

1. REDESIGN OF RECEPTION AREAS AT KINGS HILL AND TONBRIDGE CASTLE			
1	Specification / Description of works		
	(i)	Purpose of the scheme	To provide an enhanced integrated front-line customer services in public areas in accordance with the principles of the emerging Customer Contact Strategy endorsed by the Customer Contact Advisory Board on 26 Jan 2006.
	(ii)	Relevance to National / Council's Strategic Objectives	(a) National: IEG Strategy and ODPM Priority Outcomes (b) Council: Meets the new corporate priority for 2006 /07 – “Improve how we manage customer contacts”. Along with previously agreed priorities for 2005/06, (2b,2c,2g,16a,18a,19a), which have been carried forward to next year
	(iii)	Targets for Judging Success	.Customer satisfaction surveys and Local Performance Indicators
2.	<p>Design Issues: To provide a welcoming and professional space to facilitate high standards of customer services by the Customer Services Team, improved access for people with disabilities, and support the IEG agenda. All works will be of a quality reflecting the requirements of works to Listed Buildings and be in accordance with the views of English Heritage. A revised treatment for both reception areas is a prerequisite for delivery of the two key outcomes from the Financial Services Revenues and Benefits Best Value Review, (the closure of the cash offices and the relocation of staff onto a single site), and the implementation of the new Customer Contact strategy.</p> <p><u>Kings Hill</u> A revised layout based on minimum intervention to the existing design to provide an extended counter area, space for the cash machine and enhanced customer space.</p> <p><u>Tonbridge Castle</u> – A more radical intervention is required to overcome the current arrangement, which is based on 2 separate teams dealing with specific services. There are 2 options. Both designs provide for the main entrance being relocated to the Castle Lawn side of the building in accordance with the findings of the Disability Discrimination Act audit undertaken last year. There are 2 options:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) Provides a new counter area facing the Castle grounds. Subject to detail this could provide a more integrated space for the customers, but leaves the staff working essentially in 2 relatively isolated teams, and provides a new position for the toilets further away from the Chamber. (ii) The layout facilitates the operation by one team of staff, and provides an integrated space for customers. The toilets facilities are retained adjacent to the Chamber. Whilst not a requirement of the Customer Contact Strategy this option would create the potential for redesign of the toilet facilities to provide a DDA compliant toilet which has been identified in the DDA audit undertaken by consultants. There is no existing Capital Plan provision for the toilets, but there would be financial and operational 		

	<p>benefits if this element were to bought forward in parallel.</p> <p>Both building are Listed and as Members will appreciate, issues may evolve during works, particularly at Tonbridge Castle given the age and nature of the building.</p> <p>In advance of Members deciding the detailed design issues, the most costly scenarios have been reflected in the cost summary. This will enable Members to move this initiative forward informed by "worst case" Capital funding scenario which should be balanced against the net annual revenue savings.</p> <p>Members will be aware of the potential prospect of Local Government re-organisation and the current level of uncertainty. The time-table for this project is such that final designs and the necessary Consents for works will not be in place before July 2006, and as such there can be no procurement commitment to contractors, thus allowing the final decision for implementation to be informed by the White Paper due to be published at the end of June 2006.</p>
3.	<p>Consultation: Staff have been involved in the design principles. Unison support the overall approach. There has been internal consultation between Services, with endorsement by Corporate Management Team. Further details will be subject to consultation with a number of groups including staff, the Health & Safety Officer, the Disability Working Party, English Heritage and Customers. The details of the schemes will be considered by the Customer Contact Advisory Board on 27 March 2006.</p>
4.	<p>Capital Costs: The following have been provided by the Consultant Architect in liaison with a Quantity Surveyor. Fees are included in all cases. In addition to the capital costs involved, there are also other costs that had been "pre-programmed" and will be met from other budgets. These include DDA works that are being met from the special capital plan provision for adaptations to corporate buildings, and carpeting and decoration that is met from the Building Repairs Reserve. For consistency, and to avoid double-counting, the figures below do not include the costs for decorations etc.</p> <p><u>Kings Hill</u> – £95,000</p> <p><u>Tonbridge Castle</u> – various permutations ranging from £225,000 up to £300,000 subject to further investigation of fabric and detailed design issues.</p> <p>Total Capital costs - £320,000 to £395,000 dependent on the design option chosen.</p>

5.	<p>Revenue Impact:</p> <p>(i) the loss of interest on Capital - dependent on the option chosen above, loss of interest on the capital sum involved will range from £16,000 to £19,750 per annum.</p> <p>(ii) Implementation of the actions arising from the Best Value Review of Council Tax, Business Rates and Housing Benefits and the "parallel" implementation of the Customer Services function will generate corporate savings in excess of £43,000 per annum, as reported to General Purposes Committee on 6 February 2006 and reflected in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. Members will understand the linkage to the previous List C evaluation on this agenda relating to the provision of "cash kiosks".</p> <p>It is anticipated that further efficiency savings will be generated in due course through the Customer Contact Strategy but these cannot be quantified at this time.</p>	
6.	<p>Partnership Funding: Nil</p>	
7.	<p>Post-Implementation Review: In spring 2007</p>	
8.	<p>Recommendation: Implement in 2006/07 subject to the detailed designs being considered by the Customer Contact Advisory Board 27 March 2006</p>	