

## **DOCUMENT PRODUCTION – BEST VALUE REVIEW**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This is the final report resulting from the Document Production Best Value Review.
- 1.2 It outlines activity to date and sets out plans for improvement and next stage proposals.
- 1.3 The Council's services rely on support of a Document Production capability.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 At its Meeting on 7 December 2000, this Committee considered an interim report on work undertaken by the Document Production Best Value Officer Review Group. A copy of the interim report is set out at Appendix 1.
- 2.2 The Committee Resolved
  - (1) That the progress of work to date be noted with a finalised report submitted to Committee in due course.
  - (2) The Officer Review Group give consideration to the possibilities for reducing the amount of paper printing associated with the Members' Bulletin/Agenda despatch.

### **3 ASSESSMENT**

- 3.1 By the interim stage, the Group had identified options for both printing and word processing. (See paragraphs 5.1 – 5.14 of Appendix 1). The conclusions relating to these, together with consideration of possibilities for reducing the amount of paper printing associated with the Members' Bulletin/Agenda despatch are set out below. Set out separately at Appendix 2 to this report is further detail on progress/proposals for those areas of the print and word processing service where changes have already been progressed to improve the level of service offered to customers with no additional resource implications. Copies of all pertinent documentation used during the review has been compiled as a separate document and placed in the Members' Room, Rayleigh.

- 3.2 Although the review was primarily focussed on the Document Production Unit (DPU), recommendations relating to other aspects of document production are also made in this report.

#### **4 PHOTOCOPYING AND PRINT**

- 4.1 The DPU produced 2.1m photocopies in the central print room during 2000 (1.3m in 1999). A further 700,000 "response" copies are produced annually on standalone photocopiers around the Rochford and Rayleigh offices. The DPU also places offset print work with local printers to a value of £10,000 per annum. In addition, a further £20,000 of specialist printing (e.g. Rochford District Matters and computer stationery) is undertaken. A survey of DPU users suggests similar volumes of photocopying and print in the future with greater emphasis on quality and finishing.
- 4.2 While attempts should be made to reduce the Council's total future requirements, there is a clear continuing need for photocopying and printing services.
- 4.3 Copying and printing are available commercially and the Group has approached seven local companies to obtain commercial quotations for typical photocopying and offset work undertaken by the Council. Four returns were received. Work was also concluded to identify precisely the Council's current costs. The request for quotations did not include specialist printing, which is already subject to competitive quotation when orders are placed.
- 4.4 Although service users have indicated an increased requirement for offset quality printing, from the above exercise, it is clear that volumes are unlikely to reach the minimum £100,000 per annum level that would justify the Council investing in the acquisition of offset equipment. The variation in quotations received do however indicate:
- (a) the importance of obtaining quotations for jobs costing £300 or more and
  - (b) the benefits in establishing a long term relationship with two or three local printers (instead of the current nine) so that a better understanding is gained of the Council's requirements.
- 4.5 The Group also concludes that, to secure maximum benefits from knowledge of print procurement and of the local market place, in future all non-specialist external printing should be procured through the central print room. This offers the opportunity for the print room to become a "one stop shop" by taking responsibility for the best means of producing documents to the quality and price required.
- 4.6 In some cases, the cost of in-house photocopying was up to 25% lower than that quoted by external copy companies, although it might be

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expected that these prices would narrow following negotiation and/or the possible establishment of an onsite trading venture. Unless the service is available within Rochford or on site, it would be impossible to meet the turnaround times of some users that can typically be less than 4 hours. The Group received cautionary advice from one of the companies consulted that few companies would be able to turn around work within the Council's time target given the likelihood of other commitments.

- 4.7 The Group is also mindful that the 700,000 photocopies produced on standalone copiers represents "immediate" work which could not practically be outsourced.
- 4.8 The Group is aware that the Council's existing photocopiers do not produce the quality of work sometimes required, partly because, although just 20 months old, newer machines could offer greater functionality and quality. The machines were bought with an anticipated 5 year life and are under associated maintenance contracts which would incur liquidated damages to terminate at this time.
- 4.9 For photocopying and print the Group therefore:-

#### **RECOMMENDS**

That the present in-house photocopying arrangements be continued subject to:-

- (1) to improve quality –
- (a) all print room photocopiers be connected to the Council's IT network in order to avoid paper originals. (Timescale – by April 2002).
  - (b) a new system of print ordering be introduced to ensure that requirements are made clear when work is first submitted. (Timescale – by May 2001)
  - (c) users be encouraged to submit work to the print room earlier to avoid rushed jobs that often lead to a reduction in quality. (Timescale – Immediate)
  - (d) discussions take place with the copier maintenance company with the aim of improving the quality of output and service frequency. The opportunity to upgrade the copiers when it is financially advantageous to do so should continue to be assessed. (Timescale-ongoing)

- (e) Where the required quality cannot be achieved in-house, consideration be given to the copies being produced externally and/or offset being used.
- (2) to improve turnaround –  

The present vacancy for a print assistant be filled on a job share basis to provide flexibility for peak workloads and cover for absences. This would result in an increase in staffing from 1 fte to 1.1 fte at an estimated cost of £14,861 for 2001/02 and £15,327 for 2002/03 – these costs can be met from within the present staffing budget following the recent reassessment of the grade for this post.
- (3) to reduce costs –
  - (a) staff should be instructed on a regular basis to make use of the central print room rather than the standalone copiers (central copiers are 8% lower per copy excluding staffing costs). (Timescale – immediate)
  - (b) work should be placed to external offset printing where this is cheaper than photocopying (typically runs of 3,000 plus for black and white, 1,000 plus for colour). (Timescale – immediate)
- (4) to improve management of the service –
  - (a) regular user satisfaction surveys be undertaken. (Timescale – Each July)
  - (b) throughput within the central print room be monitored to enable future planning of the service in line with usage. (Timescale – immediate)
  - (c) responsibility for standalone photocopiers be transferred from central services to the central print room to ensure a more unified approach to the provision of photocopying. (Timescale – immediate)

## **5 REDUCTION IN PAPER**

- 5.1 The Group has addressed the specific request to examine how the amount of paper sent to Members could be reduced in the context of the Council as a whole. The Group acknowledges that this is likely best to be achieved through measures to reduce the number of photocopies produced and increased use of electronic communication. Reduced use of paper also offers the prospect of cost savings. The Group therefore:-

**RECOMMENDS**

- (1) That, with effect from the new municipal year, Members be asked to consider again on an individual basis whether they wish to receive copies of all agendas and reports – copies of agenda only could be provided for non-committee Members, with reports available on request.
- (2) That Members consider whether Committee, Sub-Committee and Working Group paperwork be despatched to appointed Members only.
- (3) That appendices to reports be avoided where possible, with copies of lengthy attached documents placed in the Members' Room. (Timescale – Immediate)
- (4) That the current policy that reports be a maximum of 2 pages in length should, wherever possible, be enforced. (Timescale – immediate)
- (5) That agenda, reports and minutes to be published on the Internet as soon as practicable. (Timescale – commence work immediately)
- (6) That only Council officers attending a meeting in future be provided with a paper copy of committee papers. (Timescale – Immediate)
- (7) That all Members be encouraged to make use of the Internet as a means of communication with the Council offices and for receiving committee papers. (The Government has already set a target for all Councillors to be on line by 2005 and the Council is required to assist in the achievement of this. Committee papers could be accessed on line either from the Internet or the Council's Intranet. As well as reducing paper consumption, electronic documents can be delivered to Members more speedily.)
- (8) That attachments to the Members' Bulletin should be the exception (with officers using précis techniques wherever possible) and the Bulletin emailed to all Members with "at home" email facilities. (Timescale – Immediate)
- (9) That once all agendas, minutes and reports are available on the Internet, a review be undertaken on the possibilities for Parishes and public libraries to be able to access them from that source.

(10) That officers be encouraged to communicate internally through the Council's email network and Intranet wherever practicable. (Timescale – immediate)

(11) That, in accordance with requirements of the proposed IS/IT Strategy, emails from the public be responded to by email wherever possible. (Timescale – immediate)

## **6 RECYCLED PAPER**

### **6.1 The Group RECOMMENDS**

That the Head of Administrative and Member Services be asked to consider further how the current usage of recycled paper (95%) can be increased. (Timescale – by March 2002 in line with Best Value Performance Plan)

## **7. DESK TOP PUBLISHING**

7.1 A recent review of the Council's corporate image has identified the need to improve the quality of printed documents. Increasingly, the Council's documents are in competition with those from other public and private sector organisations and they must be of an appropriate quality for the purpose they are produced. The increased use of offset will assist this aim. However, the Group has identified the need to improve the initial design of documents. This is best achieved by the use of desk top publishing software. Although desk top publishing is in limited use in some areas of the Council, the level of graphic design skills required to provide a cost effective service suggests that a centrally based provision may be advantageous. The Group therefore

### **RECOMMENDS**

That a further report be brought to Members on how best desk top publishing/graphic design could be undertaken within the Council. (Timescale – Autumn Cycle 2001)

## **8 WORD PROCESSING**

8.1 The Group has undertaken further work to identify costs and performance aspects associated with the four principal options identified at the Interim report stage.

8.2 There has been a detailed monitoring of workflow and analysis of future customer requirements (gained from both the customer survey and consultation with Heads of Service). The Group has been mindful that the service offered needs to accord closely with the demands of the Authority.

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- 8.3 From the above, it has been recognised that the traditional workload of the word processing section has been declining in recent years as more officers at all levels of the Council undertake their own typing (the use of the central dictation system has now reduced to just nine regular users).
- 8.4 Increasingly, the section is asked to undertake the production of more complex documents such as publications and forms. This work requires software and skills currently unavailable in the section and has therefore resulted in some criticism from users of the service provided.
- 8.5 To address the need for a central resource to design and maintain the Council's website and intranet site, the word processing section has recently been identified as a suitable location for this resource. However, it has already become clear that for this arrangement to work there will need to be an investment in staff retraining.
- 8.6 The Group has considered possible outsourcing of the present workload of the word processing section but has concluded that, in the case of word processing, it would not be possible to find a service locally that could meet the Council's turnaround times. Whilst it might be possible to stimulate the local market for this type of work, the cost and time involved given the volume of word processing could not be justified. A market place does exist for graphic design and website design and maintenance and the Group believes that both these options should be considered further once a clear assessment has been made of the likely future work levels, particularly those associated with the Council's IS/IT Strategy.
- 8.7 Whilst considering it advantageous to maintain word processing in-house, the Group has been mindful of the need to address user concerns about the quality of output and turnaround times.
- 8.8 Given the reduction in word processing work and the stated requirements of users, the Group no longer considers a central word processing section as the most appropriate or cost effective means of meeting the Council's basic typing requirements. Instead, consideration should be given to decentralising the typing service with each Division assuming responsibility for its own requirements. Where practical, and in accordance with work requirements, staff currently involved in word processing should be transferred to Divisions. The Group believes that the only exception to decentralisation should be activity associated with design and maintenance of the Council's website and intranet site and that an appropriate central staff level should be retained for this purpose. A case could also be made for centrally based graphic design activity. (See 7.1 above).
- 8.9 Before proceeding further, the Group:-

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**RECOMMENDS**

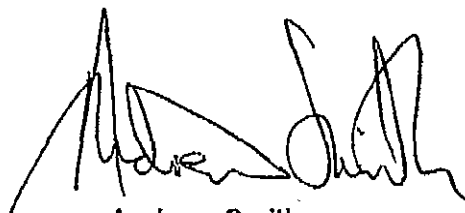
That the Corporate Director (Law, Planning and Administration) and the Head of Administrative and Member Services undertake further work on how decentralisation might be achieved and report back to a future meeting of this Committee. This report should take account of the Council's future requirements for desk top publishing/graphic design and website design and maintenance. (Timescale – Autumn cycle 2001)

**9 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

These are outlined in the report. Recommendations should lead to savings via increased efficiency which can be fully quantified on completion of work identified.

**10 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee notes the action set out under Appendix 2 and **RESOLVES** the recommendations set out under Sections 4,5,6, 7 and 8 above. (HAMS)



Andrew Smith

Head of Administrative & Member Services

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**Background Papers**

Review Documentation.

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## **BEST VALUE REVIEW – DOCUMENT PRODUCTION**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This is an interim report outlining the work undertaken to date by the Document Production Best Value Review Officer Group. Having carried out an initial survey of existing operations, this report outlines the Group's findings to date, advises Members of the options under consideration, and at this stage seeks Members' guidance on any other options or issues that Members might consider appropriate to include within the review context.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The Review Group has been meeting since June 2000, with the objective of reaching a finalised report stage for Members consideration early in the New Year.
- 2.2 The Group is looking at the production of printed material and documents for electronic publication across the Council including:-
- Preparation of documents throughout the Authority.
  - Photocopying.
  - Offset printing (currently external)
  - Graphic design.
  - Print finishing (i.e. binding, laminating etc.)

### **3 PROFILE**

- 3.1 In profiling the service, the Group is taking on board within the Review process:-
- The corporate aims relating to the service and the Council's environmental policy.
  - Service Vision and Purpose statements.
  - Existing Service Level Agreement (which sets out service scope and client/user responsibilities, including turn around times).
  - Current equipment and staff resources.
  - The current budget provision.
  - The IT contract and proposals for the Council's IS/IT strategy.

- The Central Government's targets for electronic Government and the associated requirements for documents to be produced using appropriate language for website and intranet.
- The current review of the Council's corporate identity and associated requirements.
- The Government's Modernising Agenda and likely associated communication.

#### **4 BENCHMARKING AND SURVEY WORK**

- 4.1 As part of the Review, the Group has tested existing staff satisfaction levels and is examining work flow and paper usage issues.
- 4.2 The Review Group is also working with Wycombe District Council (who have already undertaken a major survey of 128 Authorities) to identify the structure, performance and expectations of other authorities in this area and has participated in a comparison of the print service against statistics collated by South Bedfordshire District Council relating to other Shire Districts.
- 4.3 The Group is also taking on board the recent work undertaken by the Audit and Process Review Unit in respect of print services, which has recently been reported to the Audit Committee.

#### **5 INITIAL ASSESSMENT**

- 5.1 The group has now reached the stage of its assessment at which some options have been identified for both printing and word processing. During the review process, the Group has also considered some aspects of the work of both word processing and print and suggested change (where no additional resource implications are involved) with the aim of improving the current level of service. A brief indication of these is set out below:-

##### **5.2 Print**

- Ensure clear priority turnaround time for work subject to statutory deadlines, including most Committee and some legal work.
- Ensure appropriate response time to meet the requirements of users.
- Investigation of possibilities for increasing the percentage of re-cycled paper used – whilst over 90% of paper purchased by the Authority made from re-cycled material, it is possible that further inroads can be made.

- The setting of specific targets aimed at reducing the quantity of paper used (particularly given that intranet and email are available for internal communications).

These are being taken up by the Head of Service.

### **5.3 Word Processing**

- Ensure documents are produced in accordance with statutory deadlines.
- Exploration of the possibilities to input and process data received when external surveys are undertaken.
- Re-inforcement of the need for adherence to the standard design layouts for letters and other publications.

Again, these are being taken up by the Head of Service.

### **5.4 Options**

#### **Printing**

- 5.5 Whilst work is still in hand aimed at identifying the precise costs of the in-house printing service, the Group has recognised that reprographic services are commercially available and that the Council should be able to demonstrate that any in-house service provides a service of equal quality, effectiveness and cost to that which might be obtained from the private sector. Hence the Group will be undertaking market testing to establish if the private sector could meet some or all of the Council's printing requirements and the costs of such service provision.

- 5.6 Clearly, in the light of the information then obtained, the Group will be preparing recommendations on the options available for Member consideration

#### **Word Processing**

- 5.7 Based on the information obtained to date the Group has already identified four principal options for the future of word processing namely:-

- Maintaining the current service, with or without modification.
- Service withdrawal.
- Service externalisation.

- Service decentralisation.

5.8 As with the print service, it will not be possible to reach any final conclusions on which of these is likely to be the best option until such time as costs have been identified for each option. These costs, together with performance, will then need to be compared with comparable information from other Local Authorities and, if possible, the private sector.

5.9 Taking each of the four identified options in turn, the Group has currently made the following observations:-

5.10 Maintaining the Current Service with or without modifications

- The staff survey shows that the unit is highly valued by users.
- The survey of work undertaken by the central unit demonstrates a high degree of variance in work generated by divisions from week to week which can currently be absorbed within overall workload.
- The central unit now undertakes more specialist work including spreadsheets, newsletters, forms and powerpoint presentations.
- A resource would have to be identified for any future requirements for graphic design and web authoring.

5.11 Service Withdrawal

- There would be immediate savings in salaries and other operating costs associated with the unit.
- The staff survey shows an expectation that current overall typing work loads within the Council will continue and in some cases increase.
- The Group has not yet been able to identify surplus capacity within the organisation that could absorb the work presently undertaken.

5.12 Service Externalisation

- There are no longer many businesses in the private sector offering typing services.
- None of the Authorities surveyed by Wycombe have externalised their service.
- The survey has identified a need for increased graphic design and web authoring (the production of documents for electronic

publication for the internet or an intranet). There may be opportunities to seek involvement of the private sector in this type of specialist activity.

**5.13 Service De-centralisation (break-up of the central unit and the re-allocation of staff to individual divisions).**

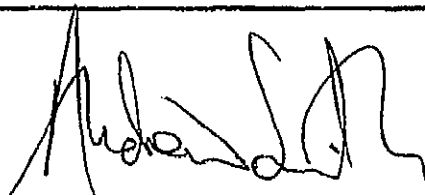
- Individual Divisions would have greater control over their typing, particularly for work not produced to legal deadline which can be queued.
- May assist in making the cost of the service more visible.
- A decentralised unit does not allow work to be spread between operators still providing additional support and cover.
- The same equipment is used by more than one operator at present so there is likely to be a need to purchase additional hardware and software to facilitate decentralisation.
- The experience of other Councils which have decentralised their word processing unit suggests that the arrangements can be made to work but often result in increased staffing within divisions as the workloads and absences are dealt with.
- Decentralised word processing can result in increased departures from the corporate standards of document production.
- There is a need to consider how decentralisation would meet the additional requirements that have been identified to input graphic design and web authoring.
- There would also be a requirement for additional copies of software to be purchased. (costs)

**5.14 To aid the Group's deliberations with its next stage, it would be helpful to receive any views of Members on the matters raised and any other options which might be considered relevant.**

**6 RECOMMENDATION**

It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

To note the progress of the work undertaken by the Document Production Best Value Review Officer Group to date and, subject to Members observations, the Committee await the finalised report in due course.



Andrew Smith

Head of Administrative and Member Services

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**Background Papers:**

Benchmarking and survey paperwork

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**FINANCE & GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE**  
**- 12 April 2001**

**APPENDIX 2**

ACTION	STATUS
Ensure response times for work subject to statutory deadlines, including most Committee and some Legal work, are maintained.	Completed
The setting of specific targets and/or reduce the quantity of paper used (particularly given that internet and Email are available for internal communications) to accord with sustainability objectives.	A target reduction of 2% has been set within the proposed IS/IT strategy.
Ensure there are instructions in place for the use of the photocopier at Rayleigh by external groups	Completed
Circulate advice to all staff on minimum photocopier amounts which should be taken to print room/charges for private use	Completed
Availability of DPU service to be included in Corporate common staff induction procedures	Completed
As now very few regular users, wind down use of central dictation equipment (thereby saving cost of maintenance agreement) and replace with hand held machines for relevant officers or other low cost alternative method.	To be concluded by end of current maintenance agreement
Investigate whether adjustments to in-house leaflet printing practices may result in lower printing costs.	To conclude by July 2001

18.15