



**Report To:** Scrutiny and Overview Committee  
**Lead Officer:** Executive Director Corporate Services

4 February 2016

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## **Customer Contact Service Annual Performance 2015 – Performance Review**

### **Purpose**

1. To present to Scrutiny and Overview Committee an update on performance for the customer contact service, and annual performance for 2015 (**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 operational performance of the customer contact service from its outset in December 2013 until 25 December 2015 inclusive, and a review of the annual performance for 2015.

### **Background**

4. Scrutiny and Overview Committee conducted the 2014 annual review of the operational performance of the customer contact service in February 2015; and confirmed that an annual review should be conducted in February 2016 for 2015.
5. The customer contact service was launched in December 2012 and, whilst performance in terms of volume of calls answered at first point of contact has been consistently good, the performance for number of calls answered has been variable.
6. There is an improvement plan which is being implemented within the service to improve the overall performance. This improvement plan has a number of elements which means the performance of the team will improve incrementally as each part of the project is completed.
7. The introduction of support being provided by the back office teams (Council Tax, Benefits and Elections) from September 2014, during periods of high demand for these specific service areas has improved the performance of the team with the number of abandoned calls reduced.

### **Considerations**

8. During the last year a number of the actions from the improvement plan have been completed which include the following:
  - a) Corporate Induction – meeting all new staff and making them aware of our service and the position our service holds within the organisation; inviting staff

to visit our service to observe our practices and listen in on customer calls. This has proved to be very successful.

- b) Additional back office support being provided by the Rents team; training has been completed and now taking calls at peak times for their specific service.
  - c) Secondment of team member to Building Control which will enable specific service calls to be handled by Building Control admin team at peak times.
  - d) Reactive call messages can now be recorded and uploaded to the system by members of the customer contact service management team on specific individual service lines and main general enquiries service line; these can now have individual messages which can be added as part of call management processes to inform the customer of service specific issues to help manage customer expectations. For example, changes to green bin collection dates for December 2016-February 2016.
  - e) Implementation of a solution to offer residents the option on both general enquiries line and revenues service line to opt to make a payment directly without the need to speak to an advisor; the customer is automatically forwarded to the automated payment line.
  - f) Implementation of new dedicated specific service line for Rents to help monitor and manage customer expectations during peak demand. For example, to assist (if required) following mail out of summons.
  - g) Introduction of electronic forms via our website for Benefits and issues relating to change of circumstances.
  - h) Review and monitoring of reception service. Currently looking at options to improve the experience for visitors to the Council; making sure the customer reaches their final destination as quickly as possible and to reduce queuing and waiting times at reception. Workshop with our partner organisations and internal service areas to be arranged. This project is on-going.
  - i) Review of Reception and Public Meeting Room Accommodation. Currently looking at options to make the best use of the space to ensure effective and efficient handling of customers resolving their enquiries at first point of contact. Ensuring that visitors can be encouraged to use self-serve kiosks, and create a suitable environment to discuss their personal circumstances, this project is on-going.
  - j) Improved information is available on the website following the launch of the new website in December 2015.
  - k) Updates provided and installed on BT Cloud Contact software and support received from back office ICT service.
9. There are a number of actions included in the improvement plan which will enable continuing improvement in the performance of the customer contact service to be sustained; these actions will be completed during the 2016/17 financial year. The list of remaining actions are shown below:-

- a) Digital by Default project is an integral part of the customer contact service improvement plan; there is a significant amount of work to be undertaken to enable residents to access self-service options - this project is ongoing.
- b) Working with high volume users of customer contact service to reduce the number of calls being presented and to look at options to reduce customer contact further or self-serve. Liaising with specific service area to look at options for on-line forms.
- c) Improvements to the website is being looked at by the Web Officer Working (WOW) Group and individual service areas will be looking at their individual service areas web pages and making the necessary changes.
- d) Extending the back office support for the customer contact service by expanding the back office teams who are able to provide staff to answer/handle calls during periods of peak demand. For example, Housing, Health and Environmental Service and Planning.
- e) Working closely with our back office staff, through regular service review meetings to ensure that customers receive an efficient and effective service from both the back office and contact centre service.
- f) Liaising with specific service areas to assist in managing customer expectations and giving guidance to suggest a process could be better managed through designing an on-line form or recording a reactive message to be played on a specific service line. Thus, reducing call wait times, handling times and enhancing the customer contact service/performance.
- g) Review of current staffing structure to continue the improvement in the operational performance of the customer contact service, taking into consideration succession planning, training and development opportunities for existing staff.

10. There are a number of challenges that may affect the operational performance of the customer contact service as follows:

a) Recruitment-

- Customer contact service vacancies currently are: x1 Team Leader, x3 Advisors.
- Senior Customer Contact Advisor replacing customer contact advisor.
- Combined role of Customer Contact Advisor/Post Room Admin Assistant. (This role has evolved following a review of central administration functions and post room duties and responsibilities of all service areas).

11. The customer contact service operational performance is improving which can be seen in **Appendix A**. This table shows all performance for all reporting periods, from outset to present day.

- a) That the average percentage of all calls answered has improved year on year. Our team performance is 84% compared with 76% for 2014
- b) Call abandonment rates have decreased by 40%
- c) Average call answer times have improved by 50 seconds (27% decrease)

d) Average call handling times reduced by 28 seconds compared with 2014

	<b>Average Calls Answered</b>	<b>Average Monthly Calls Handled</b>
2013	77% Calls answered	10411 (3163 Abandoned)
2014	76% Calls answered	10226 (3228 Abandoned)
2015	84% Calls answered	10367 (1955 Abandoned)

	<b>Average call answer times</b>	<b>Average Handling Time</b>
2013	00:02:57	00:07:55
2014	00:03:04	00:07:51
2015	00:02:14	00:07:23

12. Whilst there is and has been an ongoing improvement in performance of the customer contact service, there are still opportunities to improve performance further and expand the scope and complexity of transactions taken.
13. The Digital by Default project and remaining actions detailed in the customer contact service improvement plan should enable further improvements to performance and are a realistic reflection of team workloads.

### **Implications**

14. 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: -

### **Effect on Strategic Aims**

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

15. The customer contact service is providing a service to residents at substantially reduced cost; the current changes to the contact centre and reception are providing an improving service to resident with an increase in the percentage of calls being handled. The service will look to build on this improvement further and promote self-service options to residents.

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