

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny (Internal) Committee**

Date: **8 November 2016**

Title: **Progress Report for Contact Centre**

Portfolio Area: **Customer First - Cllr J Moody**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **Y**

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee:

- 1. Continue to support the work being undertaken to improve Customer Services and monitor performance through regular updates; and**
- 2. Note and endorse the updated Action Plan.**

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 At the last meeting on 8th March 2016, the Hub received its latest regular update on the Contact Centre. This report gives a current update of the situation.
- 1.2 Since the last meeting the new phone system and the action plan has been updated to reflect the changes that have been made.
- 1.3 All transition resource posts have been filled within the contact centre.
- 1.4 The report (appendix 2) highlights the continual improving performance within the Contact Centre since the last meeting.

2. Background

- 2.1 Changes to staffing from the T18 programme, started in June 2015. Staff reductions, along with process and IT system changes resulted in delays in service delivery and therefore increased call volumes.
- 2.2 Call volumes are currently at the highest level for a number of years and as a result call waiting times for some lines are unacceptably long.
- 2.3 Additional resources were approved in July 2016 to stabilise service delivery whilst new processes and IT systems bed down. Resources were allocated to Case Management and the Contact Centre to reduce delays, improve service and improve call answering times.

3. Current position

- 3.1 The Contact Centre is now fully staffed and transition resources are now recruited. The team is no longer reliant on agency staff.
- 3.2 Only 1 apprentice of the 4 posts has been recruited, however a further recruitment drive is underway and we anticipate that these remaining roles will be filled within the next 4 weeks. The apprentices will obtain a NVQ in Customer Services and will be trained in all areas of Customer Services and the Contact Centre. The apprenticeship will last a year and could involve attending College for 1 day a week for 13 weeks. They will also gain experience in other areas of the Council and will be able to apply for a permanent role in Council if an opportunity arises.
- 3.3 A training programme have been devised for new recruits and is now underway covering areas of highest call volumes e.g. Council Tax and Benefits.
- 3.4 Implementing the new telephone system has been hampered by a complex fault between the BT lines and the aged existing contact centre IT infrastructure. The current position is that all calls are now being presented to the new system, however West Devon calls still use a portion of the old infrastructure. This will be resolved and calls migrated to the new infrastructure by the middle of November. The Contact Centre staff have been positive about the new system.
- 3.5 Transition resources within case management have resulted in reduced backlogs and this has lowered call volumes.
- 3.6 The review of W2 processes to ensure the process is streamlined so the relevant information is provided to improve the customer experience is ongoing over the coming months. E.g. Waste, we have worked with Commercial Services to ensure the process is stream-lined and we only ask questions which are relevant the Customer's request.

4. Call volumes and performance

- 4.1 Call volumes peaked in July of this year to 29,694 but in September they have reduced to a more manageable level of 24,274. As Case Management reduce their backlogs we hope to see a reduction in failure demand calls.
- 4.2 Footfall continues to decrease over all sites.
- 4.3 Performance has steadily improved since April and in September we answered 77% of the calls received into the Contact Centre. Up to the 15th September (before the issues with the South Hams phones lines) we achieved 81% answer rate. At present due to the issue with direct dial extensions, all calls are coming through to the Contact Centre switchboard which is increasing our volume of calls.
- 4.4 A steady improvement can be seen in the calls answered within 20 seconds from 30% in April to 44% in September. Up to the 15th September (before the issues with the South Hams phone lines) we achieved 52% in September.
- 4.5 All calls are now being taken through the new phone system. This means the customer will be informed of their position in the queue so they can make an informed decision on whether to continue to hold. The greeting messages have been changed to inform the customer that they are in a queue and to provide relevant information and promote the website. At present we are promoting the on-line Housing Benefit new claim and change of circumstances form and also the on-line direct debit mandate for Council Tax. We are testing a call back service for some of our services where customers are experiencing long wait times e.g. Council Tax, Benefits and Waste. This would allow the customer the option to remain on the phone or leave a message for a call back after a certain amount of time to be determined.
- 4.6 Now all calls are coming through the new phone system we will be reviewing the performance reports to provide comprehensive information to show how the Contact Centre is performing.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Review the updated action plan that was agreed on the 8th March 2016.
- 5.2 Appoint the remaining 3 apprentices to provide additional resilience as transitional resources end.
- 5.3 Provide more meaningful performance reports to show a breakdown of performance for each service area.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		none
Financial		none
Risk		There are risks associated with the performance of the contact centre. In recognising these risks, the service will continue to be closely monitored with focus on ensuring the services improves.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity		There is a need to ensure we continue to meet our statutory duties.
Safeguarding		None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder		None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing		None
Other implications		None

Supporting Information

Appendices:

Appendix 1 – Updated Action Plan

Appendix 2 – Latest contact centre report for period up to end of September 2016