

**Customer Services Strategy  
Progress Update**

**Background/Context**

We have been working with the recognised Trade Unions since October 2006 on the key staffing and employment issues for implementation of the Customer Access Strategy and have a jointly agreed Collective Agreement in respect of this.

**Impact on Staff**

We have worked with the Unions and Heads of Service to identify a group of staff currently undertaking Customer Service roles in order to 'ring-fence' them to give them prior opportunity to apply for the new 'multi-skilled' jobs in the Customer Service Centre.

We involved the Unions in the selection of the contractor (PPS/Badenoch & Clark) to run development centres, training, assessment centres and outplacement support.

The assessment processes ran over May–July 2007 and the Head of Customer Services has recently completed final interviews. All 26 staff who went forward for final interview have been successful and job offers have been made to these employees. 30 people applied overall for posts, 4 of whom were not recommended for final interview. PPS is supporting these employees with a Job Search programme, in addition to which the Council's redeployment procedures may provide suitable alternative employment opportunities within the Council.

28 people of the original 58 in the 'ring-fence' group have not made any application and we have requested feedback from these employees to understand their reasons for choosing not to apply.

There are some vacancies remaining in the Customer Service Centre and these jobs will be advertised initially internally before going out to wider advertisement.

PPS have conducted a very thorough and objective process and have provided valuable support and feedback to individual employees. The Head of Customer Services has a full skills audit of her new staff team mapped against the competencies required for the roles to take forward into individual training and development plans.

The process over the Summer has been intensive for staff, who have been preparing for recruitment whilst continuing to run front line customer services. They and their managers are to be congratulated on this.

### **Wider Service Restructuring**

Heads of Service will, over the next 18 months, be working on service transition and subsequent restructuring as services transfer into the Customer Service Centre. The Unions and staff will be fully consulted on these restructurings, which will identify work effort to transfer to the Customer Service Centre and the reduction in overall staffing within remaining services.

We will be instituting a Council wide vacancy management process to maximise the opportunities for redeployment and are also exploring opportunities to give additional support to staff and their managers as each service restructures.

### **Ongoing Consultation**

The Customer Access Negotiating Group is still meeting regularly and agreement was recently reached on working hours/shift patterns for the Customer Service Centre. The Head of Customer Services is consulting on all operational arrangements in the lead up to "Go Live" in April 2008, including involving staff in Focus Groups.

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