



**Report To:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee 6 March 2018  
**Lead Officer:** Head of People & Organisational Development

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## **Customer Contact Service 2017 Annual Performance Review**

### **Purpose**

1. To present to the Scrutiny and Overview Committee the Customer Contact Service annual performance report for 2017 (**Appendix A**) for information and comment.

### **Recommendations**

2. It is recommended that the information provided be noted in particular the improvement in performance in comparison with 2016.

### **Reasons for Recommendations**

3. The report provides the annual review of the operational performance of the Customer Contact Service from 1 January 2017 until 31 December 2017 inclusive.

### **Background**

4. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee has conducted an annual review of the operational performance of the Customer Contact Service since the service returned in house in December 2012.
5. On the 4 December 2002 the Council entered into a contract with Cambridgeshire County Council, for the provision of a contact centre service for a period of ten years at an off-site location in St Ives.
6. The Council conducted a review of the options during 2010-2011 and the outcome following the completion of the review was to bring the service back in-house and to achieve a £250K reduction in cost.
7. The new service module would provide a service where customers would be able to resolve their queries in the majority of cases at first point of contact; which was a change from the previous contract where high numbers of calls were taken through a switchboard service.
8. The service at Cambourne was launched in December 2012 and, whilst performance in terms of the number of calls answered and resolved at first point of contact has been consistently good, the time taken to answer calls and the number of calls answered has been variable.
9. The targets agreed for performance currently are :-
  - 85% calls answered
  - 80% calls answered at first point of contact (no longer reported corporately)

- 100% of calls answered within 2 Minutes (Performance information available is based on average)

### **Considerations**

10. During 2017 telephone calls have been managed in a more effective way and this has improved the performance of the contact centre significantly compared to the spring and summer of 2016.
11. The Customer Contact Service operational performance is demonstrating an ongoing improvement. As shown in **Appendix A** Performance for 2015, 2016, 2017,2018.

The key improvements are:-

- a) Call answer time averages- have reduced (average 01:48 against 02:00 target)
- b) Call abandonment level rate- has reduced (average 88% against target of 85%)
- c) Performance against targets - has improved significantly

There are a series of planned improvements for 2018/19 which will be reflected in performance targets. It is expected that performance improvement will be incremental as the project is implemented and consolidated.

### **Service Activities**

12. A detailed call analysis has been undertaken of the Planning Service telephone calls to inform a work plan. This work plan will improve the customer service provided to residents by the Contact Centre Service and Planning Service together. Initial findings from the analysis has shown that the majority of residents who telephone the council for planning their call can be categorised to 3 main areas: -

- Duty planning appointment
- Planning application progress
- Wanting to speak to planning office

13. A joint work plan is currently being developed with the Planning Service and the Customer Contact Service to address the area's highlighted above with the express aim to:-

- Remove the need for residents to call SCDC to book a duty planning appointment
- Reduce the number of residents who need to contact a planning officer directly either by telephone or email
- Increase the resident's satisfaction with planning service
- Reduce number of avoidable calls taken by contact centre
- Reduce call waiting times for residents who telephone
- Reduce the % of calls received and abandoned before answering.

14. The aim of the work plan is to fully embrace and build on service improvements and embrace the Chief Executive's vision of "Putting the customer at the heart of what we do".

15. A data exercise has been undertaken to analyse the reason why personal callers presented at the council reception, which was completed during the autumn of 2017. This data provided detailed information to the composition of service areas and has

enabled an opportunity to improve the reception arrangements. There are around 2000 personal callers monthly and of those around 750 callers arriving for pre-booked meetings.

16. An automated visitor management system which is an additional element of the room booking management system has been procured and expected to be installed during March-April 2018
17. The System will enable:-
  - Visitors for pre-booked meetings to self-serve to book in and print a visitors badge.
  - Improve the visitor experience by reducing or eliminating the need to queue at reception.
  - Meeting hosts to be notified immediately by email that their visitor has arrived in reception.
  - Reception with a real-time list of visitors expected and in the building at any time.
  - Resource requirement for staffing reception to be reduced and customer service improved.

Some small cosmetic changes to signage and positioning of chairs and tables will be undertaken to ensure that this change is successfully implemented.

18. The service area projects which are currently in progress, which will have a significant impact on reducing telephone calls to the contact centre are shown below: -
  - Revenues and Benefit portal- to allow online access to council tax, benefit and business rate account information. This Project is likely to go live in quarter 1 of 2018/19
  - Revenues electronic forms- these forms will be fully integrated with back office systems. This will allow back office system to be updated with little or no human intervention required. This project is likely to go live in Quarter 2 2018/19.
  - Analysis of telephone calls has been undertaken and completed to ensure that residents who are able to access information electronically in the majority of cases can self-serve using the website/customer portal to answer their queries and obtain the necessary information they require.

It is planned following successful implementation of the above project that a smaller promotion piece of work will be undertaken by the teams to increase the amount electronic communications which are conducted between the Revenues and Benefits teams and residents. The express aim of this will be to channel shift residents and colleagues within teams to more cost-effective means of communications.

19. The shared Building Control service has withdrawn the requirement for telephone calls to be taken by the Contact Centre from January 2018. We are currently redirecting residents to a new number (Hunts DC) and have changed the contact details in "South Cambs" Magazine and on our website. The number of calls taken for Building Control Service is small at around 1% of total calls (9 average daily).

20. The Contact Centre continues to have some unexpected spikes in personal visitors or calls from service area activities which are not communicated. The team will work with service areas to improve communication where necessary to ensure activities and communications are planned more effectively.
21. The Contact Centre will shortly be conducting a soft survey with personal callers to establish why residents visit the council and establish how we can enable those residents who are able to access services differently.
22. The Contact Centre will conduct during 2018/19, a strategic review of Customer Contact services provided to back office with the express aim to increase the first time resolution and reduce the number of hand off and repeat callers.
23. The Contact Centre Service will continue during 2018/19 to work with all service areas and communications/web team to encourage those residents who are able to have a digital relationship with the council; where services have capability, and enabling resident's information or request a council service 24/7 without having to telephone or visit the council in person.
24. When looking at the medium term for the customer contact service, it is expected that the time taken to deal with each telephone call will increase as the overall number of calls decrease: the percentage of simple calls decrease, and the percentage of more complicated calls increases.
25. The team will continue to support the more vulnerable residents to access council services who either visit the council offices or telephone.
26. In writing the report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and other key issues, the following implications have been considered:-

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

**An innovative and dynamic organisation- Adopt a more commercial and business-like approach to ensure that we can continue to deliver the best possible service at the lowest cost.**

27. The in-house customer contact service is providing a service to residents at a substantially reduced cost; the current changes to the contact centre, reception and post services are providing a continuously improving service to our residents including an increase in the percentage of calls being handled. The service will look to build on this improvement further and actively "Putting the customer at the heart of what we do" and reducing the number of calls which are abandoned, and the time taken to answer calls.

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