



**Report To:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee

6 November 2014

**Lead Officer:** Alex Colyer- Executive Director Corporate Services

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## Contact Centre Performance Review

### Purpose

1. To present to Scrutiny and Overview Committee an update on the Contact Centre's Performance (**Appendix A**) for information and comment.

### Recommendations

2. It is recommended that the report be noted.

### Reasons for Recommendations

3. The report provides a review of the performance of the Contact Centre's operation through to 3 October 2014 (at **Appendix A**) together with an update on progress against the improvement plan.

### Background

4. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee conducted a half yearly review of the Contact Centre in September 2014 and it was agreed that an interim progress report would be reviewed at the November 2014 meeting.
5. The Contact Centre was launched in December 2012 and, while performance to date has been good, in terms of customer satisfaction levels and volume of calls answered at first point of contact (running at over 80% on average), the service has not met its call wait time target which has led to customer frustration and a higher than desirable abandoned call rate.
6. The Committee, in September, requested that some analysis of abandoned calls be provided and this has now been set out at **Appendix A**. In undertaking this analysis, it has become clear that there is a relatively high number of callers who hang up before the target answering time of 2 minutes; these callers may have hung up for a variety of reasons including use of the Council's website to find the information required. The Council has been provided further raw data by the software supplier in this regard but further analysis is required to draw firm conclusions. It is anticipated that an update on this aspect could be provided to the Committee.
7. The Committee at its meeting September heard the headlines of the improvement plan for the service which is designed to change the service design and thus, reduce the call waiting times.
8. The improvement plan will build on the achieved 80% first time call resolution, with the main objective of reducing call wait times by dealing with the peaks and troughs in calls in a more effective way.

## Considerations

9. Since the last meeting, a number of the actions from the Improvement Plan have been implemented:
  - 1) 10 members of the Revenues team are now able to assist with calls during peak demand e.g. when reminders are sent to residents. Revenues staff assisted taking calls during the week commencing 30 September 2014 and handled around 400 calls during this week.
  - 2) 3 new full time members of staff commenced employment on the 20 October as Customer Contact Advisors.
  - 3) Call coaching with Customer Contact Advisors has commenced to improve individual performance
  - 4) A Digital by Default project has been commissioned by Executive Management Team bringing together a number of existing efficiency projects to focus on providing more self-service channels for residents and so reduce the number of residents who will need to telephone or visit the Council.
10. There are a number of actions from the improvement plan which will be commencing shortly:
  - 1) New Staffing rotas will be implemented to manage the peaks and troughs in call volumes, by having more staff available at busier times and less staff available at quieter times.
  - 2) As part of this rota pattern, Customer Contact Advisors will provide the reception service and resolve queries via a number of different channels as they come on stream, with the aim to provide a first time resolution rate of 80% for all forms of customer contact.
  - 3) A number of high priority electronic forms have been identified which will enable customers to self-serve and we are working with the Web Officer to make these available.
  - 4) Self Service options for residents to manage their council tax, business rates and benefits accounts will be made more widely available and promoted.
  - 5) Updated software, to enable all customer contact advisors to have latest system version to resolve a number of issues which are currently being experienced by the team. The full implementation will it is anticipated improve the reliability and user experience of the product.
  - 6) Active monitoring of calls to enable us to work with service areas to reduce the number of unnecessary telephone calls taken.
  - 7) Working with Service areas to plan more effectively for when there may be more customer contact and how this can be managed so that we can manage the Contact Service more effectively.
11. The performance of the team is improving but this was masked due to the increases in call volumes following the changes in bin collection rounds.

The volume of calls taken regarding bins has increased significantly since September; average volumes of calls and administration of these calls is double the normal expected. It is estimated that the additional work generated has reduced the capacity of the team by one staff member.

It is expected that call volumes will decrease as the changes are bedded in and this should not be an on going issue; we are looking at options currently to manage the expected customer contact which may arise following of the change to 4 weekly garden waste collection.

12. The Contact Centre improvement plan has a number of elements which mean that improvement to the contact centre's performance will be incremental as each part of the project is completed and changes implemented.

The increase in numbers of staff available to take calls during busy times (Revenues) will immediately provide an improvement. The changes to rota will be implemented in December 2014; new members of staff will be fully trained by the end of February 2015, which will increase the number of staff available for busy times. The Digital by Default project is a large project with a number of smaller work streams within; this project will bring significant improvements over the medium term and we will see start to see improvements as this project is implemented.

### **Implications**

13. In the writing of this report, taking into account financial, legal, staffing, risk management, equality and diversity, climate change, community safety and any other key issues, the following implications have been considered: -

#### ***Financial***

14. We are aware that there could be some budget pressures if the savings from staff vacancies do not cover the cost of the additional 2 full time customer contact staff.

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

**Aim 1 – We Listen and engage with residents, parishes and businesses to ensure that we deliver first class services and value money.**

15. The contact has provided an improved service to residents at a substantially reduced cost; the current proposed changes to contact centre and reception service will look to provide improved service to residents with an increase in the percentage of calls being handled,

**Background papers - none**

**Report Author:** Dawn Graham – Benefits Manager  
Telephone: (01954) 713085