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**Report of Chief Officer Customer Services**

**Scrutiny Board (Central & Corporate Functions)**

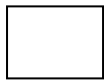
**Date: 5<sup>th</sup> October 2009**

**Subject: Interpretation and Translation Services**

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**Electoral Wards Affected:**

All



Ward Members consulted  
(referred to in report)

**Specific Implications For:**

Equality and Diversity

Community Cohesion

Narrowing the Gap

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**Purpose of the Report**

To provide scrutiny board with an update on actions taken to recommendations which had previously been made by the Board.

**Introduction**

In March 2006 the Transforming Services Scrutiny Board published its report on “whether the Council and its wholly owned companies provide consistent interpretation and translation facilities”

The purpose of this report is to provide an update on the scrutiny board recommendations.

**Background**

All requests from a resident who wants to speak to the Council in language other than English or have a document produced in language other than English, are dealt with by CITU – Central Interpretation and Translation Unit. CITU is part of the Customer Services Team in Policy Planning and Improvement.

**Actions taken in response to the earlier recommendations from scrutiny board**

**a) That the Braille and Large Print service within the Council be modernised** – The provision of Braille service was transferred along with the staff to the Leeds Society for the Deaf and Blind at Centenary House. This decision was made due to the reduction in the demand for Braille and the high costs of modernising the IT within the Council. Centenary House took over the service with a view to developing the service further. The current

arrangements are that the Council now pays per job it has translated into Braille rather than funding the service. Departments undertake their own requests for large print documents by using the computer to increase the font size of documents.

**b) That an interpretation and translation budget is established in its own right, without the need to recharge Departments** – This was created in April 2006. In 2008/2009 this budget was significantly overspent due to a large increase in the demand for interpreting services. In view of the above from July 2009 budgetary control responsibilities have been returned to departments and CITU still arrange the interpretation but recharge the cost to the Directorates.

**c) That interpreting and translation should include British Sign Language** – This is included now

**d) That there was a consistent policy for making use of staffs existing language skills in handling customer enquiries** – At the time of the scrutiny board report some staff were paid to use their language skills but the majority weren't. There is now a consistent policy of not paying staff additional salary to use their language skills

**e) That when requesting a document translated a deadline is specified for the return of the document** – The deadline of 4 days is in place and 99% are turned around in this timescale.

**f) That the Council and Leeds Society for the Deaf and Blind undertake a pilot that would link the two organisations via video conferencing so that residents could access immediate a British Sign Language Interpreter** – This recommendation was investigated and work commenced on delivering it but it was not subsequently implemented due to the high cost involved. Despite this we continue to search for a cost effective solution.

### **Other issues**

National guidance has been provided on the best way to deal with requests for documents translated. The recommendation is that documents are not automatically translated on request but other more cost effective way is considered. Leeds has introduced this national guidance.

The most requested languages for interpretation and translation are Tigrinya, Urdu, Czech, Kurdish and Polish.

### **Recommendations**

Scrutiny Board is asked to note the progress made in this service area.

### Background Papers

Scrutiny Board Report - March 2006 - "Whether the Council and its wholly owned companies provide consistent interpretation and translation facilities"