MINUTES OF CUSTOMER SERVICE RECEPTION TASK GROUP

24 JANUARY 2011

PRESENT:

Councillors Butlin (Chairman), Mrs Avis, Mrs Bragg, Lewis and Mistry.

Debbie McCarthy (Customer Services Manager), Debbie Dawson (Scrutiny Officer), Claire Waleczek (Democratic and Scrutiny Services Officer (Team Leader))

16. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 29th November 2010 were approved and signed by the Chairman.

11. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence from the meeting were received from Councillors Srivastava and Helen Walton.

12. BRIEFING PAPER

The Task Group considered the briefing paper (agenda item 4) and its draft interim report with proposed recommendations.

The Scrutiny Officer circulated at the meeting a draft Action Plan relating to the proposed recommendations.

The Task Group was informed about the changes in staffing levels within Customer Services as a result of the recent proposed redundancies. Two full time equivalent posts would be cut with effect from 31st March in the service area, with a further reduction of four full time equivalent posts by September 2011. The initial 2 post reduction would be achieved by staff taking a reduction in hours, rather than redundancies. There would be a transitional period leading up to September when discussions with ‘back office’ services would be held to reallocate services as necessary and in accordance with systems thinking principles. There is also an intention to bring support service assistants under the same management as the customer service team.

An Impact Assessment on the proposed changes was currently being undertaken and would be circulated to all members of the Task Group once completed. Opportunities would be maximised, using the data collected about peaks and troughs, to achieve a satisfactory level of service. Customer wait times were beginning to suffer as a result of some ongoing sickness issues, although indications were that a monthly target of 80% of customers seen within 10 minutes remained realistic. It was likely that the number of customer service advisers working in the reception area would be reduced from three to two in the longer term.

The Task Group was concerned that improvements made in the Customer Service area to achieve a good service level could be threatened. The reception service was particularly important as the first point of contact with the public.
The Customer Services Manager emphasised that the recommendations in the draft Action Plan were achievable despite the reduction in staffing levels.

The Task Group undertook a brief visit to the reception area to look at improvements already made as part of its review. These included changes to the seating arrangements, the installation of leaflet stands and a ‘please wait here’ sign being located near the Meet and Greet desk.

The Task Group considered the draft report and the draft Action Plan circulated by the Scrutiny Officer and agreed with the Customer Services Manager.

The paragraphs in the draft report relating to staffing levels and customer waiting times would be amended to reflect recent changes. Other minor amendments were noted within the conclusions of the report.

It was agreed that recommendations 1, 2 and 3 of the draft report be moved to the list of significant proposals which will require commitment of time or financial resources. Recommendation 12 would be deleted as the installation of Chip and Pin would alleviate some of the privacy issues relating to the location of the telephone adjacent to the meet and greet desk. The Task Group considered that recommendation 27 would be better placed in the list of improvements that could be made quickly and at low cost. The Task Group decided to include recommendations 28 and 29 as part of its proposals. No further recommendations were added following discussion of the potential additional recommendations highlighted in the draft report.

It was agreed that the Head of Customer and Information Services would be asked to set out a vision for how customer services will be delivered in view of the proposed staff reductions and service reorganisation.

The Group wished to record in the report that the original concept of developing a one stop shop in the Rugby Art Gallery and Museum building was no longer considered to be viable, and that the refurbishment is now a longer-term solution.

A revised draft report would be circulated to all members of the Task Group for their comments. The Chairman, in liaison with officers, would decide if a further meeting was required once discussions had been held with the Head of Customer and Information Services.

CHAIRMAN