Herefordshire Council

ROOT AND BRANCH REVIEW	APPENDIX 5

HOUSING, ECONOMY AND REGULATORY SERVICES (HERS)

DATE: OCTOBER 2012

1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to outline the progress made to date of the Housing, Economy and Regulatory Services People Root and Branch Review.

1.1 Scope

The HERS review scope finally included some 30 or so services shown at Appendix 1. The budget for this large range of services is c.£16m (expenditure), c.£9m (income) and c.£7m (net expenditure) and there is c.320 staff employed in the delivery of these services.

The aim of the HERS review is to thoroughly examine the services within the HERS scope in order to:

Challenge the need for the service and the effectiveness of delivery from the end user and council perspective. As a result this will,

Develop options for the redesign of services that will effectively and efficiently meet the future demands within the County and, to a certain extent, beyond.

The HERS Vision for the Future is that, as the provider of a proactive and enabling portfolio of services, we are:
- Customer led;
- Strategically vital and valued;
- Sure of our community role;
- Able to evidence performance, benefit and impact;
- Confident enough to regularly challenge our value in a changing environment

The process will also identify whether savings can be delivered from these services.

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2. APPROACH

The HERS review was already underway at the time the Root and Branch process commenced (see Background to the review at Appendix 2).

Overarching governance arrangements for the review are:

Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Roger Phillips

Project Sponsors – Jo Davidson, Director for People's Services; Geoff Hughes, Director for Places and Communities

Joint Lead – Jenny Lewis, Assistant Director, People, Policy and Partnerships

Joint Lead – Paul Nicholas, Regulatory Services Programme Manager

Project Team Members – Chris Jones, Directorate Services; Jacky Edwards, Project Manager

In addition, other staff have been involved as necessary:

- All in-scope service managers and their Assistant Directors
- Change Champions.

2.1. Activity undertaken

2.1.1 Engagement

Baseline information was collected with the help of service managers and through team meetings across every service in scope. A members' workshop has also taken place. Customers and members of the public have not yet been consulted however previous feedback and research has been considered during the review.

Note: A Quality of Life survey has just been completed and a public engagement process "Your Community, Your Say" is about to be commenced. Data from both processes will be analysed and fed into this review, as appropriate.

2.1.2 Benchmarking

Limited benchmarking activities were undertaken as part of the review process. Focus has been on a bigger picture (see Soft Market Testing below) with engagement with some who have implemented (or are considering) alternative delivery models such as North east Lincolnshire and Barnet.

2.1.3 Needs Assessment

No specific activities have been undertaken on need and demand. The Corporate Plan refers to those top priorities that have been highlighted. The JSNA, now the integrated needs assessment, has provided direction to many of the in-scope services, as has previous 'Place Surveys'.

2.1.4 Challenge

As part of the Root and Branch process a Challenge Panel was convened as part of the assurance process. They assessed whether the Review Team had done their job and followed the methodology when developing robust deliverable final proposals   it also provides an external perspective to the Review recommendations, supplementing the internal challenge that is built into the process.   The comments of the panel have helped enrich this report.

2.1.5 Workshops

In order to manage the large number of services in scope effectively service issues, common customers, high cost and income were utilised to cluster useful groups in order to undertake core purpose/customer journey workshops. These have been undertaken with a cross section of staff in four key areas – 'Permissions' (aka Planning Development Management), Housing (centred on people getting the accommodation they want), 'Allegations' (where the customer asks for a problem to be resolved), and 'Grants' (where the customer is looking for funding etc). These workshops considered the current purpose of those services, the customer perception and understanding of the service purpose and then the future service purpose. Exercises also included consideration of which service activities should stop, what new activities might be introduced and which of the current activities require improvement.

2.1.6 Soft market Testing

A market consultation exercise, run in conjunction with the StreetScene review, has been designed to inform the approach to commissioning services but also to provide market feedback about the level of interest in services. This approach has been developed through the Commissioning and Commercial Board and could help to inform how best to approach the market, the potential benefits that could be achieved through various groupings of services and enable the review to consider whether there are benefits that could be secured through external procurement of services.

2.2.   Key learning from this activity

The HERS review team has acknowledged that the scope of the review has made it unwieldy with respect to finding common customers, value propositions, partners or activities. Changes along the way to, for example, the initial scope, 'business case', structure and methodology have hampered the ability to gather more detailed information

around the proposals. There has been a heavy reliance on management expertise, participation and team knowledge/experience.

The learning from this and other Phase 1 reviews will be used to inform the process for the Phase 2 Root and Branch reviews.

The review has both confirmed and learned a number of key points that are highlighted here but appended more fully at Appendix 3 (please follow the links):

Performance Management

Financial Management

Service Improvement

Strategic Challenge

ICT

Housing Options

Customer Focus

Value Proposition

Statutory Provision

Members' views

2.2.1 Current Costs: High Level

The in-scope services budgeted spend of c.£15.6m broken down into the following parts:

Employee-related – c.£9.36m;

Premises-related – c.£1.26m;

Transport-related c.£0.27m;

Supplies and services – c.£4.1m;

Other – c.£0.56m.

'Below line' costs for 1011/12 were c.£3.2m.

The budgeted Income of c.£9m is broadly made up from: receipts – c.£8m; 'grants' – c.£1m.

2.2.2 Discovery Implications

The review process has enabled the consideration and articulation of issues and

challenges currently faced by service deliverers whilst they try to respond to customer needs and demands.

These may have been known prior to the review but there is an opportunity through the transformation process to more effectively challenge the current situation, make significant changes, rationalise the role of the council and prioritise service delivery in order to meet the key needs of the community.

Clarifying the issues offers real choices, an understanding of the investment required to effectively implement the change and the benefits that can be anticipated for the Herefordshire community.

3. PROPOSED CHANGE

3.1. Key decisions at this point in the review process

3.1.1 Fundamental policy changes proposed

To reduce the demand on the planning service by focussing and prioritising resources on those applications that meet the potential future purpose of increasing the economic growth and development of Herefordshire.

In order begin work needs to be initiated to understand how recent proposals from the Secretary of State for Local Government regarding the removal of certain types of development from the Planning system could be localised in order to positively impact upon the ability of residents and businesses in the County to develop good solutions and stimulate growth.

If such a proposal is implemented it will effectively de-regulate a significant number of developments that currently require the benefit of permission. Reducing bureaucracy and cutting red tape is a key priority of the organisation

The 'SoS' proposal suggests certain types of development. Work to understand these proposals would also look into the impact associated with widening the scope of such changes. This is a proposal that has emerged from the review.

Such a decision will be taken in the context of the Local Development Framework and the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Additional work also needs to be undertaken relating to creating a Supplementary Planning Document to encompass ideas contained within the report: Housing and Support needs of older people in Herefordshire.

3.1.2 Proposed core purpose against which redesign will be developed

The four initial workshops have put forward the following:

Planning (DM) Current Purpose: • Control development, deliver the HUDP & National Policies, provide advice to members of the public on planning applications; • Manage development/regulatory role; • Ensure planning regulations are complied with.	Planning (DM) Future Purpose: • To facilitate sustainable development whilst protecting and enhancing the environment with greater community engagement.
Housing Current Purpose: • Cope with volume of work (triage, deflection prioritisation); • Providing suitable affordable and permanent housing for the individual; • Providing cheap housing that is looked after by somebody else i.e. happy for the rest of their lives.	Housing Future Purpose: • To assist and educate people to find the possible best fit housing and support services; • Maintaining and providing existing and new homes.
Allegations Current Purpose: • Protect and ensure the health and wellbeing of the people of Herefordshire; • Protect the environment; • Ensure regulations are met; • Provide a good value service.	Allegations Future Purpose: • To keep residents and visitors happy healthy and safe in Herefordshire.
Grants Current Purpose: • To be a participant in the development of a strong thriving economy	Grants Future Purpose: • To improve the economic & community wellbeing of the county through a variety of initiatives, projects, and programmes by maximising funding opportunities into the county; so improving business skills, community strength and social & economic wellbeing.

3.1.3 What could stop, be done differently, provided by someone else

Where services currently act as commissioner, in particular in a number of Housing areas, consideration to what it is that is being commissioned has resulted in scaling down of requirements – effectively stopping certain elements of delivery.

The Planning application proposal highlighted below is advocating taking away the need to process applications.

Environmental Health has just negotiated the provision of its Air Quality/Authorised Processes work with Worcestershire Regulatory Services.

Further work is on-going and looking at the learning associated with the Housing processes so far reviewed. Additional further work also needs to be undertaken to get to the decision point.

3.1.4 Options for service redesign (including 'packaging' of services)

Before arriving at a decision point where it is decided who should deliver the services we want and need delivered, we must undertake further work to:

- Establish/confirm the core purpose – what it is we want and need to deliver;

- Implement process redesign that reduces waste and 'failure demand' for those services we believe are essential to the achievement of purpose,

Undertaking such work will take out cost and will focus on providing the right service for the customer. Whilst assisting us in tightly and intelligently specifying the services – a task that is essential irrespective of who will deliver those services in the future.

The workshop activity so far undertaken has been successful in establishing core purpose and pointing toward proposals and redesign needed (including, in some areas, following a 'lean' approach to redesigning processes). Only four groups of services have so far been looked at.

Planning Future - Proposal - Fundamentally reduce the demand on the planning service by only being involved in those applications that meet the potential future purpose of increasing the economic growth and development of Herefordshire. *Options Basket – Innovation, Strategic Redesign*   Proposal - Improving the Customer Journey to raise customer satisfaction, release capacity and improve the reputation of the council in this area. *Options basket – Core Service, Organisational redesign utilising Lean Systems Thinking*
Housing Future - Proposal - To fundamentally change the council policy on housing in order to help the most vulnerable who are unable to help themselves (making it clear to the public that this is the way the council will operate) ensure that people are not given accommodation for life, but will be housed as suitable for the size of the family and specific health needs. *Options Basket – Innovation, Strategic Redesign*
Allegations Future - Proposal – To make a policy and delivery shift from enforcement (allegations) to a preventative and protective role within the Health and Wellbeing agenda and as part of this move to share allied services internally. Re-organise the teams across the organisation. Greater merger with Public Health and use of their health data locally to target work. *Options basket – Core Service, Organisational redesign utilising Lean Systems Thinking*   Proposal - Efficiency Through Improved Tools and Technology. *Options basket – Core Service, Organisational redesign utilising Lean Systems Thinking*
Grants Future – Proposal - To develop a single delegated grants service for the council in order to give complete visibility of the grants income opportunities for the

county, improved decision making around allocation of funds, maximise benefits and outcomes allied to the strategic economic regeneration agenda for the county.
Options basket – Core Service, Organisational redesign utilising Lean Systems Thinking

Using this approach to the remainder of the services, thoughtfully 'packaged', will give rise to further recommendations regarding core purpose and proposals.

The HERS review has commenced work on establishing option parameters or 'baskets' to help in the effective consideration of proposals emerging from the review. Engagement on these option parameters is currently underway and is centred around the following broad options: **Stop – Build Exit Plan; Innovation – Strategic Redesign; Improvement – Core Service Operational Redesign and Specify (using lean systems thinking); Alternative Provider – Redesign and Specify, and, Transformation Partner – Redesign and Specify.**

Each of the options will require an initial investment (small or large) in order to ensure the appropriate standard of implementation and realisation of the forecast benefits. This information will be detailed against the specific proposals.

3.2 Anticipated Benefits

3.2.1 Savings Identified

A key objective set for the Root and Branch reviews was "***to illustrate how proposals can contribute to the corporate target of 20% savings over 2 years and 30% over 5 years against the 2012/13 budget baseline.***"[1]

The budget baseline for services included in the HERS review (net expenditure) is c.£7m and so savings to meet the target set would require a reduction in gross expenditure or an increase in income (or combination of both) of c.£1.1m at the earliest opportunity and ready for the 2014/15 financial year. The majority of spend is actually associated with staffing costs. Transformation will need to help either reduce staff costs and/or raise income.

It is understood that this is a corporate target as part of a transformation agenda and therefore not a budget top slicing process and so this review will put forward proposals for the future that:

- indicate the services that should be provided as part of the future role of the council,

- suggestions on how they could be provided, and

- an estimate of likely savings.

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[1] Cabinet report – June 2012

This Phase 1 Root and Branch review will put forward proposals that offer a number of choices for decision makers to consider in meeting both the financial and strategic priorities of the council.

3.2.2 Non-cashable benefits

- Strategic change in Housing and Planning to support the whole organisation approach to developing a preventative agenda that will divert, delay and stop areas of service demand (in particular within Adult Social Care) in order to improve outcomes for Herefordshire people;

- Improved management of customer expectation through clarity of the role of the council and its priorities in respect of service groups and the wider community;

- Removal of red tape;

- Reduction of service costs.

3.3 Investment required

In order to bring about transformation, by whatever route(s) chosen, there will be a need to invest. Investment requirements will be explored further as part of the business case for going forward. At this stage it is identified broadly as:

- Time and resource on the part of the teams undertaking the transformation. This will require key staff to spend varying amounts of time involved in workshops (usually two or maybe three) to understand the 'journey'. A limited amount of time for all other staff involved in a transition to a transformed organisation will also be required;

- Resource from facilitators to support transformational activity through workshops and other engagement;

- Depending upon the outcome of the process, there may also be opportunities to consider enhancing, or providing for the first time, technological aids/support.

4. RISKS, HIGH LEVEL NEXT STEPS AND TIMELINE

4.1 Risks

- That the proposal to change policy, especially around Planning, will not be acceptable thereby not realising benefits re enablement or savings. Mitigated by thorough engagement/consultation with stakeholders.

- That 'lean systems thinking' approach will not make the envisaged impact and thereby not produce the estimated savings, bring about the cultural change associated with it, or give rise to continuous improvement. This risk can be mitigated by using the right

facilitators utilising proven approaches and working within an effective project management environment.

- That public engagement on the proposed changes doesn't adequately focus on the improved outcomes for people through the preventative agenda and that the message received is therefore about de regulation as opposed to education, support and prevention.

- That managers cannot or do not embrace the approach and thereby do not lead change. Mitigated by thorough engagement and positive, active and exemplary leadership.

4.2 High Level Next Steps

- Undertake work to examine the impact of changing permitted development rights. A report to be submitted to a future cabinet meeting (march/April 2013) that will describe the benefits, effects, risks and financial and other consequences of making specific changes.

- Convene Lean Systems Thinking (LST) workshops (following an **Innovation – Strategic Redesign approach**) to devise options for the bringing together of a 'Strategic Development' service block that supports, in the best integrated manner, the aspirations of the County for encouraging and supporting Economic Development, vulnerable people and other key priorities.

- Taking major elements of the areas so far covered (as outlined in 3.4 above but also to include, for example Planning and other 'permission'-based services such as Licensing) to finalise the business case and clarify what must stop/start/change as a result, returning to cabinet with recommendations for policy/strategy changes and an implementation plan with timetable.

- Roll-out the methodology to other service areas within the review to establish/review/challenge core purpose and determine next steps to bring about change. This should include redesigning activities to provide services that are truly focussed on supporting people, businesses, and enablement, whilst also clarifying what the Council will stop doing and the exit planning required to put this in place. Depending upon how services will be grouped, there will be eight or so other workshops to be convened.

In parallel with the above and to inform accordingly, the following activities will also be undertaken:

- Evaluate the responses to the soft market testing exercise and explore the benefits and risks associated with alternative providers and the possibilities around a transformation partnership, examining what a partner could do;

- Development and exploration of future options for delivery both in-house and otherwise;

- Following on from the initial members' workshop and Root and Branch members briefing, a further 'cross-party' members' workshop to be held in October/early November;
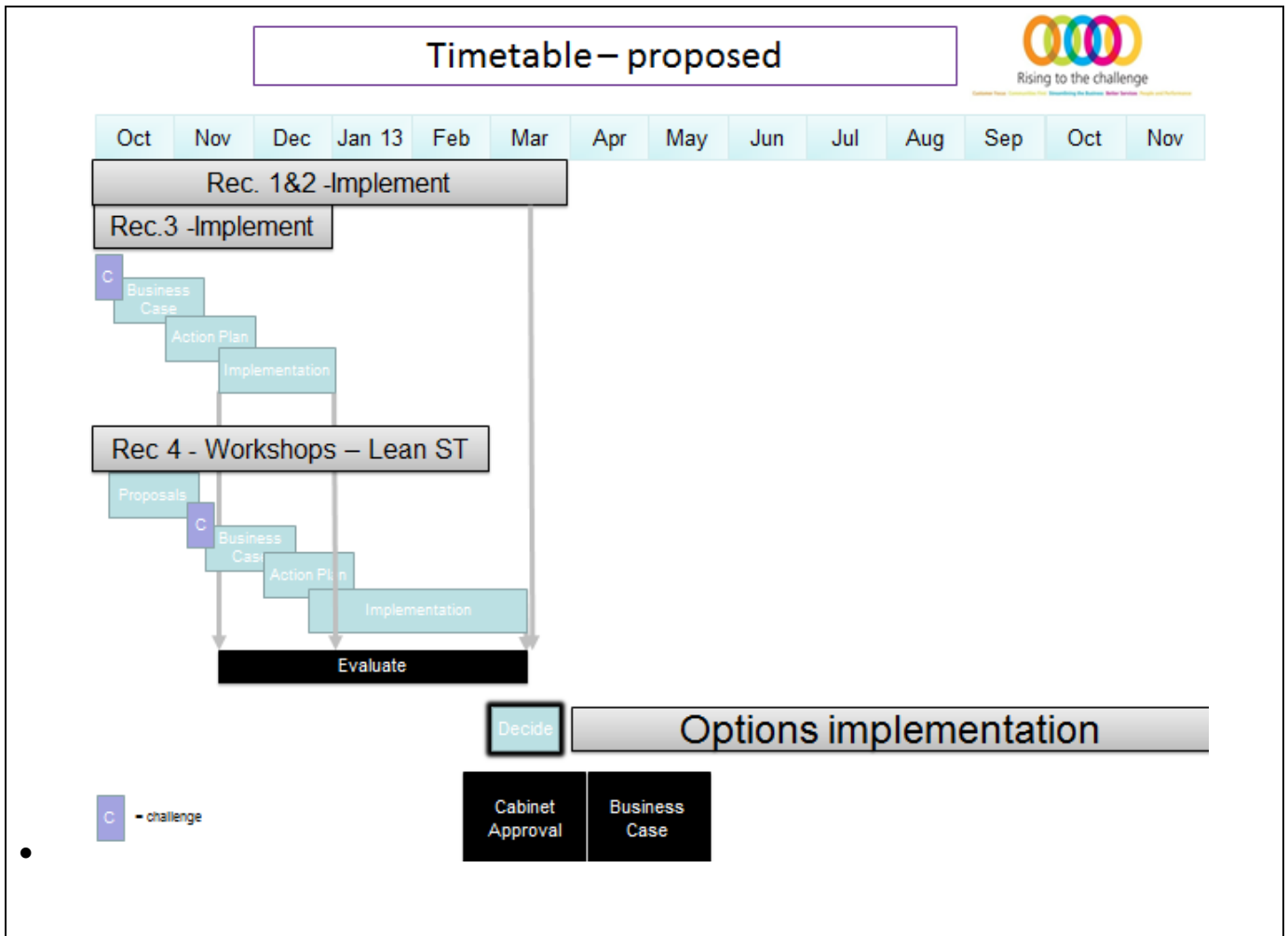
- Engagement with customers;

- Utilise other reviews to take explore options for Sustainable Communities (Safer and Stronger review), Sustainability (Environment review) and Healthy Lifestyle services (Health and Well-being review).

A project plan will be developed that will deliver those activities listed below and will include details of the investment required to bring about the change along with the expected benefits and risks. This work will culminate in a further report being presented to Cabinet by March 2013. This will coincide with the options stages of Phase 2 of Root and Branch due to commence in October 2012. The report will include detail of options for future delivery.

Activities in support of the tasks above will be centred on:

- *Development of a clear implementation plan to include resource requirements, communications plan, impact assessments and risk register;*

- *Development of Business Case and Benefits Profile for consistent application within the next stage of work;*

- *Programming the introduction and application of Lean Systems Thinking to the non-strategic services;*

- *Developing outcome based service targets*

- *Developing activity-based cost information across the retained services (in conjunction with work elsewhere)*

- *Developing an outcome based approach to commissioning the relevant services in order to maximise the current soft market testing benefits and ensure on-going value for money for the council*

- *Developing appropriate service/activity specifications for redesigned services that are to be continued whichever option is chosen.*

4.3 Timeline

Timetable – proposed

Rising to the challenge

| Oct | Nov | Dec | Jan 13 | Feb | Mar | Apr | May | Jun | Jul | Aug | Sep | Oct | Nov |

Rec. 1&2 -Implement

Rec.3 -Implement

C | Business Case

Action Plan

Implementation

Rec 4 - Workshops – Lean ST

Proposals

C | Business Case

Action Plan

Implementation

Evaluate

Decide | Options implementation

Cabinet Approval | Business Case

C = challenge

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APPENDIX 1 – HERS IN-SCOPE SERVICES

Services that have housing functions (Strategic Housing/Housing Needs and Development, Homelessness/Housing Advice, Private Sector Housing) including those associated to these ('Homepoint', Housing Improvement Agency/'You@Home'); services that lead on the development and support of the local economy and communities (Economic Development, Regeneration Programmes, Sustainable Communities, Strategic/Forward Planning), and, the so called Regulatory services (Planning Development Management, Planning Conservation, Building Control, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing, Animal Health & Welfare, On-street parking management, Community Protection) plus those associated with them (Pest Control, Bereavement Services, Markets & fairs, Street Trading, Closed Landfill Site Management, Travellers' services, Car Park management, Shopmobility). The 'Healthy Lifestyles' service is also in-scope as is the Sustainability function.

The remaining services falling within the Places and Communities Directorate and not in-scope are: the commissioning team and those services commissioned through Amey (Streetscene review), the Waste Management team (Environment review) and the waste collection and disposal contracts, 'Cultural' services (recently the subject of review), the Broadband programme, Directorate management and support, and, Hereford Futures and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Many of the regulatory services fall under the People's Directorate, Health and Well-being Division. Other services/functions within that division, namely, Public Health, will fall under several of the other reviews.

APPENDIX 2 – BACKGROUND TO THE REVIEW

The need to review services had been recognised and discussed in mid-2011. The OD process brought about new structures at top and middle management levels. Reviewing the actual services themselves was necessary partly because most had not undergone any formal review process for many years, and partly because of changes in national government priorities and funding.

During the middle of 2011 a 'red tape' review was undertaken in response to a government initiative – Red Tape Challenge. The services in-scope of that brief 'task and finish' review were all those services where some form of 'regulation' or enforcement was carried out and included services as diverse as truancy and benefit fraud.

That review published its report in September 2011 and recommendations relating to bye-law repeal and a single enforcement and prosecution policy were made and accepted by Cabinet.

When considering a more in depth review of services, most of those regulatory/enforcement services were identified as being in scope. That review started as the Regulatory Services Review. Before gaining approval from the HPS Leadership Team and Cabinet, other services from the Places and Communities Directorate were added because the view was taken that unless a service was being reviewed, or had recently been reviewed, or was a commissioned service, then it would be timely to review it and do so as part of the Regulatory Services Review. The papers that went to HPSLT and Cabinet early in 2012

therefore referred to Strategic, Regulatory and Associated Services.

Before the review had progressed, the organisation set up the Root and Branch review process. The review underwent another name change – Housing, Economic and Regulatory Services (HERS) – and was incorporated into the first phase of R&B as an 'in-flight' review i.e. recognising that it had already commenced.

A presentation to Leader's Briefing in February 2012 contained the following slide:-

APPENDIX 3 – KEY LEARNING POINTS

FROM WORKSHOPS:

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

Target setting around the services is often led by other agencies including government and tends to be quantitative as opposed to qualitative and therefore not necessarily relevant to the preventative agenda of the council. For example, services may count the number of inspections undertaken, but do not measure the benefit or impact of these inspections as a preventative or educational tool that positively impacts upon the health of the Herefordshire community and visitors.

Whilst there are clearly talented, skilled and committed staff within all of the service teams it has become apparent that in some areas the performance management of staff has suffered due to a combination of management capacity and capability issues. This has meant that poor performance has not always been tackled and that good performance is not always acknowledged or rewarded. This is clearly detrimental to both staff morale and service delivery and presents a potential barrier to the cultural change required by the council over the next 10 years.

FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

There is generally good budget understanding and management.

However, there is an absence of real activity-based cost information and therefore managers are unable to unpick the real cost of service activities as part of the assessment of value and benefit. This also has an impact on the ability to usefully benchmark with other organisations

SERVICE IMPROVEMENT

There is a genuine desire to continuously improve services and for both the services and the delivery teams to be acknowledged as best-practice providers.

Barriers to this improvement (including the performance issues previously noted) have been identified as:

- *organisational structures and culture that lead to silo management and unnecessary walls between services and so hinder efficient exchange of information and joint working;*

- *constant (and sometimes incomplete) change via numerous programmes, work-streams and projects that take capacity from the service, detract from the service delivery and lead to confusion on roles and responsibilities;*

- *a lack of clarity on what being a "Commissioning Council" really means, leading to a perception that services will be put out to the market place without proper consideration of the in house option or business case for such a decision.*

STRATEGIC CHALLENGE

In challenging the purpose of individual services there has been consideration of current council strategy and policy and the need to challenge this in order to realise future purpose: a preventative council culture focusing on supporting the vulnerable and enabling economic prosperity.

Discussion in this area also raised the need for the council to ensure that all stakeholders were absolutely clear on the council's purpose and priorities and what can and can't be done by the council's service providers. This was seen as an educative process for the Herefordshire community but critically as an enabler to allow service providers to avoid unnecessary and expensive distraction from the key role.

ICT

Significant investment in a bringing in a single 'back office' system was made three years ago but access to information within and across services is still an issue for many staff.

An inability to share data, limitations around access between service areas, limitations in ICT investment, inappropriate 'front ends' making access complicated, an under-utilisation of the system due to a lack of training, familiarity or indeed a mandate to use, have all been raised as barriers to improvement.

FROM OTHER WORK RECENTLY UNDERTAKEN:

HOUSING OPTIONS

A review of elements of 'Housing Options' has been undertaken in parallel to other consultation and engagement. This piece of work followed on from training that was recently provided to the Housing Options Team concluded that *current processes were not systems based and that the way the work of the service was being delivered was inefficient leading to high caseloads.* That review report sets out options for the way the systems, processes and the ways the service could be delivered, and emphasises the need for change. Those options need to be duly considered in the context of the other things that we have learned. Significantly they are based on the systems principle of owning the end-to-end process and delivering as much of the work at the first point of contact rather than the present system where initial front end work is not 'owned' and is pushed backwards into casework. Furthermore the report addresses how a modernised, effective, and importantly, a cost efficient Housing Options service can be delivered through reconfiguring staff teams, systems and processes and delivering the service within the resources available.

Another area of work as part of the Root and Branch process was the recent review of the way in which a number of our Housing Related Support Contracts are delivered. Existing contracts were established within the Supporting People programme and had been in place since 2003. In reviewing these contracts, we have taken into account the need to establish lean thinking models and in doing so we have been able to achieve efficiencies whilst continuing to meet the needs of our most vulnerable clients.

In addition, the customer journey workshops that have been held recently have highlighted areas for significant improvements that could and should be made across the whole system(s).

Finally, this is an opportune time to make change given the recently commenced review of the Allocations Policy.

FROM THE INITIAL ENGAGEMENT WITH TEAMS AND MANAGERS USING THE BUSINESS MODEL GENERATION CANVAS[2]:

CUSTOMER FOCUS

Not all service areas were able to clearly articulate who the customer is.

If we embrace lean systems thinking then the understanding of who the customer is will develop and is key to making necessary cultural changes.

VALUE PROPOSITION

The concept of 'value proposition' was difficult to articulate and therefore its potential in focussing on activity was not fully exploited. Further use of this concept may, in future, be useful.

KEY ACTIVITIES

Articulating what a service does in terms of key activities is key to being able to understand what the service does and to what end, and enables activity-based costing/accounting to happen.

Across the review there are many, varied and similar activities undertaken. Further work is needed to appreciate the possibilities associated with bringing together services that undertake the same or similar activities. Such work needs to be carried out alongside any changes to the way costs are understood.

FROM OUR UNDERSTANDING AND BELIEF AROUND STATUTORY DUTIES:

STATUTORY PROVISION

Most service areas undertake one or more activities on behalf of the Council where the local authority is the responsible body for the discharge of a function or holds a duty.

Note: we often talk about 'must dos' or those activities where we have a statutory duty. Statutory/non-statutory IS NOT a tenable basis for making decisions!

Decisions around statutory duties do not relate to whether or not the local authority should discharge the duty but around to what extent should that activity be undertaken, and who actually carries out the activity and how the Council then ensures that such discharge is legally correct.

FROM OUR ENGAGEMENT NOW AND PREVIOUSLY WITH MEMBERS:

MEMBERS' VIEWS

Some members had a better understanding of some services than others. Some of the services were hardly known to some members. There are some really strong thoughts, opinions, perceptions etc around some of the services notably Planning - a large part of the discussion time was anecdotal stuff but, like all the services that were discussed, there is an absolutely clear desire that services are seen to be, and actually are, supportive - for those

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[2] Business Model Generation – A Handbook for Visionaries, Game Changers, and Challengers - Alexander Osterwalder and Yves Pigneur

who want to just get on a do things, right through to those who want to develop, innovate and grow.

Periodic, timely and thorough review of all services is essential.

A greater understanding of the cost of services and what was delivered for that cost was needed.

Making decisions around stopping, doing less, doing more, doing differently etc is going to be difficult without the right information.

Further clarity and transparency is needed around the good work that exists but is less visible e.g. Regeneration.

A better understanding of what services like Environmental Protection, Trading Standards etc actually do to prevent harm or protect business, is needed. How much activity is preventative; how much reactive? Do we do too much? What actually are the consequences of doing less? Could we buy services in when we need them? Be clearer about the core purpose and redesign the service accordingly – once a specification has been produced then the options for delivery can be better explored.

Transparency again emerged as needing to be improved particularly around enforcement.

The 'support' theme continued around the activities of economic development and the 'regulatory' services. Taking customers by the hand and through the often daunting landscape of pigeon holes to get them the best advice and help to set up or develop (e.g. a one-stop shop approach). One stop shop to support business growth (small to large) – this is more than just a sign posting service it's also about potentially having a specific team (not just council) that focuses on services and advice centred on business development and the business customer segment ; from market fairs to business rates to planning etc?

Planning to be more explicitly focussed on actively supporting and encouraging innovative ideas for driving an improved economy and supporting the vulnerable people issues – e.g. so enabling more families to convert their homes so they can care for their elderly – with this level of prioritisation can we reduce the throughput for planning by at least 25% and if so what would be the consequences?

There was a clear understanding (again, Planning as an example) around the obvious and also the often less obvious ways that services contribute to the vulnerable persons' agenda. It sometimes needs to be more focussed, and better prioritised, though.

The importance of Housing services was recognised, not just in the context of vulnerable people but the part it plays across all priority areas. Its linkages with other parts of the organisation and partners are not always understood.