



Delivery of priority services and outcomes

*Which Council Aim does this case study deliver?
To transform the Council*

Background – Why?

Democratic Services is the service unit responsible for committee services, Member development, elections and electoral registration. It places a crucial role in supporting the Council's democratic processes and all electoral processes in the area and in facilitating participation and engagement from residents.

What was done?

Democratic Services procured a committee management system, Modern.gov, in 2009 and is currently rolling out its full range of functions. The system makes information about committees and councillors available online, as well as streamlining internal processes for forward planning, report writing and action tracking.

For the first time a comprehensive Member Development programme was in place in 2009-10 to ensure that Members are fully equipped to carry out their roles, with a further programme for 2010-11 being in the final stages of production and a four year strategy being developed for 2011 onwards.

New audio-visual equipment is being purchased for the civic suite meeting rooms to allow recording of meetings, electronic voting and the opportunity for webcasting of meetings.

Specific events were arranged to facilitate participation and engagement from young people, including a college visit to meet the Acting Returning Officer and Deputy Acting Returning Officer for the parliamentary general election and visits by councillors to schools and colleges, which included provision of forms for attainers (16-17 year olds) to fill out to check if they were on the electoral register.

Who was involved and how?

Staff – delivering the projects and as internal customers for the committee services function.

Members – as internal customers for the committee services and Member development functions.

Residents – as external customers for the committee services, elections and electoral registration functions.

Young People – as external customers for the committee services, elections and electoral registration functions. External Contractors and Suppliers – providing software and support for the committee management and elections software systems, providing the new audio-visual equipment and printing the election and canvass stationery.

Other local authorities – sharing expertise and exchanging good practice.

Other organisations, eg: the Electoral Commission, the Association of Electoral Administrators – providing training and advice.

What was achieved?

Election turnouts of 40.52% for the European election and ranging from 32.57% to 47.99% across the County divisions.

Excellent feedback from election candidates and agents, sought by letter following the election.

Election performance standard self-assessment, verified by the Electoral Commission, in which the majority of standards were met or exceeded, and which was comparable to or better than other authorities in the area.

Canvass response rate of 95.52%, including high level of attainers on the register.

Electoral registration performance standard self-assessment, in which all standards were met or exceeded. In comparison to other local authorities in North Yorkshire Ryedale achieved comparable or better performance against nearly all of the criteria.

Positive feedback from officers regarding the use of Modern.gov.
Customer survey of Members on the committee services and Member support functions – 77% very good, 11% excellent, 11% good.
Member Development feedback forms evaluating training.

Who benefited and how do we know?

Residents – as illustrated through the high election turnouts and canvass response rates, and the performance standards self-assessments.

Young People – as illustrated by the high level of attainers on the register.

Candidates/Agents – as illustrated through the feedback received and the performance standards self-assessments.

Members – as illustrated through the customer survey feedback and Member development evaluation forms.

Officers – as illustrated through the feedback on Modern.gov.

Partnership and joint working – expertise and training has been shared among authorities in the areas of elections, electoral registration, committee services and Member development.

Equalities – equality impact assessments have been conducted for the canvass and the general election, and also a service change to reduce the number of committee cycles. Consultation has taken place with equality groups for the combined elections in 2009, the forthcoming general election and the canvass, and the public awareness strategy for the canvass took account of targeting “hard to reach” groups.

Resources and value for money

Software purchases have been resourced from the IT Programme.

The audio-visual equipment has been funded by a budget agreed for the purpose.

Member Development is funded from the corporate training budget.

National elections are funded by the Ministry of Justice and County elections by the County Council.

Service delivery is funded from the standard revenue budgets.

Appropriate procurement processes have been followed for all purchases and contracts to ensure value for money.

Next Steps / Further Action

Ongoing roll out of Modern.gov

New Member Development Programme for 2010-11 and then four year strategy from next District elections.

Implementation of the new audio-visual equipment.

Delivery of the general election and continuing to built on expertise and good practice for 2011 District elections.

Ongoing annual canvasses.

Review of equality impact assessments and contract arrangements as and when required.

Ongoing joint and partnership working as and when appropriate.

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Background documents/Links:

Communications Plans/Public Awareness Strategies – 2009 Elections, 2009 Annual Canvass, 2010 General Election, examples of media and website articles.

Equality Impact Assessments – Annual Canvass 2009, General Election 2010, Reduction in the number of committee cycles

Performance Standards Self-Assessments – 2009 Elections and 2009 Electoral Registration