

Process Improvement Team Report

Introduction

The purpose of this report is to provide a summary of the work carried out by the Process Improvement Team (PIT) to date. The report describes the background to the team; the work carried out by the PIT since its inception; and the planned programme of work to November 2006 and beyond (if further funding is approved).

The Process Improvement Team has been in place since November 2005, within the Policy and Performance Department. The team has been working with a number of service areas within Copeland Borough Council on a range of improvement projects.

The original objectives defined for the 3FTE team were 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.

In the longer term this should lead to a culture which is open to change and embraces opportunities for improvement.

The initial funding for the PIT was approved for 12 months, with the intention that they should become self financing by generating savings through the identification and implementation of improvements within service areas.

Work to Date

A work programme was approved shortly after the team was set up, after consultation with a range of stakeholders including Corporate Team members, the IEG project manager and various service heads. The initial focus of the team was to support the achievement of Gershon targets.

The team was trained in and has used the SPRINT methodology in the execution of the initial projects. This is a business process re-engineering (BPR) methodology developed by Salford City Council, Salford University and Manchester Business School for use within the public sector; and provides a structured approach to the analysis and improvement of an organisation's systems and processes.

Over 30 projects were originally identified and the team has focussed on approximately 10 of these; ranging from small, short term activities which have realised immediate benefits; to complex, longer term projects. The latter have identified potential savings which could be realised, but have not been implemented to date. A summary of these projects and their potential or realised benefits are given in Annex 1 and 2.

In addition to its work in process improvement, the PI team has also expended considerable effort (approximately 50-60% of their resource) in supporting the implementation of two major systems:

- The upgrade to Seibel 7 within Customer Services, with the move of some waste management functions into Copeland Direct.
- The implementation of MVM within Planning, Building Control and Land Charges.

This work has included providing simple user guides, supporting training and facilitating workshops; and has been a necessary precursor to any process re-engineering (and the realisation of potential savings).

Future Work

The team carried out a review of its work with the key customer facing areas of the Council during May 2006, to check on the effectiveness of the work completed in the first six months and to identify where the team could support these departments going forward.

One of the outcomes from the review was a view that much of the team's resource during the first six months had been invested in complex projects which, while key to supporting the successful implementation of new systems, had used the majority of the team's resource. It was felt that, going forward, the team should also work on smaller, shorter term projects, which should provide 'quick wins' within the team's existing resource constraints. This should support the team being able to work more widely within the organisation, building on the good working relationships already developed.

This approach also allows the use of less complex improvement tools and techniques than the SPRINT process, and therefore encourages a more team based improvement approach. This enables personnel within service areas to gain knowledge of and to use simple improvement tools in their own areas. In the longer term this approach would support the shift towards a performance culture, where services could identify and work to make improvements within their own areas, facilitated by the PIT. An example of this new approach is within Revenues and Benefits, where a team from the department has worked to map the new benefit claim process and to identify improvement opportunities, some of which are now being piloted.

Annex 3 gives a summary of the planned projects and Annex 4 shows the current PIT project plan.

Funding

As noted previously, the PIT was initially funded for one year, with the view that it would become self-financing by generating savings. It has now been recognised that the improvements generated by the team may not be cashable – they may eliminate 3 days per month of activity within a role; or support the improvement of a Performance

Indicator (for example, enabling the time to process a new Benefits claim to be consistently achieved). Thus, while these are measurable improvements, they cannot be used directly to generate income to offset the cost of the PIT in the short term.

The team has been of value to the Council, both through the identification of efficiencies, and through their resource being used to support the implementation of key projects, such as MVM and the new Siebel 7 system within Copeland Direct.

It is therefore proposed that the PIT be funded for the period from November 2006 to the end of the financial year; and then for a subsequent year through the budget bid process (a budget bid has been submitted for 2007/08).

Annex 1 – Summary of Closed Projects

PROJECT TITLE (Ref)	DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENTS MADE	BENEFITS	EFFICIENCIES
Enforcement administration (2005/001)	Updating the existing processes for administration and reporting of enforcement activities.	A single spreadsheet providing a standard range of management information plus ad hoc reports. Using mail merge to produce of a range of standard letters.	Simplified and speedier enforcement administration. Reduction in time required to produce monthly management reports. Reduction in time to produce standard letters and improved accuracy.	Immediate efficiencies of 264 hrs pa have been gained (equivalent to £2000 pa. non cashable)
Mileage allowance calculator (2005/023)	Streamlining mileage payment process.	A revised and enhanced spreadsheet that automatically balances to the payroll system.	Reduction in pre and post processing of mileage data prior to input to the payroll system.	Immediate efficiencies of 168 hrs pa gained within the payroll department (equivalent to £1900 pa non cashable).
Absence management (2005/023)	To standardise the reporting of absence statistics across the organisation.	Standard spreadsheet in use across the organisation	Improved reporting across the organisation. Reduced effort in resolving queries and chasing up nil returns. Readily available absence statistics at departmental and organisational level, providing an effective management tool for absence control.	Immediate savings of 120 hrs pa gained within the payroll department (equivalent to £1350 pa non cashable).

PROJECT TITLE (Ref)	DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENTS MADE	BENEFITS	EFFICIENCIES
Sundry debtors (2005/011)	Review debt recovery process problems	Process formalised and roles of services departments clarified. Number of status codes increased to identify specific stage of debt recovery.	More timely and accurate information on debt status. Service units have more control over recovery process. Improved decision making to avoid incurring additional debt.	Not quantified.
Service tracking (2005/002)	To develop proposals for effective and consistent customer relationship management	A process model for handling customer contacts; both mediated (by Copeland Direct) or direct, based on a web-based approach was developed.	A uniform method for identifying and tracking a customer query or service request across the Council would improve the customer experience.	Dependant on final implementation - a technical solution that would allow implementation of the proposed process model is currently subject to investigation by the IT department.
Waste Management (2005/006)	To address detail process issues arising during user acceptance testing of BT Contact Central waste management system.	Supported the training of Copeland Direct staff; resolved process issues; and provided user guides.	Assisted Copeland Direct staff in go live. The user guides speeded up the learning curve in the initial stages prior to and following the go-live date.	Not quantifiable.
MVM – Phase 1 (2005/025)	Optimising the benefits from implementing the MVM system in Regeneration.	Facilitated project team workshops to clarify and resolve outstanding implementation issues User guides to assist staff in making the transition to MVM.	Structured approach to implementation, saving time and effort. Speeded up the learning curve in the initial stages following the go-live date in Development Control.	Not quantifiable.
Business Case (2005/029)	Update the process for the preparation of a business case for capital expenditure	Revised business case format.	Improved decision-making.	Not quantifiable

Annex 2 – Ongoing Projects

PROJECT TITLE (Ref)	DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT IDEAS	COST TO IMPLEMENT	POTENTIAL EFFICIENCIES (ANNUAL)	PAYBACK PERIOD (years)	IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALE	REMARKS
Clean Neighbourhood & Environment Act (2005/001)	Optimisation of processes to realise the benefits identified in the Chipside business case.	Web-based customer complaints Automated PCN / FPN processing Civica / Chipside interface Potential use of Allpay system Continuation of mail merge facility	£ 25,100	£ 14,100	2.2	6 months	These efficiencies will result in being able to operate the enforcement service within existing staffing levels. Operating costs of £5k per annum after first year.
MVM Ph2 – Planning (2005//025)	Optimisation of processes to realise the benefits from implementing MVM.	Do away with manual systems Provide remote working for Planning Officers Distribute information electronically Minimise hard copy Increased delegated decision making	£ 51,100	£ 19,000	6.1	12 months	Dependant on GIS officer being in place (Costs split equally with MVM Land charges)
MVM Ph3 - Building Control (2005/025)	Optimisation of processes to realise the benefits from implementing MVM.	Yet to be identified	£44,000	TBA	TBA	TBA	Cost of Northgate / Resolution software implementation split equally with MVM planning

PROJECT TITLE (Ref)	DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT IDEAS	COST TO IMPLEMENT	POTENTIAL EFFICIENCIES (ANNUAL)	PAYBACK PERIOD (years)	IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALE	REMARKS
MVM Ph4 - Land Charges (2005/025)	Optimisation of processes to realise the benefits from implementing MVM.	Do away with manual systems Undertake electronic trading with Con29 respondees. Self-service personal searches	£ 13,400	£ 15,800	0.8	12 months	(Costs split equally with MVM Planning)
Pest control (2005/005)	Provision of new pest control system to realise savings taken in the CBC restructure	Front end processing to Copeland Direct. Extension of Chipside system. Web-based booking & payments	£ 6,100	£ 2,3500	2.99	8 months	
One stop shop (2005/012)	To ensure that information is only given to the Council once and shared across all relevant service units.	To be identified.				TBA	Data Protection Act requirements confirmed. Should give improved customer service.
Benefits (2005/026)	To be able to process a new claim within 35 days.	Direct scanning of claims documents. Improved information to customers about information requirements. Aids to ensure correct information received first time to process claim.				TBA	Should reduce duplication of effort in scanning, assessment and Copeland Direct. Should support achievement of BVPI targets.

PROJECT TITLE (Ref)	DESCRIPTION	IMPROVEMENT IDEAS	COST TO IMPLEMENT	POTENTIAL EFFICIENCIES (ANNUAL)	PAYBACK PERIOD (years)	IMPLEMENTATION TIMESCALE	REMARKS
Waste Management (2005/006)	To optimise the interfaces between the front and back office functions.	To be identified.				TBA	Should improve customer service and reduce duplication of effort.
Cash Offices (2006/006)	Service review of cash office activities, the impact of the end of Copeland Homes SLA and options for the future					Depends on options chosen.	Report due to go to August BWP. Should support the identification of service efficiencies.

Annex 3 – Planned Projects

PROJECT TITLE (Ref)	DESCRIPTION	EXPECTED BENEFITS
Crematorium and Cemetery Management (2006/003)	There is currently an issue regarding how the crematorium front desk function is provided in having to cover for staff absence. In addition to this, there is a more fundamental issue in the fact that the service management and records are based on manual systems and paper. This project will look at the introduction of new processes and systems that will streamline the existing service.	It is expected that there will be a significant reduction in the administration support required to operate the service through greater customer self-service and the keeping of electronic records. It is also possible that there will be increased revenue arising from public access to cemetery records.
Just in Time Street Cleansing (2006/004)	Currently street cleansing and litterbin emptying is undertaken on a fixed rota basis or in reaction to a customer complaint. This fixed approach leads to a situation where certain areas are not cleaned adequately. The project will look at alternative methods of managing the street cleansing service based on adopting a team based just in time approach that will focus efforts where they are required.	This project will impact directly on BVPI 199 with the aim of achieving at least a 3% increase in performance. This would lead to an increased grant of £35k.
HR / Payroll integration (2006/008)	To rationalise the existing processes and information sets.	To improve the efficiency of the team and to reduce duplication of data.
Copeland Direct (2006/009)	Scope being discussed with Head of Service	Reduction in abandoned call rate and improved call times.

Annex 4 – PIT Project Plan



