

ANGUS COUNCIL

RESOURCES AND CENTRAL SERVICES COMMITTEE – 17 MARCH 2005

MODERNISING GOVERNMENT FUND – PHASE 3

REPORT BY THE DIRECTOR OF INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

ABSTRACT

This report advises the Committee of the outcome of Angus Council's Modernising Government Fund (Phase 3) bid.

1. RECOMMENDATION

The Resources and Central Services Committee is recommended to note that the Council has been allocated £535,750 from the Modernising Government Fund to facilitate the local implementation of Customer First.

2. BACKGROUND

The development and refinement of the Modernising Government Fund (MGF) priorities during the past three years led to the "Customer in Focus" programme delivered by a local authority led Consortium whose core objective is to work together to introduce business processes which will deliver public services at first contact.

The Scottish Executive recognised that there was a need for that objective to be set out in a specific strategic document. This led to the publication of "Customer First" during the latter part of 2004. A copy of the document is attached to this report. The document sets out clearly the Executive's objectives which will be delivered via a national framework supporting Councils in their plans to deliver consistent and measurable improvements in local customer service delivery. It also sets out how local authorities can contribute to national secure data sharing infrastructure and at the same time increase efficiency and reduce the costs of delivering public services.

The financial assistance available to authorities in implementing this infrastructure will be made through the third phase of the Modernising Government Fund (MGF3).

Earlier this year the Executive have also announced plans for a national concessionary fare scheme for bus travel throughout Scotland with effect from 1st April 2006. It is the intention to facilitate use of this scheme by means of smartcard technology. Accordingly the issue of smartcards for this purpose as part of the rollout of the voluntary entitlement card has become a priority area of work within the MGF3 framework.

3. CURRENT POSITION

The Council submitted a bid to MGF in accordance with published guidelines to obtain financial assistance for a development programme to improve services as part of the local implementation of the Customer in Focus programme.

The specific areas covered by the planned programme were:

- the creation of a local citizens account which would enable the Council to obtain a holistic view of customers/citizens when delivering services

- the development of a customer relationship management system to improve direct service delivery at first point of contact
- the completion of the local land and property gazetteer to enable the closer integration of back office systems
- the introduction of electronic facilities in the submission and processing of planning applications
- the introduction of an electronic booking systems for Council facilities
- the development and implementation of a local service entitlement card based on smartcard technology to be used in libraries, leisure centres and as a travel concession card.

A copy of the bid documentation has been placed in the Members Lounge.

A bid was also made for funding to assist in the implementation of projects under the national eCare scheme. However this part of the bid is no longer to be considered as part of the MGF programme and an announcement is expected in the Spring from the Executive on how this programme is to be progressed.

The outcome of the Council's bid has now been confirmed by the Executive and the level of funding to be made available for the planned local programme is £535,750. £204,500 is to be made available in 2004/05 and £331,250 in 2005/06. These sums are slightly less than requested because the Executive have indicated that the development of the electronic planning facilities was not regarded as a priority in the MGF programme and some further funding has been retained by the Executive to finance some projects which are to be developed at a national level. However the level of funding which is being made available will not affect the remaining areas of planned work significantly. Members should note that the MGF funding mechanism requires matched funding at a rate of 25%. The Council's contribution to the planned programme is incorporated in the current Financial Plan.

Detailed reports relating to the programme will be submitted to the Resources and Central Services Committee as the project proposals are finalised. However early priority will be given to the preparations to enable the Council's full participation in the national concessionary travel scheme through the local issuing of smartcards. The timescale of 1 April 2006 for the introduction of Smartcards for Concessionary Travel across Scotland is extremely challenging and arrangements for addressing the range of issues are being put in place. The Director of Planning & Transport will also continue to Report to the Infrastructure Services Committee on the National Concessionary Travel Scheme.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. The financial implications of the individual projects in the programme will be reported to Committee prior to their implementation.

5. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive and the Directors of Finance, Law & Administration and Planning & Transport have been consulted on the terms of this report.

A Greenhill
Director of Information Technology

17.03.2005

NOTE

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.