

Warwickshire Direct - Customer Access



Achievements

1) Technology transformation:

Warwickshire Direct Partnership (WDP) project was one of the first 2 tier shared service Customer Relationship Management projects in the country. It attracted Government investment of £2 million. This combined with increased joint purchasing power meant we achieved significant savings on what we implemented, and facilities beyond any individual partners funding levels. The project initiated collaboration in procurement, contract management and joint technical support, with a model of different Councils leading on behalf of others in these key areas, all of which saved costs for WDP and have been adopted for other joint projects. The partnership won the National e-Government Shared Services award in 2006 and is one of the few successful partnerships and still operating from the e-Government period. The project engendered trust between managers in this area that have led to significant business and customer service benefits for all partners. The joint ICT and Network links implemented as part of the project has allowed;

Cross Council systems access to support the joint one stop shop arrangements between individual partners;
Co-located contact centres and telephony facilities where suitable;
Facilitated the sharing of ICT systems in other business areas, e.g. Payroll, Committee Administration;
Sharing of Data room space where co-located;
Negotiated new contract under full 'open book' model and saved a further £1 million in costs. Organisations like SOCITM (Society of Information Technology Management) are now touting this method as the way forward.

Way forward:

- 1.1) Options to explore hot desking across Councils looking at using network to extend WCC wifi into District offices;
- 1.2) Develop and test a model for business continuity and resilience;
- 1.3) Explore options for potential savings via aggregating Government Connect connections between partners, up to 50% of new £15k-£18k charge. Warwickshire are leading this for the region and if achievable joint network will be vital in providing District access on the back of this;
- 1.4) The shared network is the model for future Local Public Sector Network approach. Some of the leading projects in this area are only achieving the level of joining up of Council networks that we already have from the WDP work;
- 1.5) A shared ACD (automatic call distributor) project is underway which will save participating partners approximately £2.5k p.a. and provide the infrastructure for 1.2 (above).

2) Customer access – Contact Centres

A number of developments have been implemented by partners to improve and strengthen the service offering to customers via the most popular and highest volume telephony access channel. Both the partnership and technology provide a platform for sharing best practice processes, management information and documentation. Where it has been appropriate and suited both partners co-location of contact centres has taken place and further enhanced services that can be offered to customers under one roof or via the same number.

WCC (Shire Hall) and WDC co-location of contact centres freeing up space that can be used for other purposes.

The joint teams are being integrated and staff training is taking place to enable staff to take both district and county calls.

Shared switchboards have freed up some WDC resource time increased resilience and provides opportunities for shared training and procedures Alignment of some working practices and staff conditions to integrate the teams further

Rationalisation of telephone numbers

Way forward:

- 2.1) To continue integration of teams and services through co-location or virtual joined up contact centres
- 2.2) Further explore and implement common processes where opportunities arise using systems thinking
- 2.3) To introduce a joint model of customer satisfaction indicators and standards of service.

3) Customer Access – One Stop Shops

There have already been a number of successful developments around Warwickshire on the creation, merging, expanding and developing of one stop shops and face to face customer access channel. The Warwickshire Direct brand is well recognised across a number of sectors and has facilitated the joining up of service delivery across partners and other agencies. These developments have enhanced and strengthened the service offering to customers under one roof

Police services are now being offered from the Warwick One Stop Shop. Staff have received intensive training enabling them to deal with a multitude of enquiries ranging from road traffic collision reporting to receiving of counterfeit currency;

The Citizens Advice Bureau deliver surgeries in majority of the One Stop Shops across Warwickshire;

Safer Neighbourhood teams, Money advice, Back to work (DWP), Affordable warmth, Health and Wellbeing are all external agencies that attend the One Stop Shops to provide help, advice and services;

The Customer Relationship Management system has enabled the secure referral of “Tell us once” information around births and deaths.

Way Forward:

- 3.1) Development of a County wide customer service and care standard under the Warwickshire Direct brand delivering excellent customer services;
- 3.2) Development of a shared customer care training package to be rolled out via the Learning and Development Academy providing partners with savings and efficiencies on training and development and enhancing the customer experience;
- 3.3) Further plan of joint approaches to implement more leading edge developments such as packages of services built around key life events rather than specific services e.g. change of address, unemployment, disability, new to the area, birth, marriage, bereavement etc. This would also facilitate resilience in shared staffing arrangements and contingency planning. There is potential for savings as systems and process will be designed once and used many times;
- 3.4) Informing projects such as property rationalisation, one front door from a customer access perspective. Exploring best locations for service delivery to contribute to cross partner working.

4) Customer access Web

As mentioned in section 1 of this report the technology is in place and the infrastructure is being developed further to enable customer service transformation across the partnership. Councils have a responsibility to provide excellent services to the public and value for money to the taxpayer. The channels through which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with the authority (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means) are a critical part of public service provision and there is an ongoing impetus for them to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone. Whilst the web channel has been developed extensively across Warwickshire both on an individual and in some instances on a partnership basis there is still further work to be done to develop this cheaper channel of access. The Partnership is currently looking at ways of improving and developing the web access channel which has become even more crucial in the current financial climate. Rising internet use and customer expectations of accessing public services online present an ongoing opportunity for public service providers. Competent online services are easy and quick to use, available whenever customers need them and have a relatively low administrative burden. Managed well, online access to services is a very effective channel with considerable benefits for customers

Way forward:

- 4.1) Fully integrated end to end self service options for customers and encouraging channel shift where there is the propensity to do so;
- 4.2) Exploring other methods of customer communication and access i.e. Social media, instant messaging etc.;
- 4.3) Contributing to the 'Big Society' agenda by developing ways of releasing public sector information to enable and empower citizens.

5) Other Warwickshire Direct work streams

The partnership has a number of workstreams that are being progressed and either cut across all access channels or are essential to a particular channel moving customer access and services forward across Warwickshire. Some of these involve some partners, others may involve all partners depending on the position and direction of the respective organisations.

Other workstreams / projects :

A Customer Access Strategy has been in place across the WDP for a number of years, this is being reviewed and will be re-written in line with Government guidance and local information on customer profiles. The following areas will be part of the new Strategy which will provide longer term vision and direction on customer access around Warwickshire:

- 5.1) Tell us Once – Roll out of the national project across all partners, including DWP, Health and other organisations that form part of the life event process
- 5.2) Customer Profiling and channel shift - Understanding the profiles of our customers and using internal data/intelligence to plan effective delivery of services in the way customers would like to receive services. Customer insight is a powerful tool in being able to understand customer needs and expectations, and plan services and methods of delivery around the insight delivering both efficiencies and service improvements. Customer journey mapping also forms part of this work in order to identify where the failure and non value steps occur with a view to designing them out
- 5.3) Customer Insight – It is the intention of WDP to link the customer insight work to the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire sub regional working agenda at the Programme office level
- 5.4) Customer satisfaction and feedback – GovMetric is a customer satisfaction tool that captures satisfaction and feedback from key access channel. The system has gone live on various sites and will continue to be developed in order to consider service improvements both locally and county wide
- 5.5) Management of the Contracts - WDP has a number of contractual agreements for software and services the partnership continues to monitor performance and review the contracts as and when they are due.
- 5.6) Decentralisation and Localism – from big Government to Big Society, the Bill states that its about achieving our collective goals in ways that are more diverse, more local and more personal. The partnership will be considering the future agenda of how we work with social enterprises, charities, co-ops, community groups etc to empower, support and facilitate customer services and access collectively

6. Expanding Membership of the group (3rd sector, other public bodies)

Current membership includes Heads of Customer Services from WCC and the 5 Districts and Boroughs. This has been recently extended to the Police who have taken up a place on a need to attend basis depending on the agenda. However, the

Police continue to work with Warwickshire Direct Partners where appropriate in line with their own review and the direction of partners. The 'working together and 'Warwickshire Direct' brand is one that is recognised and well sought after in the Police services across Warwickshire and is seen as a vehicle to implement more joined up services. The public sector property rationalisation project being carried out across Warwickshire will provide a further work programme of joining service delivery and customer access up further. In terms of expanding the membership further the partnership will be exploring options in line with the Localism and Decentralisation Bill. The Health Authority could potentially become part of the partnership through implementation of the "Tell Us Once" project. Options for extending membership where it would be considered beneficial will continue to be explored. There is also an outstanding action to explore the benefits of inviting extending membership to Coventry and Solihull (CSW partnership) if this is seen as beneficial. Third sector involvement can be explored if there is a purpose and benefits as and when opportunities arise.