CUSTOMER SERVICE RECEPTION TASK GROUP – 4TH OCTOBER 2010

A meeting of the Customer Service Reception Task Group will be held at 5.30 pm on Monday 4th October 2010 in Committee Room 1 at the Town Hall, Rugby.

Andrew Gabbitas
Executive Director

A G E N D A

PART 1 – PUBLIC BUSINESS

1. Appointment of Chairman - to appoint a Chairman of the Task Group for the 2010/11 municipal year.

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.

Note: Members are reminded that they should declare the existence and nature of their personal interests at the commencement of the meeting (or as soon as the interest becomes apparent). If that interest is a prejudicial interest, the Member must withdraw from the room unless one of the exceptions applies.

Membership of Warwickshire County Council or any Parish Council is classed as a personal interest under the Code of Conduct. A Member does not need to declare this interest unless the Member chooses to speak on a matter relating to their membership. If the Member does not wish to speak on the matter, the Member may still vote on the matter without making a declaration.
4. Introductory briefing from Head of Customer and Information Services and Customer and Information Services Manager – see briefing paper attached.


6. Programme of Work and Dates of Future Meetings – please bring your diaries to the meeting.

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

**Membership of the Task Group:**

Councillors Mrs Avis, Mrs Bragg, Butlin, Lewis, Mistry, Srivastava and Helen Walton.

*If you have any general queries with regard to this agenda please contact Claire Waleczek, Democratic Services Officer (01788 533524 or e-mail claire.waleczek@rugby.gov.uk). Any specific queries concerning reports should be directed to the listed contact officer.*

*If you wish to attend the meeting and have any special requirements for access please contact the Democratic Services Officer named above.*
Agenda item 4

Customer Services Centre

Reception Refurbishment Project

1. Summary

This report gives an overview of the refurbishment project, including what changes have been made to the Customer Service Reception area, the cost of these changes, the benefits achieved and initial indications of customer satisfaction.

2. Background

In the summer of 2008 a proposal was put forward to develop a One Stop Shop in the Borough’s main library situated in the Art Gallery and Museum building in the town centre of Rugby. This was a Warwickshire Direct Partnership initiative and a working party, with representatives from both the Borough and County Council, was formed to look at shared service provision, security arrangements and budgets.

In March 2009, as a result of the recession and the Council’s inability to sell the Lawns and Retreat buildings, a decision was taken not to continue with the plan to develop the library based One Stop Shop and alternatively to refurbish the Town Hall Reception area to a standard that would meet the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work and Disability Discrimination Acts. In order to facilitate a complete transformation of the Reception area and to meet the requirements of the legislation £142,000 was allocated to the project which included a contribution of £20,000 from Warwickshire County Council.

An internal user group was formed with representatives from across the Council and the remit of this group was to agree design layouts and any changes in procedure that would be required to make the transition a success. In addition, a consultation exercise was undertaken with customers using the reception area and the Rugby Disability Forum, the Tenants Association, Citizens Advice Bureau and Money Advice Service were also consulted on the proposed redesign.

In October 2009 actual building works commenced and these were completed in April 2010. During this time, the Reception area remained open to the public and disruption to services was kept to a minimum.

3. Project outcomes

As a result of the project the following outcomes were achieved:

- The main reception area now has a hearing loop facility at Meet and Greet and a portable hearing loop, available for use in the customer booths, to improve access to services for the deaf or hard of hearing.
• Low level reception desks enable better physical access for all customers, particularly wheelchair users.
• DDA compliant self service terminals situated in private booths enable customers to access our Website and online services.
• A separate terminal allows customers to undertake land searches.
• An automated telephone service enables customers to make payments and access the new Uchoose service.
• Individual soundproofed booths facilitate private discussions with customers.
• Plasma screens in the reception area and lobby provide customers with information about services and the use of the Council Chamber and Committee rooms.
• High level lighting and improved colour coded signage incorporating Braille improves access to services for the partially sighted.
• Panic alarms in customer booths and CCTV covering the whole of the reception area and 3 interview rooms ensure staff safety.
• A screened interview room ensures staff safety when dealing with customers who have been identified as potentially violent and a PACE compliant interview room enables interviews under caution to be undertaken.
• New half hour fire retardant sliding doors, fitted in the interior lobby area, ensure safety for all.

4. Ongoing Partnership working

As part of the commitment to the Warwickshire Direct Partnership all signage includes the WDP logo with the intention being to deliver County Council and other partner services from within the Town Hall. In fact, training for Customer Service Advisors commenced on 23 September 2010 with the intention being to deliver the County Council services listed below and a programme of further services being considered:

• Highways
• Blue Badge
• Street Lighting
• Schools (admission/free school meals)

We will also continue to work with organisations such as the Citizens Advice Bureau, the Money Advice Service and the Police in order to identify shared service opportunities.

5. Customers accessing services via the Reception area

Looking at the number of customers who accessed services before the refurbishment and more recent numbers there are no significant changes.
Customer numbers are fairly constant and, on average, 6,000 customers per month come into the reception area. The busiest days are Mondays and Tuesdays when an average of 330 customers visit, Wednesdays and Fridays are next with an average of 260 customers and Thursday is the quietest day when an average of 220 customers visit.

6. What services are they accessing and who is dealing with them?

8% of customers have a general enquiry and this is dealt with by Meet & Greet staff

8% of customers have an appointment or a meeting arrangement and, again, this is dealt with by Meet & Greet staff

35% of customers have a resources enquiry (Benefits, Council Tax and non-domestic rates). Benefits and non-domestic rates enquiries are dealt with by officers from those services. Council Tax enquiries are usually dealt with by Customer Service Advisors in the first instance.

21% of customers have a housing enquiry (housing needs & homelessness).

Housing needs enquiries are usually dealt with by a Customer Service Advisor in the first instance but Homelessness is referred to an appropriate duty officer.

28% of customers have enquiries about a range of other services all of which are dealt with by a Customer Services Advisor in the first instance.

All customers are received by a Meet & Greet Advisor and then, on an average day, 50 general enquiries and visitor appointments are dealt with by Meet & Greet staff and there are usually 100 Customer Service Advisor appointments.
7. Customer Feedback

Initial feedback from customers has been extremely positive with customers expressing a preference for the new layout of the area and the privacy of the booths.

A small sample of customers were spoken to at random during July just to get an overview of why they visit and how often, basically to see if there were any trends. At the same time, customers were asked whether the reception refurbishment had made any real difference to the service.

These are the results:

How often do you visit the Council?

![Bar chart showing the frequency of visits to the Council.](chart1)

What day do you usually come?

![Bar chart showing the day of the week customers usually visit.](chart2)
What have you come to do today?

![Bar chart showing frequency of different types of visits.]

- Report a repair
- Hand keys back
- Housing issue
- Benefits enquiry
- Planning application
- Bus pass forms
- Licensing Enquiry
- Complaint

Have the improvements made any real difference to the service you now receive?

![Pie chart showing responses to the question.]

- More welcoming
- More customer friendly
- Better system/shorter waiting times
- More privacy
- No improvement
- n/a

*
n/a – customer had not visited the reception area prior to the refurbishment

In addition, from 1 July customers have been able to provide feedback on our face to face service via the GovMetric kiosk in the reception area. Here is the Customer Satisfaction data for July 2010:

**Channel Summary**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overall Rating</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
<th>Percentage of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>285</td>
<td>77%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Channel Breakdown**

**F2F**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service</th>
<th>Good (%)</th>
<th>Average (%)</th>
<th>Poor (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benefits</td>
<td>69 (79%)</td>
<td>10 (11%)</td>
<td>8 (9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Information</td>
<td>6 (66%)</td>
<td>1 (11%)</td>
<td>2 (22%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council Tax</td>
<td>52 (81%)</td>
<td>8 (12%)</td>
<td>4 (6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>Poor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------</td>
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<td>---------</td>
<td>-------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental Services</td>
<td>10 (58%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
<td>4 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Housing</td>
<td>99 (76%)</td>
<td>11 (8%)</td>
<td>20 (15%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licences</td>
<td>6 (85%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning &amp; Building Control</td>
<td>6 (85%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>1 (14%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Streets &amp; Parking</td>
<td>16 (72%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
<td>3 (13%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Planning</td>
<td>1 (100%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waste &amp; Recycling</td>
<td>2 (66%)</td>
<td>1 (33%)</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Services</td>
<td>18 (78%)</td>
<td>4 (17%)</td>
<td>1 (4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>285 (77%)</td>
<td>41 (11%)</td>
<td>44 (12%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. Conclusions

- All customers can access the services they need in a safe manner and at a convenient location.
- At the Town Hall, there are officers across all services to provide additional backup and support when dealing with customer enquiries.
- Customer feedback confirms that the improvements have made a real different to the service they now receive.
- The refurbishment project has enabled us to ensure that the Town Hall Reception area meets the requirements of the Health and Safety at Work and Disability Discrimination Acts.
- The data collected for this report and the review of the Task Group will help to identify opportunities for channel shift from face to face to telephone and website both of which are cheaper options.

Raj Chand: Head of Customer and Information Services
Debbie McCarthy: Customer and Information Services Manager (Operations)
September 2010
1. **Background to the review**

When this review was originally proposed (2008), it was to be a value for money review of the planned major capital project to create a one stop shop in the library building. In January 2009 Cabinet resolved to defer for two years the Rugby Plus project to create a one stop shop in the library, but to carry out basic works to improve the existing reception area.

In February 2009 the Corporate Performance Committee decided to proceed with a review of the new reception arrangements and agreed a one page strategy for a value for money scrutiny review of the refurbished Customer Service Reception at the Town Hall. The one page strategy is attached at appendix 1, but will require some updating.

This review was delayed until now due to delays in the refurbishment work and the departure of the Customer Services Manager and Head of Customer and Information Services. The new Customer Services Manager has now been in post for several months and the Acting Head of Customer and Information Services is confirmed in her role.

2. **One Page Strategy**

The draft one page strategy suggests a plan of work to gather and analyse evidence for this review. This should be regarded as a set of terms of reference. The task group should consider the one page strategy in line with the principles of ambitious scrutiny, and a handout reminding members of the principles of ambitious scrutiny and how they may be applied to the scoping of the review is attached at appendix 2.

It should be noted that in February 2009 when the Corporate Performance Committee agreed the one page strategy they took the view that “the member and officer time spent on the review should be proportionate to the benefits that will be gained from it (possibly 2-3 meetings in total)”. With this in mind, the task group will need to consider the extensiveness of consultation activity and evidence gathering that will be appropriate for the review.

If the group agree that a ‘light touch’ approach is sensible, it should be possible to conclude the review early in the new year to ensure that it is taken through its reporting stages before the end of the municipal year. This would mean
reporting to Corporate Performance Committee on 10 February 2011 and to Cabinet on 14 March 2011.

3. Value for Money

The Audit Commission framework for assessing value for money involves an assessment of:

- The cost of services and efficiency in delivering them
- The quality and impact of services provided
- The performance and delivery of our services
- Customer satisfaction with services.

The interim nature of the changes that have been made to the Customer Service reception area means that it will be very difficult to make an objective assessment of whether the costs involved represent value for money. Such an assessment would normally involve comparisons with similar projects and consideration of unit costs, which would be difficult to apply in this context.

It is suggested, therefore, that the group concentrates its efforts on considering the customer service benefits of the changes that have been made – have there been tangible improvements, and are there further benefits that could be delivered through refinements to the service model or small physical changes? The group might also seek to draw lessons from the refurbishment project itself that might benefit similar council projects in future.

Some key questions to be addressed by the review might include:

- What has been the impact on different customer groups?
- Have our service delivery standards improved?
- Do we understand the patterns of activity in the Customer Service reception and how does the service we offer reflect this?
- Is customer satisfaction improving?

4. Purpose of this meeting

The Head of Customer and Information Services and the Customer Services Manager have prepared a separate background paper which aims to brief the task group members on the main issues pertinent to the review, including what changes have been made to the Customer Service Reception, the cost of these changes, the benefits achieved and initial indications of customer satisfaction. They will present this information to members at the meeting.

Apart from electing a chairman, the key tasks for this first meeting of the task group will be to:
• receive a 'status position' briefing from officers

• review the one page strategy in the light of what is learned from the presentation

• agree a programme of work for the task group, timed to report to Corporate Performance Committee on 10 February 2010.

Debbie Dawson
Scrutiny Officer
September 2010
VALUE FOR MONEY REVIEW OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE RECEPTION AREA

ONE PAGE STRATEGY

What is the broad topic area?
Customer access to services – personal access

What is the specific topic area?
The Customer Service Centre reception area at the Town Hall

What is the ambition of the review?
To ensure that the reception service, after basic works to the reception area have been carried out, will provide value for money, having regard to both the visual and service delivery aspects for the likely short-term arrangements.

What are the measures of success of the review?
We will base our investigations on the Audit Commission value for money assessment framework to demonstrate value in:

- the cost of services and efficiency in delivering them
- the quality and impact of services provided
- the performance and delivery of our services
- customer satisfaction with services

To contribute to this, industry standards on such factors as timeliness, politeness and effectiveness will be referred to.

How well do we perform at the moment?
Current feedback standards deal only with the first point of contact rather than the whole experience, and different services have different standards. The task group will therefore need to consider whether it is realistic to set a baseline.

Who shall we consult about the current service and how we can improve it?
User feedback data (methods to be considered by task group but should include a survey on impressions “before and after” – responses to be received by Scrutiny Unit.

Potential consultees, witnesses, experts and specialists
Local groups such as those representing tenants and disability

Other councils
Comparison with other Warwickshire districts if task group considers relevant. However, the standards are being applied across the County by the Warwickshire Direct Partnership, so there should be minimal variation.

What other help do we need?
Warwickshire Direct Partnership involvement

How long should it take?
It will be necessary to have experience of several months of operation. The improvements will be complete by June, and finalising of the review’s report in November 2009 would be realistic.

What will be the outcome?
Assurance that customer service at reception is using resources cost-effectively and efficiently for the benefit of customers and also of employees who work in the reception area.
1. **Aims**

The essential aims of ambitious scrutiny are to:

- add significant value to overview and scrutiny (O&S) and complement corporate decision making
- support excellence in policy development
- improve local services

Ambitious scrutiny is applied to scrutiny reviews carried out by small task groups and results in O&S becoming a respected improvement-planning arm of the council.

2. **What does ambitious scrutiny look and feel like?**

To understand the beneficial characteristics of ambitious scrutiny, it can be helpful to contrast them with their counterparts in an undeveloped scrutiny system. The undeveloped position gives an exaggerated picture to illustrate the difference: it is not intended to be an exact description of what it was like in Rugby before Raising the Bar.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Undeveloped scrutiny…</th>
<th>Ambitious scrutiny…</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Few members involved.</td>
<td>Many members involved in a range of reviews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shallow involvement extending to little more than reading agenda reports.</td>
<td>Action focus – with members actively exploring opportunities for improvement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus on administration or audit activities.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boring, flat.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Predominantly looking at the implications of decisions that have already been made.</td>
<td>Policy development focus – breaking new ground. In the course of this Scrutiny will consider whether existing policies and practices are working – and so perform part of scrutiny’s essential challenge role – but the main emphasis will be on making improvements rather than on unconstructive criticisms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undeveloped scrutiny…</td>
<td>Ambitious scrutiny…</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does not feel as if it is making a difference.</td>
<td>Ambitions are made clear at the start of each review, with tracking of achievements against these ambitions, both during and after the review.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frivolous input, individual members’ hobby horses, subjective or politically motivated sidetracking or ganging up.</td>
<td>Work firmly based on council priorities and key aims. Review work evidence-based and resolutely cross-party. No political points scoring. Politics still exists but it is saved for political arenas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuzzy focus; “mission creep”; reviews go on and on.</td>
<td>Laser-sharp focus; clear one page plan; realistically timed work plan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations take the form of a wish list.</td>
<td>Clear, realistic plan for change.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor relationships – blocking by those who are not committed.</td>
<td>All groups’ members are on board and involved. Partners and colleagues are engaged and they recognise the benefits of the scrutiny activity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No skills development.</td>
<td>Training linked to tasks when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No public awareness or input.</td>
<td>Consultation and community engagement – high public profile.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude of ambush and interrogation.</td>
<td>Partnership building, evidence gathering and cooperation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of resources.</td>
<td>Resources available for training, facilitation, benchmarking and officer support. Naturally, at a time when resources are in exceptionally short supply for everything, this has to relative.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

When any sign of undeveloped scrutiny manifests itself, the chairman or any other member of the task group or supporting officer should raise the matter with a view to getting back on track. Anyone raising such a matter should be thanked rather than criticised for doing so.

3. So how is ambitious scrutiny made to happen?

The ambitious scrutiny process has been likened to a funnel. The top of the funnel is where all the broad thinking happens. Then, over a period of time, the review’s focus narrows into a few specific areas where high impact improvements can be made. This is a quite different picture from a number of traditional reviews in the past that have started quite narrowly and then spread into other areas.

The stages, from the wide-ranging scoping activities down to the specific recommendations are described below.
Stage 1 – PREPARATION

This stage is not always distinct from scoping. In the case of the Community Engagement review, which was the first of the Raising the Bar reviews, it involved preparing the ground with a number of officers and key members, including Cabinet members, to ensure they understood the changes that were expected in the manner of carrying out Scrutiny.

In the normal course of events, the scrutiny officer will hold discussions with the members and officers, and people outside the council, who have interest or expertise in the topic. This will enable the scrutiny officer to get a feel for the main issues, where the most fruitful lines of enquiry lie, what type of outcomes would be of most benefit to the public, and where any blockages might occur.

At this stage, and throughout the review, the group must keep in touch with the need for the review to make improvements that will enhance the council’s ability to achieve its objectives and, specifically, the priorities in the Corporate Strategy.

This all means that the review is not starting with a blank sheet of paper. Under the new structure, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board is responsible for determining the scrutiny work programme, and the task group must work within its remit, together with any additional requirements laid down by the parent committee.

Stage 2 – SCOPING

Once the group knows what it is aiming at, it can start to narrow down the options and research, prepare for and carry out an exercise whereby the group’s thoughts and the outline review project plan are summarised on one sheet of paper known as the One Page Strategy.

The one page strategy should cover the following questions clearly and unequivocally:

- **What is the specific focus for the review?**
  - What is the topic?
  - This will have already have been determined by the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board as it is likely to be part of the work programme. The parent committee may also wish to stipulate parameters within which the review should work.

- **What is the ambition of the review?**
  - During the Raising the Bar programme, this was often referred to as the ‘unreasonable’ ambition. It is the ideal that the group would like to achieve, plus perhaps a bit more. The higher the bar is raised, the greater the achievement is likely to be. A review that just falls short of achieving an unreasonable ambition should not be condemned, whereas a review that comfortably
achieves an over-comfortable objective could be criticised for not maximising possible improvements.

- The ambition should refer to the end result: the improvement that will be made that the people of Rugby will notice. It should not confuse useful processes with the end product. For example, conducting a survey or measuring or reviewing something is not an ambition, even though these things may be necessary stages which engage the community in a positive way.

- **What are the measures of success of the review?**
  - This describes things that will have occurred that will indicate that the ambition has been achieved and that, at the same time, a high degree of rigour has been observed
  - Typically they will read: ‘We will have done or produced X, Y and Z’

- **How well do we perform at the moment?**
  - This will provide the baseline against which improvements may be judged
  - The measures to be used need to be clear and specific. In common with some of the other parts of the one page strategy, it may not be possible to finalise it at the first meeting.

- **Who shall we consult about the current position and about how we might improve it?**
  - This could be residents, businesses, expert witnesses, other councils and partners (create a subdivision for each)
  - Be specific about how this will happen
  - Use the Community Engagement Toolkit

- **Can we learn from other councils?**
  - This needs to be used with caution because no two councils are the same. Avoid ‘industrial tourism’ just for the sake of it and benchmarking that does not in reality mean anything. Be clear about what we want to find out and remember that organisations tend to defend the way they do things in order to justify their own choices.
  - However, copying processes and documentation of other councils which have done what we have already decided to do can save a lot of work.

- **What other help do we need? This could include:**
  - Co-option of an expert from another organisation
  - Training and facilitation support for meetings
  - Research help
  - Internal support from a particular service

The group should also at this stage consider whether it will need to spend any money and make a case for it to its parent committee.
• **How long should it take?**
  - Six months is common but it can vary – it is important not to let it drag on, so name a date for reporting
  - Stick to the agreed focus and avoid diversions that will prolong the job.

• **What will be the outcome?**
  - A report to the Executive showing how close we can get to our ambitious target, including recommended actions, and indication of costs, and benefits

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**Working further down the funnel**

After agreeing the one page strategy, the group goes through the stages described below. All members of the team (group members and officers) are fully engaged and are developing a good grounding in the subject. The group plans each stage and, at the end of each meeting, draws up an action plan listing all the actions that have been decided and which members or officers will be responsible for putting them into effect.

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**Stage 3 - AWARENESS RAISING FOR MEMBERS**

Members need to become 'just in time experts' in many areas so they need help to get 'up to speed' with the main issues pertinent to the review. They need to be briefed in areas such as:

(a) What do we already do in this area?
(b) How successful is it?
(c) What are people doing to try to improve things already?
(d) Are there any standards that we should be aiming at?
(e) How good do inspectors say we are in this area - and are we due an inspection in this area?

**Stage 4 – CONSULTATION AND BENCHMARKING**

The group members then need to get out and about talking to 'real people' who consume the service or who have a real interest in our getting things right. The group puts together its own consultation strategy. It also needs to consult with partners and others, such as experts in the field.

If we can find a reliable way of doing so, the group can set up a benchmark based on best practice elsewhere, but note the points of caution raised in the one page strategy advice.
Stage 5 – MEMBER DEVELOPMENT ISSUES

The group should consider what training or development will be needed to make the best of the consultation, other research and findings. This could include training in questioning and listening skills, chairing skills, project management, IT, benchmarking, survey researching. The aim here is that the development should link directly to the tasks in hand.

Training should only take place if it is genuinely needed. It need not necessarily mean buying formal training: it could be provided using in-house knowledge.

Stage 6 – PRE-RECOMMENDATION

Members will start to formulate ideas of how things can improve. It is helpful to get quality feedback on draft ideas before they become firm recommendations. This will ensure that the group does not 'shoot itself in the foot', 're-invent the wheel' or come up with ideas that have no hope of making it in the real world. The group therefore talks to people about its thoughts – including, for example Executive members, officers, and consultees. This is a transparent process; it is not in the interests of the review to spring recommendations on people without warning.

Stage 6 – CHANGE PLAN

When the group has some good ideas that it knows can work, these are incorporated into a change plan, which proves that the group has thought through the practicalities.

The group has now arrived at the narrow end of the funnel, where a few highly focused recommendations have been filtered and rigorously examined, and the group can predict with reasonable certainty that they will make a real beneficial difference.

Stage 7 – RECOMMENDATIONS

A set of recommendations will emerge from the processes detailed above. These recommendations will be concise and realistic and demonstrably able to deliver improvements. There should be no surprises by this point as the group will have been through a thorough process of consultation, challenging and testing. Partners and service users will also be likely to support the proposed changes because they will have been involved.

The task group chairman will present the recommendations in person to the parent committee, the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board and Cabinet.

December 2008