

Report

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Report to:	Finance and Information Technology Resources Committee
Date of Meeting:	19 May 2009
Report by:	Executive Director (Finance and Information Technology Resources)

Subject:	Best Value Service Review - IT Help Desk Service
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1. Purpose of Report

1.1. The purpose of the report is to:-

- ♦ Advise on the process followed and the key outcomes/recommendations of the recently conducted Best Value Service Review (BVSR) of the IT Help Desk Service.

2. Recommendation(s)

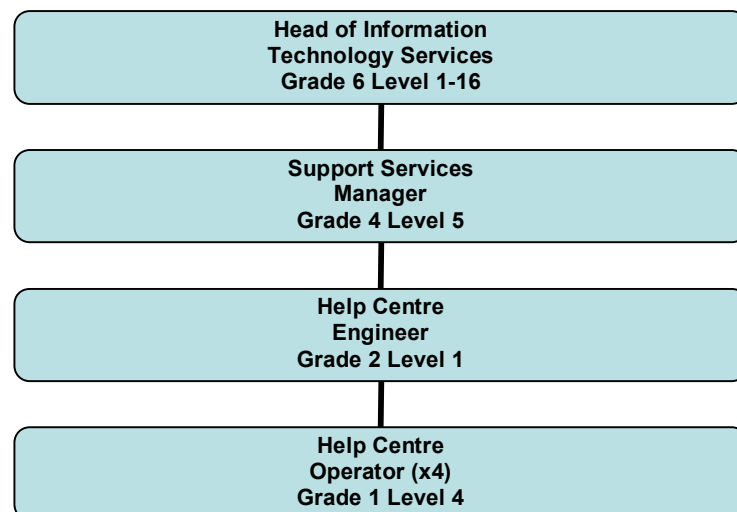
2.1. The Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

- (1) that the key findings of the IT Help Desk Best Value Service Review be noted;
- (2) that the proposed Improvement Plan recommendations as contained in Appendix 1 be adopted as a basis for future improvements to service delivery.

3. Background

- 3.1. An IT Help Desk service has been provided since South Lanarkshire Council was formed in 1996. The primary aim of the IT Help Desk is to facilitate the resolution of all IT and telecommunication faults logged by employees of SLC, South Lanarkshire Leisure, LVJB and elected members. It seeks to do this in a professional and timely manner and to the ultimate satisfaction of the customer.
- 3.2. The IT Help Desk Service resides within the IT Service of Finance & IT Resources and is resourced by 5 full time equivalent posts. The service is the first point of contact for more than 6,500 employees, elected members, South Lanarkshire Leisure and the Lanarkshire Valuation Joint Board.
- 3.3. In 2008 the IT Help Desk handled around 29,000 incidents and 20,000 Requests for Change from customers, of which 52% of the incidents were resolved at first point of contact.

3.4. IT Services – Support Services Structure



4. The Review Process

4.1. Scope of the Review

To determine the current quality and cost of the Help Desk Service with a view to identify improvements in the quality of the service and to improve customer satisfaction. To identify any potential for Shared Service of this function.

4.2. Objectives of the Review

The objectives of the review were as follows:

- To improve the overall quality of the Help Desk Service.
- To determine appropriate Scope of Service, Channels for Delivery and Customer Satisfaction.

4.3. Focus of the review

The focus of the review is to:

- Review delivery of the first line contact of the IT Help Centre.
- Consider whether the current model is appropriate (scope, Hours of Opening, Customer expectations and Satisfaction) to current and emerging business requirements.

4.4. Review Methodology

The review was conducted according to the Best Value principles and the 4 C's - **Challenge, Compare, Consult and Compete**. It will be shown that each of these stages was fully considered as part of the review.

- **Challenge** – Workshops were held with the main stakeholders to challenge the effectiveness of current processes. Customers were also surveyed to ascertain their thoughts on the quality of the service and how well it is performing.
- **Compare** – The SLC service was compared to other Scottish Local Authorities by way of a survey and to all UK councils using the Society of IT Managers (SocITM) benchmarking service.
- **Consult** – All of the major stakeholders were consulted during this review through the use of surveys or workshops.
- **Compete** – The cost and risks of providing the service internally within IT has been compared to outsourcing and in-sourcing to another SLC call centre. The details of this are available in the background papers.

The full details of the 4 C's review will be covered within the body of this report.

4.5. Review Team

The Team consisted of Robin Miller, IT Strategy, Security and Standards Manager; Ian Halferty, IT Support Services Manager; Fiona O'Neill, Business Change Manager; Jackie Turnbull, Support Services Admin Team Leader and Lila Sneddon, IT Help Centre Engineer and Unison representative.

4.6. The project team also formally reported, on a monthly basis, to a Project Review Board comprising the IT Senior Management Team.

5. Survey Analysis

5.1. Separate questionnaire surveys were undertaken as an integral part of the review process. In particular, two key groups were surveyed:

1. **Customers** - to determine if the service provided is of a high quality.
2. **Other Scottish Councils** – to benchmark IT Help Desk activity against current practice within other local authorities.

5.2. The design of each questionnaire was tailored to seek views on overall IT Help Desk performance, satisfaction levels and areas for improvement. The detailed questionnaire results of both surveys are available on request, the headline outcomes of which can be summarised as follows:-

5.3. **Customer Survey:** The key findings confirm that the IT Help Desk is providing a very good service to its customers - 98% of respondents giving a good or excellent rating. The survey received a 37% return which provides a significant statistical sample for the basis of the analysis.

5.3.1. **User/Customer Perception of the IT Help Desk Strengths:** The following are examples of the vast number of positive comments made by respondents

- A shining example of good customer care
- Friendly, efficient and helpful staff
- Staff take ownership of the issues
- Don't make customers feel "stupid" – patient with technophobes
- Professional, knowledgeable and prompt service
- Always follow-up when promised
- The service is organised and accessible
- Many problems solved immediately
- Majority of incidents resolved in an acceptable timeframe
- Majority of calls answered within corporate standard
- Keep up the good work!

5.3.2. **User/Customer Perception of Potential Improvements:** The following are examples of the areas for improvement suggested by respondents and the follow-up action that is planned. It should be noted that these represent a very small proportion (2%) of the overall comments received.

Improvement	Action
Extended opening hours	This would be too costly as there is insufficient demand. No action will be taken
Reduction of time spent “on hold” when calling	This will be monitored and considered after the restructure of the Help Desk reporting
Consistent regular updates on the progress of issues	This will be considered during the review of the Incident and RFS processes which are recommended within the Improvement Plan
No issues left unresolved	This will be considered during the review of the Incident and RFS processes which are recommended within the Improvement Plan
More training for the Help Desk Operators to increase their knowledge base	Training has been recommended as part of the Improvement Plan
The Help Desk pre-recorded message should only be played when the Help Desk is closed	The IT Help Desk messages are continually monitored and changed as required therefore no specific action will be taken
Introduction of additional contact methods	Additional contact methods have been recommended as part of the Improvement Plan
New starts to the council should be given the Help Desk telephone number with an overview of the service that they provide during their induction	This has been recommended as part of the Improvement Plan

5.4. **Peer Review/Benchmark Survey:** Of the 31 Scottish Councils surveyed, 11 replied giving information on the IT Help Desk service they provide. The results indicated that South Lanarkshire’s IT Help Desk was making good use of its resources and providing a good all round service to its customers. South Lanarkshire Council was the top performing UK authority for IT Help Desk Services (SocITM 2008)

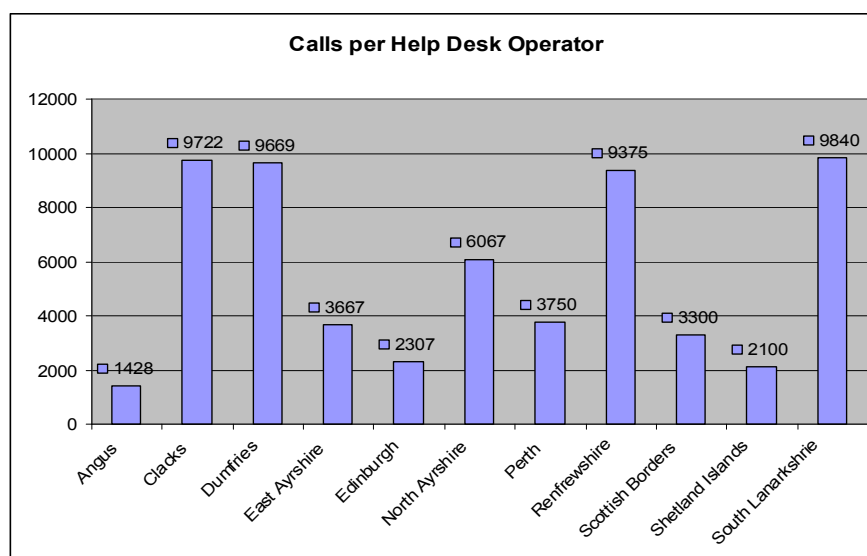


Figure2

In South Lanarkshire each member of the IT Help Desk team deals with on average 9840 incidents per annum showing a strong placing within Figure 2.

6. Key Conclusions from the Surveys

- 6.1. On the basis of this primary research, the evidence from 2 surveys confirms that the IT Help Desk is highly rated by its customers whilst the analysis of performance indicates that the IT Help Desk makes efficient and effective use of the resources at its disposal.
- 6.2. In operational terms, the performance analysis and SOCITM benchmarking in particular provide a strong endorsement that South Lanarkshire Council's IT Help Desk is customer-focussed and providing value for money to the users of the service. Similarly, in benchmarking terms, whilst the peer review exercise is by no means a definitive statement on the effectiveness of the IT Help Desk services, it does add strong credence to the assertion that South Lanarkshire is providing an excellent IT Help Desk service within the public sector in Scotland.
- 6.3. Notwithstanding this claim, a number of alternative delivery options were also considered as part of the BVSR process ranging from outsourcing to a third party to transferring service to the Customer Service Centre.
- 6.4. In the event, each option was assessed in turn but rejected on the feedback evidence of the survey results which clearly revealed high customer satisfaction rates allied to a strong desire to not just maintain the status quo but improve upon the existing service delivery model. The other options were also much more expensive and carried with them inherent risks that would have been very likely to have an adverse impact on customer satisfaction.

7. Other Analysis

- 7.1. To supplement the information gathered from the surveys several other forms of stakeholder consultation were under taken, namely:
 - Data gathering workshops
 - Process Mapping workshops
 - Stakeholder interviews

The information collected from each of the sessions was analysed and used to initially inform the Improvement Plan. The "As-Is" process maps also highlighted some areas of the processes that required further investigation.

- 7.2. Initially data gathering workshops were held with the Help Desk employees to collect as much information as possible by answering some key questions, like:
 - What they do on a daily basis?
 - What additional tasks they perform?
 - What are the main issues/concerns?
 - What challenges they face?
 - What gives them the most satisfaction?

This allowed the project team to fully understand the IT Help Desk from the perspective of the employees.

- 7.3. This was followed by a set of process mapping workshops, attended by IT Help Desk employees and representatives of the groups providing second line support i.e. ComputaCenter and Service Delivery. The current (As-Is) processes were mapped for Incident and RFS handling. The opportunity was also taken to further explore the issues with the current processes from each group's perspective. All of this information was captured and shared with the Steering Group and other major stakeholders and is available upon request.
- 7.4. To complete the consultation with the stakeholders structured interviews were conducted with senior representatives from the IT Business Systems teams and IT Training both of whom have significant dealings with the IT Help Desk. Many calls from users are passed to these groups for resolution and their opinion of the service provided was very valuable and informative. The conclusions from these interviews are available upon request.
- 7.5. The analysis from the consultation fed into the construction of the Improvement Plan as it highlighted many of the areas that required to be addressed. The Improvement Plan is therefore well rounded and covers the perspective of many stakeholders.

8. Options Appraisal

- 8.1. In order to compare and consider each of the potential options a full options appraisal was carried out. The options under review were:
- Retain the existing Service with Improvement Plan
 - Outsource
 - In-source to existing Council Call Centre
 - Shared service

The findings of the options appraisal are summarised below.

- 8.2. **Methodology**
A full appraisal was undertaken for each of the four options identified, which included comparisons of the costs, the risks and the business advantages. The existing costs for the current service were calculated as well as indicative costs for each of the alternative options, using consistent figures from the 2008/2009 budget. A Risk Assessment workshop was conducted with the major stakeholders, where each of the options was fully considered. Full deliberation was also given to both the advantages and disadvantages of each of the options under consideration.
- 8.3. **Option 1 - Retain the existing Service with Improvement Plan**
The cost for providing the current service was detailed and the quality of the service provided was compared to other Scottish Unitary Authorities. The risks involved in continuing to provide the service will not change, although business benefit could be gained by delivering the improvement plan. The success of the Improvement Plan is dependant on the introduction of improved reporting lines and a higher degree of operational management for the Help Desk. The Improvement Plan includes the introduction of some added value tasks including additional product support, as well as full training for all IT staff.
- 8.3.1. **Cost:** It is estimated that the current service costs **£129,000** per annum and no additional costs would be incurred to implement the Improvement plan.

8.3.2. Principle Risks: the principle risks with this option are

- The internal changes made due to the Improvement plan may have an adverse impact on the customer satisfaction
- There may be insufficient time to implement the Improvement plan

8.4. **Option 2 - Outsource**

Two sets of indicative costs were included within the review as a full tendering process was not completed. Costs were provided by ComputaCenter, who currently provide server and desktop support services to SLC. Also, the City of Edinburgh, shared their costs for outsourcing, which were extrapolated for the purposes of this review. In both cases the costs were considerably higher than providing the service internally. Added to this many high factor risks were identified which would require thorough mitigation and with very little business benefit to balance it out.

8.4.1. Cost: It is estimated that an outsourced service could cost between **£226,000** and **£358,000** per annum depending on the supplier chosen.

8.4.2. Principle Risks: the principle risks with this option are

- The scope of the change may have an adverse impact on the Customer Satisfaction rating
- Loss of business knowledge may initially result in a poorer service to users and customers
- Increased longer term costs and loss of revenue control. Change control may become a feature of future service provision

8.5. **Option 3 – In-source to existing Council Call Centre**

Moving the IT Help Desk to an internal Call Centre represented a significant risk to the Council in terms of increased cost, service degradation and inflexibility in accruing future business benefit.

8.5.1. Cost: It is estimated that an in-sourced service would cost around **£143,000**, if the Customer Service Centre was used.

8.5.2. Principle Risks: the principle risks with this option are

- Internal changes made during the implementation may have an adverse impact on the Customer Satisfaction rating
- Service Dilution. The priority nature of the Help Desk may be diminished due to a lack of technical knowledge by the new service.
- Loss of business knowledge may, initially result in a poorer service to users and customers particularly in the areas of resolving incidents on first touch.
- The quality of the service to the internal customers may be impacted by the fact that the service is currently externally focussed.

8.6. **Option 4 – Shared Service**

There are several possible Shared Service models that can be adopted – Offering a shared service to other Councils, using another Council's services or participating in a joint venture. As SLC are in the upper quartile of UK Local Authorities for Help Desk provision the best choice would be to provide Help Desk services to others.

8.6.1. Cost: The costs of providing a shared service have not been calculated as part of this review as many factors have to be taken into consideration, including the scope of the service to be provided.

8.6.2. Principle Risks: the principle risks with this option are

- Internal changes made during the implementation may have an adverse impact on the Customer Satisfaction rating within SLC as well as the new organisation.
- Service Dilution - providing Help Desk services to more than one organisation may diminish the provision due to a lack of technical knowledge.
- Lack of business knowledge may, initially result in a poorer service to users and customers particularly in the areas of resolving incidents on first touch.

8.7. Recommendations

Taking all of the information into account Option 1- Retain the existing Service with Improvement Plan is clearly the best choice for SLC at this time, as it offers the greatest value for money with by far the least risk to the business. It also has the maximum possibility for delivering business benefit through the successful implementation of the Improvement Plan.

8.8. Providing a Shared Service is considered to be a future ambition of SLC after the Improvement Plan has delivered its benefits and could be a possible income generator, if it is planned and executed correctly.

9. Key Recommendations/BVSR Action Plan

9.1. In order to fully demonstrate a commitment to best value, it is clear that the IT Help Desk needs to respond to new challenges in the short, medium and longer term and continue to add value to the users of IT in SLC.

9.2. The success of the recommendations is dependant on the implementation of a revised management structure for the IT Help Desk, where more focus can be given to the operational support required to improve day-to-day performance as well as achieve the goals of the Improvement Plan.

9.3. Within this context, therefore, a number of opportunities for improvement have been highlighted as part of the review process. They have been priorities as follows:

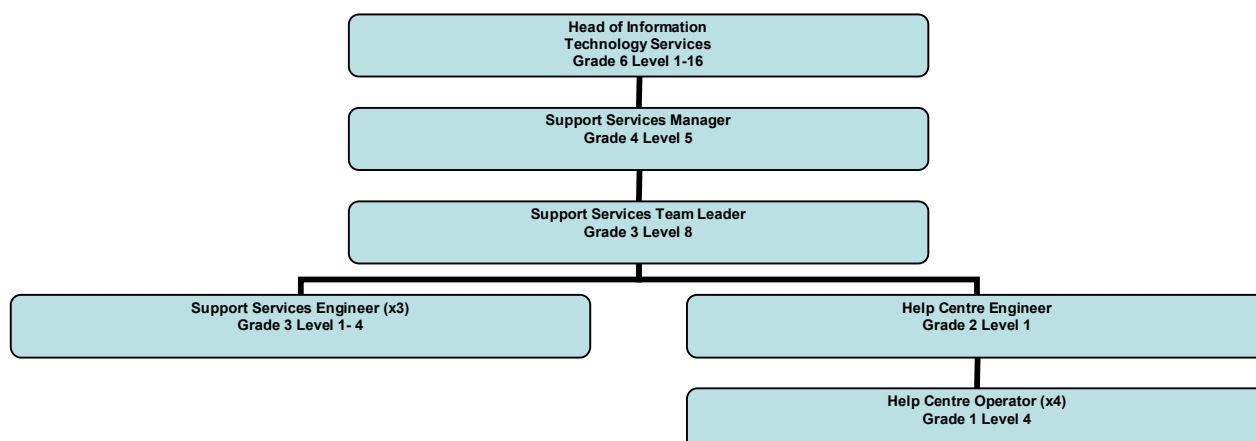
- High
- Medium
- Low

9.4. A total of 22 individual recommendations have been identified as an integral part of the Improvement Plan summarised in Appendix 1. These recommendations are designed to meet the original scope and objectives of the review with a view to ensuring that the service remains “fit for purpose” in the short, medium and longer term.

10. Employee Implications

10.1. A change in reporting structure may impact the roles of some of the employees involved. Also, training and education on the IT Help Desk procedures and the use of Assyst has been advocated for all employees.

10.2. Proposed New Structure – IT Services - Support Services



10.3. This proposed new structure has several key advantages:

- The more structured day-to-day management will help ensure that the IT Help Desk not only continues to deliver an excellent service, but focus is given to delivery of the Improvement plan.
- It provides an opportunity to blend the services of the IT Help Desk with the skills of the training team. This should, over time, provide a higher skilled workforce within the Help Desk which will provide a better service to the customers.
- The training team admin can be performed by the IT Help Desk staff, as both aspects will be managed by the same team leader.

11. Financial Implications

11.1. The costs of all the recommendations contained in Appendix 1 can be met from the existing revenue budgets.

11.2. By implementing the proposed new structure additional costs for a team leader can be avoided, as an existing post will be used to cover it. Avoided costs are detailed below:

Salary	£34,710
On Costs	£ 8,610
Total cost	£43,320

12. Other Implications

12.1. None.

13. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

13.1. This report has been screened for any policy implications in respect of Equality Impact Assessment. There is no requirement to carry out an impact assessment in respect of the proposals contained within this report.

13.2. In terms of consultation, a Unison representative was fully involved in all aspects of the review.

Linda Hardie

Executive Director (Finance and Information Technology Resources)

20 April 2009

Link(s) to Council Values and Objectives

- ◆ Values: Accountable, efficient and effective

Previous References

None

List of Background Papers

- ◆ IT Help Desk Executive Summary
- ◆ Scottish Local Authority Survey v10
- ◆ Business Team Consultation Report

Contact for Further Information

If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-

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Best Value Review of the IT Help Desk

APPENDIX 1

Improvement Plan

Improvement ID	Improvement Action	Outcome	Additional Comment	Affects	Priority	Start Date	End Date	Lead Officer	Risk and Issues
SSST06201	Review Help Desk Management and Reporting Structures	<i>Improved reporting lines with a higher degree of operational management support for the Help Desk.</i> <i>Pre-requisite to other improvement plan actions and future business improvements.</i>		IT Support Services Manager	High	01/04/2009	01/05/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Lack of delivery on this improvement action WILL impede the remainder of this plan.
SSST06202	Training and education for all IT staff on the Help Desk procedures and the use of Assyst for this purpose.	<i>Consistent professional practice across IT Services</i> <i>Consistent approach to Resolver Groups by the Help Desk</i> <i>Reduced reluctance to use Assyst</i> <i>Better understanding of the difference between RFSs and Incidents</i> <i>Improved quality of information within incidents and Requests for Service (RFS)</i>	Improvement Action will cover both the Incident and RFS process	ALL IT Services	High	01/04/2009	30/12/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient Time Lack of Buy-in throughout IT
SSST06203	Review of prioritisation and escalation of Incidents and RFSs in relation to Help Desk services.	<i>Service to customers is correctly prioritised and delivered.</i>	This needs to cover both the Incident and the Help Desk aspects of the RFS process	ALL of IT Services	High	01/04/2009	31/03/2010	IT Support Services Manager	Lack of Communication

SSST06204	Introduction of training and Education on the Help Desk procedures and the use of Assyst into the IT induction training for New Employees	<i>Consistent practice within IT</i>		ALL IT Services	High	01/04/2009	30/06/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Proper Induction Processes are not followed
SSST06205	Review use of tools and processing across IT for Help Desk, configuration management, asset controls and procurement	<i>Best Practice proceses</i>		All of IT Services	High	01/04/2009	31/03/2010	Group BSM	Resistance to change and improvement
SSST06206	Reiteration of internal procedures for Help Desk Staff	<i>Consistent approach to handling calls</i> <i>Consistent quality of information held with Assyst</i>		Service Delivery Help Desk Training & Support Services	High	01/04/2009	30/06/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient time due to competing priorities
SSST06207	Review of Model Incidents	<i>Model Incidents fit for purpose which assist by helping the IT Help Desk to gather the appropriate information to ensure the correct information is passed to resolvers.</i> <i>Improved customer outcome</i>	This may increase the total number of model incidents.	ALL of IT Services	Medium	01/04/2009	30/11/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient time due to competing priorities Resistance to Change
SSST06208	Review of incident queues	<i>Easier management of workload</i>		ALL IT Services	Medium	01/04/2009	30/11/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient time due to competing priorities Resistance to Change
SSST06209	Introduction of SLA/OLA between the Help Desk and the internal IT teams	<i>Proactive approach that sets expectations on both sides</i> <i>Improved Levels of buy-in</i> <i>More effective resolution to end-users</i>		ALL of IT Services	Medium	01/04/2009	31/10/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Lack of Buy-in throughout IT

SSST06210	Consideration of password self-service	<i>Improved service to customers</i> <i>Reduction in password reset calls to Help Desk</i>	People Connect plan to provide a degree of password self-service	IT Technology Services Business Systems Teams	Low	01/04/2009	31/03/2010	Group BSM Technology Services Manager	External Suppliers cannot deliver effective self service solutions
SSST06211	Provision of formatted WEB forms based on the revised model incidents	<i>Additional contact method that increases the information provided at first point of contact</i> <i>Improved number of channels for customers and users contacting the Help Desk</i>		Mod Gov Business Team	Medium	01/04/2009	31/12/2009	BSM Modernising Government	Lack of available integration with the Help Desk Software
SSST06212	Provision of formatted Mail forms based on the revised model incidents	<i>Additional contact method that increases the information provided at first point of contact</i> <i>Improved number of channels for customers and users contacting the Help Desk</i>		IT Support Services	Medium	01/04/2009	31/12/2009	IT Strategy, Security and Standards Manager	Lack of knowledge of Outlook forms
SSST06213	Consideration of providing auto-notification to the Business and Technology Services Teams that an incident has been passed to their queue	<i>More proactive service that decreases the delay in reacting to an incident.</i>		ALL of IT Services	Medium	01/04/2009	30/06/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Lack of available integration with the Help Desk Software
SSST06214	Consideration to removal of pending closure step within the Incident management process	<i>Improved process</i> <i>Potential removal of redundant step</i>		Help Desk Service Delivery	Low	01/08/2009	30/11/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Resistance to process change
SSST06215	Consideration of SLC leading on a Shared Service for the IT Help Desk provision	<i>Longer term potential income generator</i>	More investigation required into how much interest exist with other councils.	IT Support Services Manager	Low	Consider as longer term improvement following consolidation of other improvement plan actions.		Head of IT	

SSST06216	Provision of a monthly report detailing the top ten incident reasons	<i>Call trends identified</i> <i>Problem areas identified and dealt with</i> <i>Knowledge Library improves customer outcomes</i>	This report should be available at the start of each month so that the last months issues can be dealt with in a timely manner	Help Desk Service Delivery	Medium	01/04/2009	30/06/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient Time due to competing priorities
SSST06217	Monitor and review the use of specialist Help Desk used for Business applications over a six month period	<i>Better understanding of pros and cons of providing the service using this model</i> <i>Number of calls taken and resolved by the specialist Help Desks</i> <i>Total number of calls received from customers</i>	The requirement to provide specialist Help Desks should be validated to ensure that it is providing the best customer outcome Complete audit available of calls received by IT Services	Business Systems	Medium	01/04/2009	30/09/2009	Group BSM	Insufficient Time due to competing priorities Resistance to process change
SSST06218	Introduction of IT Master classes, providing proactive intervention using a blending of the Help Desk and IT Training	<i>Increased duties and responsibility for the Help Desk and support services.</i> <i>Enhanced level of support to users.</i>	This could add value to the Help Desk service if implemented successfully.	Help Desk IT Training	Low	Consider as longer term improvement following consolidation of other improvement plan actions.		IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient time due to competing priorities Resistance to Change
SSST06219	Improve corporate awareness of IT Help Desk and the services that it delivers	<i>All staff are reminded of who to contact for IT assistance</i> <i>Staff will better understand the role of the IT Help Desk</i>	This could be an on-going campaign as changes to the Help Desk are implemented	IT Support Services	Medium	01/04/2009	31/03/2010	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient Time due to competing priorities
SSST06220	Introduction of a bi-ennial survey of the IT Help Desk to capture the on-going views of the IT Help Desk customers	<i>On-going consultaion on the service provided</i> <i>Abiity to tackle issues</i>		Help Desk	High	The last survey was conduct in the summer of 2008, therefore should aim to survey in 2010.		IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient time Customer apathy

SSST06221	introduction of the running of McAfee Virus Scanning reports	<i>Increase duties and responsibility for the Help Desk</i> <i>Responsibility moved from Service Delivery to the Help Desk</i>	Reports have to be run twice per day at 08:00 and 14:00	Help Desk	High	01/04/2009	30/04/2009	IT Support Services Manager	Insufficient Time due to competing priorities
SSST06222	Introduction of an overview of the IT Help Desk and the contact number into the new start induction	<i>All staff will know who to contact for IT assistance</i> <i>Staff will better understand the role of the IT Help Desk</i>		All new employees	High	Discussions are already underway and the changes are imminent		IT Strategy, Security and Standards Manager Employee Diversity & Development Manager	Proper Induction Processes are not followed