



Report To: Scrutiny and Overview Committee
Lead Officer: Alex Colyer – Chief Executive Officer

9 November 2016

Customer Contact Service Annual Performance 2016 – Performance Review

Purpose

1. To present to Scrutiny and Overview Committee with an update on performance for the Customer Contact Service (**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 January 2016 until 30 September 2016 inclusive.

Background

4. The Scrutiny and Overview Committee conducted an annual review of the operational performance of the Customer Contact Service in January 2016. At the September 2016 meeting, the committee asked for an update report on the performance of the service.
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 the number of calls answered has been variable.
6. The service has been successful in recruiting very dynamic, able and enthusiastic staff who have over a period of time been able to secure roles within the council as part of back office teams.
7. There is a work plan (see 11 below) which is being implemented within the service to look areas of the business where improvements can be made. The plan has a number of elements which will incrementally improve performance of the service as each part of the plan is completed.

Considerations

8. As already highlighted in 6 above, the Contact Centre has been very successful at recruiting excellent staff who then progress their careers in local government by taking roles within the other areas of the organisation. Although this is a positive indicator of excellent staff development and progression, it does result in a higher than normal level of staff movement.

9. The council has made a clear commitment towards apprenticeships and currently has a number of staff on accredited apprenticeship programmes. January 2017 marks the start of the Government's apprenticeship programme to increase numbers in business. The Contact Centre would offer an ideal opportunity to deliver a formal apprenticeship route in Customer Services. It is proposed that this is established in line with the corporate apprenticeship programme. This will deliver an accredited framework of learning whilst linking salary increases to the completion of learning outcomes and qualifications such as National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ's). This career option is aimed at employing staff on training agreement contracts and who will be employed within the Customer Contact Service for fixed periods of time.
10. The council's "Digital by Default" project has already helped residents to use online forms, the next stage of this project will provide more options via the website for residents to access council services. The Revenues team's project will commence before the end of 2016 and will provide online access to residents to their council tax, business rate and benefit accounts.

The project will also provide a suite of electronic forms for council tax which can be processed using minimal staff manual intervention and enable the revenues service to manage the impact of the growth in properties without additional staffing resources.

It is expected that following completion of this project together with some active promotion of self-service options to residents, the number of calls the contact centre receive can be reduced significantly; the revenues and benefits team's calls amount to currently around 30% of total call volumes around 3000-4000 calls monthly.

11. Customer Contact Service Work Plan

There are a number of parts to this plan which include: -

- a) Introduction of advanced call coaching on a one to one basis for all Customer Contact Service staff to increase their knowledge leading to reduced call times.
- b) Review and refresh business processes for handling calls for service areas with the aim of rationalising and reducing processes to minimise the administration time taken following the call.
- c) Review of options that can be provided by current telephony provider to manage calls more effectively during busy periods; these may include options for leaving a message to get a call back, providing queue position to callers and more targeted messages to encourage callers to use the website.
- d) Investigate alternative options to provide overflow call handling in times of anticipated peak demand periods.
- e) Implement a strategy to encourage greater website take up from those residents who can use online service options.
- f) Provide digital reception services to improve customer service; this will offer a self service registration for visitors attending meetings and pre-booked appointments on most occasions.
- g) Review of Reception and Public Meeting Room Accommodation:

- (1) Consideration of 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.
 - (2) Promote and support visitors to use self-serve kiosks, and to create a suitable environment to discuss their personal circumstances, this project is on-going.
12. Following a recruitment and selection process, three new staff were appointed and commenced employment at the end of August. In addition, three temporary staff were appointed to cover vacancies and allow for the initial training of these new employees.
 13. The recruitment process continues and will be currently looking to recruit a number of new advisors to supplement the team.
 14. The Customer Contact Service's operational performance is now showing improvement, this follows a reduction in performance due to staff vacancies and annual leave which can be seen in **Appendix A**.

Implications

15. 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 Objectives

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

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 all actively promote self-service as service areas are able to provide digital access for residents.

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