NI 14 – Measuring Avoidable Contact, Phase 2

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor George Clements
LEAD OFFICER: Jane Salt, Head of Customer Services
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WHAT BENEFITS WILL THESE PROPOSALS BRING TO COPELAND
RESIDENTS

The improvement of service delivery across the Council. The potential to deliver
more without the need to increase costs.

WHY HAS THIS REPORT COME TO THE EXECUTIVE?
**(Eg Key Decision, Policy recommendation for Full Council, at request of
Council, etc.)**

Approval is requested to spend £9,000 in order to develop the way the Council
collects data in respect of monitoring the level of 'avoidable contact' we have with
our customers. The development work would be within the Customer
Relationship Management system (CRM) we use in the contact centre and also
for the creation of a new web based system for the rest of the Council.

RECOMMENDATION: **That approval is granted to allow the development
work to commence, so that the Council can efficiently and accurately
understand the level of avoidable contact we have with customers. More
importantly this will allow the data to be used in a way that improves how
we deliver services to customers and contribute towards becoming more
financially efficient.**

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 National Indicator 14 was introduced to allow Councils to measure the
level of avoidable contact they were receiving and why this was. Avoidable
contacts are those contacts which in an ideal world we should not receive,
as they are often due to a 'failure' on our part and therefore would have
been avoided if we had delivered a more effective service. For example a

customer 'chasing' a request for service "why haven't you collected my bulky waste on the date you said you would".

More importantly the purpose of this NI was not to focus on the '%' of avoidable contacts but it was to be used as a tool to address areas where improvements were necessary in terms of reducing the level of avoidable contact being received. This would allow Councils to become more efficient in many ways and improve service delivery.

Recent events have lead to NI 14 being dropped as an NI. However as Copeland is facing a challenging future financially the recommendation is that NI 14 reporting continues that the results be used in order to allow the improvements and efficiencies in service delivery to be realised.

In the last 2 years Copeland have reported 30% and 33% respectively as our avoidable contact score.

2.   ARGUMENT

2.1   Corporate Team have approved in principle the recommendation to continue to record NI 14 data as a Local Performance Indicator. As the Council is faced with finding significant savings in the immediate future we have to become more efficient in dealing with customer requests

2.2   This could ultimately lead to us needing less staff, as we will have reduced demand, (because we will not be dealing with so many avoidable contacts) or the ability to deal with more services as a result of increased capacity. Realising efficiency gains such as this will put the Council in a stronger position to be able to meet our customers' demands through the challenging few years ahead and more importantly improve service delivery.

2.3   The proposed development work would implement a solution to address the 2 main issues we have at present;

1 – We are not collecting enough data as the system for doing so is time consuming and inaccurate.

2 – That when data is collected, it is not clear as to what the reason for the avoidable contact was. This basically results in the data being of no use in terms of it being used to make improvements to service delivery.

Example –

Benefits currently have a 40% level of avoidable contact. The majority of these avoidable contacts are marked as 'clarification required'. The next level of data required here should clearly specify why the customer needed clarification. This would allow us to make changes to improve the service and reduce the level of avoidable contact.

There are many possible reasons for a customer needing clarification, such as, they didn't understand a letter we sent them, they don't know what happens next in the claim process, they don't know how to make a claim etc etc..

Using the current manual system for recording avoidable contacts and also whilst continuing to use the basic CRM reporting tools we have there is no way of accessing the sort of information we need to improve service delivery.

3.   OPTIONS

3.1   To proceed with the development work to improve the way we collect data in the contact centre and in the back office departments.

The proposed solution is to be provided by Connected Concepts who currently develop and maintain our CRM. There are 2 parts to the work..

1 - They will be re-designing the NI 14 module within the CRM to enable accurate reporting from the contact centre. This will mean each Customer Service Officer can record each contact as avoidable or unavoidable but also depending on what service the customer requested a relevant reason for avoidable contact will be offered.

Example – if a customer with a benefit query rang to say they didn't understand a letter we sent them, at present we would mark this as avoidable contact under the 'clarification required' category. Using the new system we would mark this contact as avoidable but would then have a number of relevant options specific to benefits, such as 'customer did not understand letter' or 'customer has received letter in error'.

2 – The implementation of a back office web based NI 14 recording system with the same features as the CRM has, as described above. This would allow staff to quickly record data in an accurate way via our intranet.

Full reporting options on the above 2 developments will be provided to allow information to be produced quickly and accurately.

3.2   To continue with how we are recording data at present and accept the quality of data means the use of it will be limited.

3.3   To stop collecting NI 14 data completely, as it is no longer a requirement to do so.

4.   **CONCLUSION**

4.1   Due to service delivery improvements and efficiency gains that measuring NI 14 can realise, I would recommend that the proposed development work should go ahead as described in 3.1.

4.2   To have access to data that informs us where we are 'failing' is key, in order for us to make improvements in line with the challenging future the Council faces.

5.   **WHAT ARE THE LEGAL, FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS?**

5.1   There are no legal implications.

5.2   The funds to pay for this development work are available in the 'CRM Development' Capital Budget. This expenditure would not put any other pre planned projects or development work at risk

5.3   There are no HR implications.

6.   **HOW WILL THE PROPOSALS BE PROJECT MANAGED AND HOW ARE THE RISKS GOING TO BE MANAGED?**

6.1   The Customer Services Manager will be responsible for the delivery of the solution if agreed by Executive. Input from Service Managers will obviously be required.

7.   **WHAT MEASURABLE OUTCOMES OR OUTPUTS WILL ARISE FROM THIS REPORT?**

7.1   We can more accurately measure the level of avoidable contact the Council receives.

7.2 Each Department would be able to measure trends against the level of avoidable contact over time. (Increases/Decreases)

7.3 Using the data collected we should be able to make significant improvements to service delivery that would be reflected in the avoidable contact results.

7.4 As service delivery improves and avoidable contact reduces this should free up capacity within the Council or lead to less resource being needed.

List of Appendices

n/a

List of Background Documents:

n/a