Dear Member

END TO END SERVICE REVIEWS TASK GROUP – 22 SEPTEMBER 2010

A meeting of the End to End Service Reviews Task Group will be held at 5.30pm on Wednesday 22 September 2010 in Committee Room 2, the Town Hall, Rugby.

Carol Bradford
Head of Democratic and Legal Services

AGENDA

PART 1 – PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 March 2010.
2. Apologies – to receive apologies for absence from the meeting.
3. Declarations of Interest.
   To receive declarations of –
   (a) personal interests as defined by the Council’s Code of Conduct for Councillors;
   (b) prejudicial interests as defined by the Council’s Code of Conduct for Councillors; and
   (c) notice under Section 106 Local Government Finance Act 1992 – non-payment of Community Charge or Council Tax.
4. Finalising of the review report (attached) with particular reference to:
   • Common themes and how they could be adopted across the council
   • Ways in which members’ understanding of systems thinking could be improved
• Other conclusions from the review
• Action plan for implementation of the recommendations
• Recommendations to Cabinet

Any additional papers for this meeting can be accessed here via the website.

Membership of the Task Group:

Councillors Mrs Avis, Butlin, Cranham, Mahoney, Mrs O’Rourke and Spiers.

If you have any general queries with regard to this agenda please contact Elizabeth Routledge, Democratic Services Officer (01788 533522 or e-mail Elizabeth.routledge@rugby.gov.uk). Any specific queries concerning reports should be directed to the Scrutiny Unit (01788 533591 or e-mail Scrutiny@rugby.gov.uk)

If you wish to attend the meeting and have any special requirements for access please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.
A REVIEW OF END-TO-END SERVICE REVIEWS AND SYSTEMS THINKING

Draft report for discussion at Task Group meeting on 22 September 2010
CONTENTS

To be added
The task group consisted of Councillors:
Maggie O’Rourke (Chairman)
Tina Avis
Peter Butlin
Tom Mahoney
Ian Spiers
David Cranham

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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Elizabeth Routledge
Democratic Services Officer
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e-mail: elizabeth.routledge@rugby.gov.uk

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The task group thanks the following for their contribution to this review:

Sean Kennedy Change Officer
Chryssa Burdett Council Tax Manager
Debbie McCarthy Customer & Information Services Operations Manager
Dave Wortley Benefits Manager
Adam Lenton Benefits Technical Officer
Simon Haile Property Maintenance Team Leader
Nick Freer Development & Enforcement Manager
Karen McCulloch Principal Planning Officer
Owain Williams Senior Planning Officer

The group is particularly appreciative of the help given by Council Tax and Customer Services staff.

CHAIRMAN’S FOREWORD

To be added
1. RECOMMENDATIONS

The Task Group proposes the following recommendations *(To be agreed on 22 September)*:

These are grouped according to how quickly they should be implemented (S = in the short term, M = medium term, L = long term, i.e. about year or more) Recommendations are listed in order of priority within each category.

**IMPROVEMENTS THAT COULD BE MADE QUICKLY AND AT LOW COST**

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## Significant Proposals that Will Require Commitment of Time or Financial Resources

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Of the above, the following will involve modifications of existing policies and procedures.

### 1.1 Alignment with the Corporate Strategy and the Local Area Agreement (LAA)

The review relates to the corporate priority 5:

Enable the delivery of excellent VFM services in line with our corporate plans.
2. OBJECTIVES

The review was placed in the work programme following a suggestion by a member at the March 2009 work programme workshop.

The one page strategy (or scoping document) was agreed at the first meeting of the task group on 22 February 2010 as follows:

**What is the broad topic area?** End-to-end service reviews and systems thinking

**What is the specific topic area?** Reviews carried out and in progress

**What is the ambition of the review?** The improvement of services to the customer throughout the council through the routine application of common themes derived from the end-to-end service reviews.

**What are the measures of success of the review?** We will have carried out an analysis of the reviews; some members of the task group will have participated directly in real review work. An initiative will have been put in place to raise members’ understanding of systems thinking.

**How well do we perform at the moment?** Comprehensive reviews of development control and benefits are still in progress, and a review of housing repairs is in the ‘plan’ stage. These reviews have been carried out by officers with the guidance of a consultant. Services need to learn to apply systems thinking principles in their everyday work without the use of consultants.

**Who shall we consult about the current service and how we can improve it?** This will largely be an inward-looking review. However, members should seek evidence that customer satisfaction has improved as a result of end-to-end service reviews.

**Potential consultees and witnesses** – Participants in reviews

**Can we learn from other Councils?** None identified

**Are there any learning and development requirements for members?** Members will need to learn the fundamentals of systems thinking. They will do this largely by questioning and listening to the Benefits Manager, Development Control Manager and Deputy Chief Executive. Other needs and learning methods may be identified. It is intended that the learning from the review should also be transferred to members in general to improve their understanding of end-to-end service reviews.

**What other help do we need?** Some of the group members will need become full participants in a systems thinking review for several days so will need the help of the review team in question to do this.

**How long should it take?** Four months

**What will be the outcome?** An understanding of how common themes may be applied by services and a proposal for improving members’ understanding of systems thinking.
3. METHODOLOGY

A large part of the work of the review was to develop an understanding of the concepts behind systems thinking and to understand what an end-to-end service review entails.

This process was divided into four parts:

1. Lecture-style presentation
2. Account of reviews by the managers of services that are doing end-to-end reviews
3. Direct experience of carrying out of the ‘check’ stage of a review
4. Identifying common themes between the principles arrived at through the group’s check stage with those adopted by the three reviews currently in progress.

3.1 Lecture-style presentation

Sean Kennedy – Change Officer of the Business Improvement Team – gave a presentation on the fundamentals of systems thinking. The slides from this presentation are attached at Appendix 1 but two key messages that governed the methodology of the review are reproduced below

Thinking – System – Performance

A core principle of systems thinking is that the way in which an organisation thinks ultimately governs how the organisation performs:

Thinking

Management thinking and assumptions about the work…

System

drives the design of our processes and procedures…

Performance

which in turn affects performance

Different approaches to change result from different styles of thinking: there is a need for a ‘normative’ approach where informed choices are made by developing
understanding through doing, as opposed to being forced to take a particular course of action or being persuaded that a course of action is the rational choice.

Check – Plan – Do

Reviews are carried out using the ‘check-plan-do’ cycle.

Six-stage model for the ‘check’ stage:

3.2 Account of reviews by the managers of services that are doing end-to-end reviews

The following managers gave accounts of the reviews being carried out in their services.

Simon Haile, Property Maintenance Team Leader  
Dave Wortley, Benefits Manager  
Nick Freer, Development and Enforcement Manager

A summary of these accounts is attached at Appendix 2.

3.3 Direct experience of carrying out of the ‘check’ stage of a review

Over the course of three meetings, including 1½ days of practical work, the group carried out check work in Council Tax. It was only through doing check in a real service that the group members could gain a full understanding of the power of the process. Council Tax was chosen because it is the service that has not done an end-to-end service review that has most transactions with the public.

The stages of check work referred to below are documented at Appendix 3.

The group discussed the purpose of the service in customer terms.
Members then identified demand by listening to calls coming into the contact centre and by observing transactions with customers at reception. This provided illustrations of the difference between:

- **failure demand** – which is unproductive and is the result of a system’s failure to address the needs of the customer; and
- **value demand** – which is productive and consistent with the purpose of the system

The group members then split up and followed the flow of work with staff of the Council Tax Unit, Professional Support Team and Customer Services.

Having observed the demand, the group was in a position to identify what matters to the customer.

Using evidence gathered group members drew a diagram of the flow. From this, the group separated waste in the system from value work. Waste may be defined as any activity that does not contribute to the achievement of the purpose.

The next stage was to identify the system conditions and then the thinking that created these system conditions.

The check was necessarily carried out over a much shorter period and in far less detail than would have been the case in an actual review. The findings were valid for the purpose of the review, but they should not be used to make judgments on the council tax service. For example, the listing of waste might lead one to assume that the service is underperforming, when – using the criteria under which most services are currently operating – it is a service that is regarded as performing well, so blame should not be attached to anyone.

The group then drew up a set of principles for good systems thinking that would help eliminate the system conditions that create waste. These are attached at Appendix 4, along with the principles adopted by the three reviews currently in progress. The purpose of this is to identify common themes that may be adopted across the council.

### 4. FINDINGS

The 22 September meeting will do the following:

- Consider how common themes could be adopted across the council
- Consider ways in which members’ understanding of systems thinking could be improved
- Draw up recommendations to Cabinet
- Draft an action plan for implementation of the recommendations
4. CONCLUSIONS

To be amended and added to at 22 September meeting

The review drew the following conclusions from the evidence that it gathered:

End-to-end service reviews must be carried out by the officers who do the work. However, members have a legitimate role in articulating public demand for improvement and thereby identifying the services that should be reviewed.

Members may also have a role in validating purpose at the beginning of the check process.

Experience from the existing reviews suggests that keeping members informed of progress during reviews improves trust and understanding on the part of members, and will help to reinforce the customer focus of the reviews. This could be done by means of occasional reports to the Corporate Performance Committee.

The Council has adopted systems thinking to improve performance. However, members and many officers are still using traditional performance indicators (PIs) to measure performance. The experience of end-to-end service reviews is that not only are such indicators usually of little use but they can actually damage performance.

New means of measures need to be adopted to quantify performance in terms of the satisfaction of customer purpose.
Appendix 1

[Sean’s February presentation slides will be inserted here but they are now attached as a separate file]
Appendix 2

Evidence submitted by managers of services that are carrying out end-to-end reviews

Simon Haile, Property Maintenance Team Leader – Housing Repairs Review

- Over a year, an average of 43 calls per day were being received, 65% of which were failure calls.
- The average period for responding to a demand was 59 days, when measured from the customer’s point of view, with anything up to a range of 551 days statistically ‘normal’.
- 70% of jobs were fixed first time. The average period for jobs not fixed first time was 153 days.
- The flow process had revealed hand-offs, batching, rework and duplication as impeding the 3 value steps of:
  - Customer wants a repair doing
  - Demand is diagnosed
  - Repair is carried out
- The service was target driven and subject to functional splits which did not enhance performance.
- The service had moved into ‘plan’ stage on 25 January 2010 and was experimenting in one particular patch. So far approximately 75 demands had been handled in that patch.
- It was important to acknowledge that housing repairs were not ‘one size fits all’.
- It was essential to take on board contractors with the right skills, tools, parts and mind set in order for the service to succeed.
- The use of a handyman had been trialled to deal with small reactive jobs. It was felt that it was a waste of time and resources to use a highly skilled person for a task requiring fewer skills.
- Equally important was the need to speak to tenants directly so that the required repairs could be diagnosed properly.
- Work was in progress with IT to build up a new system to cope with the service’s demands. At the moment, only a basic Excel spreadsheet was in use.

Dave Wortley, Benefits Manager – Housing Benefits Review

The main driver for undertaking a systems thinking review of the Benefits Team had been the increase in caseload as a result of the recession. The team had historically been a good performer in terms of meeting government targets but, with the increase in caseload, had slipped backwards.

It had been quickly identified that there were several issues that could be addressed:

- procedures were aimed at meeting targets and were not designed to help customers
- there were functional splits across council teams - the use of Customer Services to provide the face to face contact and Benefits Team being the backroom
A lot of time was spent dealing with contact that we did not want - customers chasing up progress, customers not understanding letters that they received or what they needed to do.

A series of experiments had been conducted which aimed to do things in a different way:

- replacing the standard "one size fits all" form with a series of different forms aimed at different customer groups
- using benefits officers to provide face to face contact with customers and therefore able to take ownership of the case without handing it off to someone else
- giving benefits officers the authority and training to make all decisions required in support of a benefits claim

At each stage officers would be talking to customers to find out why they were contacting the office and to see what was going well and what did not work. Capturing this learning and feedback was crucial to continuing improvement.

It was found from doing things in a different way that officers could speed up the processing of a claim.

It was also found that the current structure of the team was getting in the way of what was trying to be achieved, and therefore it was decided to move to a new structure. Roles had been made more generic, this would increase flexibility in moving resources around as required.

Officers were looking to recruit to the new posts created and then to ensure that all staff were trained to enable them to deliver the service.

**Nick Freer, Development and Enforcement Manager – Development Control Review**

Planning Services’ end-to-end review had started in autumn 2008. By the end of the year, the existing systems had been audited, revealing a 40% failure demand.

- The flow stage had identified hand-offs which indicated that even simple processes involved taking unnecessary steps.
- Check had been completed by the beginning of 2009.
- The service’s purpose had been established and it was felt that it shouldn’t be driven by NIs.
- The average period for the end-to-end procedure for processing planning applications had been approximately 180 days. In order to improve on this turnaround time, it had been necessary to simplify the whole process.
- Having started with a multi-disciplinary team, the service had gradually moved towards working in the new way and it had been possible to reduce the end-to-end time down to an average of 60 days. Even the service’s critics had commented on the improved level of service since the start of the new process. As an illustration of this point, only one complaint on the length of time taken to process applications had been received in the last 16 months.
Since December 2009, the service had started to move fast towards the new system of working:
- Planners took ownership of demands received from day one, in effect, rendering the Technical Admin Team redundant
- Planners were more accessible to members of the public and would operate on a 9 – 5 basis
- As a result of the above, planners were more customer-focused and the service had developed a culture of continuous improvement.
Appendix 3

Task group’s observations on waste, thinking and system conditions

Warning notice: These observations were made in respect of a particular council service (Council Tax) as a means of introducing task group members to the methodology of systems thinking. The identity of the service is irrelevant as the purpose was for the members to learn from doing check work and not to carry out an actual review. The work was done less thoroughly and more quickly than would be the case in a real review and should not be regarded as a judgment on the service. In fact, the task group is grateful to Council Tax for being a helpful and welcoming host. Evidence from the check stage of reviews already carried out suggests that the findings are not unique to the service being examined.

What is the purpose?

The group defined the purpose of the service – from the point of view of the customer as:

To pay the right amount of council tax in the right timeframe

What matters? (Identified during observation of demand)

1. Customers understanding communications from the council
2. Customers getting help in dealing with problems arising from matters such as death or illness of relatives and complications with former partners
3. Eliminating delay
4. Dealing with one person
5. Privacy
6. Interaction between services

Waste identified by the task group

This list was derived from: (a) observations of failure demand from customers; and (b) an analysis of the flow of work, dividing activities into value work and waste.

Paper backup in case of Northgate crashing

Computer system freezing slows input

Inability to deal with third party enquiries
Going round in a loop
Automatic letters generate queries
Forms are not returned
Incorrect input from form or form incomplete
Contradictory information from different routes
Multiple visits
Forms can need to go in and out of the Professional Support Team twice for scanning and rescanning
Contact centre copies information off Northgate onto and email to Council Tax, who in turn copy it onto IBS revenues and benefits system.
Enquiries about banding
Enquiries as a result of not understanding bill
Two or more bills to one address
Billing errors
Incompatible IT systems

**System conditions**

Unreliable paperless system
Data protection and privacy
Traditional working practices
Demarcation and silo working
Automatic letters
Forms are service-friendly and not customer-friendly
Multiple visits to empty properties
Incompatible IT systems
**Thinking identified by the task group**

We are looking for a quick, cheap fix

We create IT systems without really knowing what we want

We think IT will solve all our problems

It was always done that way

We are driven by our own codes of practice

We think hierarchically

We think it’s cheaper to have just one scanner, fax machine etc

We seek economies of scale

Let the important, valuable staff do the important work and get cheaper staff to do the ‘menial’ work

We think we need to be overly careful with regard to data protection and privacy as it could get us into trouble

We think automation will save time and money but it’s not at all flexible

We don’t think from a customer perspective. We think the system we have is customer-focused but it is actually service-focused

We think customers will swindle us

We make assumptions and think they are the right thing to do
### Appendix 4

**Principles – identification of common themes**  
**Draft for consideration by task group on 22 September 2010**

Each common theme is grouped within a bold rectangle

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<th>Development Control</th>
<th>Housing Repairs</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Primacy of the customer</strong></td>
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<td>Keep customers informed during the process (when necessary)</td>
<td>Work in equal partnerships with contractors to help us meet the tenants’ purpose</td>
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<td>A solution that works for the customer is better than a quick cheap fix</td>
<td>Do what matters to the customer.</td>
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<td>Respond to individual tenants’ differing needs</td>
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<td>If it doesn’t work for the customer, change it</td>
<td>Make the system flexible so that the customers are treated as individuals.</td>
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<td>Do what is right for the property</td>
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<td>The customer is what we’re here for</td>
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<td>Ensure information given by customers is accurate and sufficient for purpose</td>
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<td>Seek to answer demand at first contact</td>
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<td>Minimise number of appeals through further negotiation</td>
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<td>Help customers to get it right first time</td>
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<td>Task Group</td>
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<td>Customers should be able to choose how to access service</td>
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**Alignment with purpose (in customer terms)**

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<th>Budgets and National Indicators are secondary to our purpose, and should not be used for decision making.</th>
<th>Think about government advice – what is best for us?</th>
<th>We won’t break the law</th>
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<td>Performance should be measured by the purpose.</td>
<td>Priorities should be based on purpose</td>
<td>Don’t put the reputation of the council at risk</td>
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<td>Workload should be based on ‘pull’ and not on ‘push’</td>
<td>Understand and decide for ourselves what we need before we get it and don’t be driven by time</td>
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<td>Only do the ‘value’ work</td>
<td>Only do value work (challenge any waste)</td>
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<td>Get the best tools and resources to achieve purpose (within realistic costs)</td>
<td>Use principles rather than policies</td>
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<td>Focus on ensuring development is acceptable (achieving our purpose)</td>
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<td>Councillors/committee should ‘focus’ on achieving purpose</td>
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<td>Workflow to be ‘100% clean’ (when passing form one person to another)</td>
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**System review and correction**

- The process will be stopped if there is a system flaw.
- Work as a team to fix the system using…

  ![Diagram](image)

  - Check
  - Do
  - Plan

  **Purpose**
  **Measures**
  **Method**

- Changes and decisions about work should be based on fact and knowledge
- Understand causes of variation and improve consistency
- Look at the system for the cause of failure
- If we see something wrong, stop and change
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<td>Work consistently from a set of principles – not 'set in stone' procedures – and review.</td>
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**Ownership**

- Make decisions when you can and pull support when required
- Pull or provide support or expertise based on demand (when necessary)
- Only use an expert when the jobs need it
- Measures are made by those who 'do' work
- Eliminate re-work and re-checking. Staff to be responsible to manage their own workload.
- Minimise checks (of our work)
- Stop checking when confident in the system

- The assessor should take ownership of the claim from "end to end", thus stopping avoidable hand offs.
- Minimise handoffs
- Use minimal handoffs to maintain ownership

**Information technology**

- IT should be adapted to fit the task and not the task adapted to fit IT
- Make the IT systems work for us, not us working around them.
- IT should help the process and not lead it
- We only use IT to improve the process
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<td>System design – other</td>
<td>The system should be geared to ensure benefit is correct first time.</td>
<td>No errors</td>
<td>Design the system to make sure things don’t go wrong</td>
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<td>Learning from mistakes</td>
<td>Keep the process simple and easy to understand</td>
<td>Do work as you get it</td>
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<td>A mistake is a learning opportunity</td>
<td>Make decisions based on our data – learn from our mistakes, not from other’s successes.</td>
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<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Ensure council gives accurate information</td>
<td>Don’t assume cheaper is better</td>
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<td>Do not assume it works – check that it works</td>
<td>Officers’ planning decisions must be consistent</td>
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<td>Do not impose time limits for determination of applications</td>
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<td>Do one thing at a time</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Avoid unnecessary duplication</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>