Report to Personnel Panel 8 April 2008

PROCESS IMPROVEMENT TEAM AND GIS/INFORMATION MANAGEMENT OFFICER

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor Giel
LEAD OFFICER: Head of Policy & Performance
REPORT AUTHOR: Hilary Mitchell

Summary and Recommendation:
The report defines the current position with regard to the Process Improvement Team and GIS/Information Management Officer.

Recommendation : The Personnel Panel is asked to note that the Process Improvement Team members and GIS/Information Management Officer have been added to the Council's establishment following agreement of the budget for 2008/9, which includes allocation for the staff costs.

INTRODUCTION

1.1 In November 2005 the Process Improvement Team was set up as part of the restructure of 2004/5. The team of three full-time equivalent posts was originally appointed on a temporary basis, however the employees' fixed term contracts have been renewed twice. This has resulted in the team members gaining certain employment protection rights.

1.2 In September 2006 the Executive agreed that a fixed term post should be created to support the Council's development and optimisation of existing GIS installations, and to help support the increasing requirement for information management.. The post has since been successively filled by two employees, the second of whom started work in September 2007.

1.3 This report explains that budget has been made available through the budget-making process for 2008/9 to continue to fund the posts. The posts should be added to the base budget and the posts therefore become permanent. The decision of the Resource Planning Working Group to recommend the budget to the Council was made on the basis of service review documents presented according to the budget-making process.

ARGUMENT

2.1 The Process Improvement team is part of the Performance Improvement section. Its remit, as described in 2005, was to support the Council to :
- focus on the customer and as a result deliver a better overall service
- release resource to areas of priority
- build capacity within the services
- learn from and apply best practice
- meet its Gershon targets

2.2 Over the intervening period the PIT has been associated with all the major Council projects in which changing the way in which work is done results in improved customer

service or efficiency. The Team's skills and working methods are available to help managers to find simpler and more cost effective ways of delivering services. Their support has included work on:

- issuing concessionary travel permits under a more complex scheme;
- improving the Council's Benefits service performance from bottom to top quartile and enhancing the customers' experience;
- developing automated systems for calculation of expenses and attendance.

Between August 2007 and February 2008 the PIT has led or significantly contributed to:

- the successful introduction of the new CRM, which is enabling quicker and more efficient contact with customers;
- the introduction of the Alternative Payments Arrangements, which will lead to efficiency savings in 2009/10;
- re-engineering the Planning applications process improving performance from bottom quartile in 2006/7 to top quartile in 2007/8
- introducing a rationalised approach to managing trade waste including better customer demand records

The required development of the public sector in terms of greater efficiency, better value for money and increased customer satisfaction is accelerating. Other local authorities are attempting to recruit similar teams to add expertise and guidance to re-engineering work, and the PIT is ideally placed to be able to help Copeland respond in this direction.

2.3 The Geographic Information System/Information Management Officer has corporate responsibilities relating to the development of the Council's various GIS systems and their integration with other information systems, including the Customer Relationship Management system, website, Planning and Land Charges systems, Local Land Property Gazetteer and Council Tax records. The post also supports Copeland Borough Council's links through the Cumbria Information Hub to the systems of other Cumbrian authorities.

2.4 The post-holder also has responsibilities for helping to develop the Council's capacity to manage information as a resource. This means helping an organisation to ensure that its information is maintained, stored safely and accessible within agreed legislation and protocols. The Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act require a higher standard of managing information held electronically and in paper records, for which the Council should be making faster progress. Beside compliance with legislation there is a raised expectation among the public that information, particularly personal data, will be handled more professionally.

CONCLUSIONS

The Personnel Panel, having responsibility for employee resource planning, is asked to note that the decisions of Executive and the Council with regard to the budget, have enabled continuing resources to be allocated to these priority areas.

FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

Budget decisions on these posts have already been taken.

7.   IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

Work on this development will achieve objectives in the Corporate Plan 2007/12 as shown below:

1.1.3	Further work and implementation leading to greater efficiencies in service delivery and greater local accountability
1.1.7	Undertake a review of organisational effectiveness and support improvements in achieving: o Value for money o Customer focus o Continuous improvement
2.2.9	Provide top quartile service in Development Control and Building Control
2.5.6	Service areas will improve delivery to meet internal and external customer needs
2.5.7	Service delivery to DWP performance standards
2.6.7	Develop and implement action plan to improve the quality of data collection systems and processes

List of Appendices :

Background Documents: Half yearly progress report from PIT March 2008.

List of Consultees: Cllr Giel, Corporate Team, Len Gleed