



To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)

Date: 04 July 2018

Subject: Customer Services Update

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 To detail the actions being taken to improve Customer Service.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Scrutiny Board 1 are recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the briefing note and support the actions being taken to improve performance of Customer Service.
- b) Make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources for any additional improvement opportunities.

3 Information/Background

- 3.1 In 2015 the Customer Journey programme brought together initial customer contact into one service area. Through this programme Customer Services delivered £500,000 savings target and an increase in self service from less than 1% to 33%.
- 3.2 The programme and the current performance of the Customer Services department was last considered at Audit and Procurement Committee in February 2018. Therefore this note details the progress made between February and June 2018.
- 3.3 Customer Service handles enquiries from residents across a number of service areas. The volume and nature and number of enquiries are driven largely by the processes within each service area. Therefore detail is also provided, as an example, from Adult Social Care, to show the work that is being done to change and improve the interface between the Council and residents of Coventry.

4 Performance

- 4.1 The performance data for the financial year 2017-18 shows that the call answer rate has increased from 63% to 72% compared to the previous financial year. This equates to 23,000 more calls being answered in 2017-18 compared to 2016-17.
- 4.2 Approximately 309,000 calls were answered during the financial year 2017-18 and the answer rate has increased by 9%. The average wait time to answer has fallen from 06:27 to 05:42 – an improvement of 45 seconds.

4.3 The total number of calls answered will increase for 2018-19. This is because information for other areas of Customer Services – previously Business Services; Children’s Services and Provider Services (Adults) can now be measured. These areas equate to roughly 9,000 calls per month.

4.4 The performance data for two areas of Customer Services considered in previous reports are outlined in the tables below:

4.5 **Customer Services General Enquiries (formerly Coventry Direct):**

	Calls answered	Answer rate	Average wait times
2016/17	110,812	53%	06:49
2017/18	133,945	70%	04:52
Change	+ 23,133	+ 17%	- 01:57

4.6 **Council Tax:**

	Calls answered	Answer rate	Average wait times
2016/17	60,569	52%	10:42
2017/18	67,714	67%	08:29
Change	+ 7,200	+ 15%	- 02:13

4.7 The data shows that there have been significant improvements in the answer rates and average wait times for 2017-18 compared to 2016-17.

This has been achieved during a period of high vacancy rates and a recruitment freeze for approximately two months while additional savings of £300k were identified across the broader service area, no posts were deleted from the contact centre environment. There are 134 posts in Customer Service Delivery of which 26 posts are currently vacant. All of these posts are being recruited to and are at varying stages along the recruitment process.

When the recruitment freeze was lifted in April 2018 a new approach to recruitment was introduced. This has led to successful recruitment to 11 posts, with more interviews booked in over the next few weeks. This new approach enables faster recruitment and ensures people are in post at the earliest opportunity.

A new approach to induction and training within the Customer Service centre designed to improve the experience of new recruits, deliver consistency in training and ensure that standards and expectations are set early on. Feedback from new starters confirmed that they believe that they are well equipped when they are released into the centre to engage with customers. Training time has been reduced to less than a week whereas previously it could take three weeks before people were able to add value. This new process has helped with improved performance and supported the improvement in customer experience detailed in section 5 below.

4.8 The improvement in performance is directly linked to the work undertaken by the recently introduced coaching function which measure the service that is delivered to customers and introduce changes at an individual and team level to deliver improvements. This coaching currently takes place in both Customer Service General and Council Tax, in which ownership, call structure, listening, questioning and soft skills and compliance with GDPR regulations are measured. There is an expected quality bench mark of 85%. When the coaching started in January teams and individuals were achieving 78%, this has improved every month and it is currently 90%. The coaching has evolved and now also looks into productivity and call control. The positive impacts of which can be seen through the productivity results detailed in 4.9 below.

- 4.9 In January 2018 a productivity initiative was introduced within the Customer Service Delivery area, with the aim of measuring the levels of productive time for each team and looking at working practices to improve productivity levels. This has been successful in increasing productivity across all teams, for example Customer Services General Enquiries productivity figures for April 2018 are 7% higher than for January 2018 while Council Tax has increased by 3% over the same time period.

Month	Average Daily Number of Calls Answered	Capture Rate (%)	Average handle time (Inc. Wrap) secs	Average Wait Time for Customers
January	510	58%	7 mins 39 secs	8 mins 24 secs
April	530	75%	6 mins 51 secs	4 mins 17 secs
May	561	76%	6 mins 2 secs	3 mins 42 secs

- 4.10 A Meet and Greet team are based in the Customer Service Centre, they deal with customers who contact the Council face-to-face at the Customer Service Centre in Broadgate House. Between September and November 2017, as other services moved their teams to Friargate, the Meet and Greet team were required to pick up additional face to face enquiries equating to approximately 2,400 enquiries between November and the end of March. During 2017-18 average wait times to be dealt with by the Triage and Scanning services in the Customer Contact Centre reduced, Triage by more than 1 minute and Scanning by nearly 2 minutes.

5 Customer feedback

- 5.1 We recognise the importance of using performance measures in conjunction with customer feedback to identify the things we are doing well, and to highlight the areas where we need to develop.
- 5.2 The collation of customer satisfaction across online and telephony services went live mid-June, for customers using our services for Registrars, this was used as a pilot area to test the technology and approach to ensure that customers were happy to engage. The feedback has been positive and from 25 surveys, the phone service has been rated 'Excellent' 21 times, 'Good' 3 times and Satisfactory 1 time. Our customers on all 25 occasions have, got the information they needed, found the advisor helpful and got the required outcome from the call.
- 5.3 At the end of our online forms, customers have the option to give us feedback by choosing a face icon (either happy, neutral or unhappy) and they have the option to leave a comment too. In 2017, 19,233 people chose to leave us feedback: 65% were positive (selecting the happy face), 23% were neutral, and 12% left negative feedback (unhappy face). This feedback is used to consider improvements to the self-service offer.
- 5.4 Since opening the Customer Service Centre we have undertaken regular customer satisfaction surveys and there has been high satisfaction reported with face to face services.
- 5.5 A household survey was conducted in the spring of 2018 and included a wide range of questions, including how much citizens feel informed about what the Council is doing, and how they feel they can influence decisions about the local area. Analysis of these survey

results is currently being undertaken and the Insight Team aim to share these findings by the end of July 2018.

6 Adult Social Care

- 6.1 Over the last 2 years Adult Services have made significant improvements to their online offer. In September 2016, the Adult Social Care and Communities Directory was launched. The directory is dual purpose; firstly it provides a range of information and advice about the variety of support and community activities available in Coventry to help people live independently and well. Secondly the directory includes a self-assessment and signposting tool. The self-assessment tool enables citizens or their family and friends to complete a series of short questions to identify any potential care and support needs. The system then advises whether they would benefit from a further assessment of need with a professional and provides tailored advice based on their answers. People are then able to create a brochure of information to help them. Since the launch of the tool to 31st May 2018 the self-assessment has been completed 1343 times, of which 74% has resulted in no further follow up, with people choosing to self-support using the information provided in the directory.
- 6.2 In January 2018, an online carer's self-assessment was added to the directory. The Carer's self-assessment enables carers of an adult to answer a series of detailed questions designed to provide an overview of a carers circumstances and their situation. The questions focus on the carer to gather information about their current caring role, what their needs are and how to plan for the future. A carer can take as long as they need to answer the questions at times to suit them; as they are able to save and return to the assessment as often as they need to prior to submitting the assessment. The completed assessment will then be considered and validated by either the Carers Trust Heart of England, who are working in partnership with Coventry City Council, or a member of the Council's carers team. Information and advice is then provided to assist the carer in continuing to fulfil their caring role, and to look after themselves. To date five carer's have fully completed and submitted a self-assessment online.
- 6.3 Digital technology is also enabling adult social care to improve our initial contact with customers. An electronic calendar booking system, implemented in January 2018, allows practitioners within our Community Social Care Intake Team (+65) to book appointments so that customers are given a date for their initial social care visit at first contact. To date, 444 appointments have been arranged using the system. From July 2018, our Occupational Therapy Team will be using the booking system to make appointments.
- 6.4 In order to increase general public awareness of the requirement for some people to contribute or pay the full costs associated with their care needs, the Council's Financial Assessments team worked with IT colleagues to develop a short online tool to help people understand whether they might have to pay towards the cost of their care. This tool has been used 155 times.
- 6.5 Improving the customer experience of our online offer remains a key priority for Adult Services and over the coming months we will be enabling a customer feedback mechanism on the directory and self-assessment to support this work. In addition the Adult Services Improvement Programme includes the redesign of our most complex process and forms in order to streamline and simplify wherever possible. This should have a positive impact on the customer experience as well as the average handling time for Customer Services – Delivery. Customer journey mapping has been undertaken recently and the learning from this activity will also inform our improvement plans.

7 Future plans

- 7.1 The future programme of change referenced includes the following:

- We will continue to maximise the use of our on-line platform to support customers to progress transactions within a self-service setting
- Customer experience monitoring will be rolled out to additional services and resultant improvement opportunities will continue to be progressed
- Opportunities to further improve productivity will be sought
- Our unified communications offer is being reviewed to ensure we are optimising the use of technology.
- Complementary technology used for call recording, quality monitoring and resource planning will be reviewed alongside the telephony platform

7.2 We remain committed to improving our performance based on the feedback we receive from our customers and at the same time we are maintaining a focus of evolving the service offer to allow us to exploit technology and achieve efficiencies.

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