

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **27 July 2017**
Title: **Transitional Resources Monitoring Report**
Portfolio Area: **Cllr S Wright**
Wards Affected: **All**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

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

Author: **Steve Mullineaux** Role: **Group Manager – Support Services / Customer First**

Contact: steve.mullineaux@swdevon.gov.uk, (01803) 861412

RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel endorse the contents of the Transitional Resources monitoring report and the progress to date.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report will provide Members with an update on the impact on services areas of the temporary, fixed-term transitional resources approved by council in June 2016 to improve services, customer satisfaction and public perception of the Council.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update on T18 payback period and the current expenditure of the additional approved funds.

2. Background

- 2.1 Council approved £545,000 in June 2016, the funding is being used to recruit temporary fixed term staff to reduce 'failure demand'. Failure Demand is a term to describe the additional workload caused by the failure to deliver a service correctly in the first place, resulting in additional customer contact and dissatisfaction. This resulted in increased call volumes, increased call waiting times and service backlogs.
- 2.2 All temporary fixed term resources have now been recruited, these have been a mixture of agency staff, some already working at the council and new recruits. Staff have been deployed so that existing agency staff with experience have been given more complex work and new staff deployed in to less technical roles.
- 2.3 A transition improvement team led by the seconded manager from Support Services and supported by the managers of Case Management, Specialists, IT and Business Improvement, now meets fortnightly and is working through the action plan to improve processes and technology in each area.
- 2.4 Monthly call volumes had been at the highest levels for a number of years and as a result call waiting times were unacceptably long. Call volumes have consistently reduced since the peak of June 2016.
- 2.5 A number of services had backlogs of work, which in turn was generating increased call volumes and higher levels of customer dissatisfaction. The services of particular concern were;
- Planning
 - Waste
 - Car Parking
 - Council Tax
 - Housing Benefit
 - DFG's

3. Current status

- 3.1 Of the £545,000 of additional approved funds, £435,716 (80% of the total) had been spent as at the end of March 2017. The following table shows the allocation between the various areas.

Service Area	Total spend at 31st March 2017 (£)
Customer First Case Management	264,806

Customer First Contact Centre	54,338
Commercial Services Case Management	72,071
Support Services Case Management	44,501
Total	£435,716

- 3.2 It had been profiled that approximately 9/12ths of the additional funds would be spent by 31st March 2017 (this equates to £409,479), on the basis that transitional resources would cease around the end of the June/July time. So the expenditure is currently slightly ahead of profile (actual spend of £435K against a profiled spend of £409K).
- 3.3 Officers will address this as part of the re-profiling of transitional resources funding for 2017/18.
- 3.4 As part of the Budget proposals for 2017/18 which were approved by Council on 9th February 2017, it was agreed to utilise £75,000 of the Budget Surplus Contingency Earmarked Reserve to fund five additional case managers within Development Management for a period of one year (2017/18).
- 3.5 Transitional Resources will be reduced in 2017/18, whilst keeping areas which still need support adequately resourced within the approved funding levels.
- 3.6 Technology update:
- In-Cab technology has now been fully deployed to the waste fleet and integrated with the council's workflow system.
 - A new car parking management system is currently being implemented which will enable digital permits and a streamlined parking appeals process.
 - The new website and simplified online forms were successfully launched in March 2017.
 - Automated processing software currently being implemented for council tax will speed up processing times.

4. T18 Budget

- 4.1 In December 2014, the Council agreed the updated business case for the Transformation Programme (T18). An investment budget of £4.61 million was approved, to deliver annual recurring revenue savings of £3.3 million. The payback period for the Programme was estimated to be 2.5 years. The Transformation Programme received the backing of Central Government and the Council was awarded £434,000 of Government funding towards the upfront investment costs.

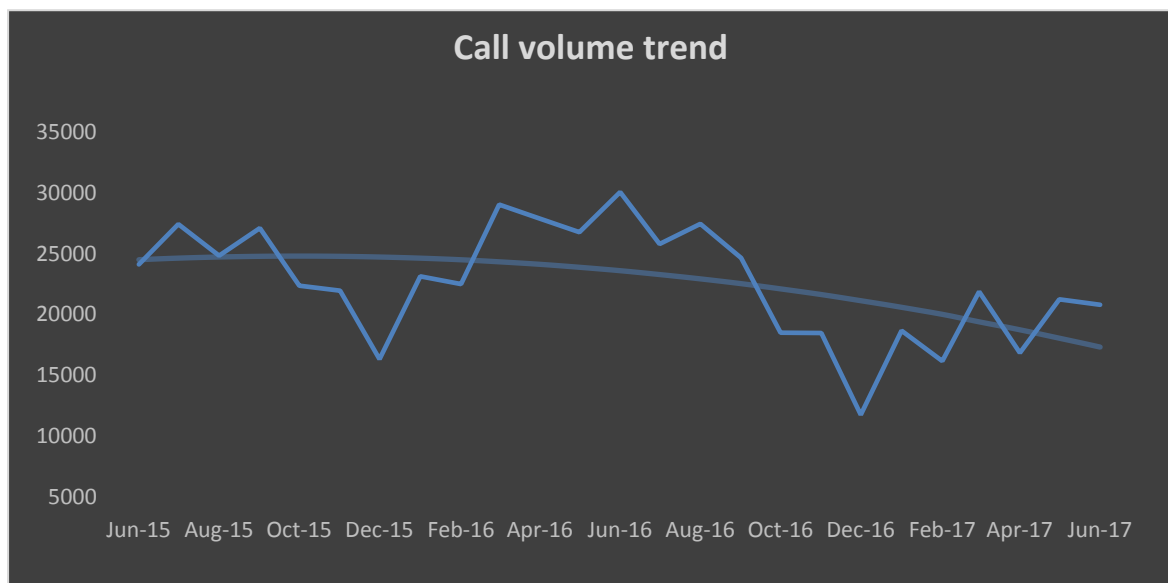
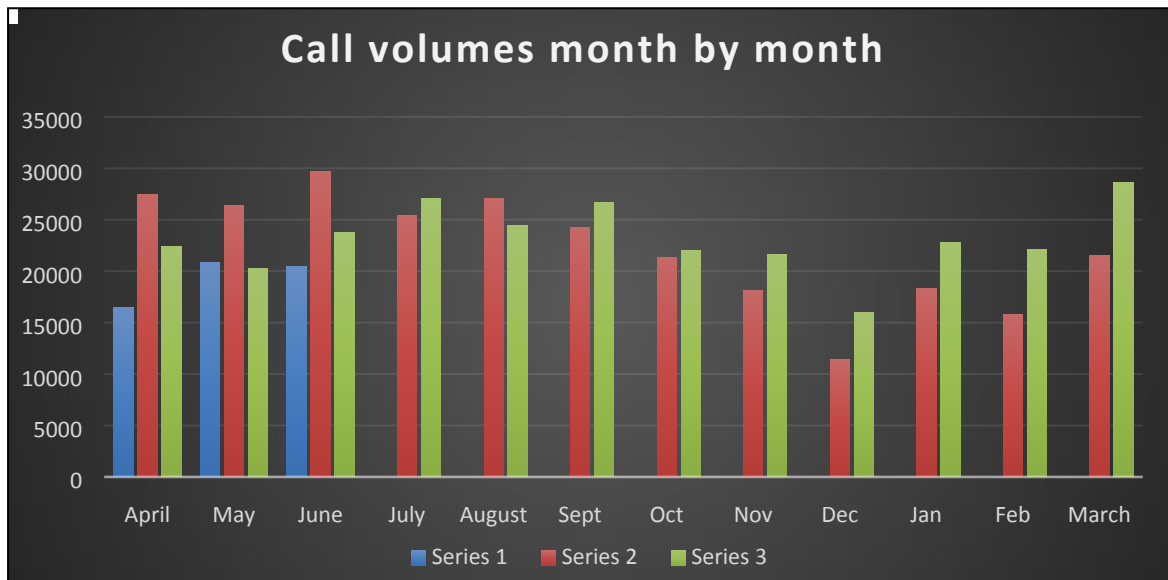
- 4.2 The following items have had an adverse impact on the payback period:-
- 4.2.1 There was budgeted to be £125,000 of savings from 2015/16 onwards for recycling and waste. This was to be gained from the rationalisation of the current waste and recycling rounds. These savings were not able to be achieved, as previously reported to Members.
 - 4.2.2 In June 2016, Members approved transitional resources of a one-off amount of £545,000.
 - 4.2.3 On 25 Feb 2016, Council approved the cost of £134,000 for additional resource to address the planning enforcement backlog. (A separate report on planning enforcement is on this agenda.)
 - 4.2.4 As part of the Budget proposals for 2017/18 which were approved by Council on 9th February 2017, it was agreed to utilise £75,000 of the Budget Surplus Contingency Earmarked Reserve to fund five additional case managers within Development Management for a period of one year (2017/18).
 - 4.2.5 The above items have had the effect of increasing the T18 Payback Period from 2 years and 6 months (estimated payback) to 2 years and 10 months (actual payback).

5. Current Service Status

5.1 Contact Centre

- 5.1.1 Improving performance is taking longer than anticipated. As more work is completed by contact centre staff at the first point of contact the call duration time is increasing. As a result call waiting times are not reducing as quickly as anticipated.
- 5.1.2 Coaching and performance management is now being rolled out, reception staff are now being trained to answer calls when visitor numbers are low. A contact centre manager from another authority (and with a private sector call centre background) that use the same technology is visiting to act as a 'critical friend' assessing our set-up and overall management.
- 5.1.3 Retention and recruitment of staff continues to be challenging, a number of staff have successfully obtained promotion elsewhere in case management.
- 5.1.4 The table and graphs below demonstrate that call volumes continue to decrease, however in May and June calls increased primarily due to the county and general elections.

	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	March
17/18	16478	20874	20427									
16/17	27501	26390	29694	25420	27072	24274	21332	18108	11394	18300	15804	21505
15/16	22436	20309	23744	27049	24461	26723	21995	21586	15961	22762	22128	28657



5.2 Housing Benefit and Council Tax

Work is up to date for housing benefit and the focus is now on training and development to improve quality and reduce single points of failure. In council tax and business rates work is underway to eliminate the traditional increase in requests that occurs after the annual bills are sent and technology and channel shift are key to this.

5.3 Car parking

Whilst the new software wasn't available for the busy renewal period, there were no significant delays in permit production this year and currently new permits are being processed within the 5 working days. The new software is in the final stages of testing and should be fully implemented within the next few weeks.

5.4 Waste and Grounds maintenance

Online processes have been simplified, case management has been restructured and centralised under one team leader, freeing up operational supervisors.

5.5 Planning

Increases in application numbers (feedback suggests that developers are putting applications in ahead of the government proposal to increase planning fees) continues to put a huge pressure on staff who have exceptionally high caseloads. Whilst determination performance is still above target, work is still needed to improve customer service. Transitional resources in case management will remain in place throughout 17/18 and it is anticipated that members will be asked to increase the establishment in this area, subject to the increase in planning fees receiving parliamentary approval. The transition improvement team continue to focus on the planning service and a comprehensive performance dashboard is now reported to the Development Management Committee on a monthly basis.

6 Financial Implications

6.1 Transitional resources are within the additional approved budget as paragraphs 3.1 and 3.2. There are no new financial implications.

7 Risks

7.1 That service improvements are not sustainable when transition resources are removed. The transition improvement team are prioritising service improvement work accordingly so that incremental improvements mean that transition resources can be redeployed as backlogs are reduced.

7.2 That service performance will suddenly deteriorate when transition resources are removed. Temporary resources are reviewed monthly. A number have already left and these savings from within the transition budget are being used to extend other transition resources posts. This will enable a smooth transition to business as usual resources over the next 6 months.

8 Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	None
Financial	Y	See Section 6.
Risk	Y	See Section 7.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	N	None
Safeguarding	N	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	The report recognises staff welfare concerns and the proposals will support permanent staff.
Other implications	N	None