

Customer Services Update

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

Date: **19 November 2015**

Title: **Customer Services Update**

Portfolio Area: **Customer First**

Wards Affected: **All**

Relevant Scrutiny Committee:

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

Date next steps can be taken:

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RECOMMENDATION:

That the Panel continue to support the work being done to improve Customer Services and monitor performance through regular updates

1. Executive summary

Following regular updates to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel, this report updates Members as to performance trends since the last meeting.

Particular attention is paid to phone call answer times, call volumes and staff recruitment as areas of particular concern.

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2. Background

Following the staffing changes during June, there was a period where gaps in staffing in the call centre provided us with some service delivery challenges. How this has been and is being addressed is covered within the body of the report.

Pressure should be eased as transition occurs in respect of the move to new technology and as staff training is rolled out and embedded across the workforce.

3. Transformation Programme Update

- 3.1 Due to delays in functionality delivered by Civica and the knock on effect of reduced capacity due to the loss of staff after June the go-live dates have been delayed. The table below identifies services that have now gone live in respect of customer interaction and staff are using both the new case management and pre-existing back office systems.

Service Area
Housing
Recycling and Refuse Collection
Car Parking
Environmental Health & Licensing
Non customer Council Tax & NNDR

- 3.2 Our initial plan was to go-live with individual services in a phased approach but this puts too much strain on the service area as it requires significant time investment. A 'Dragons Den' approach was utilised to prioritise the remaining processes to deliver the maximum return on investment and spread the officer effort across more services. The following table shows planned go-live dates for the remaining high priority processes:

Service Area	Target go-live date (week commencing)
Planning	16/11/15
Council Tax	16/11/15
Remaining Waste Processes & linked street scene processes	30/11/15

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Legal & Support services	21/12/15
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4. Call Volumes and Performance

- 4.1 October 2015 saw a reduction in calls across all call types;
- 4.2 Footfall across all three sites was reduced in comparison to October 2014;
- 4.3 Performance is improving, with an increase of calls answered from 70% in September 2015 to 82% in October 2015
- 4.4 The percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds also improved from 42% in September 2015 to 51% in October 2015. This performance figure is exactly the same as the statistic in October 2014;
- 4.5 The average call answer time for October 2015 was 2 minutes, which is a significant improvement on the September 2015 average figure of 3 minutes 11 seconds;
- 4.6 The top 3 highest volume phone call types for October 2015 were:
 1. Contact a planning officer;
 2. Make a payment; and
 3. Paperless Direct Debit.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Calls are being reviewed, and will continue to be so that processes are improved to prevent people from calling us unnecessarily.
- 5.2 We will continue to review phone messages to ensure signposting is used. We will promote the use of automated telephone line and the Council website (please note if this is effective the number of calls answered % will reduce as people will productively leave the queue).
- 5.3 The customer Self Service Portal will be launched this week.
- 5.4 The plan for how the Council interacts with its customers (the channel shift plan) is under development. This plan will help us target cheaper forms of contact such as SMS and email to those people who want and can use it, rather than trying to encourage all customers to use these types of contact.

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- 5.5 Other agencies are being used to deliver less complex work for planning. We are in a procurement process for similar 'on demand' services for Revenues and Benefits having just completed a free trial with a company.
- 5.6 Recruitment of vacant posts is being prioritised by managers and agency staff are being used as a short term measure to backfill unfilled vacancies.
- 5.7 Outstanding workloads and customer service measures are now being reviewed on a weekly basis by SLT.
- 5.8 The website is being updated and customer services are being given key messages to reassure customers.

Staffing

- 5.9 Seven permanent members of staff have been recruited and given job offers with 6 out of 7 of those offered roles accepting.
- 5.10 Two temporary and three agency staff have been recruited. In the short term, there is an advantage whereby these are part trained in some of the areas
- 5.11 Two members of staff are currently absent through long-term sickness, we are working to manage them back to work.
- 5.12 In respect of staff training:-
 - Three additional staff members had started training to take Council Tax calls (full training can take up to 6 months);
 - Two more staff members have been trained to take Customer Services calls;
 - Three staff members have been trained to take calls related to recycling;
 - Ten staff members have received initial training for benefits related calls.

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6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance		None
Financial		None
Risk		The service will continue to be monitored and focussed on to ensure that the services continues to improve.
Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications		
Equality and Diversity	Y	There is a need to ensure we continue to meet our statutory duties.
Safeguarding	N	None
Community Safety, Crime and Disorder	N	None
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	N	
Other implications		

Supporting Information

Appendix A: Performance Report