



OFFICIAL

Smarter Working programme update

Finance & Resources Committee

Date: 16 April 2021

Agenda Item:

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Submitted By: Director of Service Support

- Purpose** To update Members on the progress of the Smarter Working programme and the associated service improvements.
- Recommendations** That the report be noted.
- Summary** The Smarter Working programme has been in place for over two years and has successfully implemented a “Lean methodology” approach across several departments allowing for efficiencies in terms of time, revenue and user satisfaction to be realised. This report gives an update on the progress to date and the associated business benefits.

Local Government (Access to information) Act 1972

Exemption Category: None

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Background papers open to inspection: None

Annexes: None

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This year has highlighted more than ever that smarter more innovative ways of working are vital as we manage the challenges of an ever-changing environment, and the value of working differently has been recognised. Staff surveys have indicated that in areas there is dissatisfaction from staff regarding overly bureaucratic processes. The Smarter Working programme has worked with teams to take steps towards addressing these issues and improve capacity and quality of work. The Smarter Working team have completed a review of the progress to date and the associated benefits
- 1.2 As part of our IRMP a lean working proposal was submitted in September 2018. Research was undertaken into whether lean methodology could be used to improve and increase efficiency and effectiveness within the organisation. The proposal identified ways in which a lean review could be implemented:
 - 1.2.1 Identification of which processes which are critical, add value and if there are any processes that can cease because they are not adding value.
 - 1.2.2 Diagnosis of areas of failure and waste that are costing money unnecessarily.
 - 1.2.3 Removal of waste and failure meaning creation of capacity and budgets which will go further.
 - 1.2.4 Development of our internal capacity to continuously improve effectiveness.
- 1.3 An initial scoping exercise highlighted that there was insufficient in-house experience and knowledge to undertake this review. As a result, the service engaged in a tender process to appoint a consultant to work with the service to identify 4 projects. The Smarter working Manager will continue to progress and evaluate the key areas identified as part of the lean review, whilst continuing to embed the lean methodology within the service and support Business as usual and new projects.

2 Information

- 2.1 The Smarter Working programme have completed a review of the progress to date and associated benefits.

3 Property Repairs (Reactive)

- 3.1 The Smarter Working team worked closely with the property team to improve the previous "851" process. This enabled and empowered station-based personnel to make appropriate repairs and changes to their environment without the need for external contractors. The review took place over a 10-month period, concluding in November 2019. The new ways of working have reduced the average end to end time for these repairs from 23 to 4 days and achieved an estimated cost saving of £30,217 through a 24% reduction in use external contractors for reactive repairs.
- 3.2 The property team continue to work with the new improved system with success and feedback from the evaluation survey has rated the new process as good.

4 OPEX

- 4.1 The “314” review aimed to change the previous paper-based process for requisitions. Feedback highlighted the system was long and arduous. The Smarter working team transformed the process through the removal of areas of duplication, challenging the number of steps required and ultimately digitising the process by leveraging the capabilities of OPEX. Therefore, the previous average of 12 days to receive goods has significantly reduced to under 4 days. This reduced the time taken for goods to arrive and has increased user satisfaction through improving the speed of use and providing greater accountability throughout the process. The management and coordination of stock has improved through the introduction of the OPEX platform leading to more efficient stock levels within stores. This process has now been adopted service wide, with all staff now using the OPEX platform for the requisition of personal and station-based items. This review has now closed.

5 FS 100 – Expenses claims process

- 5.1 The previous FS100 paper-based expenses claims process required improvement which was highlighted through several feedback forums. Claimants explained that the process was over complicated which led to a time delay in completing the forms. The new digital form streamlines the claims process and creates a data library of expenses, providing the organisation with a greater degree of business intelligence and accountability. This new expense claim rollout is now imbedded in to BAU as per August 2020.

6 EMOC review and Competency Dashboard

- 6.1 Satisfaction with old competence recording platform was low and the HMICFRS had given us cause to review our ability to easily audit the competence of our operational personnel. An external audit through Kirklees council was commissioned on our existing EMOC which concluded with an outcome of ‘limited assurance’. As such a review was undertaken to assist in the creation of an alternative method to record station-based competency. The review recommended an inhouse system – Competency Dashboard. The Smarter working team provided a key role in the production of the new Competency Dashboard which followed the key stages of the ‘lean methodology’.
- 6.2 The new Competency dashboard has received praise on arrival from all levels of the organisation as well as achieving ‘substantial Assurance’ in the follow up Kirklees audit.
- 6.3 There has been a significant improvement in user satisfaction of the new system as well as releasing over 3500 hours of time on station to undertaken key roles, achieved through a reduction of time taken to input station training.
- 6.4 Cost saving did form part of this project, however through developing our own in-house system, the existing recording system will become redundant, achieving a cost saving of £7000 per annum.
- 6.5 Competency Dashboard has been a resounding success which is now part of BAU as per December 2020. Due to the level of satisfaction the robust usability and reporting functionality of Competency Dashboard, the system is now being levied as part of a review into Station Assurance practices.

7 Ongoing Streams

- 7.1 The Smarter Working team is working on the following:

7.1.1 A review into our Station Assurance Practices: The scope of this review is to bring our assurance practices in line throughout the service. This review is starting to align these processes and levy our existing technology by providing a clear, easy to use and auditable assurance process and system, which will in turn improve working environment for our crews and reduce paper-based recording.

7.1.2 Equipment Management: A review into improving the processes by which the service tests and conducts inventories on our electrical and operational equipment. Current satisfaction is reducing and engagement with the procedures requires improving. The Smarter Working team is looking at ways we can increase engagement and improve attitudes as well as exploring better use of our systems and potential cost and time saving interventions.

7.1.3 Performance Management: The Smarter Working team is heavily involved with the review into how the brigade manages and monitors performance of all departments across the organisation.

7.1.4 Ongoing dissemination of Smarter Working methodology across all departments to drive positive change and highlight effective ways of working.

8 Financial Implications

8.1 A tender process was undertaken to appoint an external consultant. ICE creates were appointed at a cost of £111,806.67.

8.2 The Smarter working programme was initiated to improve the capacity and quality of work across the service. However, financial savings have been realised through the introduction of the Reactive repairs of an estimated £30,217 per financial year.

8.3 Whilst difficult to quantify in terms of financial savings, the opportunity costs relating to the release of staff hours to undertake other key roles has been significant in addition to the reduction of duplication and raw materials.

8.4 As part of the relationship with ICE, their responsibility was to impart their methodology and knowledge on to “in house champions” who would be the internal drivers for change, these are now in place to assist the service to work smarter and identify areas for improvement which will provide further benefits in the future.

8.5 There are no other direct financial implications associated with this report although areas for development may require investment decisions which will be incorporated into each specific business case for funding.

9 Human Resource and Diversity Implications

9.1 There are no Human resource implications and the Smarter Working process includes implementation and evaluation of Equality Impact Assessments.

10 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Implications

10.1 The process used by the Smarter Working Manager will continue to contribute to more effective working practice. As a consequence, this will allow for more capacity within teams to consider and improve health and wellbeing.

10.2 With regard to reactive repairs, Slaithwaite, Rastrick and Stanningley have built partitions and walls to better comply with our new decontamination policies, which will lead to better health for our firefighters.

11 Environmental Implications

11.1 A fundamental element of the role is to identify efficiencies in work practices. A key outcome of the existing projects has seen the reduction in duplication, leading to less waste and a reduction in vehicle use.

12 Your Fire and Rescue Service Priorities

12.1 We will reduce the risks to the communities of West Yorkshire

12.2 We will continue to develop ways of working which improve the safety and effectiveness of our firefighters

12.3 We will be innovative and work smarter throughout the service.

13 Conclusion

13.1 As well as the tangible and quantitative benefits of Smarter Working there has been a marked qualitative improvement in overall satisfaction and morale service wide due to these interventions, which can be viewed from feedback analysis. The Smarter Working methodology and ethos is at its heart used to review processes and systems that, receive widespread criticism or have a drive and united desire for a change. The change is always designed and imbedded in direct partnership and consultation with the end users/customers. As such, every intervention that has been undertaken has improved satisfaction from end users, improving morale and the desire to take part in future Smarter Working Interventions. The latter being key in making the workforce feel they have a department to go to that will empower them and to drive the philosophy in to the organisation. The future of Smarter Working will be to carry on being the driver for change, to challenge business as usual and to create long lasting, tangible and emotive improvements throughout the service as per WYFRS programme of change. The Smarter Working department will also provide mentorship and guidance to existing and planned programmes of work.