

## **REVIEW OF DOCUMENT PRODUCTION AND DATA MANAGEMENT**

### **1 SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report contains the results of two reviews. The first is the review of the Document Production Unit, and the second the review of data management in the authority.

### **2 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 The document production Best Value review concluded in April 2001. The then Finance and General Purposes Committee agreed 'that the Corporate Director (Law, Planning & Administration) and Head of Administrative and Member Services undertake further work on how decentralisation of basic word processing work might be achieved and report back to a future meeting of this Committee. This report to take account of the Council's future requirements for desktop publishing/graphic design and web design and maintenance.'
- 2.2 As a result of the asset management Best Value review, the Finance and General Purposes Committee agreed, in December 2000, 'that a further report on the viability of a data centre following a process review of data management with the authority be presented.'
- 2.3 Both reviews were put on hold whilst the post of Head of Administrative and Member Services was vacant.

### **3 REVIEW OF DOCUMENT PRODUCTION UNIT (DPU)**

- 3.1 The DPU consists of 4.8 full time equivalent staff, within the Central Services section of the Administrative and Member Services Division. It provides a centralised word processing service for the Council, including typing of dictation, letters and memoranda, committee reports, minutes, Power Point presentations, Excel work, forms and preparing and posting documents to the intranet and web-site.
- 3.2 The review took the following process:-
- E-mail survey to all staff
  - Consultation with Operational Management Team

- Team and individual meetings with all staff in DPU
  - Collection of information on work undertaken in the DPU over a four month period.
- 3.3 The results of the staff survey indicated that the majority of staff did not use the DPU. The reasons for this were identified as being:-
- More convenient for individuals to produce their own work
  - Many computer applications now generate standard letters and reports
  - Ability of the individual to determine quality and appearance of documents produced.
- 3.4 The statistics showing the usage of the DPU indicated that a limited number of regular 'customers' accounted for the majority of work undertaken. The volume of work for 'general' document production (such as letters and memos) is reducing significantly, but the demand for the production of specialist work, such as Power Point presentations and for posting information and maintaining it on the intranet and web-site, has increased considerably.
- 3.5 The staff in the DPU believes that there is a need for specialisation. They wish to build on individual strengths, either by concentrating on general document production (e.g. word processing of committee reports and minutes) or alternatively working on documents for the intranet and web-site.
- 3.6 In respect of the demand for desktop publishing/graphic design skills, with the advent of new, more advanced, print machines and PC based software, an increasing number of documents are already produced in-house. Publications requiring the use of specialist equipment are sent to external suppliers. The volume of this work is limited, and it would not be cost-effective to have the ability in-house to carry out this type of work.
- 3.7 However, to make the best use of the capabilities of the new print machines, including the potential for document imaging and scanning of documents, (leading to electronic storage of information), there needs to be a closer working relationship between the print room and the staff producing documents. This is also important for the work which needs to be undertaken on records management and the current centralised paper filing system, in the light of the requirements of the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts.
- 3.8 The conclusion of the review is that the DPU in its current form does not meet the needs of the organisation. Instead the work needs to be re-focused on the two areas where resource is required to address the overall needs of the organisation.

- 3.9 It is therefore proposed to integrate 2.8 full-time equivalent posts from the DPU with the existing print room, filing room and central stationery purchasing functions, into a new, single team. This will provide a centre for document management across the authority, put an emphasis on productivity and quality, and concentrate on the wider records management and storage work which needs to be taken forward.
- 3.10 It is proposed that the remaining 2 full-time equivalent posts from the DPU become specialists in meeting the needs of preparing and posting documents to the web-site and intranet. These posts will be transferred to the management of the I.T. Client Manager, who has responsibility for the development of the Council's intranet and web-site. These staff would be proactive in working to identify material for the web-site and in dealing with routine 'Webmaster' enquiries. They will also work on databases, data input and develop templates as required, as a result of the findings of the data management review which are set out below.
- 3.11 Structure charts showing the current and proposed structure are contained in Appendix 1.

#### **4 DATA MANAGEMENT REVIEW**

- 4.1 The process review of data management has been conducted by requesting all divisions to identify all the databases (both electronic and paper) that are maintained.
- 4.2 There are in excess of 90 databases in use across the authority. These are mainly electronic records, with some paper-based systems as well. The size of the databases varies. Examples include:
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| 4.3 | Electoral register database  | 33,450 property records                        |
|     | Uniform 7 database for land charges, development control and building control: | 39,000 property records                        |
|     | Council tax database   | 33,000 live accounts<br>40,000 closed accounts |
|     | Business rates   | 1,800 live accounts<br>9,000 closed accounts   |
|     | Crime and disorder complaints log  | 20 records                                     |

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|---|---------------|
| Committee Management Information System | 3,500 records |
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| General ledger database | 9,295 records |
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- 4.4 The databases are maintained, on a day-to-day basis, by the staff in the relevant section.
- 4.5 However, the initial establishment of databases requires a significant input of resource. For example, in order to ensure that the Council's corporate property database for land charges, development control and building control is reliable and that the best use is gained from the system, it has been necessary to check all records for duplicates and accuracy. This has been a full-time role and is still being completed.
- 4.6 This corporate database is being expanded further to include tree preservation orders and environmental health property records (over 16,000 records), all which require to be checked to ensure that the records can be properly transferred and the integrity of the database is maintained.
- 4.7 Work is also required on the decent homes database in the near future, and with the increasing use of electronic databases throughout the Authority, this area of work will develop further.
- 4.8 Proper management of this data is key to the efficient functioning of virtually every service provided by the Council. Currently this is done departmentally and the survey reveals that managers estimate in excess of 40 fulltime staff are involved in this task. In the medium to long term there is clearly a business case to be made for centralising this function within a data centre or bureaux. This will permit the Council to develop a level of expertise and resilience across the authority that does not exist in some areas at present and to ensure uniform input into a properly integrated system.
- 4.9 Many staff involved in data management also have other duties within their departments but the move towards e-government is creating a need for new skill sets in many areas. For these reasons it is suggested that there should be a gradual progression towards the centralisation of data management rather than a disruptive step change in the organisation. Corporate Management Board will seek opportunities to redirect staff towards electronic service delivery where improvements in service can be achieved and as opportunities arise. They will also look closely at the requirements for each replacement when staff vacancies occur.

- 4.10 A considerable amount has been achieved in the last year. The Council is on target with its IS/ICT strategy and within budget. This could not have been achieved without the help of external consultants had it not been for the work carried out by the Temporary Database Assistant. Considerably more work remains to be done and, in view of the extent of electronic databases across the Authority, it is proposed that this post is made permanent as part of the DPU reorganisation described above, under the management of the I.T. Client Manager. The Database Assistant post, graded at Scale 2-4, will work on databases and data input and provide a resource for the entire organisation to call on as required. The post will also work with the GIS (Geographical Information System) Officer, and provide cover for that post holder.

## **5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The review of the document production unit, as set out in paragraph 3, can be achieved within existing resources.
- 5.2 The Head of Financial Services advises that should the temporary Database Assistant become a permanent post this will result in changes to the core budget. The post holder has been engaged on a number of project/ service areas since 1999. Funding has been met from support service budgets for the various projects/services involved. If approval is given for a permanent post it will be included within the salaries estimates and enable the miscellaneous support provisions to be reduced. A permanent post will enable more forward planning and time tabling than at present.
- 5.3 There are no I.T. or equipment costs as a result of the proposals in the report. It is intended to review the office accommodation of the staff concerned to locate them appropriately in accordance with the new management structure, but this should result in minor expense only which can be met from existing budgets.

## **6 RECOMMENDATION**

- 6.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**
- (1) That the review and re-organisation of the document production service be approved as set out in paragraph 3 of the report.
  - (2) That Corporate Management Board keeps the opportunities for revised working practices under review in the light of the Council's move towards electronic service delivery.

- (3) That the post of Temporary Database Assistant be established as a permanent post, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April, 2003, as outlined in paragraph 4 of the report. (HAMS)

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**Background Papers:**

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