including modernising the reception area at Roman House and improving the layout, decor and accessibility of the Assembly Rooms Box Office. Access to Allestree Library as well as the interior spaces has also been improved and Alvaston Library is being replaced with a new state of the art facility.

1.23   The Streetcare Section has developed an integrated service and single points of contact for street cleansing, lighting, highway maintenance, refuse collection and recycling.

1.24   Reception facilities have been improved including the redecoration and reorganisation of the reception / general office. The reception desk has been lowered to enable better access for wheelchair users and to enable visitors to complete any written forms.

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1.25   In Social Services, customer service practices have been improved. Visitors are assured of being dealt with promptly and in a confidential environment. Use is made of interpreters and translators both internally and those provided by the Health Authority.

1.26   Reception areas are kept stocked with relevant up to date leaflets and information including printed documents in minority ethnic languages.

1.27   Telephone calls to the Council's main switchboard are usually answered within three rings.

1.28   In December 2003, Derby Care Link was awarded the Association of Social Alarm Providers – ASAP Accreditation for Call Centres. They are aiming to increase the number of lifeline services by 360 to people who live alone and feel vulnerable because of age, isolation, illness or disability by April 2005.

1.29   Both reception staff and telephonists have received increasing access to information including PCs on the reception desk and Derbynet on the switchboard consoles. This has enabled more enquiries to be handled at the first point of contact without the need to refer on to the 'back office'.

1.30   More forms are being e-enabled in Revenues and Benefits. E-Forms software has been procured with corporate implementation scheduled for 1 March 2004.

1.31   Technology is being used across the Policy Directorate to improve accessibility and includes recruitment advertising, Derby Homefinder and the Derby Home Maintenance Guide.

1.32   Technology is being used to improve access and the customer service experience including internet ticketing for the Assembly Rooms Box Office, the introduction of induction loops at library counters, the installation of a large screen monitor, voice recognition software and large print keyboard at every library. Library staff have been trained on using the Internet for visually impaired customers.

1.33   Credit card payments for Council fees such as Building Regulation Fees can now be made over the telephone.

1.34   Bereavement Services have introduced a remote booking system enabling Funeral Directors to make bookings outside normal operating hours. Muslim burials are available seven days a week.

1.35   Forms for booking events on a park are now available on-line and Park Rangers are now contactable by e-mail.

1.36   For customers who speak little or no English, the Council has subscribed to Language Line - a telephone translation service.

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1.37   Translation and interpretation services are available to customers at counter areas. An Ethnic Liaison Officer is delivering an outreach benefits service in deprived wards and a payment line is available 24/7 in the main minority languages as well as English. BSL signers are available for customers and for anybody needing a home visit. A textphone service is also available.

1.38   Key documents are available in a number of ethnic minority languages and a member of the reception team speaks Urdu / Punjabi. In addition one of the reception team is a trained signer.

1.39   The Corporate Complaints System has been streamlined and rewritten and a Remedy Policy introduced. The procedure and forms are now available online.

1.40   A recent street sports initiative that will result in three facilities in the city was based on consultation with residents. This included significant consultation with minority ethnic groups.

1.41   A list of customer expectations – what they can expect from the Council and what the Council should expect from them – are on display at the Revenues and Benefits counter areas.

1.42   Customer care training has been made available to all staff within the Finance Directorate.

1.43   Five Area Panels were established in December 2002 to provide an opportunity for residents to engage with councillors and officers from the Council and other partner agencies. Meetings are held bi-monthly and are rotated around the whole city giving people from all neighbourhoods an opportunity to attend.

1.44   The Housing and Advice services have introduced a common Housing Allocation Policy shared between the Council and Registered Social Landlords. This provides shared criteria when assessing priority for social housing.

1.45   Prior to any Group Repair scheme starting, the Housing and Advice services send out information on 'What to Expect' and on 'Staying Safe'.

1.46   The Council is working in partnership with other agencies to create integrated service points within local neighbourhoods. The first is being piloted at Sinfin Library.

1.47   A wide range of information is available to customers both in poster and leaflet form. Staff on the reception desk have access to Derbynet and the Internet. All information is provided in the Council's corporate format and has been written in plain English.

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1.48   Wherever possible home visits are made to Social Services clients requesting a service removing the need to attend one of our offices. This happens predominantly in the Adults Operational side of the department but will include any person or persons having difficulty in visiting a local office.

1.49   Social Services is included in a corporate programme of works identified under DDA to improve access to local offices.

1.50   The Arboretum Park development, where there is a major refurbishment programme has been designed to meet the needs of disabled users. Park Rangers will be available during daylight hours enabling access to the sports and community facilities.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

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2.1   This section aims to set out the current service access arrangements within Derby City Council. It covers the five main types of access within the Council. These are:

- physical access at Council reception points
- telephone access
- access via the Council's website
- contact through e-mail
- letters.

2.2   Derby is the third largest city in the East Midlands and has a population of 223,249. 12.6 percent of the population is made up of minority ethnic groups, with well established Asian and Afro-Caribbean communities. Thirty three percent of the population are under 25 and sixteen percent over 65.

2.3   Derby is a compact city and lies on the River Derwent towards the southern end of Derbyshire. Together with Leicester and Nottingham, Derby forms part of the 'Three Cities' sub region of the East Midlands. As the third largest city in the East Midlands, it is a regionally important centre.

2.4   Derby City Council has been a unitary authority since 1997. It employs some 11,000 people and is now the largest single employer in the city.

2.5   The information contained within this section has been pulled from a variety of sources. In May 2003, a survey of all Business Units within the Council was completed to gauge the level of access across the Council. In addition two Focus Groups with members of the Derby Pointer Panel – the Council's Citizen's Panel - were held as part of the Scoping process. The information from these two sources together with information gathered from individual managers across the Council has been used as the basis for this document.

2.6   This Baseline Assessment was prepared on the basis of the revised scope outlined in Section 1, concentrating on service access issues within the city centre. The review seeks to deliver a 'step-change' for customers by improving access for those seeking advice and information. At the same time it has looked to improve 'day-to-day' access for all other buildings including opening hours, signage, disabled access and the performance standards customers can expect to see at all the Council's access points.

2.7   The Review Team acknowledges the developing work in the city's areas and neighbourhoods. The review has however focussed on developing service access solutions within the city centre with a view to rolling these out into the areas and neighbourhoods at a later stage.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

2.8   It should be noted that for the purposes of the review, customer access points provided the by the Council's Arms Length Management Organisation for Housing – Derby Homes have not been included in the review.

Links to the Council's Themes, Priorities and Values

2.9   The Service Access review supports the Council's objective of…

>   Through the services we provide and in partnership with others, we will make Derby a city where Council services are integrated, responsive, customer focussed and cost effective, concentrating on the needs of the community rather than those of service providers.

It also supports the Councils priority for change of…

>   Making sure we respond to people's needs appropriately, on time and first time, by developing a customer focussed culture and using new technology and investment in the Council's buildings to provide modern working environments for service delivery and employees.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

GENERAL OVERVIEW

2.10   In May 2003, the Council completed a survey of all its Business Units to ascertain the amount and type of contact the Council has with its users. The survey was conducted electronically. Only Business Units that have direct contact to the public were asked to respond and 72 responses were received.

2.11   Business Units were asked if they keep a record of their customers and the reason why they contact the Council. Only 19.4% of those Business Units that responded keep these types of records. Many of the figures used in this Baseline Assessment are based on the survey and as such can only be an indication of access levels.

2.12   The survey tried to gauge the level of customer contacts each week across Business Units. Table 1 shows the number of Business Units within each band of contact.

Table 1

No. of customer contacts per week	No. of Business Units
Up to 100	13
101 – 500	25
501 – 1000	7
1001 – 2500	11
2501 – 5000	4
5001 +	5

2.13   On the basis of the survey findings, there are an estimated 95,000 customer contacts with the Council every week. Of this, 65% are face to face and 25% are by telephone. Table 2 shows the breakdown of customer contacts per category.

Table 2

Type of contact	No. of contacts per week
Telephone Calls	24630
Letters	3702
Visits	62893
Email	4618

SECTION 2 BASELINE INFORMATION

2.14 Of the 62,893 visits, approximately 47,000 visits are to Libraries, Sports Centres and Museums. The review will be concentrating on the 16,000 people who visit Council facilities seeking advice and/or information as well as those contacting the Council by telephone, letter or email.

2.15 Business Units were asked to identify the reasons why users contact their service. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3

Reason for contact	% of contacts made
Information/advice or to collect something	28%
To make a payment	9.5%
To make a complaint	1%
To use/arrange for a service provided by Council	61.5%

PHYSICAL ACCESS

2.16 The Council offers a wide range of access points across the city. These include:

- Administrative offices
- Entertainment facilities
- Cultural facilities such as museums
- Training establishments
- Housing offices – with the support of our partner and armslength company Derby Homes
- Youth centres
- Adult education facilities
- Libraries
- Sports and recreational facilities
- Markets
- Social Services offices

2.17 Facilities within the City Centre – defined as being within the Inner Ring Road – are highlighted on the map at Appendix 2.

2.18 Of the 95,000 estimated contacts with the Council, nearly 63,000 are by personal visit. The majority of these visits are to Libraries – 20,444, sports centres – 25,340, adult learning centres – 6000, museums – 2287 and parks – 1510. The remaining personal contacts – approx 7,500 are at the other facilities listed on the previous page.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

2.19   In the survey, Business Units were asked to identify the reasons why physical access to the service was provided. The results of this question were…

1.   79% provided physical access because some transactions are interactive and require the customer to be present.
2.   39% involve visiting the customer.
3.   78% provide access because the customers want face-to-face contact.

2.20   The majority of Council facilities offering physical access provide a service during normal office hours – 85%. Nearly 45% of services offer a service outside normal office hours. No Business Units provide a service 24 hours a day.

2.21   Currently access to Council services in the City Centre is fragmented. There are a number of Council buildings within the City Centre all offering reception facilities. These include:

- the Council House – four reception areas
  - reception area for Chief Executive's Department covering Corporate Services, Finance, Policy
  - Payment Hall
  - Council Tax and Benefits counter areas
  - Derby Advice

The Council House Reception including new plasma information screen

Derby Advice Reception – The Council House

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

- Roman House – one reception area
  - Planning
  - Building Consultancy
  - Transportation
  - Libraries
  - Arts and Entertainment

Roman House Reception

- Celtic House – two reception areas
  - Taxi licensing
  - Environmental Health

- Saxon House – once reception area
  - Refuse collection
  - Street Cleansing

Saxon House Reception

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

- Middleton House
  - Education
  - Social Services
  - Grants and Awards Reception

Middleton House Reception

- Bio House
  - Housing Options Centre

- Tourist Information Centre

2.22   As part of the Scoping phase of the review, focus groups were held with members of the Derby Pointer Panel. The groups were asked what they felt about the Council operating a one-stop facility in the city centre. Most people thought that to have a selection of frontline staff in one place would be a good idea. The groups also felt that the main issues with accessing Council services were with users of the Benefits Service and that specific consultation with this group should be carried out.

2.23   Consultation work completed as part of the review specifically asked people if they would like to see a single city centre location for all Council enquiries – see Section 5 Consult.

TELEPHONE ACCESS

2.24   Telephone access to the Council is provided in a number of ways. A switchboard at the Council House handles general enquiries and where necessary transfers calls to the relevant officers. Direct dial facilities are available across the Council enabling members of the public to contact officers directly.

2.25   The Council operates two telephone systems. These are…

- Mitel SX 2000 Light PABX

  This system covers the Council House, Roman House and St Peter's House.

  The Mitel system provides 80 lines though an ISDN connection and a further 16 analogue lines. The ISDN connection is currently operating near its capacity.

  - BT Featurenet VPN

  This system covers Celtic House, St Mary's Gate, Local Area Offices, Residential Homes and the Museums and Libraries.

  Both systems can 'talk' to each other enabling calls to be transferred between the systems.

2.26   Approximately 70% of calls are handled through the Featurenet system and 30% of calls through the Mitel system.

2.27   The Council House switchboard currently operates with three members of staff and handles approximately 6050 calls per week. 97% of calls are answered within 3 rings or 9 seconds.

2.28   As part of the Best Value review of Buildings Management in 2000 it was recommended that the Council should upgrade the telecoms platform. In 2002, the Council upgraded to a new Mitel platform which supports call-centre technology.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

2.29   In the 1980's, there was a move away from customers calling a central switchboard number and the Council promoted the use of direct dial numbers. In 1988 the Council introduced 'hotlines'. In its 'Charter for Derby' in 1994, the Council states – 'if you ring one of our advertised hotline numbers, we will answer within three rings'.

2.30   The Council currently operates a range of hotline numbers. These are spread across the following departments:

Corporate Services – including environmental services   19
Commercial Services   7
Development and Cultural Services   15
Education including leisure centres   10
Finance – Revenues and Benefits   10
Policy   9

Social Services do not operate any hotlines.

2.31   Derby Care Link provides a 24 hour telephone based monitoring service to anybody in Derby who feels vulnerable because of age, isolation, illness or disability. They currently serve 3500 residents who live in specialist housing schemes for elderly people or individual private homes who utilise their individual lifeline services. The service also provides an emergency 24 hour repairs hotline for Derby Homes, pest control, noise nuisance, street lighting and waste management and is the first line telephone reception point for social services from 5pm - 9am daily and at weekends. The service is provided through a PCN Piper network and a Tunstall Vision system. Every call is logged and recorded. Care Link also provide a mobile warden visiting service - 6 part-time mobile wardens provide home visits to approximately 1300 properties on a fortnightly basis. They employ 18 staff - one full time and 17 part-time. Two telephone operators work every night until 10 pm and one operator from 10.30 pm onward through the night. The service handles approximately 2500 calls per week.

2.32   In comparison, Nottingham City Council, has 11 hotlines, Leicester City operate hotlines on a departmental basis but could not tell us how many and Stoke City Council do not have any.

2.33   The hotline system is monitored by the Council's central switchboard. The switchboard operators test each hotline extension monthly. The date, time and actual response is noted down manually, and the data sent of a quarterly basis to the Strategic Planning and Performance Unit for analysis and data dissemination to Chief Officers, Service Managers and Unit Heads.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

2.34   Local Indicator 3 – 'responding to hotline calls within three rings' is included in the Council's Best Value Performance Plan each year. Data is supplied for the Best Value Performance Plan from the quarterly monitoring sheets.

The Council's performance for the last three years is shown below.

2000/2001		2001/2002		2002/2003	
Target	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**	**Target**	**Actual**
85%	80%	85%	85%	85%	78%

2.35   A number of issues have been identified in relation to the hotlines and these need to be addressed as part of the review. These include…

- No clear ownership/leadership at Assistant Director level, resulting in lack of corporate guidance, on areas such as use of answerphones, response times, and numbers unobtainable.
- Lack of clear understanding of the implications of having a hotline number in their office by employees. Some employees are unaware that they have hotline numbers, or what the requirements are of a hotline number.
- Unknown impact of data in individual units/departments. Very few enquiries are received per quarter when the data has been sent to officers.
- Irregular checks. Uncertainties exist as to how representative these are. There are only three checks per hotline phone per quarter.
- Inconsistency of standard introduction responses of hotline numbers. Standard introduction should, for example, be "Good Morning, Derby Benefits hotline, John speaking, how can I help you".
- Lack of credibility of the hotline system amongst employees. Employees are not aware of the 'urgency' impact behind having nominated hotline numbers.
- The number of engaged and unobtainable hotline numbers limits the impact of the survey. Engaged and unobtainable numbers are failures in service standards from the customer's point of view.
- Level of importance placed on the hotline survey results by senior managers. Few enquiries received concerning hotline numbers from managers, but performance trends continuing, for example engaged numbers, numbers unobtainable, use of answerphone.
- Perceived impact of the urgency of the 'hotline' lost due to the large number of hotlines. Fewer numbers may focus the importance of the hotline, and offer more impact.
- Relevance of certain services having hotlines. There are many services where it is very doubtful calls are 'hotline' level calls, in terms of emergency and speed of response. For example, Pickfords House museum and leisure centres.
- Use of answerphones on hotline numbers – impersonal. Other authorities access to services Best Value reviews have drawn audit commission comments that people would much prefer speaking in person rather than to answerphones.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

2.36   In March 2003 the Assembly Rooms purchased Automatic Call Distribution – ACD call centre software. This was followed by the Benefits Service in May 2003. The software provides service managers with real time information about the calls being received.

Benefits Call Centre

2.37   Since its introduction, the Benefits Service has received an average of 997 calls per week. The average length of call has been 4.28 minutes.

2.38   Management reports from the ACD system show that in May 2003, 59.1% of telephone callers on average were getting straight through to the Benefits Service and 40.9% of callers were abandoning their calls before gaining access to the Service.

2.39   Eleven new members of staff have been recruited to the service and once fully trained by January 2004 this should help improve performance figures. The telephone service currently closes at 1.30pm each day but will extend its opening hours to 'normal' office hours once staff have been fully trained

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

ELECTRONIC ACCESS – INTERNET AND EMAIL

2.40   Electronic Service Delivery, ESD, and electronic access are synonymous but much wider than first appears. The tendency is to first think of 'electronic access' as being e-mail and web pages providing information to a limited number of customers who may visit our website. In fact web technology and message technology, are often the accessible front-end to a much wider system of technologies and information. Almost every contact with anyone who communicates with the Council, other than in person, is part of ESD and even then it's likely that the council's representative will be using ICT to provide the information or secure the service delivery. It's important that the information we provide as a council is seen as part of our overall knowledge base and service deliver mechanism.

2.41   The information available through our Website should be seen as being a vital ingredient in service delivery whether accessed directly by the customer, a partner, and external agency or a council representative. This would be the same source and would provide accurate and consistent access to service delivery, whether its simple information or transactions.

2.42   However it will be supported by information available through Derbynet, departmental systems, and ultimately any Customer Relationship Management, CRM, system we may introduce.

2.43   Segmenting out the specific delivery channels like e-mail and web is difficult and provides a distorted picture, particularly if just counting the number of emails received by the council.

2.44   To help improve the provision of information to stakeholders the Council launched its own Website in September 1999. In 2002, we decided that we needed to provide a more customer and community focused Website and invited a number of design consultants to create new designs. The intention being to create a design focused on citizen and usability. To this end members of the Pointer Panel were included on the evaluation team and a focus group was set-up to advise on content and terminology, they also commented on the designs. Staff and councillors were also consulted on their views.

2.45   It is intended that the website will become a 'Portal' for Derby and will link seamlessly, where possible and appropriate, to the Derbyshire Partnership Portal, the UK Government Gateway, and UK Online. This work will be phased in as the local portal develops and has useful content.

SECTION 2 BASELINE INFORMATION

Intranet/Internet/Extranet services

2.46   The Council sees the Internet / intranet and extranet services as being almost synonymous, and key elements in our e-delivery mechanisms. However, the intranet is differentiated by referring to it as Derbynet, to avoid confusion. An extranet is an intranet available on a controlled basis to external partners.

2.47   Derbynet has been built by working in partnership with Amber Valley Borough Council, to produce a generic Intranet, which could be used by other IEG-in-Derbyshire partners.

2.48   The Council is currently introducing database driven web servers to support both the newly designed web site and Derbynet. It is intended to deliver a wide spectrum of information to different audiences in a manner appropriate to that audience. These will deliver internal and publicly available information, and documents, from a single source.

2.49   We currently use single source publishing and intend developing community portal technology for local people.

E-MAIL ACCESS

2.50   There are significant advantages in using e-mail for communication and document distribution. These include:

- speed of delivery and access
- reduced costs and environmental impact
- improved and direct access for customers
- global availability
- direct access from our websites.

2.51   The Council has made a significant investment in an externally managed service for nearly 3,000 employees. The service has been extended into a Remote Access Service, RAS, which councillors and staff can use from home. It is our intention to provide e-mail access to all employees who use computers in their work.

2.52   The Council has a corporate standard for answering external emails. An acknowledgement will be provided within two days and a full response within 10 days. The standard is not widely publicised.

2.53   The Council currently handles approximately 4500 email enquiries from external sources per week.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

LETTERS

2.54   The Council currently receives approximately 3700 letters across all departments each week.

2.55   The Corporate Standard for replying to letters set out in the Council's Good Service Guide – 'First Impressions' is ten days for all departments. This is not widely publicised.

COMPLAINTS

2.56   The Council has a Corporate Complaints Procedure that was relaunched in April 2003. The Council has approved this complaints procedure as part of its overall commitment to service improvement. Leaflets explaining how to make a complaint are available from the main reception at the Council House and at Roman House and all departmental reception offices. Formal complaints can also be made by telephone or e-mail. The complaint form includes contact details for the Corporate Complaints Officer, who will be the first point of contact for most complainants. A new corporate system from Amber Valley Borough Council is being added to Derbynet.

2.57   The Council hopes that most complaints will be dealt with informally at the time they are first raised, to the satisfaction of the person complaining. If the customer is not satisfied, the procedure then gives an opportunity for the complaint to be fully investigated. The procedure does not prejudice the customer's right to refer a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman at any stage if they feel that the Council is guilty of maladministration.

2.58   The aims of the complaints procedure are to make sure that:

- it is as simple and straightforward as possible for customers to make complaints about Council services
- the customer feels that their complaint is being treated seriously, even if the answer is not to their complete satisfaction
- the customer is kept informed of the progress of their complaint and who is dealing with it
- the Council responds to complaints within a reasonable time and in a courteous and efficient manner
- the customer is told how to take the complaint further if they are still not satisfied
- the Council learns from complaints and takes appropriate action to improve the quality of its services.

2.59   Complaints should be acknowledged within two working days and a full response provided within ten working days.

2.60   There is currently no system to capture basic feedback from customers whether good or bad.

SECTION 2   BASELINE INFORMATION

DISABLED ACCESS

2.61   A sub-group was formed to review the Council's reception facilities in relation to access for disabled people. An inspection of facilities took place in October 2003 primarily to assess the accessibility of reception areas, but wider issues were also considered.

2.62   A report including recommendations for further action was prepared and this is included at Appendix 3. The recommendations from the Group are incorporated into the overall conclusions and recommendations of the review – see Section 8 Conclusions and Recommendations.

SECTION 3   CHALLENGE

SECTION 3   CHALLENGE

3.1   Challenging the way the Council provides access to its services has been a fundamental element throughout the review process from scoping the review, preparing the baseline assessment, consulting stakeholders, comparing the service with best practice authorities, assessing competitiveness as well as considering alternative options for future service delivery.

3.2   A key element of challenge for the review was a 'Challenge Event' held at the Assembly Rooms in Derby in September 2003. Over 60 stakeholders including councillors, members of the Council's Citizen's Panel, employees and representatives from neighbouring local authorities attended the event.

3.3   The Challenge Event was an opportunity for stakeholders to challenge the three areas which form the scope of the review – see page 19 paragraph 1.5. The following paragraphs outline some of the key issues identified by stakeholders under each of these issues.

3.4   **Issue: The most effective methods of providing the public with a good, easy, city centre point of access to Council services.**

      3.4.1   There is a need to provide services at times convenient to all of the Council's customers.

      3.4.2   Information should be provided and displayed in a way that the public can understand.

      3.4.3   The process of contacting the Council should be made as open as possible.

      3.4.4   There should be one point of contact for all Council services – preferably the Council House although the present building needs modernisation. All services should be represented at this point with information made widely available.

      3.4.5   Telephone contact should also be at one place with good access to information. Any call centre solution needs to be personable with well trained and experienced staff.

      3.4.6   The current arrangement of hotline numbers is not effective across all services.

      3.4.7   Systems need to be developed to deal with enquiries that cannot be resolved at first contact.

      3.4.8   There is currently an inconsistency in the delivery of out-of-hours services across the Council.

      3.4.9   In addition to a city-centre facility, the Council needs to provide contact at a neighbourhood level particularly on local issues and this could possibly be done through partner organisations.

SECTION 3　　　　CHALLENGE

3.5　　Issue: The procedures, information and infrastructure that are needed to support all methods of access.

    3.5.1　　The Council should develop smart, generic service standards that can be used consistently across the whole organisation.

    3.5.2　　There is a need to address the inconsistent provision of IT across the Council.

    3.5.3　　Frontline staff need better access to information and systems.

    3.5.4　　The Council needs to improve the physical access and signage to its buildings.

3.6　　Issue: The methods of developing a customer service culture within the methods of access identified.

    3.6.1　　The Council needs to develop a Customer Service Strategy with a clear vision.

    3.6.2　　To deliver the vision, the Council needs high-quality frontline staff.

    3.6.3　　The Council needs to 'put the customer first'.

    3.6.4　　Customer Service Training customised for individual services where appropriate should be developed.

    3.6.5　　Customers should know what to expect when they contact the Council through a set of clear standards which are well publicised.

    3.6.6　　The Council should record all customer contacts to enable it to deal with customers more effectively when they contact the Council in the future.

3.7　　The comments provided by stakeholders show that the issues identified by the Review Team at the scoping stage of the review reflect the issues important to stakeholders.

3.8　　The Review Team was keen not only to find out what was wrong with current provision from stakeholders but also to work with them to identify some of the possible solutions to these issues. The key solutions identified at the event are outlined below.

3.9　　Issue: The service people provide to the customer

    3.9.1　　There is a need to develop training in corporate customer care.

    3.9.2　　Strong leadership committed to customer care is essential.

    3.9.3　　The knowledge base and information already in the Council needs to be made more widely available.

    3.9.4　　Employees need to be trained to use the resources that are provided and available to them.

SECTION 3   CHALLENGE

3.10   **Issue: Frontline customer service and information and advice**

    3.10.1   There should be one point of contact for physical, telephone and electronic access.

    3.10.2   The introduction of a Customer Relationship Management – CRM system would enable information from all services to be available to frontline staff.

    3.10.3   Opening hours to meet all customer needs should be extended but this has to be balanced against the cost of doing so.

    3.10.4   There needs to be a strategic / long-term solution to service access and customer service to deliver a step-change but operational challenge and change need to become part of the Council's culture with a customer service focus.

3.11   **Issue: How do we get the right infrastructure for staff and customers to support all methods of access?**

    3.11.1   Improved ICT
- The development of a comprehensive multi-functional internet/intranet database.
- Electronic access to information in terms of issues, subjects, services, categories and A to Z including multi-functional search facilities.
- The introduction of an extranet for partners to better integrate services.

    3.11.2   Customer Gazetteer
- The introduction of a unique identifier for each person.
- Possible link into the 'Mackay Project' using individual's National Health numbers.

    3.11.3   Recording system for customer contacts
- This would enable follow-up work and assist during future contacts with the Council.

    3.11.4   Widening staff access to information
- Through improved technology including hand-held pc's as well as development of the intranet.

    3.11.5   Training
- Introduction of 'service champions'.
- Corporate training in customer service.

    3.11.6   Funding
- By having dedicated customer service specialists, back office functions will be released to concentrate on more complex areas of work which should ultimately lead to savings being realised.

SECTION 3   CHALLENGE

3.12   Issue: Standards of service – consistency across the Council.

    3.12.1   There is a need for strong corporate leadership that takes a strategic and planned approach to customer service, getting rid of the silo mentality to improve co-operation and communication.

    3.12.2   Council-wide responsibility for customer service standards should be held by one Cabinet Member Portfolio – with a customer service champion at officer level.

    3.12.3   Performance indicators to measure customer service should be introduced across the Council.

    3.12.4   Adequate resources need to be provided both corporately and in departments to develop customer service.

3.13   How do I get the information I need?

    3.13.1   The development of a single identifiable building where customers know to go to for advice and information.

    3.13.2   The appointment of a Customer Services Manager to manage and co-ordinate customer service across the Council.

    3.13.3   Work with other service providers to ensure that the public have the easiest possible access channels to all public services.

    3.13.4   The introduction of Corporate Customer Service Standards so that customers know what they can expect.

    3.13.5   Systems and procedures to ensure that the information available to frontline staff is up-to-date.

    3.13.6   Development of corporate customer care training.

3.14   Access to good information on services and people.

    3.14.1   The Council needs to learn from other Councils who have already introduced these systems.

    3.14.2   Staff at the frontline need to have access to as much high quality information as possible.

    3.14.3   Information must flow freely around the Council.

3.15   As outlined in paragraph 3.1, challenge was not confined only to the work at the Challenge Event but has been a key part of each stage of the review.

SECTION 3   CHALLENGE

Conclusion

3.16   There are a number of key issues arising from the challenge work that are developed throughout the document. These are…

3.16.1   The need for a strong vision for customer service from the very top of the organisation.

3.16.2   The need for cultural change across the organisation focussed on improving customer service.

3.16.3   The need to develop a post within the Council with responsibility for customer service.

3.16.4   Development of corporate customer service standards that are used by all departments and that are monitored for compliance.

3.16.5   Introduction of a programme of customer service training for frontline staff.

3.16.6   The need for a single easily identifiable location within the city centre where the public can access all Council services.

3.16.7   Providing electronic service delivery, ESD, across various delivery channels for, and, supporting access to services both directly through Council and partner's employees.

3.16.8   The development of Customer Relationship Management, CRM, system which is ultimately deployed across the whole Council.

3.16.9   Current telephone arrangements particularly the use of 'hotlines' need to be addressed to meet the changing needs of users and to reflect any changes to direct contact facilities.

SECTION 4   COMPARE

SECTION 4   COMPARE

4.1   Comparing a service such as this when there is limited cost or performance information to allow comparison with others, is difficult. However, the Review Team has taken the opportunity to look at the work of other authorities and the many examples of good practice that exist.

4.2   Service access and the way the public access council services affects all authorities so the Review Team decided to look at examples of good practice from councils of all sizes.

4.3   Members of the Review Team visited Derbyshire County Council, Three Rivers District Council, High Peak Borough Council, London Borough of Havering, London Borough of Lewisham, Sunderland City Council, Liverpool City Council and the London Borough of Ealing. All these authorities appear to have developed service access solutions that meet the geographical and social needs of the communities they serve.

4.4   In addition to the visits, a desktop comparison of authorities was completed looking at Best Value reports and Best Value Inspection reports.

4.5   On the basis of the information gathered both from the visits and the desktop exercise, the Review Team has identified the following lessons to be learned as Derby moves forward with developing service access solutions that will address the issues affecting the Council and the specific needs of the residents of Derby.

Culture

4.5.1   Authorities that have successfully developed service access solutions have done so supported by a culture of change and customer focus. Change has been driven by a strong and focussed vision from the top. Employees at all levels of the organisation have been involved in the change process and not only those employees providing a frontline customer focused service. In one authority this has involved a significant investment in employee development with the aim of engendering a willingness and appetite for change.

Customer Service / Service Access Strategy – A Vision

4.5.2   All the authorities visited by the Review Team have a clear vision about where they are going with customer service / service access. The development of a clear strategy for customer service is essential so that the organisation as a whole and individual managers and employees within it understand what they are trying to achieve, the changes that are necessary and how this will impact on them. The strategy also needs support and endorsement from elected members.

SECTION 4   COMPARE

Corporate Capacity

4.5.3   Customer service cannot be seen simply as an 'add-on' to the existing jobs that people do. From experience of authorities at the forefront of excellent customer service, there needs to be a corporate resource co-ordinating and driving forward the strategy and improvement plan developed as part of this review. The authorities visited had developed capacity by re-engineering existing processes. In some cases this had generated significant savings that had been re-invested into frontline services.

Service Standards

4.5.4   Good practice authorities have all developed a clear set of customer service standards so that all employees know the level of service that they need to provide to customers. Just as importantly, customers know what they can expect when contacting the Council. Linked to this is the need for a straightforward way for customers to comment on the service whether good or bad and mechanisms in place for these comments to be handled efficiently and effectively. Service standards need to be backed-up by a performance management system that can regularly monitor and report on adherence to the standards across the organisation.

Telephone Handling

4.5.5   Telephone handling has been a key part of all the authorities visited as part of the review. Central to most authorities has been the development of call centres where one or a number of telephone numbers have been used to channel calls into the council. The public perception of call centres based primarily on contact with private sector organisations makes the introduction of a call centre solution more challenging for the Council. This was demonstrated at the start of the review by feedback from members of the Derby Pointer Panel during two focus groups – see Section 1 paragraph 1.6.

4.5.6   There are a number of lessons to be learned from the experiences of other authorities. These include…

   a)   The call centre model adopted by most of the authorities has been based on a number of 'mini' call centres located together and centrally managed. This avoids the need to develop generic advisors capable of handling the wide range of calls received by the Council. Some of the authorities have started 'work shadowing' to create more flexibility within their call centres.
   b)   Call centres can be developed over time, starting with a small number of services and then expanding them to bring-in additional services as they are re-engineered.
   c)   Call centres do not need to take a long time to develop. Based on the model outlined in (b) above, it should be possible to implement a call centre solution for Derby within 6 – 12 months.

d) Call centre advisors need to come from within existing services. Services need to be re-engineered to enable staff to be released to work in the call centre.

e) Call centres can be good places to work. During the visits to other authorities the Review Team had the opportunity to speak to people working in them. The feedback received during the visits demonstrated that employees found that working in the call centre was actually better than their previous working conditions in the back office.

f) Call centres improve performance and the quality of the customer service experience. However, the Council needs to be prepared for teething problems as the call centre is introduced.

g) Call centres work! They can provide the springboard for the development of a one-stop customer service centre.

h) The grading structure for front line staff recognises the importance placed on high quality, front line customer service.

Face-to-Face Contact

4.5.7 The development of one-stop customer service centres or one-stop shops as they are commonly known is not a new thing. As part of the visits to other authorities, the Review Team looked at the public access points that have been introduced to deal with face-to-face contact.

4.5.8 In the same way that call centres provide the opportunity to enhance the level of customer service, one-stop shops can improve the quality of customer service experience for those contacting the Council in person. The same level of service available through the call centre should be provided in customer service centres.

4.5.9 The introduction of a one-stop shop facility does require considerable resources particularly if the right image is going to be achieved and maintained. The examples looked at by the Review Team were impressive and provided an excellent image for the councils visited.

4.5.10 Like call-centres, the right attitude and commitment from those employed as customer service advisors is essential if the Council is to achieve a step-change in performance.

Electronic Service Delivery

4.5.11 As part of the visits to other councils the Review Team considered the benefits being derived for service access through improvements made through the use of electronic service delivery. It is clear that the use of technological solutions provide significant benefits in the way they interact with customers.

SECTION 4   COMPARE

Customer Service Training

4.5.12 Customer service training is key to the successful implementation of a call-centre or one-stop shop facility. This can raise a number of challenges for the Council as staff need to be released from their frontline work to enable them to be trained. In some authorities training took place outside peak hours such as in the late afternoon or on a Saturday.

4.5.13 Encouraging staff to be flexible in this way with emphasis on improved customer service will be one of the key cultural change challenges for Derby.

Conclusion

4.6   What are the pros and cons of call / one-stop centres?

Pros…
* Customer satisfaction is high and tends to increase.
* Response times are quicker.
* The percentage of enquiries dealt with at the first point of contact is high generally 80% plus.
* They provide the opportunity for extended opening hours and more flexible working patterns.
* Reduced numbers of failed / abandoned calls.
* Back office staff are freed-up to deal with more difficult or complex issues and savings can be realised.
* Provide career development opportunities for staff.

Cons…
* Set-up costs can be high particularly accommodation costs.
* Organisations do not always achieve quantifiable savings through implementing these new arrangements.
* Negative call centre image.

4.7   Issues that need to be addressed during the implementation of a call centre / one-stop shop solution include…

* Securing chief officer and member commitment and involvement at an early stage.
* Accepting that a call/contact centre approach is a major cultural shift.
* Recruiting employees who want to be there and have strong customer care skills.
* Making sure that there is an effective training and development programme for employees.
* Communicating effectively and managing expectations.
* Getting the right balance of expertise, including external help where necessary.
* Re-engineering the back office services is essential and managers and staff at all levels need to 'buy into the vision'.

SECTION 5   CONSULT

SECTION 5   CONSULT

5.1   Consultation has been a key element of the Service Access review. From the start of the review a Sub-Group was formed to address this issue and it has co-ordinated and developed the consultation activity throughout.

5.2   As part of the scoping phase two focus groups were held with members of the Derby Pointer Panel – the Council's Citizen's Panel of 1000 residents. The focus groups endorsed the terms of reference being proposed by the Council. The potential development of a call centre was not received favourably although this was mainly based on panel members' experiences of using private sector call centres.

5.3   In July and August 2003, a number of consultation exercises were organised and delivered to provide the Review Team with both quantitative and qualitative information.

5.4   Three main pieces of consultation work were completed…

5.4.1   A postal survey of 610 older people – people over 50.
5.4.2   A face-to-face survey of 100 benefits customers waiting in the benefits reception area.
5.4.3   A face-to-face survey of over 500 members of the public both visiting Council reception areas and also on the streets of Derby.

5.5   To enable comparative work, the same questionnaire was used for all three groups.

5.6   Key findings from the surveys are as follows...

- 43.6% of older people visited a Council office and 47.5% telephoned.
- 79.4% of benefits users visited and 15.7% telephoned.
- 62.6% of general users visited and 29.8% telephoned.

5.7   We asked people how difficult it was to find the person they needed to speak to when they last contacted the Council.

- 73.3% of older people found it very or fairly easy.
- 88.2% of benefits users found it very or fairly easy.
- 80.2% of general users found it very or fairly easy.

SECTION 5   CONSULT

5.7   We asked people how difficult it was for them to get to a Council office.

- 37.4% of older people found it fairly or very easy and 7.8% found it fairly or very difficult.
- 74.5% of benefits users found it fairly or very easy and 9.8% found it fairly or very difficult.
- 61% of general users found it fairly or very easy and 5% found it fairly or very difficult.

5.8   When visiting a Council office...

- 34.6% of older people said they had been seen within 5 minutes and 8.4% said they had waited for more than 15 minutes.
- 23.5% of benefits users said they had been seen within 5 minutes and 41.2% said they had waited for more then 15 minutes.
- 47.3% of general users said they had been seen within 5 minutes and 12.6% said they had waited for more than 15 minutes.

5.9   In terms of outcomes from their last visit or contact with the Council...

- 69.3% of older people said they had a successful outcome but 10.1% said they would have to go back.
- 55.9 % of benefits users said it had been successful but 36.3% said they would have to go back.
- 67.2% of general users said it had been successful but 21.3% said they would have to go back.

5.10   We asked people what they thought about the service they received.

- 71.5% of older people thought the staff were polite and 2.8% did not.
- 94.1% of benefits users thought the staff were polite and 3.9% did not.
- 87.4% of general users thought the staff were polite and 3.1 did not.

- 72.1% of older people thought the staff were helpful and 3.9% did not.
- 89.2% of benefits users thought the staff were helpful and 8.8% did not.
- 81% of general users thought the staff were helpful and 5% did not.

- 51.4% of older people thought the staff were knowledgeable and 9% did not.
- 82.4% of benefits users thought the staff were knowledgeable and 8.9% did not.
- 72.9% of general users thought the staff were knowledgeable and 8.5% did not.
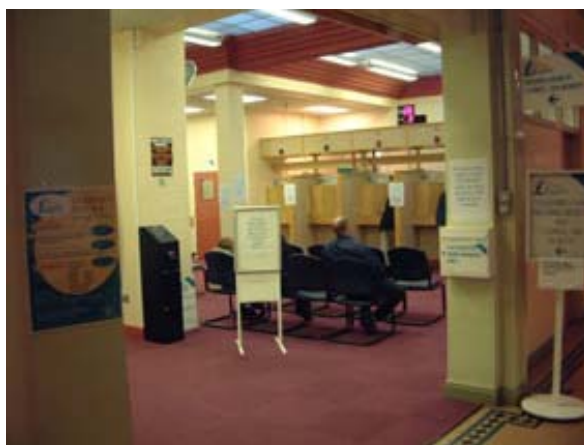
SECTION 5   CONSULT

5.11   We asked people how they would like to contact the Council.

- 35.2% of older people like to visit, 37.4% telephone and 3.4% to send a letter.
- 72.5% of benefits users to visit, 16.7% telephone, 2% to send a letter and 1% to communicate by email.
- 53.1% of general users to visit, 31.6% telephone, 2.3% to send a letter and 2.1% to communicate by email.

5.12   In terms of future service delivery, we asked people how they would like to see services delivered in the future.

- 19.6% of older people would like to contact a single city centre office, 27.9% to contact an office in their local area, 12.3% would like to be visited in their own home and 29.6% are happy with the way the Council provides services now.

- 22.5% of benefits users would like to contact a single city centre office, 36.3% to contact an office in their local area, 2.9% would like to be visited in their own home and 34.3% are happy with the way the Council provides services now.

- 37.6% of general users would like to contact a single city centre office, 26.6% to contact an office in their local area, 5.4% would like to be visited in their own home and 28.7% are happy with the way the Council provides services now.

5.13   In 2003 the reception facilities for the Benefits Service were relocated within the Council House with seating facilities and a new ticketing/queue management system introduced. This was an area that had previously received repeated negative comments from customers and even within a few months of introduction, the positive comments being received from benefits customers in the surveys shows that this has been a welcome development. Complaints to the service have reduced significantly as a result of the changes introduced.

Benefits Reception Area

SECTION 5   CONSULT

5.14   Where possible and in particular with the face-to-face surveys, we have tried to make sure that those interviewed were representative of the population of Derby where according to recent census data 12.6% are from minority ethnic communities. In the case of the survey of older people, as this was a postal survey sent to people attending the Liberation Day events, it was not possible to make sure that those receiving the questionnaire were representative of the population and the percentage of respondents fall short of the proportion of the minority ethnic communities. Both face-to-face surveys at least met the proportion of the minority ethnic communities.

5.15   The following table shows the number of respondents from minority ethnic communities as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

	Total number surveyed	Total number of respondents	% of respondents from minority ethnic communities
Postal Survey of older people	610	179	5.58% (10)
Face-to-face survey of benefits users	100	100	26.47% (27)
Face-to-face survey of members of the public	516	516	16.47% (85)

5.16   The findings from the consultation work were presented to the Council's Minority Ethnic Communities Advisory Committee in November 2003 who were satisfied with the findings and had no additional comments to make.

5.17   The following table shows the number of respondents who consider themselves to be disabled as a percentage of the total number of respondents.

	Total number surveyed	Total number of respondents	% of respondents who said they were disabled
Postal Survey of older people	610	179	33.5% (60)
Face-to-face survey of benefits users	100	100	15.7% (16)
Face-to-face survey of members of the public	516	516	16.1% (83)

SECTION 5   CONSULT

5.18   The findings from the consultation work were presented to the Council's Disabled People's Advisory Committee in February 2004 who were satisfied with the findings and had no additional comments to make.

5.19   The Review Team was interested to find out the views of young people and a member of the team attended the Derby Youth Forum to facilitate a participative workshop with 15 young people aged from 11-17. Their preference when contacting the Council was to use email and phone but they also use letters and personal visits. There was some consensus that a single city centre office would be good however, there was a strong consensus that the Council should have once central telephone number. All thought that service access could be improved.

Conclusion

5.20   The consultation work suggests on face value that people are happy with the access arrangements provided by the Council now. However, the findings need to be treated with caution. As two out of the three surveys were conducted face-to-face to help make sure we achieved a good response rate, those people surveyed were already in the city centre and in many cases within Council reception areas so are likely to choose face-to-face contact as their preferred method of contacting the Council.

5.21   This inconsistency is demonstrated in the following table where the results of the surveys are shown against the number of contacts per week by type identified in the Baseline Assessment.

	Visit Council Office	Telephone
Postal Survey of older people	43.6%	47.5%
Face-to-face survey of benefits users	79.4%	15.7%
Face-to-face survey of members of the public	62.6%	29.8%
% of contacts per week identified in Baseline Assessment	33%	50%

SECTION 5   CONSULT

5.22   The surveys show that in general customers feel that staff are polite, helpful and knowledgeable although there is room for improvement and the introduction of service standards would enable customers to know what level of service they could expect when contacting the Council. Customer care training would also help to improve service levels even further.

5.23   In terms of the future delivery of the service, only around 30% of customers in the three groups want to see service delivery maintained the way it is now. The development of a single city-centre office does not get strong support but this may in some part be due to the lack of information available to respondents to enable them to give an informed answer to the question. When visiting other councils where one-stop facilities have been developed, in some cases little or no consultation was done in advance of any development but feedback from customers after they have been introduced has been extremely positive.

5.24   The negative public perception of private sector call centres is an important consideration for the Council and this was reflected at the start of the review in the feedback from the focus groups. However, the work done when comparing the Council's current arrangements with authorities that have introduced call centres shows that service levels can be improved. These issues are explored in more detail in Section 4 – Compare.

SECTION 6   **COMPETE**

SECTION 6   COMPETE

6.1   As part of the review the review team has looked at various options for future service delivery. These include…

- Stopping all or part of the service.
- Creating a public-private partnership through a strategic contract or a joint venture company for example.
- Transferring or externalising the service to another provider.
- Market-testing of all or part of the service.
- Restructuring or repositioning the in-house service.
- Re-negotiating existing arrangements with the current providers.
- Delivering the service jointly with others.

6.2   The service access review is complex in that it covers many services spread across the Council. This could make it difficult to identity alternative forms of service delivery and those capable of providing it. The Review Team acknowledges that an external market does exist for many of the services covered by the review and in looking at other authorities has considered this element.

6.3   From the very start of the review it was clear that a key area of weakness for the Council is the lack of reliable and accurate management information about the levels of customer activity and transactions and the costs associated in providing this service either centrally or within departments. This has made it very difficult for the Review Team to accurately determine how competitive the services provided by the Council actually are.

6.4   As a starting point, the Review Team looked at the seven options for future service delivery outlined in paragraph 6.1 above. This enabled them to concentrate on options that could potentially be pursued by the Council. A summary of the findings against each of the options is given below.

6.4.1 Stopping all or part of the service

6.4.1.1   In the case of service access, the Council does not have the option of stopping providing the service. The definition of service access included in the introduction to this report makes it clear that 'service access is the processes by which the public's requirement for information and services is linked with the information and services offered by the Council.' If the Council stopped answering telephones, closed down its receptions and stopped responding to letters and e-mails then the public could not access many of its services. The option of stopping providing this service in whole is therefore not an option for the Council although it is clear throughout this report that there is a need for the Council to consolidate its activities in some areas to provide a better quality of service to the public. This could potentially mean stopping providing some aspects of services in some areas.

SECTION 6   COMPETE

6.4.2   Creating a public-private partnership through a strategic contract or a joint venture company for example.

6.4.2.1   It is clear to the Review Team that a number of examples of public-private partnerships exist in this area of service delivery. There are a number of major 'players' in the market including Capita, Hyder and British Telecom. The benefits realised by some of the well publicised authorities are impressive although in most if not all cases are as a result of the transfer of a wide range of services to these companies and not just the frontline customer service function.

6.4.2.2   The experience of authorities that have chosen this route is that the negotiation of these partnerships was a lengthy and complex process.   A market-testing exercise undertaken by KPMG on behalf of Sandwell MBC showed that there still appears to be some interest amongst private sector organisations to enter into partnerships with local authorities although the financial packages are now less lucrative than early examples such as Liverpool direct.

6.4.2.3   As part of the compare work, the Review Team visited a number of local authorities including Liverpool City Council. Liverpool has set-up the widely publicised Liverpool Direct, a joint-venture company with British Telecom. The information gained from the visit and the lessons learned by Liverpool will be used by the Council when it re-assesses the competitiveness of the service in due course – see Section 7 Options Appraisal.

6.4.2.4   Partnerships do not have to be with the private sector, and an alternative option would be to enter into a partnership with other public sector organisations such as neighbouring local authorities or local partners.

6.4.3   Transferring or externalising the service to another provider

6.4.3.1   This option is very much linked into option 2 above. In the current market, private sector companies are looking to form long-term partnerships or strategic alliances with local authorities.

6.4.4   Market-testing all or part of the service

6.4.4.1   Although the Council could potentially subject the current service to a competitive tendering exercise, there is a need to structure the service and determine its long-term objectives before consideration of this option would be appropriate. In addition, as outlined in Option 3 above, in the current market any market-testing would probably have to be linked to the development of a long-term partnership or strategic alliance.

SECTION 6   COMPETE

6.4.5 Restructuring or repositioning the in-house service.

6.4.5.1   It has been clear from the very start of the review that although customer satisfaction with access to Council services has always been favourable, there is a need to develop a stronger corporate identity for customer service. Through the work on the baseline assessment, challenge and consultation and by comparing the Council against others, it is evident that the facilities and services provided by Derby City Council do not meet the changing needs and expectations of the Council's customers. Before any consideration can be given to the options outlined above, the Council needs to re-structure and provide capacity within the service. This is reflected in the Options Appraisal, the Improvement Plan as well as the draft Customer Service Strategy.

6.4.6 Renegotiating existing arrangements with current providers.

6.4.6.1   As the service is already provided in-house, this option is not relevant to this review.

6.4.7 Delivering the service jointly with others.

6.4.7.1   As the Customer Service Strategy progresses and the Council moves towards the development of a single point of access to customer services within the city-centre, there will be an opportunity for the Council to move towards partnership/joint-working with other agencies and organisations.

6.5   As part of considering the alternative options for service delivery, the Review Team has also used the competitiveness checklist in the Best Value Toolkit. A summary of the outcomes of this exercise is shown below.

6.5.1 Is there an identified need to continue providing the service?

The Council needs to continue to provide good access to its services to enable local people, businesses and partners to receive the services they need in a way in which they find acceptable.

6.5.2 Does the Council have a statutory obligation to continue providing the service?

There are elements of this cross cutting review which are statutory, primarily physical access to buildings must meet the Disability Discrimination Act by 2004. However, unless suitable access is given to Council, other statutory services would not be fulfilling their duties.

SECTION 6   COMPETE

6.5.3   Does the Council have to deliver the service or is it allowed to use external
         providers of it wishes?

         The Council can use whatever means necessary to provide access to its
         service as long as they are inclusive to all users and meet local needs.

6.5.4   Is the service performing as well as or better than other services with which it
         has been benchmarked?

         There is currently a lack of performance data that has made it very difficult for
         the Review Team to assess how well the service is performing. Consultation
         with users during the review suggests that in general users are happy with the
         services being provided by the Council. However, there is a need for service
         standards linked to robust performance management arrangements to be put
         in place to monitor the performance of the services.

6.5.5   Could the service deliver the improvements required to achieve performance
         equal to, or better than, those services with which it has been benchmarked?

         The development of a Corporate Customer Service Strategy linked to the
         Improvement Plan for this review with a clear vision and commitment from the
         Council should enable the service to deliver services as good as or better than
         those that the Review Team has compared.

6.5.6   Could the use of an external organisation increase the services' capacity to
         meet peaks in workload?

         Yes. Liverpool Direct have used their joint venture company with BT to allow
         them to meet the seasonal requests for information relating to educational
         grants, school meals and transport cost, which are concentrated into a short
         period of time, just before the new school year begins. The number of these
         calls answered has risen from 4% to 90%.

6.5.7   Has the review identified the need to significantly amend the way that the
         service is delivered?

         Yes – it is clear that while the majority of customers are happy with the service
         being provided by the Council, when comparing ourselves to other providers,
         there are a number of things that the Council needs to do to meet the changing
         demands of our customers. These include the introduction of service
         standards, improved call handling arrangements and the development of a
         single reception facility in the city-centre.

SECTION 6   COMPETE

6.5.8   Would forming a joint venture or partnership help achieve service
        improvements and deliver Best Value?

        Yes. A number of authorities have developed partnerships with private sector
        providers, to deliver improved services to customers. The joint venture
        company at Liverpool has delivered the following service improvements…

        - Cut costs and allowed the council to reduce taxes by 3%.
        - 70% of KPI improved to top quartile from bottom quartile in just 12
          months.
        - 90% of inquiries are now solved in a single contact.
        - More than 500 databases have now been combined.
        - New debt collection contact centre brought in £500,000 of owed rent in
          its first eight weeks.
        - Absenteeism in the Council has been cut from 16 days a year to 11
          through better management intelligence.
        - Electronic telephone directory has saved £60,000 a year.
        - Eliminate a backlog of 760 IT faults within 2 weeks.

6.5.9   Are there organisations in the voluntary or private sector who could provide a
        similar service?

        Yes. There are a number of private sector suppliers, who are able to provide a
        variety of services, these suppliers include:

        - BT
        - Capita
        - Hyder.

6.5.10 Is the performance of the current service poor and unlikely to improve?

        As outlined in 6.5.4, there is currently a lack of performance data that has
        made it very difficult for the Review Team to assess how well the service is
        performing.

6.5.11 Should the Council consider contracting out the service, or elements of it
        without an in-house bid?

        Yes. Developing a partnership with the private sector would enable the
        Council to share the risk and would also allow higher investment in the project.
        However there would be large procurement and legal costs with a Public
        Private Partnership - PPP.

SECTION 6   COMPETE

6.5.12 Would the cost of market-testing the service through a tendering process outweigh the benefits achieved if the service was externalised?

The cost of developing a partnership or market-testing the existing service could be considerable although the experience of other authorities shows that the long-term benefits can be considerable.

6.5.13 If the service was exposed to competition, is it likely that there would be improvements in terms of costs and/or quality?

The experience of authorities that have outsourced has shown that they have not experienced any long-term problems although in some cases the quality of service has suffered at the expense of speed of processing.

Conclusion

6.5.14 It is clear that from the work done on compare, the most common option is to keep customer service in-house. However, alternative options such as partnerships and outsourcing do have significant benefits and should be considered in the medium to long-term once the initial phases of the Improvement Plan have been implemented. This issue is explored further in Section 7 Options Appraisal.

SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL
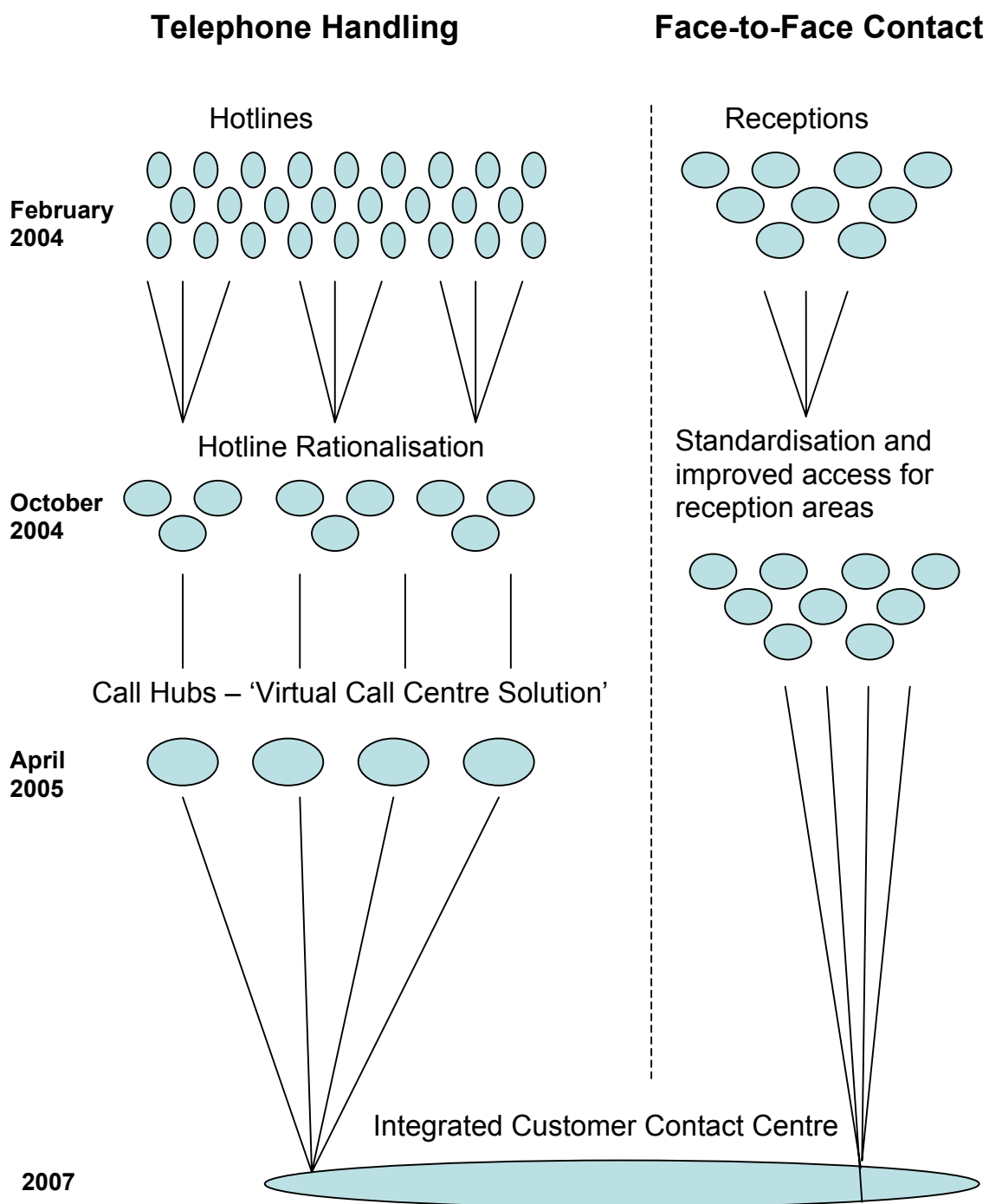
SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.1   Paragraph 1.5 in Section 1 of this report outlines the scope of this review. This was to identify:

- the most effective methods of providing the public with a good, easy, City Centre point of access to Council services
- the procedures, information and infrastructure that are needed to support all methods of access
- the means of developing a customer service culture within the methods of access identified.

7.2   The options considered by the Review Team aim to meet the objectives of this scope and provide the Council with improvement options that address the issues identified during the course of the review and that provide a course of action that contribute to the Council's Vision, Objectives and Priorities and deliver a better service to customers.

7.3   In addition, the options outlined in this section contribute to the overall aims of the Council's change management programme Building for Excellence. These are…

- Creating a modern high quality customer interface.
- Implementing business change, harnessing new technology and modern approaches to work.
- Continuing with the modernisation of the organisational structure to improve service quality and performance and enhanced accountability.

7.4   A key factor that the Review Team has had to address as part of the option appraisal process is the Council's developing Accommodation Strategy that will be considered by the Council's Cabinet in full in July 2004.   This Section is primarily based on the assumption that the Council's Accommodation Strategy will ultimately lead to the provision of a new administrative building within the city centre. On the basis that this strategy is not adopted, an alternative set of options are outlined in the summary of options shown at paragraph 7.26.

7.5   Although this review concentrates on service access solutions in the city centre, the Customer Service Strategy being developed in conjunction with the review includes the partnership work being done to develop integrated service points within local areas.

7.6   Although in many cases, the options considered address more than one of the terms of the scope they are outlined below under the most relevant headings.

SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The most effective methods of providing the public with a good, easy, City Centre point of access to Council services

7.7   From the very start of the review in the Baseline Assessment and through the work on the 4Cs, it is clear that the Council's current provision both in terms of voice and face-to-face contact with the public need to be improved. Currently the Council operates two telephone systems and provides numerous 'hotlines' across most service areas. Reception facilities are provided at most of the Council's main administrative buildings. All these things lead to an uncoordinated rather than a holistic approach to customer service.

7.8   Public satisfaction with current provision is generally good, although the Review Team did identify the fact that public expectations around customer service in general are increasing and the option of continuing to provide access to services in the way that is provided now will ultimately lead to a relative reduction in performance when compared to other providers. A stand-still or status quo option is therefore not an option the Council can consider.

7.9   Telephone handling arrangements are not effective when compared to the solutions being offered by other providers and our existing service is not meeting customer expectations. The provision of call-centre technology on a small-scale basis in the Revenues and Benefits service in 2003 has already started to demonstrate service improvements.

7.10   The use of 'hotlines' is no longer an effective method of dealing with telephone enquiries and there is an urgent need to rationalise the existing set of numbers. In the medium term, the Review Team proposes establishing a number of mini-call centres or 'hubs'. Ultimately should the Council move to new premises, these hubs would be combined into one integrated contact centre incorporating telecommunication and face-to-face customer service enquiries. The diagram on the next page illustrates the proposed solution.

7.11   Face-to-face contact is provided in a number of sites across the city centre. This is not an ideal situation although consultation has not shown it to present users with a major issue. However, the Review Team believe that in the long-term, there is a need to establish a city-centre customer contact centre where the majority of enquiries can be handled with little or no contact with the back-office.

7.12   Ideally the establishment of a customer contact centre should be a medium-term priority for the Council although with the potential relocation of the Council's administrative buildings, it is more sensible and practical to plan this improvement into any new development. Some minor improvements will be made to existing facilities particularly in the areas of access for disabled people but the Review Team would not propose recommending any major expenditure on establishing an interim customer contact centre.

Telephone Handling   **Face-to-Face Contact**

Hotlines   Receptions

**February
2004**

Hotline Rationalisation   Standardisation and
                                 improved access for
                                 reception areas

**October
2004**

Call Hubs – 'Virtual Call Centre Solution'

**April
2005**

Integrated Customer Contact Centre

2007

SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.13   The Review Team propose the following step change solutions…

- Rationalise existing hotlines by October 2004
- Develop mini-call centres or 'hubs' from April 2005
- Create an integrated customer contact centre for telecommunication and face-to-face contact from September 2007.

The procedures, information and infrastructure that are needed to support all methods of access

7.14   The Review Team acknowledge that a considerable amount of work is being done as part of the Building for Excellence Programme under the E-Derby Strategy area which will impact on and provide solutions to customer service / access issues.

7.15   Working as part of the Derbyshire Partnership, the Council is developing an A-Z for the website and an E-Forms solution.

7.16   In January 2004, the Council decided not to participate at the present time in the development of a Customer Relationship Management - CRM solution as part of the Derbyshire Partnership. This was the correct decision for the Council as the solution did not fit with the established strategic direction for the supporting infrastructure. There were also issues regarding the availability of resources to implement the solution within the required timescales set by the partnership.

7.17   The Review Team acknowledges that a CRM solution will be required prior to the introduction of the integrated customer contact centre and recommends that a solution be implemented from April 2005.

7.18   Placing technology over existing systems and processes is not the solution however and a significant amount of Business Process Re-engineering – BPR will be required as part of the rationalisation of the hotlines, development of the mini-call centres and introduction of the integrated customer contact centre. This exercise will be completed as part of the Building for Excellence Programme in close liaison with a newly appointed Corporate Customer Services Manager who will initially report to the Assistant Director – Revenues and Benefit see paragraph 7.19.

7.19   Lack of management information has been identified as a key issue for the Council and as part of the implementation of the strategy, a system of collecting information will need to be introduced across all departments. This will also be the responsibility of the Corporate Customer Services Manager. It is recommended that the new Performance Management Information System - PMIS – is used to assist this process.

SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL

The means of developing a customer service culture within the methods of access identified.

7.20   The Review Team has identified the need to develop corporate capacity in customer services to enable to Council to drive forward the improvements identified within this report. Without additional capacity, the implementation of many of the improvements identified within the Improvement Plan will either take longer than anticipated or in some cases will not happen. The Review Team has therefore proposed the appointment of a Corporate Customer Services Manager.

7.21   Initially the Corporate Customer Services Manager will not be responsible for any employees. Their main task will be to implement the findings of the Review Team and to work with Departments to achieve the improvements in customer service outlined in this report. The postholder will become responsible for customer service employees on an incremental basis starting with front line Revenues and Benefits employees. Ultimately they will be responsible for the whole integrated customer contact centre when it is developed.

7.22   The Corporate Customer Services Strategy is currently being developed and will be launched in the summer of 2004. The strategy will provide a clear vision of where the Council wants to be in terms of customer service by 2007. The Strategy will be a key reference document for the Council and will provide the basis for a new programme of customer service training that will be introduced from January 2005. Initially training will be for all frontline employees as well as new employees to the Council but will ultimately be rolled-out to all employees.

7.23   To reinforce the customer service message the 'Good Service Guide' that has been revised by Frontline Employees working on the review will be re-launched at the end of 2004. This will provide employees who may have to wait for some time for customer services training with important information on how the Council expects its employees to treat customers.

7.24   Changing the culture of the organisation to become more customer focussed will be a major initiative and will be addressed as part of the wider Building for Excellence Programme. A group has been established to address this issue and will report back regularly to the Building for Excellence Programme Board.

7.25   The Review Team propose the following solutions…

- Appoint a Corporate Customer Services Manager by July 2004
- Launch the Corporate Customer Services Strategy by July 2004
- Relaunch the Good Service Guide by December 2004
- Implement a programme of customer services training for all employees from January 2005.

SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL

7.26 The following table summarises the key solutions identified by the Review Team.

	Option 1 – Relocation of Council House	Option 2 – Refurbishment of Council House
By July 2004	Appoint Corporate Customer Services Manager	Appoint Corporate Customer Services Manager
By July 2004	Launch Corporate Customer Services Strategy	Launch Corporate Customer Services Strategy
By October 2004	Rationalise Hotlines	Rationalise Hotlines
By December 2004	Re-launch Customer Services Guide	Re-launch Customer Services Guide
From January 2005	Introduce Customer Services Training	Introduce Customer Services Training
From April 2005	Further develop the Council's mini-call centres into a 'virtual call centre'	Further develop the Council's mini-call centres into a 'virtual call centre'
From April 2005	Introduce CRM system	Introduce CRM system
From April 2005	Re-appraise strategic partnership option	Re-appraise strategic partnership option
From April 2005		Implement revised accommodation strategy
From March 2006		Integrated customer contact centre – voice and face-to-face – See Note 1
By September 2007	Integrated customer contact centre – voice and face-to-face	

Note 1   The integrated customer contact centre developed under Option 2 – Refurbishment of the Council House would be implemented on a phased basis and would not provide the same comprehensive solution proposed in Option 1 – Relocation of the Council House.

SECTION 7   OPTIONS APPRAISAL

Service Delivery

7.27   The Review Team has considered the potential for working in partnership with other providers including Derbyshire County Council and our Arms Length Housing Management organisation – Derby Homes. The development of mini-call centres in 2005 provide the Council with an opportunity to work in partnership with Derby Homes who themselves are introducing a call-centre solution from April 2004.

7.28   As part of the work done on compare as well as compete, the Team has considered the advantages and disadvantages of working in partnership with a private sector organisation. Due to the lack of management information available at this stage, the Team propose that this issue be revisited in 2005 once the initial stages of the improvement plan have been implemented.

Conclusion

7.29   The Review Team has concentrated the Options Appraisal on looking at the options that the Council can deliver. The option of continuing the way access to services are provided now is not a long-term option for the Council or for customers particularly if the new accommodation strategy is adopted in July 2004. The relocation of the Council's administrative offices to a single city-centre location will necessitate the redevelopment of current service provision.

7.30   The accommodation strategy provides the Council with a real opportunity to radically re-shape service access over the next three years to ensure high quality customer service and access solutions which meet the needs of customers in the 21st century.

7.31   There are many service improvements that the Council can do in the interim however and these can be monitored and co-ordinated by the Corporate Customer Services Manager. The proposed solutions provide a balance of short, medium and long-term activities that can both be financed and implemented within the current resources available to the Council.

7.32   The Improvement Plan includes many smaller but equally important improvements that have been identified during the course of the review and in particular through the work of the Frontline Employee Forum which was established as part of the review.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SECTION 8　　　　CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Vision and Strategy

8.1　　'It is 2007, a resident of Derby can access Council services by a telephone or internet up to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. He or she can also visit one city centre location or one of a small number of local neighbourhood bases with extended opening hours.

　　　　The service provided is consistent, co-ordinated and pro-active. Customer Service employees will be able to identify if the customer needs extra help or advice, will help sort out problems and take personal responsibility for them.

　　　　The Council ensures that services are responsive and accountable to all citizens by regular reporting and consultation.'

8.2　　That is our vision for Derby.   It reflects the Council's objective of working in partnership with others to make the Council's services integrated, responsive, customer focussed and cost effective, concentrating on the needs of the community rather than those of service providers. It also supports the Council's priority of making sure that we respond to people's needs appropriately, on time and first time, by developing a customer focussed culture and using new technology and investment in the Council buildings to provide modern working environments for service delivery and employees.

8.3　　This review has established that although access to services is in many respects good, the Council will have to achieve a considerable 'step-change' if it is to achieve its vision for Derby outlined above.

8.4　　The first thing the Council needs to do is to develop a clear vision and strategy. We have already started to do that and a Corporate Customer Services Strategy will be published and launched in the summer of 2004.   The strategy will put the customer first – at the heart of everything the Council does and stands for.

8.5　　It is easy to write a strategy but a lot harder to implement it in an effective and efficient way. If Derby is really going to embrace its vision and work towards its achievement in 2007, every officer, at every level and every member must truly believe and be committed to its success.   This will require a cultural step-change never before experienced by the organisation. It will require new management skills and an extensive training programme. It will be a journey along which some people may decide they do not wish to travel – we all have a choice.

8.6　　The Customer Services Strategy needs commitment from the very top of the organisation and needs to be championed both at Chief Officer level as well as within the Cabinet.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.7   Achievement of the vision and strategy will be dependent on developing a flexible workforce willing to accept change and to embrace the vision. The Council will need to support and coach employees through the process in order to alleviate any anxiety or uncertainty.   It will be a worrying and uncertain time for some but this should not deter the organisation from realising its goals.

8.8   Training and development will be key to delivering the strategy.   Customer Services Training should not be confined to frontline employees but should be rolled-out across the organisation. All new employees should receive customer care training as part of their Corporate Induction to the Council. This will require resources in time and money.

8.9   The Good Service Guide needs to be updated and re-launched. Every employee needs to have a copy of the guide and linked into the training outlined above understand their role in delivering and realising the Council's vision for customer service. Achievement and Development interviews should include a section on how each individual employee is contributing to delivering the vision.

8.10   A clear set of customer service standards needs to be developed, agreed and then widely publicised so that every customer of the Council regardless of their needs knows what service they can expect from the Council.   These standards need to be monitored and reviewed to ensure consistency and adherence across the organisation.

8.11   Departmental Business Plans should include a section demonstrating how the Department is contributing to the implementation of the customer service vision and strategy. In addition they should include those elements identified as part of BVPI157 and the Delivery of Priority Services, as defined by the ODPM, supporting the modernisation of government.

Corporate Capacity

8.12   Delivering the vision and strategy needs resources. The review has identified that the lack of corporate capacity or ownership for customer services has led to a fragmented and un-coordinated approach to customer service across the Council. Each department approaches customer service in a different way and corporate standards are not delivered in a consistent manner.

8.13   Because good customer service needs to be integral to everything that we do, it cannot become the responsibility of one Department, Chief Officer, Assistant Director or Manager. However, the Council does need to build capacity into its corporate structure to co-ordinate and support the implementation of the vision and strategy.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.14   A post of Corporate Customer Services Manager reporting to the Assistant Director – Revenues and Benefits will provide some urgently needed capacity within the organisation. This post will provide a co-ordinating role in the first instance, implementing the recommendations from this review and promoting the vision and strategy across the organisation.

8.15   A Corporate Customer Services Group should be established to carry on the work started by the Review Team. This group should include representatives from across the Council and should be backed-up by Customer Service Champions in each Department. The Group will need to work under the Building for Excellence programme.

8.16   The Frontline Employee Forum established as part of the review should continue to meet to carry forward the work the group has started and to contribute to the implementation of the improvement plan and strategy. The work of the group will be co-ordinated and monitored by the Corporate Customer Services Group.

Integrated Delivery Solutions

8.17   Integrated delivery solutions for voice and face-to-face contact are inextricably linked to the Council's emerging Accommodation Strategy.   The conclusions and recommendations made by the Review Team reflect the strategy as it currently stands and allow for development of an integrated delivery solution linked to whichever accommodation option the Cabinet decides to approve.

8.18   It is clear however that the most effective method of delivery that will enable the customer service vision and strategy to be realised is the development of a new civic centre within the city centre.

Telephone Handling

8.19   Current telephone handling arrangements, particularly the use of hotlines are ineffective and do not provide good customer service. Rationalisation of the hotlines needs to happen as soon as possible to reduce them to a manageable amount.

8.20   Call centre technology when properly used does provide customers with excellent service.   Service standards, speed and availability of service will all be improved.   The working experience for employees is also greatly enhanced.

8.21   The Council has already started to implement call centre technology in specific areas such as Revenues and Benefits and the Assembly Rooms.   There is an opportunity to extend this technology to other areas of the Council and to create a 'virtual call centre' solution.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.22   Ultimately, in-line with the Council's emerging Accommodation Strategy, the Council should look towards developing an integrated call and contact centre based in one location within the city centre. Ideally this should be part of ground floor of the present Council House or any new civic centre developed by the Council.

Face-to-Face Contact

8.23   The plethora of reception facilities within the city centre providing different levels of service to different standards and all with disabled access issues highlights the inadequacies of the current service access arrangements across the organisation.

8.24   Whatever the final decision in relation to accommodation, there is an immediate need to standardise the reception areas ensuring a consistency in the information available, opening times and level of service delivered.

8.25   Adjustments for disabled customers have been incorporated both at Roman House and the Council House reception points. A number of adjustments are still required to further advance the accessibility of our reception points and many of these will be funded from the DDA programme in the next financial year.

8.26   The development of an integrated customer contact centre outlined in paragraph 8.21 above will enable the Council to deliver its vision and provide first class customer services to its users.

Management Information

8.27   The review identified at a very early stage that there is a serious lack of management information available in relation to customer service.

8.28   There is an urgent need for all Departments to start monitoring and recording the levels of customer contact by voice, face-to-face, electronically and by letter. In addition, the Council needs to start monitoring the amount of resources currently committed to providing customer service across the organisation. Without detailed and consistent management information from all Departments, the implementation of much of the improvement plan and strategy will be difficult.

8.29   The Council has developed an effective system for dealing with the complaints it receives. However, there is no system in place to monitor informal feedback made by customers whether good or bad. A system should be introduced across the Council to capture and record this information and this will enable the Council to improve its services in the future and should ultimately lead to a reduction in the number of formal complaints.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.30 The customer services strategy should be linked-in to the Council's Performance Management Strategy and local performance indicators should be developed to enable customer service to be monitored and reported. Business Units should be encouraged to develop and include customer service related performance indicators within their annual Business Plans.

8.31 Mechanisms for regular and consistent consultation with customers including hard to reach groups should be introduced in all Departments to enable the Council to monitor public satisfaction and to ensure that customer service is continually improving across the organisation.

Business Process Re-engineering

8.32 The customer services strategy will require Departments, Business Units and employees to work in different ways. The rationalisation of hotlines, the introduction of the virtual call centre and ultimately the development of the integrated customer contact centre means that the Council needs to urgently review all the back office processes that will feed into these new ways of working.

8.33 Business Process Re-engineering is an area being addressed under the Building for Excellence programme and the outcomes of this review and the improvements being proposed emphasise the importance that corporate capacity should be developed as soon as possible to enable this work to start.

Information and Technology

8.34 Technology is key to the implementation of the improvement plan and strategy. Technology cannot just be bolted on however and the process re-engineering outlined in the previous paragraphs must take place before technological solutions are implemented.

8.35 The Council cannot expect employees to deliver excellent customer service if they have not been provided with excellent information. The work being undertaken as part of the E-Derby initiative such as the A-Z, Property Gazetteer and E-Forms will all help to ensure that employees have the information they need.

8.36 CRM is still a developing area and while the Review Team has proposed a cautious watch and see approach to the implementation of a CRM solution based on the experiences of other authorities. However in the long-term, it does see the benefits both to customers and employees of introducing a CRM solution for Derby.   The introduction of a technological solution such as this can only follow once organisational, culture and process re-engineering issues have been addressed.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Working with others

8.37   The Review Team has not been able to adequately assess the competitiveness of all or part of the current service due to the lack of management information and the fragmented and un-coordinated approach to service delivery.

8.38   There are a many opportunities to work in partnership with others including neighbouring local authorities as well as private sector providers. The benefits that such solutions can bring should not be underestimated and the Council needs to revisit this issue once some of the structural, capacity and management information issues have been addressed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

8.39   On the basis of the information gathered during the review, the Review Team recommend the following…

Vision and Strategy

R1   The Council should develop a clear vision and strategy for customer service – see page 55 paragraph 4.5.2 and page 87 paragraph 8.4.

R2   Chief Officer Group should nominate a Customer Services Champion and Cabinet nominate a portfolio holder each with responsibility for customer service – see page 87 paragraph 8.6.

R3   A customer care training and development programme initially for frontline employees should be developed. This should be rolled-out to all employees in due course – see page 81 paragraph 7.22 and page 88 paragraph 8.8.

R4   The Corporate Induction for new employees should include a session on the high customer service standards expected across all services of the Council – see page 81 paragraph 7.22 and page 88 paragraph 8.8.

R5   The existing Good Service Guide should be updated and re-launched and a copy provided to each employee – see page 81 paragraph 7.25 and page 88 paragraph 8.9.

R6   Achievement and Development interviews should include a section on how employees are contributing towards the Council's vision for customer service – see page 88 paragraph 8.9.

R7   A clear set of customer service standards should be developed, agreed and then widely publicised across the Council – see page 56 paragraph 4.54 and page 88 paragraph 8.10.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

R8   Monitoring and review arrangements for the customer service standards should be put in place to ensure consistency and agreement across the Council – see page 88 paragraph 8.10.

R9   Departmental Business Plans should include a section demonstrating how the Department is contributing to the customer service vision and strategy – see page 88 paragraph 8.11.

Corporate Capacity

R10   The recruitment process for the Corporate Customer Services Manager should proceed as quickly as possible with a view to having the new postholder in post by July 2004 – see page 56 paragraph 4.53, page 81 paragraph 7.20 and page 88 paragraphs 8.12 – 8.14.

R11   A Corporate Customer Services Group should be established to carry on the work started by the Review Team – see page 89 paragraph 8.15.

R12   Each Department should nominate one or more 'Customer Services Champions' to act as a link for the Corporate Customer Services Manager and Corporate Customer Services Group – see page 89 paragraph 8.15.

R13   The Frontline Employee Forum established as part of the review should continue to meet to carry forward the work that the group has started and to contribute to the implementation of the improvement plan and strategy – see page 89 paragraph 8.16.

Integrated Delivery Solutions

Telephone Handling

R14   Rationalisation of the hotlines should be completed as soon as possible and by no later than October 2004 to reduce them to manageable levels and make access to service simpler and easier for customers – see page 78 paragraph 7.10 and page 89 paragraph 8.19.

R15   The call-centre technology already introduced in some areas of the Council such as the Revenues and Benefits service should be extended across the Council with a view to developing a 'virtual call centre' solution – see page 78 paragraph 7.10 and page 89 paragraph 8.21.

R16   In-line with the Accommodation Strategy, the Council should look towards developing an integrated call and contact centre in the city centre – see page 78 paragraph 7.11 and page 89 paragraph 8.22.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Face-to-Face Contact

R17   Reception areas should be standardised to ensure a consistency in the information available, opening times and level of service delivered – see page 90 paragraphs 8.23 – 8.24.

R18   The plans to address Disability Discrimination Act - DDA issues in reception areas should be progressed as soon as possible – see page 78 paragraph 7.12 and page 90 paragraph 8.25.

Management Information

R19   All Departments must drive up standards and start monitoring the levels of customer contact by voice, face-to-face, electronically and by letter – see page 80 paragraph 7.19 and page 90 paragraph 8.28.

R20   Departments must put systems in place to start monitoring the amount of resources being committed to customer service – see page 80 paragraph 7.19 and page 90 paragraph 8.28.

R21   A system of recording formal and informal feedback from customers whether good or bad should be introduced across the Council – see page 90 paragraph 8.29.

R22   Local performance indicators for customer service should be introduced at a Corporate, Departmental and Business Unit level to enable customer service activity to be monitored and reported. Departments and Business Units must include these performance indicators within their annual Business Plans – see page 90 paragraph 8.30.

R23   All Departments must introduce regular and consistent consultation with customers so that the Council can monitor public satisfaction to ensure that customer service is continually improving across the organisation – see page 91 paragraph 8.31.

R24   The Corporate Customer Services Group should develop mechanisms for regular and consistent consultation with hard to reach groups to make sure that any future service development meets their needs – see page 91 paragraph 8.31.

Business Process Re-engineering

R25   There is an urgent need for Business Process Re-engineering specialists within the Council and the work proposed under the Building for Excellence Programme should proceed as soon as possible. This needs to be closely linked to the government's modernisation and e-government targets and will be an integral part of delivering the Council's vision for improved service access to customers – see page 80 paragraph 7.18 and page 91 paragraphs 8.31 – 8.32.

SECTION 8   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Information Technology

R26   The e-government and e-Derby related projects being developed through the e-Derby programme, in partnership with others, must continue to focus on the needs of customers, end users, employees and other stakeholders to deliver an integrated and joined-up approach to services – see page 91 paragraph 8.35.

R27   The implementation of a CRM solution must enhance the customers experience in a way that builds on the existing developments and improvements in customer service across the council – see page 80 paragraph 7.17 and page 91 paragraph 8.36.

Working with others

R28   The Corporate Customer Services Group should revisit the options appraisal and compete elements of the review once the initial management information, cultural and structural issues have been addressed – see page 83 paragraph 7.28 page 92 paragraph 8.38.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1   Reference documents

Appendix 2   Map of Derby showing buildings with public access within the URC area

Appendix 3   Report on Access for Disabled People in Reception Areas

Appendix 4   Acknowledgements

Appendix 1 Reference Documents

Derby City Council – Best Value Performance Plan 2003/2004

Derby City Council – Corporate Plan 2003/2006

Derby City Council – Service Access Review – Report – Results of Service Delivery Questionnaire

Derby City Council – Service Access Review – Pointer Panel Focus Group Report

Derby City Council – Implementing Electronic Government Statement 2002

Derby City Council – Cabinet Report dated 5 August 2003 – Service Access Review

Derby City Council – Good Service Guide

Derby City Council Complaints Procedure

Derby City Council – Service Access Review – Consultation Report

Donaldsons' Report

Appendix 2

Derby City Council
Buildings with public access within URC Area

R1 COUNCIL HOUSE
Main Reception; Derby Advice;
Payments Hall; Housing Benefit;
Council Tax

R2 MIDDLETON HOUSE
Education Reception; Awards & Grants

R3 29 ST MARY'S GATE
Social Services Reception

R4 ROMAN HOUSE
Development & Cultural Services
Reception

R5 CELTIC HOUSE
Trading Standards Reception;
Taxi Licensing

R6 SAXON HOUSE
Waste Management Reception

R7 BIO HOUSE
Housing Advice

▲ Other Buildings with Public Access

☐ URC Boundary

1: 10000

DERBY CITY COUNCIL

Appendix 3

REPORT ON ACCESS FOR DISABLED PEOPLE IN RECEPTION AREAS

Documents

Surveys by Paul Matthews 2000 for Buildings Management BV Review – Council House, Roman House, Celtic House, St Mary's Gate, Bio House.
Survey of St Mary's Gate – 1997
Survey of Celtic House – 1997

Inspections

October 2003 - Joint inspections of all City centre reception area by Julie Basford, Mick Watts, Paul Windle and Ann Webster (AW just Council House). The inspections were primarily to assess accessibility, but wider issues were also considered.

Major Issues

1.   St Mary's Gate Social Services reception – this reception area is not suitable for disabled visitors due to:

   - only access for wheelchair users at the rear of the building not well sign-posted and potential security issues
   - unable to get wheelchair into the reception area
   - reception desk too high.

   Additional problems are that the reception area is extremely small and dated. There is only one private interview room which is often already in use when needed. As this is a Listed building it would not be possible to make it fully accessible from the front. The nature of this reception area falls well short of the standards we need to be aiming for to achieve excellent status. In the circumstances, its closure and relocation of the functions to Middleton House or the Council House should be considered.

2.   The Council House lift in the main reception is too small and very difficult for wheelchair users to operate. It is the only means of access to the upper floor meeting rooms. It would be possible, though costly, to provide a larger cabin in the space available. As the main reception facilities are on the ground floor it is most unlikely that the lift will be improved unless the Council makes a long-term decision to remain in this building.

3.   The Council House double entrance doors are difficult to manage and could be replaced by sliding doors. The estimated cost in 2000 was £11,500.

4.   The Education Grants and awards reception in Middleton House is extremely basic and again falls well short of the standard we are striving for.

Appendix 3

5.   The reception layouts in the Council House are disjointed with:

- the main reception being too small,
- the payment hall in the Council House very dated and far larger than currently required
- Derby Advice is being very prominent
- Council Tax reception situated away from the other public areas

Rationalisation and modernisation of these areas should be considered

Other Issues

1.   This team recommends the introduction of a checklist that should be used whenever a reception area is created or modernised in any City Council property. This would set out the main access criteria which should be considered and will include full consultation with the Access Officer and Building Manager at the design stage.

2.   Council House
- Mats should be recessed
- Seat near internal phone
- Public pay phone could be replaced with a text phone
- Info leaflets to be displayed at a lower level
- Consider doors to Derby Advice being left open (fire safety implications)
- Poor standard of interview rooms off main reception

3.   St Mary's Gate
- Improve signage from the street
- Handrails and steps require painting
- Automated internal doors to 27 to be considered
- Very dated appearance
- Disabled toilet very poor – shared use with female staff not ideal
- Furniture layout in interview room not ideal for wheelchair user
- Suggestion box lowered

4.   The use of home-made signs to be actively discouraged.

5.   Roman House
- Create a disabled customer parking bay under the arch to also serve Celtic and Saxon House
- Consider creating 2 disabled parking bays at Ford St car park
- Ramp does not meet current standards. Would need a mechanical lift to improve access
- Consider automatic doors

Appendix 3

6. Celtic House (first and second floors)
    - External signage very poor
    - Heavy external door to communal lobby
    - Lift buttons too high
    - Unfriendly and dated appearance
    - Steps prevent access to external door for taxi licensing

7. Saxon House
    - External signage very poor
    - Low usage – could this functions be dealt with at Roman House

8. Bio House
    - Automatic door would improve access
    - Counter too high for wheelchair users – need to consider staff safety issues if a lower counter is proposed
    - Need some higher chairs with arms
    - Consider a queuing system
    - Consider a portable induction loop for interview rooms

9. Public Transport – every effort should be made to ensure that the current and any future reception areas are easily accessible by public transport. This is particularly important for disabled or elderly people.

10. Tourist Information Centre – this reception has been added to the review at a late stage. It has recently been refurbished and is fully DDA compliant.

Appendix 4

Acknowledgements

Derby City Council would like to thank the following for their contribution to the review:

        Liverpool City Council

        Derbyshire County Council

        High Peak District Council

        London Borough of Ealing

        London Borough of Havering

        London Borough of Lewisham

        The Call Centre Benchmarking Group

        Three Rivers District Council

        Joan Dryburgh – Chair, Derby Citizen's Advice Bureaux

        Members of the Derby Pointer Panel