

REPORT TO: Business Efficiency Board
DATE: 19 January 2011
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Resources
SUBJECT: Efficiency Programme Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

1.1 To inform the Board of progress made to date with the Efficiency Programme.

2.0 RECOMMENDED THAT THE BOARD NOTE THE REPORT

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

3.1 Progress on the Efficiency Programme is summarised in the Appendix.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None identified at this stage. Activity within the Efficiency Programme may result in recommendations to change policies as individual workstreams progress.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

5.1 The Efficiency Programme has identified net efficiency savings totalling £3.5m. These savings have helped the Council to balance the budget.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

6.1 The Efficiency Programme is designed to improve the effectiveness of services across the authority and reduce costs associated with service delivery. This affects all of the Council's priorities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Given the financial constraints facing the Council in the immediate and medium terms, failure to continue to progress Efficiency Programme workstreams into future stages may result in the Efficiency Programme not achieving its

objectives – primarily service improvement and cost reduction. This could result in services being underfunded, with departments unable to meet the costs of staff and other resources required to deliver to the community of Halton. The Efficiency Programme Board meets regularly to monitor and manage the Programme to ensure that planned cost reductions are achieved.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

N/A

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

N/A

Halton Council Efficiency Programme

Progress update; January 2011

The programme continues with Wave 3 workstreams now commencing. To summarise, progress to date against each workstream is given below.

Review of Open Spaces

Work has continued to implement elements of the transition plan to ensure that savings are sustainable. The workstream implementation team meets regularly and an evaluation of the first year of operation of the reconfigured service is being carried out. This will be reported in February 2011.

Review of Property Services

Redesign and restructuring of the function is reaching a conclusion. Soft market testing of the cleaning service is currently in progress.

Review of Revenues & Benefits & Halton Direct Link

A revised structure for the front line service delivery aspect of these services has been proposed and consultation closed on 4th January 2011. A final structure will be brought forward and reconfiguration of the services will commence shortly.

Other improvement opportunities that the workstream board had committed to have been pursued and savings recorded.

The Contact Centre element of this workstream has been taken out and set up as a workstream in its own right. See below.

Review of the Contact Centre

A Workstream Board has been established and work commenced in December 2010. Benchmarking and customer consultation are currently in progress.

ICT Support Services Review

A new structure for the service went live on 1st October 2010. Savings of £80,000 resulted from the restructuring process.

Opportunities for the rationalisation of systems, hardware and software are currently being evaluated in order to identify further savings.

Review of Contracted Services to Schools

Following an analysis of the costs of delivering services to schools, charges have been examined and some have been revised. Schools will shortly be advised of the services available to them, and the charges for the coming financial year.

Review of Operational Fleet & Client Transport

Two projects are currently in progress within this workstream:

- The usage of operational fleet across Council departments
- Client Transport arrangements (use of contracts and transport suppliers)

An analysis of current arrangements is in progress. Initial reports are expected to be brought forward in early 2011.

Following the findings of these projects, a third project will look at the fleet management function (procurement, maintenance, fuelling, etc).

Transactional / Non-Transactional: Process Review

This workstream is looking at process improvement to generate further efficiencies in business areas that were set up in April 2010. Four projects are underway and will operate on a task and finish basis. These cover;

- HR Processes – to streamline across the organisation
- Implementation of Document Imaging & Workflow to enable more reliable and cost effective movement of documentation around the organisation.
- Review of Invoice Payment Process (P2P) to streamline and adopt a common process
- Review of officer authorisation processes

Each of the above projects will result in more efficient working practices with a reduced resource requirement.

Initial findings in each of the projects have indicated that there are opportunities to streamline activity, save time and reduce costs. As proposals for improvement are brought forward, further updates will be made available.

Review of Income & Charging

In order to facilitate an effective review of fees, charges and opportunities to introduce new charges, a Corporate Charging Framework has been drafted. This sets out both the statutory background and the definition of full cost recovery. This framework will be taken through the policy approvals process and will then be the platform on which all existing and potential charges, as well as trading opportunities, will be assessed.

Review of Business Development & Regeneration (including Major Projects, European Affairs and External Funding)

This workstream has been scoped and an analysis of the 'As-Is' situation is due to be undertaken. Opportunities for savings and improvements are yet to be developed.

Review of Community Services

Workstream scope has been agreed. 'As-Is' analysis to commence shortly.