

REPORT TO: Business Efficiency Board
DATE: 29 June 2011
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Policy & Resources
SUBJECT: Efficiency Programme Update

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT:

To inform the Board of progress made to date with the Efficiency Programme (refer to Appendix 1).

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

The board is asked to note the contents of the report.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

None

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

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

None identified at this stage

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

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

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 Programme has its own detailed Risk Register.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

There are no equality and diversity issues directly associated with this report, although changes brought about by the programme may require Community Impact Assessments. Each will be considered on their own merits at the time.

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

None

Halton Council Efficiency Programme

Progress update - June 2011

Wave 3 of the programme is in progress, with some Wave 2 workstreams continuing and others closing. Each workstream is bringing its own challenges.

To summarise, progress to date against each workstream is given below.

Review of Open Spaces (Wave 1)

Evaluation of the first year of operation under new service arrangements has been undertaken and evaluation report completed. Independent site assessments have been used to measure the level of service delivery. The results are positive and the workstream has now closed.

Savings achieved: £531,000.

Review of Property Services (Wave 1)

Redesign and restructuring of the function has been completed, and a new staffing structure is now in place. Workstream now closed.

Savings achieved: £106,000.

Review of Revenues & Benefits & Halton Direct Link (Wave 2)

As a result of the success of the Action Based Research Project, the Workstream Board recommended the placement of Benefits Officers within One Stop Shops as the preferred option for future service delivery.

Following consultation with Unions and employees, a staffing structure has been agreed and was implemented on 29th April 2011. A further range of improvement options have been developed as this workstream has progressed.

Savings achieved: £487,000

A further range of improvement options have been developed as this workstream has progressed.

An evaluation of the first eight weeks of the new operation will be carried out, following which the workstream will be closed.

ICT Support Services Review (Wave 2)

A new ICT staffing structure was implemented in October 2010, along with changes to operational arrangements and rationalisation of some ICT infrastructure.

Savings from this workstream totalled £250,000 and the workstream is now closed.

Review of Contracted Services to Schools (Wave 2)

New charges for contracted services to schools (SLA's) have been agreed and conveyed to schools. The additional income from revised SLA rates has been tracked and an increased cost recovery figure has been established - £195,000.

This workstream has now closed and the activity has been handed over to the Procurement Unit to manage on a day to day basis.

Review of Operational Fleet & Client Transport (Wave 2)

'As-Is' reports have been completed for the Client Transport and Utilisation of Operational Fleet projects within this workstream. Work has commenced on documenting the 'As Is' for the Fleet Management function.

Initial improvement opportunities for consideration as part of the 'To Be' phase have been discussed by the Workstream Board, and a number have been prioritised for further investigation.

Transactional / Non-Transactional: Process Review (Wave 2)

The first four 'task and finish' projects are ongoing and progressing as follows:

- HR Processes – Business Analysts currently developing an 'I want HR' portal to automate the amendment to establishment process.
- Implementation of Document Imaging & Workflow - initial business case has been approved by Management Team and Programme Board and has received broad approval to take forward. The Project Group is beginning to identify candidate services where a document imaging system can be implemented.
- Review of Invoice Payment Process (P2P) to streamline and adopt a common process. Work is continuing to rationalise and consolidate invoice load.
- Review of officer authorisation processes – Management Team endorsed a series of principles to be adopted Authority-wide which will see the reliance on paper-based systems reduced. The Project Group will support individual departments to adopt more efficient approaches to authorisation as processes are reviewed and revised.

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

Further process review projects will be added to this workstream as it progresses.

Libraries Service Review (Wave 2 – Directorate Led)

This review has now been completed with staffing structures reconfigured in some areas of the service, along with the introduction of new technology.

Savings Achieved: £157,500

Review of Income & Charging (Wave 3)

Work on a Corporate Fees and Charges Register is now underway. The workstream will establish the extent of full cost recovery based on current charges. This will be approached on a department by department basis.

Review of the Contact Centre (Wave 3)

As the review of Revenues and Benefits and Halton Direct Link focussed on service delivery via the One Stop Shops, it was decided to conduct a separate review of the Contact Centre.

An Outline Business Case/Project Initiation Document has been developed, and an 'As-Is' report will be presented to the Programme Board in June 2011. Thereafter, improvement opportunities will be evaluated and followed up to develop a 'To-Be' model for the service.

Savings from this workstream are anticipated to be a minimum of £110,000.

Review of Business Development & Regeneration (Wave 3)

An Outline Business Case/Project Initiation Document and 'As-Is' report have been developed, along with activity impact assessments on the key activities taking place within Business Development, External Funding and Major Projects. Improvement opportunities are to be identified, and will then be evaluated and followed up to develop a 'To-Be' model for the service.

The operations of the Market Service and utilisation of the Council's Industrial Estate portfolio are being mapped. A peer review of the markets is also planned. Improvement options will be identified once the mapping and peer review process is completed.

Review of Development Control/Building Control (Wave 3)

The scope of the workstream has been agreed and an Outline Business Case/Project Initiation Document has been drafted for submission to the Efficiency programme Board.

Review of Adults' and Children's Social Care Commissioning (Wave 3)

Initial investigative work underway, workstream scheduled to start June 2011. OBC / PID in draft.

Review of Community Services (Wave 3)

Scope has been agreed to include: Tourism and Promotions, Sports Development, The Brindley Arts Centre, Museums, Community Centres, Community Development, Voluntary Sector Grants and Dorset Gardens. OBC/PID being developed and due to go to Programme Board in June 2011.

Workstream lead and savings and income targets to be decided.

Traded Services Workstream (Wave 3)

PID approved by Programme Board May 2011. Detailed investigation into the legal framework underpinning traded services is underway. A baseline of all current trading activity is being collated. This will be presented in the form of an 'As-Is' report.

Wave 1 Savings:

The completion of the Open Spaces and Property Services workstreams brought Wave 1 of the Efficiency Programme to a close. Total gross savings for Wave 1 of the Efficiency Programme amount to £4,521,934

Wave 2 Savings to date:

To date, gross savings achieved from the Wave 2 workstreams detailed above are £1,189,483. These savings will be increased as the workstreams that are still in progress continue.