

Leicester  
City Council

(Wards Affected)  
All

**CABINET**

**15<sup>th</sup> December 03**

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**INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATIONS SERVICE REVIEW (ITS)**

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**Report of the Service Director (Human Resources & Equalities)**

1. **The Purpose of the report**

To present a series of proposals and options on the future configuration and delivery of Interpretation and Translation Services (ITS) to enable agreed improvements to be made to service performance.

2. **Summary**

This report sets out proposals to implement previous Cabinet decisions on the future of Council's Interpretation & Translation Services (ITS). The report follows consultation with departments, staff and their representatives and presents a way forward to ensure agreed improvements can be achieved. Cabinet are asked to agree to the proposals and decide on the location of the new service in order that improvements can be effectively implemented.

3. **Recommendations**

Cabinet to:

1. Support the proposed 'Strategic Framework' as the basis on which to reconfigure the Council's new Interpretation, Translation & Communication Service.
2. Decide on the location of the new service, either Resources, Access & Diversity Department or Social Care & Health Department.
3. Agree that the separate but related policy activities be accommodated within the Chief Executive's Office, Policy & Performance Team, utilizing available resources.
4. Agree that the move toward the new service be initiated through the recruitment of postholder to head up the new service, as an agreed outcome of the Organisational Review Group involving service staff.

5. That the Auxillary Interpreters Scheme (AIS) be formally disbanded and replaced by a commissioned service managed by the new service.
6. That resourcing involved in the agreed changes be contained within existing budgets and that current service resources are redirected to ensure the effective establishment of the new service.
7. That the above changes be managed through a Project Management team as set out in Para 10, which will report to the lead Cabinet Members for RAD&SCH during the transitional period.

#### 4. **Background**

The background to the Review of ITS is presented in Appendix A. This includes summary details of the Consultant's report into the Council's Translation & Interpretation Service.

Cabinet on the 15 July, 2002, resolved;

1. that the overall direction and consultant's recommendations, be supported in principle:-
2. that the Service Director (HR & Equalities) undertake consultation on the resulting organisational changes and bring back proposals for implementing them and for the new service delivery arrangements;
3. that the Council continue to work with in partnership with the Health Community in determining and shape a longer term vision for communication services in the city.

This report mainly focuses on the second Cabinet resolution and reflects consultation with departments, staff and their representatives. The report presents a way forward to implementing the agreed changes to the Council's ITS services.

#### 5. **Financial and Legal Implications**

ITS Services currently cost the Council about £300,000. This report recommends a redirection and reconfiguration of this money to ensure necessary improvements. It is anticipated that the proposed changes will lead to improved service efficiency and an increase in service income and overall reduction in average service unit costs. There are no direct legal requirements.

## **Consultation**

Andy Morley, Chief Accountant

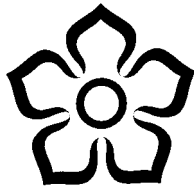
Peter Nicholls, Head of Legal Services . Legal services will be involved as required.

### 6. **Author of Report**

Ian McBride  
Service Director (HR & Equalities)  
Telephone 0116 252 6003

## **DECISION STATUS**

<b>Key Decision</b>	<b>No</b>
<b>Reason</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Appeared in Forward Plan</b>	<b>N/A</b>
<b>Executive or Council Decision</b>	<b>Cabinet</b>



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## INTERPRETATION AND TRANSLATION SERVICE REVIEW (ITS)

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### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### 1. Report

##### 1.1 A framework for the new service

The following framework has been developed for the new service. It has been subject to consultation with staff within the current service units and has received their support.

Key features of the new service should include:

- A single point of access for language support services
- Unified and integrated service designed around service user needs
- A separate policy function ensuring clear guidelines and standards in all aspects of Communication support consistent with Council Equality and Diversity policies and strategies
- Core Communication services that include:-
  - Translation of key Council documents e.g. policies
  - Disabled user communication services
  - Service user interpretation needs
- Service provision based on a Commissioning model
- A commitment to quality and effectiveness based on:
  - Accredited training for interpreters
  - Agreed standards for interpretation services
  - Properly structured monitoring and evaluation linked to performance management
  - Clear lines of management responsibility

- Regular user consultation
- Transparent complaints procedure
- To work in partnership with the Health Authority and work towards a City wide Communication support service framework based on shared service user needs

## 2. **Implications of adopting the new strategic framework on current service arrangements**

2.1 A summary of current service arrangements are presented in Appendix B. The implications for current services based on the adoption of the strategic framework can be summarized below;

- Auxillary Interpreters Scheme – Over 200 employees who receive a regular monthly pay supplement cost the Council up to £150,000. There is no management control of service quality or monitoring of actual service useage. The AIS was criticized in the Consultants report as being outdated, inefficient and inappropriate for modern service delivery purposes. There is broad support from departments to end the service although there are concerns about what might replace it.
- Community Language Unit - Located in RAD, the CLU provides a Corporate translation service for the Council. It employs 7 staff (including 4 long standing temporary) and has a service charge of £25 per hour for interpretation services. It provides a direct service to Council departments. Changes required to ensure necessary improvements highlighted by Consultants and that have implications for the Unit include; the lack of a common charging policy, concern about quality control, lack of awareness of the services and how to access them, speed and accuracy of translation, cost of recharging the services to departments.

CLU have taken steps to address problems raised in the report, including service evaluation, developing performance indicators and introducing electronic translation.

- Interpretation and Translation Services - Located in Social Care and Health and meets departmental interpretation needs and provides services for Health and Probation services. A Commissioning based service model is in place. The service is generally well regarded and has received commendations by external inspection e.g. Social Services Inspection report into 'Management and use of Information', reported positively on 'an extensive ITS service ' staff valued the service.... its level and accessibility".

The interpretation service is priced at £11 per hour and is more closely aligned to developments in the Health Service and the new framework as set out above.

Thus in order for the new Strategic Framework to be effectively applied, there will be major implications for existing services. This report now goes on to address the issues for attention in sequence.

3. **The need to decide on a departmental location for the new integrated single service;**

3.1 A series of meetings have been held with staff employed within the service and their representatives to consider the need to move to a new single service unit. A summary of outcomes of those meetings are presented below;

- Broad support for the Strategic Framework as set out above, as the basis on which to base new service provision.
- Broad support for the need to move to a new single service
- General disagreement on detailed alternative staffing structures presented but
- Broad agreement on the need for a new post to head up the new integrated service and lead on the remaining staffing structure.

A decision on the location for the new service is needed before the new postholder can be appointed.

The options would appear to rest between one of the current service departments, RAD and SCH. The pros and cons of the two departments are set out below

**RAD – Community Languages Unit**

Points in favour include;

- Established service provision
- Long standing qualified staff
- Experience of providing services for Council departments

Points against include;

- Source of much of the criticism in the Consultants report
- Does not meet the requirements under the Strategic Framework e.g. Commissioning based service provision
- Does not have the relationship with the Health Trust to facilitate the longer term development of a City wide support service

## SC&H – Interpretation & Translation Services

Points in favour include;

- There is an existing NHS interface, which can be built upon to create the emerging partnership
- An existing approach based on the Commissioning model and management ability which have proven their worth through experience and validation
- The need for the new service to be user led by a people service (as is the current service in SC&H)

Points against include;

- Does not have experience of providing services to other Council departments (although does provide services for Probation and Health services)
- Current capacity would be tested (e.g. translation support)
- Is not a traditional home for corporate service provision

A decision on which of the two departments should be home for the new service is necessary in order for other changes and improvements to be implemented.

### 4. **The need for separate but related policy work**

4.1 The separate policy work could be corporately located and, given its audit role, separated from the commissioning service, thereby ensuring a balance in overall service structure. This would help to ensure that the service provider department (RAD or SCH) would comply with agreed corporate standards.

4.2 It is proposed that the separate policy work is carried out by the Policy and Performance Team, Chief Executives department, within current available resources.

### 5. **The need to appoint a person to head up the new integrated service**

5.1 Following a decision on a new home for the service, attention should turn to the need for someone to head up the new service. As indicated above there is broad support for this from staff within the service and the new job description would need to reflect the new Strategic Framework. The person, when appointed would play an important role in concluding the rest of the staffing review and the developing replacement service for the AIS.

### 6. **Disbanding the Auxillary Interpreters Scheme(AIS)**

6.1 There is broad acknowledgement that the AIS needs to end. However departments will want to know what is going to replace the AIS before they give their full commitment and support for change. Under the Strategic Framework, it is envisaged that new Interpreter services will

be commissioned from the new single provider which will have responsibilities for ensuring quality and monitoring service usage.

- 6.2 Council staff who are currently on the AIS register and who wish to become qualified interpreters for the new service could be offered opportunities for accredited training to qualify to work under the new service arrangements.
- 6.3 The Auxillary Interpreters is not a contractual entitlement therefore the Council is not obliged to provide formal notice to withdraw the allowance from employees remuneration. However in order to preserve staff goodwill in any transitional period, a reasonable notice of withdrawal of the allowance would be appropriate.
- 6.4 Some departments (e.g. Housing) have a high level of need of the AIS service. To ensure a smooth transition to the new arrangements it is proposed that a planned programme of scheduled changes be applied so that for example, one department may move to the new service arrangements before another where business needs make it more feasible.
- 6.5 The consultants report recommends that AIS costs are redirected into the new single service. Some care will be needed in managing this as actual monies are paid to individual employees as part of their monthly salary. Allowing for some retraining costs, the closure of the AIS will enable £100,000 - £150,000 to be redirected to the new service to help with set up costs etc.
- 6.6 It is therefore proposed that the new Service manager have the responsibility for ensuring a commissioned based alternative to the AIS and that arrangements take on board the issues set out above. Departments will be responsible for resourcing their interpretation support services from the Council's new Single service under these arrangements
- 6.7 Subject to agreement in principle to the above, it is proposed that once a decision is taken on the location of the new service and the management thereof, a more detailed project plan be presented to show how the transition will be managed in practice. This can be managed by the Project Group as set out in Section 10 of this report.

7. **An update on the development of policy and proposals on how this should be managed to support the new service arrangements**

- 7.1 Work has begun on the development of a Policy on Communication, Interpretation and Translations, including needs of Disabled people. The work is in its early stages, and is now being influenced by the developments in the local Health Authority.
- 7.2 It will take time for a Council policy to be drafted and formally approved, although arguably it is necessary to have some sort of Policy framework or set of core standards in place to inform issues central to the Staffing Review, Health Service Strategy, replacement for AIS etc.



- 7.3 The review was overdue when it started, therefore a fast but achievable timetable is proposed, that would allow the development of policy to inform developments in the service structure.

## **8. Health Service Developments**

- 8.1 Substantial progress has been made by the local Health Authority over the past year or so. They have recently produced a new 'Interpretation and Translation Strategy for the Health service in Leicestershire'. This has clear implications for the Council which is represented on the ITS Joint Steering Group who are dealing with this. It is very important that we contribute to the development of this Strategy and the wider goal of integrated service provision between local agencies.

- 8.2 Proposed developments should result in more efficient service delivery and a more cost effective service, designed to meet the needs of joint service users.

## **9. Proposed Project Management Structure**

- 9.1 Following decisions on the issues set out above, it is proposed to adopt a Project Management Team to oversee the management of the respective strands. The Project would be managed by the Service Director (HR & Equalities) and representatives would include;

- New home departmental representative (i.e. RAD or SCH)
- Old home departmental representative (i.e. RAD or SCH)
- Health Trust representative
- PPT – Policy Officer
- Head of Communications
- Finance representative (AIS)
- Personnel representatives

Plus the new postholder to head up the service (subject to decision by members and appointment).

It is proposed that the Project Group keep the lead Cabinet Members for RAD & SCH briefed on progress. A provisional 12 months project plan will be developed to direct the work of the group.

## **10. Financial, Legal and Other Implications**

- 10.1 The Council currently spends about £300,000 on Interpretation and Translation services. A summary of main service costs have been given in Appendix B. The proposals in this report are designed to reallocate service costs and reinvest in areas in need of development and improvement. Any interim funding needed to manage the transitional costs of appointing the new postholder to head up the service will need to be found from within existing budgets or through Departmental development funds. It is anticipated that the proposed changes will result in an increase in overall service income and a reduction in average service unit costs.

OTHER IMPLICATIONS	YES/NO	Paragraph References Within Supporting information
Equal Opportunities	<b>Yes</b>	The whole report deals with language support services for people with social needs
Policy	<b>Yes</b>	Para. 4
Sustainable and Environmental	<b>No</b>	
Crime and Disorder	<b>No</b>	
Human Rights Act	<b>No</b>	
Elderly/Low Pay	<b>No</b>	

## 10.2 **Background Papers – Local Government Act 1972**

Best Value Review of Communication and Promotion. Public Management Association 'Interpretation' Translation and Communication Services (May 2002). Cabinet Report on PMA report July 2002.

## 10.3 **Consultation**

This report incorporates consultation with departments on the Cabinet resolutions of July 2002 and the views of ITS staff and their representatives.

## 11. **Author of Report**

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**INTERPRETATION & TRANSLATION SERVICES REVIEW  
BACKGROUND**

The Customer Care Best Value Review (2001) identified the need for change and improvements in ITS Services and a subsequent Consultant's report, commissioned by the Council and Local Health Trust, identified options for developing a joint integrated communication service for the City (published in April 2002).

Key findings/views for the report which specifically concerns the Council, include:-

- The Council is considerably further advanced than the Health Community in developing and delivering communication services.
- There is a high need for communication/language support within the City, which has a diverse community where English is not spoken or is not the preferred language for communication for a significant part of the population.
- £350,000 (approximately) per annum is being spent across the Council in a range of communication service/needs.
- A general feeling has been expressed that services were fragmented and lacked policy direction in the Council.
- There is lack of common service values and policies around the Interpretation and Translation between the Council and its Health Partners.
- 202 sessional (language) Interpreters are registered with the Council's Auxilliary Interpreters Scheme at the current time.
- There is considered to be a lack of/limited awareness of the needs of both disabled people in communication matters.
- There is a lack of single focus for Interpretation and Translation in both policy and service delivery within the Council.
- A fully integrated service (with the Health Community), whilst a desired aim, is much further down the road and the priority at present, should be the better arrangement and focus of existing service arrangements and the adoption of common strategic objectives.
- There is a need for the Council to continue to work with the Health Community in helping to shape the service and achieve a long term aim to develop an integrated service in the City.

The recommendations that principally affect the Council can be summarized as follows:-

- The adoption of a strategic Framework by the Council (and the Health Community), which incorporates common service and policy principles and a commitment to the development and communication services in the City.
- The disbanding of the Council's Auxillary Interpreters' Scheme, which is seen as ineffective and outdated.
- The creation of a central policy development and management function for Interpretation, Translation and Communication, separate to the operational service delivery of these services.
- The review and merger (of the functions of the Community Language Unit and the Interpretation and Translation Services) into one single corporate integrated Council interpretation, Translation and Communication service, located within a service department.
- The need to review the existing service delivery arrangements and cost effectiveness of these services in the Council, exploring the options for possible alternative arrangements.
- The development, greater awareness of and commitment to enabling improved communication for disabled people.
- The reinvestment of resources (for communication) realised through the improvements identified/implemented.
- The maintenance of the partnership with the Health Community through formal structures and senior office involvement.

**CURRENT COUNCIL ITS SERVICES (SUMMARY)**

- Auxillary Interpreters Scheme (AIS), a Council wide scheme (excluding, Education and Social Care and Health Departments)
- Community Languages Unit (CLU) – Resources, Access & Diversity
- Interpretation and Translation Services (ITS) – Social Care and Health Departments

The table below summarizes the resourcing of the above.

AIS	Over 200 employee who receive a regular monthly pay supplement	Cost of £100,000 - £150,000 per annum	No management control of service quality or monitoring of actual useage
CLU	RAD based on 7 employees plus c85 sessional interpreters	Budget £144,100 Turnover £214,000	Service charge £25 per 100 words of translation/typesetting, proof reading and electronic copy. £25 per hour for interpretation
ITS	SCH based. 1 FTE plus c100 sessional interpreters	Budget £58,000 (excluding staffing costs)	Service charge £11 per hour