

**Review of Great Access to Great Services
Isle of Wight Council**

Report

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Promoting
Excellent
Government

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Introduction

In this report we consider short, medium and long term visions of service development in Isle of Wight Council.

In the immediate **short term** GAGS offers considerable improvement through the development of a Call Centre and of the underlying processes that support it. It is important to recognise that the Call Centre essentially includes service development and is not just a telephony technology development. A Call Centre is not, nor should it become, a glorified switchboard routing calls to others.

In the **medium term** is the chance to make access to service equal all across the island by taking steps such as the development of:

- the existing Help and Advice centres in Ryde and Shanklin, and the Customer Services Centre in Newport, into full one stop shops
- other locations (e.g. the library in East Cowes) into more wider ranging community focussed service access centres
- and, in smaller places, installation of remote help for all citizens in e.g. parish halls, community centres or suitable public buildings
- mobile help.

It can be seen that there are many different choices. The important thing is to understand that all must be underpinned by the same information, data handling and service access processes as are now being developed within GAGS. Make once, use many times.

In the **long term** there may be the possibility that ownership of a level of service delivery could be passed to communities themselves. Once again this level of inclusion of the whole community would be underpinned by the developments now being made within GAGS.

If, therefore, the current phase of GAGS is beginning to seem like a large amount of work to crack a comparatively small nut it must be understood that it is in fact laying the foundations for significant longer term development. Of course there will be choices all along the way, not least in the balance of service access defined in the medium term, but those choices will not be open if you do not put the best possible foundations in place now.

In conducting this review we have concentrated on the short term scenario. In the short term GAGS will contribute strongly to fostering immediate improvement to service delivery. It would therefore be valuable even if you did nothing else. However our review confirms that GAGS is sensibly positioned so that the medium and longer term scenarios can be developed when the right moment arrives.

Finally, GAGS also offers a foundation for developing effective partnerships with other service providers across the island; many of which would surely welcome it. Considering those wider possibilities was not part of our remit.

Summary of main conclusions

GAGS has the potential to improve IWC's service to its customers in highly desirable ways. It can also act as a focus for several of the Council's other initiatives.

That potential can only be fulfilled if the underlying support processes are actively developed. Such work will help to bring staff and managers 'on board' because a growing range of people - including the unions – will become involved within a clearly demonstrable programme. This is all to the good.

Developing processes and reaching consistency in service access and delivery across the council is as important as the growth of technology use and will enable many significant improvements. The seminar attendee who said: 'Getting consistency across all frontline services would be a service improvement in its own right' is correct.

Both the DiP project and the Call Centre project are sensible next steps provided they are managed within the context of service improvement. The improvement will not come simply by procuring the technology. The implementation and the renewal of service processes to take full advantage of the investments is crucial work. Both projects should be progressed within a wide-ranging plan focussed on the implementation environment and on the opportunities to create new service effectiveness - there is nothing to gain, and quite a lot to be lost, by delay.

The CRM project is fit for current purpose. It should be speedily progressed in an open-ended way that does not preclude future integration with other tools. This is a necessary development for successful implementation of the Call Centre and for the medium term development.

GAGS should look backwards as well as forwards. There is good, and sometimes best, practice within IWC which should be harnessed. In technology terms consideration should be given to maximising use of existing GIS and similar systems in line with the GAGS objectives. Don't go rushing past the old in the excitement of the new. Make sure you use what you have already got better and learn the lessons of past successes, and failures.

IWC is not yet ready to consider a strategic partnership. Nor is it all clear, at present, what kind of strategic partnership, if any, would be most valuable. We believe that question would be better addressed in between four and six months time. There is much that IWC can do during that time which will be immediately useful regardless of what partnering decisions are finally reached and which will provide essential baseline information and experience which can inform that decision. This should not impact unhelpfully on any foreseeable future arrangement.

There is some hard work needed. GAGS is an important step towards a modernised, 21st century service fit for all the people of IoW. The main risks you must avoid are those of overlaying new methods on old structures, replicating the old service with new technology, perpetuating poor practice in an electronically enabled format.

Members were right to express concern. They now need to give strong support to both management and staff so that you can move forward together.

1. The Task

Isle of Wight Council (IWC) asked CDW & Associates Ltd (CDW) to review progress on the Great Access to Great Service (GAGS) project to date, to address a number of specific issues and to make any additional comments that arose.

2. Approach

The project was undertaken through a five stage process:

- document review
- a pre-review questionnaire which received 21 responses
- 29 face to face interviews including 9 with Councillors (one of them unscheduled)
- results from two seminars for managers and frontline teams
- a number of follow-up emails to check points of detail

All IoW people were extremely helpful and friendly in this work. CDW wishes specifically to thank Sarah Ruwaidan for a considerable feat of organisation.

3. Initial results

The document review presented a clear view of the GAGS initiative as presented to, and accepted by council. We also read conclusions from other reviews of council performance including the recent Audit Commission report.

Respondents to the pre-review questionnaire were, to a greater or lesser extent, predominantly in favour of GAGS although there were strong reservations about implementation and an almost unanimous concern that, to date, GAGS is not properly owned across the organisation.

The interviewees agreed that GAGS has the potential to be a key contributor to a necessary improvement in the Council's customer service, in line with government directives, and can help to provide focus and direction for a number of IWC's other initiatives. The interviews confirmed the questionnaire finding that implementation issues need addressing with urgency. We also gained the overall impression that there is, at present, no shared vision nor is there a clearly understood level of ambition, to direct the medium term development. While the work with Liverpool City Council may have been inspirational it has not yet been translated into a vision that feels right for IWC. Liverpool and the Isle of Wight are markedly different places and local authorities. IWC needs its own steadily developing vision.

The seminars showed that IWC has a pool of expertise and commitment among its managers and frontline staff that must be fully engaged. Now is the time to do this. However the seminars also showed that IWC teams are not, at present, very good at learning from, or even talking to, each other. We have quoted the comments from the seminars as received in full (see Appendix). Focussing in depth around the 20

questions asked in the first seminar and engaging the level of officer who volunteered for this seminar, would help you make progress. Note that all those people said they would be glad to be involved further. Seminar two showed how a slightly different level of staff might be involved.

All of the above results suggest that internal communications need much more attention. That finding is in line with the recent Audit Commission report. However you can't communicate until there is clarity about what is to be communicated!

4. Our Review of GAGS

4.1 Overview

The four basic statements of the GAGS project are sound. However senior officers and councillors need to explore the underlying implications more fully. A better analysis and understanding of the issues involved in such change will require reaching agreement over direction in far greater detail than currently exists. It also calls for commitment and backing for development of the work that is needed. It is not true that, as one interviewee suggested, *'we were sold a pup'*. It does seem that the sound basic statements were constructed in good faith and then wholeheartedly accepted by people who were not, perhaps, given sufficient time or induction to consider all the implications fully. More needs to be done to build on the existing broad agreement.

This particularly applies to analysis and understanding of the risks involved in the various options that are being considered for delivery of GAGS.

4.2 Strategic approach

The strategic approach needs to include a much greater focus on customers. At the moment it is potentially strong in terms of modernising the council's infrastructure and will progress a fair number of the specific requirements of the e-government programme but it needs a secure customer focus to give it balance and direction.

Leading this development by creating a Call Centre that fails to position the telephony service as part of a spectrum of customer facing services would be a high risk strategy.

This is not an argument about one channel versus another. Nor about suggesting (which we don't) that multiple access channels should all be developed together. The Call Centre must be viewed as a subset of Customer Services. The temptation to work the other way round, ie positioning customer services as a subset of the call centre, would be a mistake. Developing this argument - other subsets, some already existing, some yet to be developed, will run in parallel with the call centre in due course, even if the call centre has the initial prominence. The strategic approach must focus firmly on the customer not the technology channel.

Everyone should be clear that the support processes with which the customer 'interacts' are the key issue not the individual channels. If you can create consistency in the support processes they will be effective in the Call Centre, in existing Customer

Services work and in any future channels adopted to deliver service. The huge potential gain for IWC lies in the efficiencies to be had by developing all these support processes ONCE and then using them many times.

That is why it is worth taking the time, trouble and effort to make sure that you get this right now even though the full rewards of doing so may lie in the future.

4.3 The GAGS agenda

It is clear that, currently, access to service is not equal across the island. At the same time access to service is inconsistent between services and even within the same service. The GAGS agenda should address this to the benefit of customers (actual and potential) and to the benefit of the council. However members and officers need to understand fully that achieving this objective requires commitment and some solid internal development work.

4.4 The work strands

The existing GAGS work strands are appropriate but they are horizontal, infrastructure strands. Four vertical (service change) strands need to be developed to mesh with the horizontal ones. They are:

- i. development of the face-to-face contact service – structure, personnel issues, practices, standards etc
- ii. revision of current ways of working – information management, procedure and process, joining-up etc
- iii. development of business cases which are agreed by all services – which must cover all items in i. and ii. above – and address sustainability
- iv. development of a clear focus on the community and its needs – including addressing inclusivity, geographical issues, demographic trends etc

4.5 Council capacity

Like any other council IWC is pretty fully stretched. Like any other council IWC has to consider how improved ways of working can evolve without causing interruption of service delivery. There is no evidence that IWC could not do this provided that it aims for steady evolution, not necessarily over a long period, and not for a ‘big bang’.

Among IWC’s strengths are that the island naturally tends to encourage a co-operative spirit, not always found elsewhere, and the very varied backgrounds and experience of its elected members. Members have a great deal to contribute to this but they are not the managers and they should resist the temptation to manage. This requires a conscious effort to build and maintain trust between members and managers.

As is often the case there is plenty of evidence that the staff have the ‘appetite’ for change. We saw no reason to believe that the staff themselves cannot make significant and very valuable contributions to the change agenda. We saw rather a lot of reasons to believe that they both can and should be the ‘engine-room’ for change. In the face of such evidence you have to question very carefully whether any external body could do better and you have to be prepared to consider that external bodies might do a great

deal worse. The issue is more one of capacity in depth than simply capability and, at least to some extent, how that develops depends on how far the various service departments are prepared to move to take GAGS on board.

Whether all the managers have the same appetite as the staff depends largely on the ability of the GAGS team to demonstrate that the proposed changes will lead to improved service. Nobody wants to see existing procedures that have been tested over time tossed up in the air for no apparent reason. On the other hand senior managers are already well aware that GAGS ought to be able to reduce duplication and wasted work, streamline procedures and support 'joining-up' between services which is beneficial both to customers and to the council itself. It is incumbent on the GAGS team to demonstrate this, through negotiation, with their senior colleagues. Not the other way round.

Our interview with UNISON suggested that IWC is fortunate in having union representation that is prepared to support reasonable moves towards change especially if such moves clearly include, as they must, major chances for self-development among its members. We recommend that the union should be involved in development, possibly by inclusion on the Task Force (see below).

4.6 Understanding the community

Although we did not have the chance to review it on the ground, the description we were given of IWC's work in community partnership is Best Practice in line with the standards set in the national Promoting Excellent Government (PEG) programme. Very few other councils currently reach that standard (although plenty claim it).

The work of the Customer Services team also seems to be of good, although not yet best, standard with good understanding of customer needs and the potential for improving the service further.

Finally we heard claims, although we did not have time to verify them, that work in the frontline in the education service is also well organised. We had no reason to disbelieve these.

IWC therefore has a base of good practice in exactly the area that is needed. But it is not currently looking to this experience to contribute as fully as it could to developing the support processes that must underlie the call centre and all other customer facing channels.

This is also the base of experience which provides the best foundation for the necessary continuing development work with the community.

We believe that the importance of this work is not fully realised. This means that the recently advertised Customer Services post could well have been underrated. You cannot successfully develop the call centre without the information and understanding of service delivery that can come to you from this established base of expertise.

4.7 Ownership

The GAGS programme is not properly owned across the organisation nor will it be until serious moves to negotiate the benefits it can offer to each department and to different levels of staff are put in hand. Enthusiasm and words of good intention from management are not enough; there must be some hard internal agreements which empower action.

4.8 Programme management

There is uncertainty about the exact standing of the GAGS Programme Board which needs immediate resolution. However the solution should not bind the executive and managers responsible for delivery into a ceaseless round of meetings. Signed-off decisions that have been through due process should be decisions which managers are empowered to action. Members should oversee that process in the proper way.

At the moment it seems that the Programme Board operates at quite a high level but authority below it is too focussed on technology issues. There needs to be what we normally call a Task Force operating immediately below the Programme Board and reporting into it. This should be a small team that combines a range of expertise from central areas and from services. It is there to shape and think through the implications of each individual development project or other element of the programme and to ensure in practical ways that these all join up to deliver the programme itself. The Task Force should meet regularly and its meetings should be short and very focussed. Each member of the Task Force must be actively engaged in development work, with a clear allocation of sufficient time to do the work properly, and supporting resources (as required), so that the full potential can be reached.

The Task Force's most immediate tasks are to agree a more detailed routemap and to be involved in implementation of the necessary audits (see later in this paper).

5. Strategic partnering

IWC is not yet ready to consider strategic partnering.

Without a clearly owned vision and an understanding of the levels of ambition within which the council can work there can be no fully defined baselines for the issues outlined in 4.4 above. Such baselines are certainly not in place. Entering into strategic partnering discussions from this situation will entail significant risks - indeed unquantifiable risk.

Experience elsewhere in the UK has shown that negotiations based on poorly understood service requirements will focus on superficial process and technical specifications. The real needs are about service delivery and its outcomes. Any failure to understand in depth, and to be able to describe, delivery and outcome requirements will leave any potential service provider partner catering for substantial risks, which they will offset into costs – whether immediately contracted, contingent,

or concealed by the structure of the partnership. This is a level of exposure which a small council such as IWC cannot afford.

We believe that the time to address this question will occur in March next year at the earliest. By this time IWC should be in a much better position to consider whether partners are needed or not and then to look in a better informed and more considered manner at what kind of partner is required. As of today it seems to us much more likely that you could need a partner or partners who can offer capacity to help undertake and complete specific tasks, rather than one large-scale partner offering to undertake a wholesale transfer of resources.

We strongly advise against making a hasty decision.

We are also concerned that in any rush to seek a partner there could be a lack of awareness that engaging a partner which cannot demonstrate considerable experience of working in the local authority world, is in itself a risk. Companies that have won contracts and then engaged local authority staff to undertake the work are beginning to demonstrate undesirable levels of failure and the cost of extracting councils from these contracts can be high. Local authorities which follow that route can also find that they spend eighteen months at their own expense teaching the management of the contractor/partner about local government.

6. Summary Recommendations

Our recommendations are made in two stages. The summary in this section is complemented by detailed implementation suggestions in the next section.

Clarify the vision AND the levels of ambition:

- A very small number of 'visioning' exercises, possibly with external facilitation, will help all parties to contribute more strongly and will allay some of the concerns that have been expressed - all of which have been perfectly reasonable at this stage of the programme.

Work hard for six months to get fully up to speed for change:

- The GAGS programme must make serious moves to engage each service department fully. That can be done first through initial audits of current work and then through negotiating the benefits that GAGS will bring.
- The GAGS programme must fully engage all levels of staff –enthusiasm and good intention from the project team are not enough; you need solid co-operative actions.

Develop a managed programme approach:

- centred on a high level programme board (including elected members)
- to which the day-to-day operational team (Task Force) reports
- which in turn supervises, and is involved in, all individual projects (whether technical or service related) so that everybody can see the overall programme

Information Management

- The need for this was identified by the PEG workshops in autumn 2002. Little seems to have been done except that the ICT team is now expected to manage information on top of their other duties. Lack of clarity, direction and rapid progress in this area will threaten the whole project.

Business planning

- Development of outline business cases with inter-departmental negotiation is essential. The objective is to achieve as much clarity as possible on the benefits GAGS will bring, on how it will help each individual service department to meet its business objectives and on how that will lead to sustainability within the council's own resource base.

Such work should be focussed on basic PI's wherever that is possible. For example the answer to the question: 'could GAGS help us to pay benefits quicker?' is 'yes'. That helps the service department and would seem likely to please the customer too. Potentially, GAGS delivers win/wins.

7. Implementation Recommendations

The first task is to become much more sure than you are at the moment about what your current baseline is. This is essential.

7.1 Audits

Develop a range of audits which can gather the baseline data you need. Include a wide range of people in this process and do so for genuine and useful reasons. Our initial suggestions would be:

- Frequently asked questions audit
Purpose: to understand the consistency or lack of it in frontline service delivery. Note: a subset of this may well be to pass information to the CRM team but the first purpose is understanding service delivery.
Model: Aberdeenshire council
- Service complexity audit
Purpose: to identify anomalies in service delivery that have grown up over time and need to be ironed out. It is a precursor to 're-engineering' procedures and processes. It is important to avoid passing historical anomalies into the electronic system.
Model: Herefordshire Council – first-stop development and review of benefits.
- Frontline complexity audit
Purpose: to find out what percentages of questions asked at the frontline (whether face to face or by phone) are simple, median or complex. From this to eliminate wasteful overlaps and duplication.
Model: Middlesbrough council

➤ Frontline service audit

Purpose: to consider what the cut-off points between frontline and service teams should be and what processes can be put in place to develop these (as protocols or SLAs) as working practice. This is a key step prior to re-engineering processes. It can make it possible for every service enquiry to be dealt with in a timely way by the most appropriate person and with the highest level of accuracy.
Model: Newham council and many others.

➤ Information audit

Purpose: to bring consistency to the whole information management task. To bring together directories, A-Zs etc and to make them consistent. To form them into ONE information repository that underpins GAGS and all other customer facing work. To show departments that information work must be carried out internally within the department and that it is no longer acceptable, as still appears to be the case, for departments or individuals to withhold information from the corporate effort.
Model: Stoke City Council

None of these audits is hugely time consuming but they are vital (so managers need to agree that staff will commit time to them). These five audits and others that may occur to you will be more use than any number of committee meetings. They will move GAGS forward. They will constructively engage a large number of people. They are not sterile exercises but, from the very start, will deliver incremental improvements to the council and, through that, to the service delivery received by its customers. And, finally, GAGS will be seen to be happening all across IWC.

7.2 Managing the implementation - the GAGS Task Force

As suggested above there needs to be a layer in between the programme board and the people doing the work. Up till now this has been provided by the individual managers of DiP, NLPG and CRM. Quite apart from the workload this is not enough because a range of different specialisms needs to be brought to bear and, increasingly, individual services must be engaged in the work. For example, you can't expect the CRM manager to become an HR expert overnight. (well, you can, but you shouldn't!)

We would suggest that a 'Task Force' acting as the operational body is needed. An operational Task Force of, for example: Caroline Taylor, Steve Lawrence, Maureen Gardiner, Sue Chilton and Avril Holland plus others at much the same level, should come together with a role to make things happen. Many of these are already involved in the programme but, at present, they do not appear to talk to each other often enough. (They don't need to talk for long, but they do need to talk often!)

The operational task force needs to focus each audit – we would suggest that one member of the Task Force is responsible for each audit – and to ensure that staff at all levels contribute their experience and ideas to it.

The successful model for this way of working (and managing) is East Riding Council.

Appendices - introduction

Four main pieces of work underpin the above report:

- The questionnaire sent in advance to interested staff
- The seminar to examine performance parameters
- The seminar to look more directly at frontline questions
- The face to face interviews with officers and councillors

Appendix 1 - Questionnaire

STAFF QUESTIONNAIRE - GAGS PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT



| Question | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
|---|---|----|---|---|
| 1. COMMUNICATION How well do you rate your personal understanding of what GAGS is trying to achieve and how it is being done? 0 = no understanding 3 = good understanding | 2 | 7 | 7 | 5 |
| 2. PROGRAMME ORIENTATION In your opinion, will the GAGS agenda deliver real benefits to the public? 0 = unlikely to deliver any benefits 3 = likely to deliver real and significant benefits (please say why overleaf) | 1 | 9 | 5 | 6 |
| 3. PROGRAMME DELIVERY Are you confident that the right work is being done to deliver the objectives of the GAGS programme? Or do you think there may be some gaps? 0 = low level of confidence/no knowledge 3 = high level of confidence | 4 | 12 | 5 | |
| 4. CHANGE MANAGEMENT Does your part of the organisation have the capacity, skills and appetite to help deliver the proposed changes? Do you think your part of the organisation really wants to change and, if so, do you think it can? 0 = no, none of these conditions exist 3 = yes, all of these conditions exist | 1 | 11 | 6 | 2 |
| 5. OWNERSHIP BY THE ORGANISATION Does your part of the organisation have any level of ownership over the direction of the programme? 0 = no sense of ownership observable – we don't seem to be involved 3 = clear sense of ownership observable | 9 | 7 | 5 | |
| 6. POSSIBLE BLOCKS Although we obviously hope that everything will go well, can you suggest blocks or difficulties relevant to your department that need to be thought through at an early stage? | | | | |

| Comments and Suggestions |
|---|
| 1. Communication |
| 1. There has been no communication within our section, all I have found out has been via the Intranet, this would also apply to the titles below. |
| 2. Don't let apathy rule |
| 3. It's no use providing our community with access to information about services if those services are not adequately resourced enough to function in the first place, |
| 4. Staff do not feel that GAGS is going to support their work. In fact the negative publicity, generated mischievously or not, has undermined their belief that the council supports the work we do as a whole. |
| 2. Programme Orientation |
| 1. Yes, absolutely anything that streamlines responses, removes duplication, speeds |

| |
|--|
| <p>up services and aids quality of response, backed up by sophisticated technology, is going to reduce costs in the long term and should improve customer service, As an organisation we do need to get more focused on “the customer” as our day to day driver of the business. Retraining of frontline operators is paramount.</p> |
| <p>2. Yes it will deliver real benefits, Under the modernisation white paper it is critical that citizens are able to access services, state their opinion (and be listened to) on the services their council provides. It is no longer possible to deliver quality service using ‘old’ ways and we must use technology to its full advantage to ensure that we do so.</p> |
| <p>3. Taken stage by stage there are likely to be benefits for people, but experiences of call centres are usually frustrating, That in mind, the public really should be more specifically consulted and informed as to what the agenda will mean to them with an honest assessment of what how services will be affected.</p> |
| <p>4. What is not clear to a lot of people is where the millions in funding are coming from especially when so many other services are being cut</p> |
| <p>3. Programme Delivery</p> |
| <p>1. Do not set over optimistic targets – every target not met or put off to a later date damages the credibility of the whole thing. All colleagues I spoke to thought the September deadline ridiculous.</p> |
| <p>4. Change Management</p> |
| <p>1. It all seems very IT project managed, almost a feeling of splendid isolation, what about people, departments and managing change?</p> |
| <p>2. Council employees and the local community often feel change is managed poorly here because of inadequate consultation before strategic decisions are made – surveys.....would be a better more informed and perceived as less arrogant way of initiating projects such as this</p> |
| <p>3. My section has made various improvements...none of the changes were radical and most were common sense. If all council services took a similar approach.....</p> |
| <p>4. Don’t underestimate how much work needs to be done with staff</p> |
| <p>5. Ownership by the Organisation</p> |
| <p>1. Very much a feeling of us and them over GAGS, people need to be won over, not lectured to, or let know there is some unknown project plan (very boring) We need to see success, not blame for it not working.</p> |
| <p>2. Departments are secretive, it appears to be a number of isolated departments. People have to be willing to change</p> |
| <p>6. Possible Blocks</p> |
| <p>1. Stop the rush to get this started asap and do it properly – the council officers and local community need the council to stop trying to walk before it can run and please plan and resource it properly</p> |
| <p>2. Enthusiasm is the largest missing factor at the moment. there are a few people really up for it, a sadly larger number of doom and gloom merchants and the mass in the middle who are in the wait and see mode, We need to change the balance of that if the potential of GAGS is to be realised</p> |

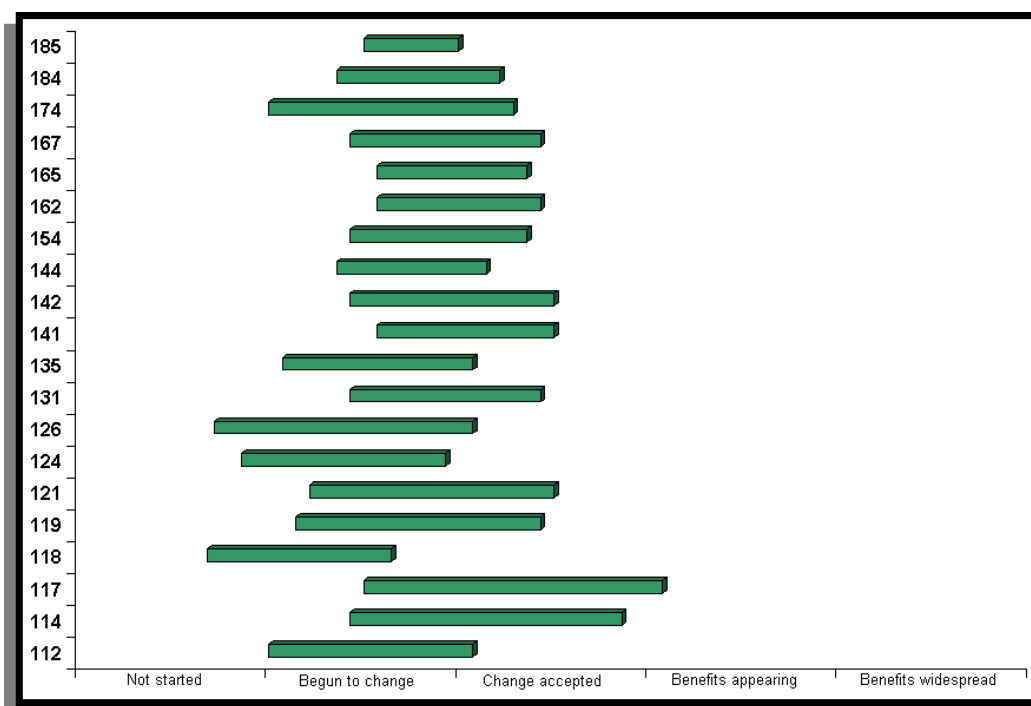
Appendix 2 – Seminar - Performance parameters

The national PEG programme provides a set of 20 profile parameters that are core to development of access to service in any local authority.

A small group of IWC officers volunteered to work through these. Those attending were:

Tracey Darch, Roseanne Lloyd, Don Roe, Maureen Gardiner, Steve Lawrence, Barbara Martin, Dawn Cousins

Working in three groups we went quickly through the material to identify “where IWC is today” and “where IWC anticipates being in 12 months time”.



The chart illustrates the ‘gap’ which the council is aiming to close during the coming twelve months.

The impression which this analysis gives is that the team making the self-assessment are confident that the issues of ‘Service Access’ (the parameters beginning 1xx) and Information (beginning 2xx) can change performance dramatically in the 12 month period. The parameter which looks weakest amongst this group is 118 which describes the issues of creating internal and external partnerships. The internal partnership issue is critical and if ‘beginning to change’ is the situation in 12 months time then achieving the ‘benefits appearing’ ambition for parameter 114 (‘a single access approach which takes full regard of user needs ...’) may not be achievable.

Viewed in this way the model illustrates the range of inter-dependencies which are easy to disregard when individual issues are treated in isolation. This highlights the importance of a coherent programme for change.

After undertaking the initial self-assessment we then asked the delegates to make specific comment about what would help progress on each of the parameters and what blockages they could identify.

- 112 Community data is mapped so that geographical communities, interest groups, and communities of need can be identified and analysed on demand.

Plus points:

- National census database
- CM development – end of September
- Enquiry page expanded through all services
- Website data on communities – grouped by postcode
- Parish data on areas of need
- ‘My profile’ to be introduced so that people can register
- SS & Housing Bens to hold personal data (but what are issues of sharing? but note data could be used well if not identifiable by individual)
- Sets of interest groups on website

CDW comment: this is already a powerful set of plus points but see above about ‘coherent programme’...who exactly is going to draw all this together and maximise use of it? That was not clear to us. Points up the need for central focus with departmental input.

Barriers:

- No clear approach to mapping action although some consultation etc does take place. Talks shops with little feedback and fragmented action.
- Resources and priorities
- risk aversion – re implications of DPA
- data ownership – people don’t want to let go of empires (also strongly cited in questionnaire exercise)
- no means of sharing
- do we engage properly with our communities
- attitude towards town and parish councils – we have a low opinion of them although it is true that some are poor.
- CM project – currently in-house changes
- Service take on doesn’t happen

- 114 A single access approach which takes full regard of user needs, current demand, and new service access opportunities, is developing in a 'joined up' manner to deal with the ‘whole customer’.

Plus points:

- GAGS! 1 stop shop – (IT infrastructure)
- Partnerships ie Inland Rev CAB DSS
- CMS system is being developed
- ability to add new access channels if needed
- whole customer therefore data retained centrally

- wide recognition and acceptance of the problems we have (CDW comment: think of them as opportunities!)

Barriers:

- user needs not fully considered due to constraints of project
- departmental and member resistance
- the above two issues are not being addressed
- no evident overall plan
- HoS enthusiasm for GAGS not brought back and communicated to staff
- All of it IT-led
- Poor communication of GAGS progress/non-progress particularly with the “volunteers”
- lack of staff
- lack of plan including how many people needed
- Not across full council. Some have started (mandatory requirements) but more development needed. Some areas of good practice.
- COST
- Access to information (protected by staff)

117 Whichever contact channel the customer accesses it operates to consistent service and customer care standards developed through consultation with staff and external feedback from customers.

Plus points:

- CMS and website but they need to be consistent and have ability to feedback
- Policy and procedure (Customer Care Strategy)! – watch this space
- Training – again pilot scheme in process

Barriers:

- Information not acted on or shared with right department
- No customer care strategy
- No consistent approach to consultation either internally or externally
- Isolation of services (we are not ONE council)
- As 114 things are fragmented. Some areas of good practice. Communication less than satisfactory. Staff need involving!

118 Internal and external partnerships address the service needs of customers and all partnerships use the results of community analysis to help shape joint service delivery.

Plus points:

- Audit review of partnerships highlighted key issues (lots of them)
- service heads and active groups working together ie Inland Rev H Bens...free phone service

Barriers:

- Analysis there is lots of info but not joined up
- Don't seem to share the data with our partners

- Lip service at present. Much more is needed. We have many examples of good working but needs shaping more effectively

119 All the information required to meet customer needs accurately and speedily is always available to all staff, to elected members and direct to the public where appropriate.

Plus points:

- e-govt initiative
- CM initiative
- Endeavouring to address this, although perhaps more aware of the need to improve – is communication effective?
- Information will be available to those authorised
- Benefits to members of access to data in their area
- via website for staff members and public
- If driven from centre with enough commitment can be achieved
- using staff meetings to make sure GAGS is discussed – needs informed person at meetings

Barriers:

- Departmental lack of acceptance that shared info is going to be the way we want to go
- Need a team to drive process forward
- Lack of IT structure, problems at service level – no budgets no upgrades
- No shared information
- Isolation and lack of communications
- No incentives
- Comms channels not available in-house

121 A corporate information policy, actively backed by senior management, which expresses the principle of processing information once to use it many times, is in place.

Plus points:

- Draft policy in place and taken to Dirs Group
- GAGS could be a plus and a minus in this area

Barrier:

- Do all managers back this and support initiative effectively – we doubt this
- Some staff not aware that policy exists

124 Every partnership with other service providers supports provision and access to all relevant information by all partners to deliver information on demand.

Comments:

Differs from directorate to directorate but there is some good practice

Other comments the same as for 118

It's only piecemeal at present

126 Elected members understand the importance of information, are actively involved in the processes of information development and support the necessary organisational changes.

Comments:

- Only piecemeal again
- Some members do and some do not. Differences of opinion demonstrate that not all members understand (or are on board!) (or take the time to find out and be proactive. Self interested not corporate?)

Barriers:

- Political weapon
- Lack of understanding
- Lack of hands on experience
- Members too involved in detail – not helpfully

131 The front line service objective is to resolve routine queries at the first point of contact and to ensure that when specialists are required it is done in an integrated and timely manner.

Plus points:

- Information presently issued where clear guidelines are adhered to
- Enquiry page with own database in CSC
- CM development
- We are trying but have no (ICT) etc systems in place to address this effectively. Staff keen but we need help. Need to look at strategies, buildings, technology etc – does that lead towards strategic partner?
- Staff support open access agenda but query if it is being managed correctly.

Barriers:

- Routine information still held by all departments
- No infrastructure to support routine information/ownership of the information
- Directory out of date
- Lack of communications
- Appointment systems not initiated although access to diaries can happen now
- Location for frontline services – the right people in the right place
- Advertising
- Movement of personnel doesn't help
- Telephone databases etc not compatible

135 All departments share process and information mapping procedures and can identify how their information flows to and from the front desk to meet their service objectives.

Comments:

- If only.
- Differences in approach – locations which are isolated tend to be less informed – staff seem isolated.
- Capacity issues need addressing throughout the whole agenda

- What do we need to deliver

Barriers

- No authorisation to do this
- Job loss fears
- No identification between routine and specialized questions

141 The council is developing a single access approach with a shared customer tracking system as the most effective and efficient way to meet service needs based on the 'whole person'.

Comments:

- Differs from service to service. Is being discussed. Must be managed
- Barriers include cost, willingness, job loss, isolation, compatibility with current systems (not even one council one number) No systems available

142 The council has an ICT infrastructure which provides an appropriate level of support for each transaction regardless of the channel through which the transaction is accessed.

Comments:

- Unsatisfactory – infrastructure frail.
- Some new systems being developed
- No consistency across departments

144 The council analyses its information usage and its internal systems traffic as well as its service delivery to provide a continuous integrated review of its performance.

Comments:

- call logger and CM will help
- what each directorate is doing needs scrutinising. Long term view needed to ensure effective development
- No consistency. Not fed into one source to improve services
- Lack of policies – down to service heads

154 The council's investment in ICT tools to support customer access takes full account of information delivery and management needs at the front line.

Comments as earlier

162 A business planning methodology is in use throughout the council, is used for all development and all managers understand its impact on service planning and delivery.

Comments:

- Partly being achieved. However should not be as bureaucratic as at present. Concept important as is service planning
- Business plans should be a "live" process

165 Senior managers, key elected members and appropriate staff are involved in the creation of business cases, implementation planning, formal review and in any review of the business case process itself.

Plus points:

- This is moving forward
- Inroads being made but still differences within the application

167 Through performance management, communications, training, evaluation and consultation processes the council is becoming a 'learning organisation' adapted to continuous improvement.

Plus points:

- Is moving forward and has improved but differences need looking at

174 Each partnership has a management structure which provides clear leadership, allocates individual responsibilities and defines where accountability lies.

Comments:

- Is possibly there - but is leadership the only quality that is needed

184 The council reviews competency requirements, skills available, recruitment and training needs to ensure that the balance of its staff is appropriate for the access channels and service methods it is supporting.

Comments:

- differs from directorate to directorate

185 The council uses service outcome measures to set performance targets and to evaluate the performance of staff, service teams and their managers at all levels.

Comments:

- Moving forward.
- Some directorates have started to experience stress due to pressures with regard to targets.
- General support across directorates to this approach but pressures/capacity issues need addressing

Appendix 3 - Frontline Questions

The team attending this event were asked to work through a quite simple set of questions all of them looking at whether or not Access to Service in IWC can be thought of as a single process.

The answer is “it can’t”, but there are many steps already in place that are leading towards such a situation and there are plenty of staff who know why customers need it and how things might be improved.

The Summary flip chart sheets after the exercise had been completed show:

| <i>Requirement</i> | <i>Objective</i> |
|----------------------------------|--|
| Consult staff and public | Staff participation and how it really is |
| What will GAGS do for <u>you</u> | System which will do what’s needed |
| Charter (or other) mark criteria | Consistency |
| What will GAGS achieve | Understanding |
| How will it be done | Co-operative working at many levels leads to success |
| Employ right people | Empowered staff |
| Management Training | Cross-service understanding (‘joined-up’ working) |
| Internal communications | 1 Council |
| Service audits | Streamlining |

As can be seen from the above comments the participants in this seminar tackled key questions possibly at a different level and from a rather different angle to the first seminar. They came up with rather similar and supporting results.

This section should end with the one question that the entire seminar answered the same way. Asked ‘how well do teams work together’, every person answered either ‘not very well’ or ‘not at all’. Which is why we think you need to do some very hard thinking!

Appendix 4 - One to One interviews

The one to one interviews have been used to inform the comments made in the first section of this paper. The existing projects come through strongly.

The DiP project

We did not examine this in detail. However it is so evidently an essential component of development that we hope it now goes ahead with all possible speed. It will be important for the implementation team to document its experience carefully so that it can be used to accelerate the second wave adopters through well documented experience.

NLPG

We did not examine this at all but an electronic land and property records system is a necessity and the resources behind the development of NLPG make it the only sensible option. We did not have time to ask whether you have taken a firm decision to adopt NLIS for land charges or are working with a commercial provider. The only comment we would make is that the hub provided by NLIS has the potential to enable wider usage of that infrastructure beyond land charges.

CRM

What you have at the moment is not, in the normal sense, a customer relationship management tool. Nor does the council as a whole yet subscribe to the idea that relationships with customers benefit by being managed and that the council can gain many efficiencies by doing so. All that is a little further down the track.

What you do seem, on an admittedly short examination, to have is a tool that is fit for purpose in terms of driving necessary work forward in the short term. Provided that the enthusiastic team who have put this together keep making sure that their tool is open to further development and might, possibly, need to be integrated with a more sophisticated tool further down the line, they have done an excellent job.

We are not however clear how much work has yet been done on implementation. Is it, for example, expected that staff, or even town councils, in areas such as Sandown or Ventnor will have access to this facility. If so what is being done to identify places/people, provide infrastructure, prepare and train them for this? Or did they really mean that they hope a smallish number of people in Newport will use it?

Call Centre

It has to be recognised that the call centre as it stands at the moment has almost equal potential for being a sensible next step or a considerable risk. The first risk is that it will be seen as is a glorified switchboard which simply interposes a further level of complexity between the user and getting service.

The second risk is a consequence of the first - that it may never be seen as a service access channel in its own right – representing the council's dedication to improved service and leading other channels all working to the same consistent principles with the same underlying support tools. This risk manifests itself most in the potential for

failing to take advantage of the fact that support work should be done once, consistently for the whole council not once for each channel.

We question how far IWC's existing call handling centres, such as Wightcare, have really been involved in the thinking about developing the new centre. There were moments when it seemed as though the only real question that has been asked about the Call Centre is where it should be, whereas a more positive lead question would have been how far can it integrate with existing provision? The third risk, therefore, is of ending up with a number of different call centres (and numbers) none of them working as well as they could.

There is a great deal of ground to cover in a short time. However the most important ground lies in making sure that the call centre and face to face services are properly integrated as a consistent service using the same underlying support tools. Our recommendations aim towards that objective.

GIS

We did not have time to examine GIS or other mapping tools. However they are a very important part of the support armoury and their importance in the direct customer service relationship should not be ignored. The few remarks we did hear suggest a need for rationalisation. Could it really be true that you have thirteen different GIS systems?