

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET BOARD
1st APRIL 2010

DIRECTORATE OF FINANCE & CORPORATE SERVICES

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF REVENUES & CUSTOMER SERVICES
- M. JONES

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Part 1 - Doc.Code: PRB-010410-REP-FS-MJ

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SECTION B

ITEM 1

ACCESS TO SERVICES - DIGITAL TV PROJECT

Purpose of Report

1. To give an update on the National Assembly's pilot project for accessing council services via digital TV.

Background

2. One of the workstreams under the Tier 1 programme Transforming How We Do Business is Access to Services, and amongst the objectives of this workstream are:
 - to increase the range of service channels available for citizens;
 - to improve the design of access channels to reflect what matters to citizens.
3. One access channel which has not been used to date by the authority is digital TV. This is a channel which allows citizens to interact with the council (and indeed other public sector bodies) through their television in much the same way that citizens can interact via the internet. Essentially, the interactive digital channel takes content from the authority's website and displays it via digital TV.
4. Research has indicated that over 30% of the population is "digitally excluded" and does not have access to a pc. Many of these people are the most in need of access to council (and other public sector) services.
5. Digital TV is seen as a way of drawing these disenfranchised citizens into council services, and as such meets the objectives of increasing the range of access channels available for citizens.

Current Position

6. The National Assembly has recently allocated resources for an all Wales pilot scheme for the year 2010/11, and it has offered grant funding to all Welsh authorities to pay for the service provided by "Looking Local" (this is a fully managed service owned and run by Kirklees Council on behalf of all local government and its partners, with currently over 100 public sector organisations engaged).

7. Direction and governance for the project at national level will be given by the establishment of a steering group comprising key individuals from the Assembly, participating authorities, and the WLGA. Progress will be reported to SOCITM Cymru, Customer Focus Wales, and to the Assembly's Making The Connections team.
8. The steering group will carry out a full evaluation of the pilot scheme and will produce a business case for future use in February 2011.
9. However, it is important to stress that commitment to the pilot scheme does not entail any commitment to the project beyond March 2011. There is, therefore, no commitment of future years' budgets.
10. Over and above any national evaluation of the pilot, we will be carrying out our own evaluation over the course of 2010/11 and we will come to our conclusion as to the business case for continuing (or not) with the service after March 2011.
11. The National Assembly's timescale from announcing the pilot scheme to requiring authorities' acceptances was extremely short as it is intended that the pages to be published on digital TV be available from 1st April 2010.
12. That acceptance has, therefore, been returned to the Assembly and work to prepare the necessary pages for publication was undertaken in early March. I would stress again at this point that the service for 2010/11 is 100% funded by the Assembly so will not involve any financial input from the authority.
13. The services to be included initially in the pilot exercise are:
 - Benefits
 - Community & Living, which includes Libraries, Council Tax, and Trading Standards.
 - Community Safety
 - Education
 - Health & Social Care, which includes Children's & Family Services, Services for Disabled Persons, Support for Carers.
 - Home and Housing
 - Rubbish & Recycling, which includes Refuse Collection & Recycling, Home Composting, and Recycling Guide.
 - Transport & Streets, which includes Bus Passes, Blue Badges and Residents' Parking.
 - Report & Request It, covering a wide range of service areas.
14. There will be both English and Welsh version of the pages.
15. Appropriate publicity for the launch is currently being prepared.

16. A further report will be presented when the project has been live for a couple of months.

Recommendation

17. To note the report.

List of Background Papers

18. Welsh Unitary Authority Digital TV Service – Projection Initiation Document.
Welsh Assembly Government Funding Offer – 4th March 2010.

Wards Affected

19. All

Officer Contact

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COMPLIANCE STATEMENT

ACCESS TO SERVICES - DIGITAL TV PROJECT

(a) **Implementation of Decision**

The decision is proposed for implementation after the 3 day call-in period.

(b) **Sustainability Appraisal**

Community Plan Impacts:

Economic Prosperity	No impact
Education and Lifelong Learning	Positive
Better Health and Well Being	Positive
Environment and Transport	Positive
Crime and Disorder	Positive

Other Impacts:

Welsh Language	Positive
Sustainable Development	No impact
Equalities	Positive
Social Inclusion	Positive

(c) **Consultation**

There has been no requirement under the Constitution for external consultation on this item.