

Cambridge City Council

**Customer Services and Resources
Portfolio Plan 2013-14**

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Julie Smith

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Version control:

Introduction

a) Purpose of the Portfolio

The Customer Services and Resources Portfolio is responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the Council's plans, policies and strategies and the delivery of services in the following areas:

- **Customer Services:** delivery of front line services to the Council's customers through the Customer Service Centre, the main Guildhall reception, telephone services and the website. The land charges, streets and open spaces and tourism services are also delivered as part of this portfolio.
- **Property Services:** buying and selling of land and property, management and development of land and buildings held by the Council, including the Council's office accommodation.
- **Civic Functions:** the mayoralty, civic hospitality and town twinning, appointments and nominations of Council representatives on outside organisations where these are not related to other portfolios.
- **Corporate Services:** provision of professional and central support services including human resources and training, health and safety, emergency planning, financial services including accountancy, audit and revenues and benefits services, property valuation and advice, legal and committee services, ICT, procurement, city centre management, electoral services.

b) Context for the Portfolio Plan

National financial picture

The national economic situation and the Government's plans to tackle the national debt mean that local authorities have to play their part by managing a reduction in the money that they receive from government. This has meant planning for an anticipated 31% reduction in the main source of government funding in the four years to 2014/15, whilst continuing to provide services that local people want and need.

Continued pressures from the national economic position suggest that prospects for future funding under the next Spending Review, i.e. from 2015-16, are unlikely to improve. Whilst this will be a significant challenge, the City Council is clear about its priorities and how it will go about achieving the necessary savings with the minimum impact on front-line services.

In addition to this, the whole method of local government funding will be changing from 1st April 2013. Central to this is the introduction of business rates retention. This change represents new risks for the Council as well as providing new opportunities through the ability to retain a share of additional income generated through local business growth.

Local financial picture

The government's grant settlement for the City Council means that over the five years following this Plan period (from 2014/15 to 2018/19) the council will need to find savings in the region of £5.95 million. The council is reasonably fortunate in comparison with many other local authorities in that only 23% of our income currently comes from government grant. We have set money aside, over time, to replace our key assets and have adequate reserves to meet any unexpected costs. Whilst the Council's adoption of the Government-led freeze on the level of Council Tax in 2012-13 and the previous two years served to provide some relief to taxpayers during a period of financial pressures, it also means that the Council has less income from this source available to fund the provision of services.

Achieving efficiencies and savings

In order to help meet the requirement for net savings we have put in place a programme of service reviews that goes across all portfolios, so that we can look very closely at what we do, how we do it, what the services cost and whether we could do things differently in the future. The programme of reviews is a rolling programme and during 2013/14 the Council will need to develop proposals to achieve further net savings from its budget for 2014/15.

We will undertake a systematic appraisal of council services which have the potential to grow or generate income streams in order to identify how we can develop a more commercial approach to those services and maximise external income.

In looking to see where we might make savings we will seek to:

- protect services for vulnerable individuals and communities
- protect the basic services that keep our city looking good and working well
- make sure that we get right the things that we only have one chance to get right – such as planning new communities.

Making effective use of the Council's assets

The council has a portfolio of assets that is worth around £710 million. In 2012-2013 the council received 64% of its income (£33 million) from services that we charge for and from our commercial rents. One of the ways in which we can contribute towards achieving our savings targets is to look hard at how the council uses its own offices to see if we can make better use of the space and stop paying rent on extra buildings that are not needed.

This also means looking at how the council's staff work, for example, can we find more flexible ways of working that will reduce the requirement for office space, or make better use of technology? We will also be looking at the potential to share assets with our partner organisations in order to achieve cost reductions and improve access for customers.

Welfare reforms

The government's plans to reform the country's system of welfare payments have considerable implications for the council and for the work of this portfolio. We need to ensure that support, information and advice about the changes and their implications for individuals are in place, in particular for those who are most vulnerable and in need.

c) The following service divisions will contribute to the achievement of this Plan's Objectives:

Accountancy and Support Services
Customer Services
Human Resources
ICT Client
Internal Audit
Legal Services

Property Services
Corporate Strategy (Civic & Democratic Services)
Revenues and Benefits
Streets and Open Spaces
Tourism and City Centre Management
Director of Environment (Business & Information Services)

Vision Statements applicable to this portfolio

The Council's eight corporate vision statements were reiterated as part of the [2012 Annual Statement](#) and provide the context for the Council's work.

All vision statements are applicable to the Customer Services and Resources portfolio. In particular:

- A city which celebrates its diversity, unites in its priority for the disadvantaged and strives for shared community wellbeing
- A city whose citizens feel they can influence public decision making and are equally keen to pursue individual and community initiatives

Strategic Objectives 2013-2014

Vision Statement:	All Vision Statements
Strategic Objective CSR1:	To achieve the efficiencies and savings required as set out in the February 2013 Budget Setting Report (covering the period 2013-14 to 2016-17)
By March 2014 we will have:	<p>CSR1.1 Integrated the Council's information systems effectively</p> <p>CSR 1.2 Reviewed the approach to and delivery of services common to all departments</p> <p>CSR 1.3 Obtained greater value for money from the Council's spending on procurement</p> <p>CSR 1.4 Simplified internal processes and delegations to improve efficiency and reduce cost.</p> <p>CSR 1.5 Identified further opportunities to work in collaboration, or share services, with other public sector organisations in order to create efficiencies or improve resilience; including carrying out a comprehensive review of all our back office support services with a view to maximising opportunities through sharing those services with other local authorities.</p> <p>CSR 1.6 Continued development of a more commercial approach to the tourism service and identifying a sustainable model of tourism management which is less reliant on the City Council.</p>
Lead Officer:	David Horspool, Director of Resources

<p>Performance Measures:</p>	<p>CSR 1.2, 1.3 & 1.5 - Whether services within the portfolios make appropriate contributions to achieving the net savings requirements during 2013-14, as set out in the February 2013 Budget Setting Report.</p> <p>CSR 1.4 – Whether changes are implemented to streamline internal processes.</p> <p>CSR 1.5 – Whether the existing Internal Audit shared service is expanded to bring in additional public sector partners</p> <p>CSR 1.6 – Increase in level of income generated by the Tourism service in 2013/14 compared with 2012/13</p>
<p>Delivery Risks:</p>	<p>Failure to achieve savings targets in the February 2013 Budget Setting Report resulting in increased pressure on resources in future years</p> <p>Simplified internal processes and delegations fail to maintaining appropriate levels of assurance</p> <p>Inadequate strategy for the identification of opportunities for collaboration / sharing services, resulting in improved service delivery or efficiencies and savings being missed.</p> <p>Availability of willing partners for partnering and sharing services.</p> <p>Failure to deliver value for money through failure to robustly challenge services to improve efficiency and achieve savings.</p>

Vision Statement:	All Vision Statements
Strategic Objective CSR2:	To ensure that the Council's assets are used to deliver the maximum possible benefit to the Council and to the citizens of Cambridge.
By March 2014 we will have:	<p>CSR 2.1 Developed, and implemented with partner organisations (in particular through the Making Assets Count initiative), a common approach to the management of public sector owned property assets to reduce costs and maximise their use.</p> <p>CSR 2.2 Agreed a strategy for the optimum use of the Council's accommodation for the period 2013-2017 that also supports our CO₂ reduction targets.</p> <p>CSR 2.3 Developed a planned maintenance programme for the Council's administrative buildings that reduces the Council's running costs and levels of CO₂ emission through investing-to-save in its accommodation e.g. through further energy efficiency measures, and commenced delivery of the programme.</p> <p>CSR 2.4 Enabled more staff to work more effectively and flexibly, and therefore more efficiently by providing appropriate support in terms of buildings, technology and working practices.</p> <p>CSR 2.5 Maximise the commercial return from the development of the growth sites on the southern and north-eastern fringes of the city, subject to the Council's other objectives for these developments.</p> <p>CSR 2.6 Undertaken focussed work to improve electoral registration rates in the Cambridge City electoral area and made preparations for the implementation of Individual</p>

	<p>Electoral Registration.</p> <p>CSR 2.7 To support the new Business Improvement District to deliver the projects as set out in its Business Proposal. This will be delivered following the guiding principles of equalities and community engagement as agreed with the City Council.</p>
<p>Lead Officer:</p>	<p>CSR 2.1 Richard Egan, Head of Property Services CSR 2.2 David Horspool, Director of Resources CSR 2.3 Bob Hadfield, Head of Estates & Facilities CSR 2.4 David Horspool, Director of Resources CSR 2.5 Richard Egan, Head of Property Services CSR 2.6 Gary Clift, Democratic Services Manager</p>
<p>Performance Measures:</p>	<p>CSR 2.1 - Total rental income on commercial properties for 2013-2014 is maintained or enhanced</p> <p>CSR 2.2 & 2.3 -Percentage reduction in the total energy used by Council buildings and operations in 2013-2014 compared with usage in 2012/13</p> <p>CSR 2.4 – Increase in the number of staff taking up smarter and flexible working opportunities (including pieces of technology, office accommodation and working practices)</p> <p>CSR 2.6 - Electoral Registration rates (response at canvas) – increase from 81% to 83%,</p> <p>CSR 2.7 - Evidence of the BID actively seeking the views of the local community on its activities through establishing channels for feedback</p> <p>CSR 2.7 - Completion of the 5 year business plan setting out the timetable for delivery of the projects as set out in the CBbid proposal. Achievements of projects as set out in year 1</p>

	of the Business Plan.
Delivery Risks	<p>Failure to achieve the desired balance between commercial returns and achieving the Council's objectives for the growth sites on the Southern and North-eastern fringes.</p> <p>Financial pressures resulting from being unable to rationalise existing council accommodation in line with targets in the Council's Accommodation Strategy.</p> <p>Operational risks associated with software that is unable to adequately support the Council's Information Communication Technology / financial management needs and ambitions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seasonal effects associated with the move to winter canvas presents a challenge to maintaining or improving current electoral registration rates. • Additional resource is forthcoming from central Government to facilitate improvement of current electoral registration rates. • Inability to effectively influence the CBbid Board

Vision Statement:	A city which celebrates its diversity, unites in its priority for the disadvantaged and strives for shared community wellbeing
Strategic Objective CSR3:	To ensure the efficient and effective implementation of welfare reforms, whilst supporting the most vulnerable in the city.
By March 2014 we will have:	<p>CSR 3.1 Implemented a local scheme for Council Tax Support for implementation in accordance with the Government's timetable (to commence in April 2013).</p> <p>CSR 3.2 Monitored and reviewed the local scheme for Council Tax Benefit as implemented from April 2013, and identified any future scheme amendments required.</p> <p>CSR 3.3 Implemented the required changes to the Council's own systems and liaised effectively with partners such as the Department of Work and Pensions and advocacy and support agencies</p> <p>CSR 3.4 Ensured a high-level of take-up by, in particular, those who are most vulnerable and in need.</p> <p>CSR 3.5 Effectively co-ordinated and provided support for debt advice and information, minimising the number of people who, as a result of welfare reforms, are at risk of becoming homeless or whose financial circumstances could be exploited by others.</p>
Lead Officer:	Alison Cole, Head of Revenues and Benefit Services

Performance Measures:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Percentage of eligible people in receipt of benefits 2. Time taken to process new benefit claims 3. Customer Service Centre achieves performance targets
Delivery Risks	<p>Late or inadequate detailed information provided through secondary legislation Inadequate support for advice and advocacy linked to welfare reforms Customer Service Centre unable to cope with the level of increased demand Software suppliers unable to provide system changes within the required timescales Potential reputational and adverse financial consequences arising from the requirement to deliver a local Council Tax Benefits scheme with significantly reduced funding Potential for damage to social cohesion in the city and other impacts on social and personal well-being from failure to effectively implement and communicate welfare reforms.</p>

Background Information:

Vision Statements

Our vision

The Council has a clear vision for the future of our city, a vision which we share with Cambridge citizens and with partner organisations.

Cambridge – where people matter

A city which celebrates its diversity, unites in its priority for the disadvantaged and strives for shared community wellbeing

A city whose citizens feel they can influence public decision making and are equally keen to pursue individual and community initiatives

A city where people behave with consideration for others and where harm and nuisance are confronted wherever possible without constraining the lives of all

Cambridge – a good place to live, learn and work

A city which recognises and meets needs for housing of all kinds – close to jobs and neighbourhood facilities

A city which draws inspiration from its iconic historic centre and achieves a sense of place in all of its parts with generous urban open spaces and well- designed buildings

A city with a thriving local economy that benefits the whole community and builds on its global pre-eminence in learning and discovery

A city where getting around is primarily by public transport, bike and on foot

Cambridge – caring for the planet

A city in the forefront of low carbon living and minimising its impact on the environment from waste and pollution

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