

Council – 12 September 2011

Business Support Services Progress Report of Councillor Arif, Portfolio Holder

I am happy to report that support functions within my portfolio are continuing to deliver excellent value for the citizens of Walsall and are focusing their efforts on what is important to our customers. The portfolio consists of Procurement, ICT, Print and Design and Business Change. We cover anything from a mobile phone to the working smarter programme. There are many highlights for the year, I would like to mention first the “**my Walsall**” project. The “my Walsall” site went live in August and starts the transformation of how our customers communicate with us via the web.

Its build and its design are “Working Smarter”.

The site went live on time using agile working and involving our citizens in its design. This work is ongoing and the platform which was built in Walsall by our ICT team is as good as any in the country. It’s something of which I am proud and will develop as we align ourselves with our customers.

As part of the 2012/13 budget round our **ICT** team have been identified as “best in class for cost” in the Black Country. We get a great deal out of our ICT team and they are successfully delivering improvements in new and innovative ways.....and it’s an in-house team.

As an example of some of the work we are doing I would highlight the following:

We saved £90,400 by re-cycling/re-using equipment

We saved £46,000 by changing/ceasing current contracts (technical and communications)

We reduced the cost of 65xxxx calls to mobiles from £47,414 to £15,120

We enabled Steps to Work to successfully bid for a £3M contract (over 5 yrs)

We provided 3 young people from school work experience opportunities including vital key skills and an insight into careers in IT. ICT also have 2 Apprentices and 2 trainees via DAF (Deprived Area Funding) who are developing their personal skills, key skills and technical knowledge by working with experienced ICT staff.

Procurement – The Council is under pressure to deliver savings and as with any organisation this requires working along the supply chain. We are arming our teams with the skills needed for a modern organisation. We have supported the following reductions in spend:

Street Pride – Supported the procurement of new contracts for waste and recycled materials which has delivered £1 million saving.

Office Supplies - About to launch a new office supplies contract which will save £40,000 on current spend and further savings can be delivered through rationalisation of items.

Walsall is leading a regional procurement project for the supply and installation of stair and vertical lifts. This collaborative framework will have an anticipated annual value of £15 million which will enable Walsall to achieve greater economies of scale and achieve greater outcomes from its capital grant.

Adult Social Care - Community Support Annual Fee Review negotiations are projected to generate savings in the region of £98,330.77 based on 2010/11 spend of £6.9 million. Early analysis shows that if utilisation and rates continue at the current level the projected saving is in the region of £108,000 for 2011/12.

Adult Social Care – Working with the service area to terminate and renegotiate fee levels for individual high cost community Support Packages which will reduce unit cost for some packages from in the region of £26 per hour to £13 per hour. This work is in progress and will need to be accounted for within SC & I Budgets. 2 providers have currently been targeted with a combined total spend of £2.6 million pounds. This will eventually be rolled out across all providers of this service.

We provide procurement expertise which when aligned with operational expertise is providing significant results.

The **Working Smarter programme** is delivering significant benefits to ourselves and our customers. The focus of the work is to help our citizens:

- **Help me live the way I want**
- **Help me improve the place I live**
- **Help me run my business successfully**
- **Help me ensure I have enough money to meet my basic needs**

Working Smarter has helped the Council contribute to savings in the region of £8m for 2010/11 and is helping the Council to contribute to savings in the region of £17m for 2011/12; this has meant significant improvements to our citizens. This work is continuing and the impact will be felt in every part of the authority.

The **Business Improvement Service** is going through a major change in direction aligning itself to the Working Smarter programme. During that transition we have worked with service areas supporting the delivery of the following:

Finance Direct has transformed the way the Council operates its financial systems, procedures and processes. Introduction of p-cards, consistent financial reporting

(Qlikview) & upgraded Oracle systems will provide benefit in excess of £850,000 savings per year.

Street Pride Software Integration Project implemented the facility for refuse collection vehicle drivers to record all events. This allows the Contact Centre & First Stop Shop to immediately view reasons why a resident's bin may not have been emptied.

The **Server Consolidation Project** received £200,000 of grant funding from Improvement and Efficiency West Midlands (IEWM). The objectives of the project are to modernise the Council's server estate and to save money. Savings are to be made as the project aims to remove around 80-100 old servers and migrate the systems onto 10 new servers running in a virtual environment. This will result in a decrease in electricity use and save on maintenance costs. The project is around 50% complete and is expected to achieve £320K worth of savings in the first five years.

The **Sickness Absence Reporting Centre Pilot** received CMT approval in May 2010 and went live in January 2011. Funding of £80,000 was secured to deliver the in-house absence reporting centre solution for a six month period for Neighbourhoods and Social Care & Inclusion directorates (2,247 staff). The pilot project was delivered on time, £18,000 under budget (23%) and has reduced sickness levels in the 2 directorates by 4.41% during the pilot period.

Information is a critical part of any organisation. We are working closely with partners to investigate ways of improving our combined use of information to better address local priorities. The work regarding shared intelligence is considering ways of pooling resources and improving the availability of information to inform service delivery on a borough, area partnership and locality basis. We are the first authority in the Black Country considering this approach in response to better serving residents. The aim is to get the right information, in the right format, to the right people at the right time and in doing so improve outcomes for residents. We are leading the way in the Black Country.

Councillor Mohammed Arif
Cabinet Member
Business Support Services