



To: Audit and Procurement Committee

Date: 19 February 2018

Subject: Customer Services Update

1 Purpose of the Note

- 1.1 To provide an update to Audit and Procurement Committee on Customer Services, including performance and customer satisfaction.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members of the Committee are recommended to:

- a) Note the content of the briefing note.
- b) Identify any recommendations for the Cabinet Member for Strategic Finance and Resources or for the Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1).

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 achieved its £500k savings target.

- 3.2 The Customer Journey programme implemented a number of changes to improve the customer experience when contacting the Council, including:

- The creation of a My Account area on the Coventry City Council website, enabling customers to request Council services 24/7.
- The introduction of a new phone system to help us to manage our calls more effectively.
- The delivery of the Customer Service Centre in Broadgate House, bringing together all the city centre reception points into one place.

- 3.3 Customer Services now deals with initial customer enquiries relating to services across the Council, such as (this is not an exhaustive list):

Council Tax	Housing and Homelessness	Blue Badges
Housing Benefits	Electoral Services	Register Office
Parking Services	Waste Services	Pest Control
Highways	Adult Social Care	Street Scene

- 3.4 In July 2016 Business Services (administrative support for the organisation) joined Customer Services under one Head of Service.

3.5 The service had a savings target of £1.75m to achieve. To date £1.12m has been delivered (£1.2m full year effect). There is an ongoing programme of transformation to continue to drive the changes necessary to both achieve the remaining savings and to deliver improved service.

4 Performance

4.1 By bringing the Council's customer contact together, we are able to build a better understanding of our performance levels for all contact channels. We are able to use this information to evaluate our service delivery, plan our resources and identify any changes needed.

4.2 Following the creation of My Account and increased availability of self-service options for our customers, there has been a change in how customers contact the Council. In 2013 less than 1% of all customer contact was self-service, compared to 31% in 2017.

4.3 In Customer Services so far this financial year, approximately 25,100 more calls have been answered than were answered last financial year, and the call answer rate has increased from 59% to 72%. Approximately 260,000 calls have been answered from April through January, and the answer rate has increased by 13%. The average wait time to answer has fallen from 06:49 to 05:40 – an improvement of 1 minute 19 seconds.

4.4 Customer Services General Enquiries (formerly Coventry Direct), have answered over 22,300 more calls than last year, and the current answer rate of 70% is an improvement of 18% over the same period last year. So far this financial year 113,682 calls have been answered in CS General Enquiries, whereas just over 91,300 calls were answered by this time last year. Wait times have dropped by over 2 minutes. The average wait time so far this year is 04:48, which is much improved over last January when the average wait time was 06:50.

4.5 Council Tax has also shown significant improvement, and call answer rates have increased from 48% at this time last year to 63% this financial year. Approximately 7000 more calls have been answered so far this year. From April 2017 to January 2018, approximately 54,000 were answered, which marks a 15% increase over the 47,000 that were answered by this time last year. Wait time to answer has fallen by more than 3 minutes, from 13:24 last year to 10:15 so far this financial year.

4.6 The Customer Service Centre has a Meet and Greet team, who deal with customers who contact the Council face-to-face. With various services moving their teams to Friargate, the Meet and Greet team is now dealing with even more enquiry types than before.

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. As such, we have collected various forms of customer feedback over the past few years to inform our improvement programme.

5.2 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.

- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 The first satisfaction survey was undertaken during the first two weeks of opening the Customer Service Centre. We spoke to 83 customers and there was a satisfaction rating of 4.42 out of 5, with 93% of responses being positive. The highest levels of satisfaction were with staff attitude and friendliness, look and feel, facilities and wait times.
- 5.5 We repeated the customer survey after 3 months of being open and found that the levels of customer satisfaction were slightly up at 4.45 out of 5, with 83% of positive responses with a higher proportion of those being 'very satisfied'. There was a slight satisfaction decrease with wait times and staff knowledge.
- 5.6 At the one year anniversary of the centre opening we undertook a further satisfaction survey with customers, the survey was reduced to just one question which was "Overall, and taking everything into account, how would you rate your satisfaction with our Customer Service Centre?". 120 people responded giving a 4.28 out of 5 satisfaction rate with an 87% positive response. The highest levels of satisfaction were with excellent service and friendly staff, there was a slight decrease around waiting times.
- 5.7 In August 2017 we completed another satisfaction survey of our face to face service, and we also included a survey of our telephone service. We spoke to 99 people in the Customer Service Centre, and we called back 23 people who had phoned the Council. Satisfaction levels were higher than at the one-year anniversary, with an overall satisfaction score of 4.68 and an overall positive response of 97%.
- 5.8 In 2016 a representative sample of 2573 Coventry residents took part in a household survey commissioned by the Council. This included questions about how people perceive and contact the Council. Of those surveyed, 31% said they get information about the Council through the website. The survey found that two in five (39%) residents had contacted the Council in the last 18 months; a quarter by telephone (24%) and 8% by email or website. When asked why they chose the contact method that they used, speed and convenience were the most important factors, whilst a minority of residents said they prefer to speak to a person.

6 Future plans

- 6.1 The future programme of change referenced previously includes the following:
- There will be more online services available to customers over the coming months. By releasing these additional online services, customers who prefer to use a self-service platforms will be able to do so.
 - When designing our online services we will continue to focus on refining process to save organisational effort and improve our customers' experience when dealing with the Council.
 - We will also monitor feedback about our online services and identify where we can improve them for our customers.
- 6.2 Fundamental to the service aims is the recently formed Improvement and Development function. The function will lead in a number of areas:
- Proactively seeking the views of customers on the service that they have received across all channels and using their feedback to inform changes, to engage with the

wider organisation to highlight opportunities to adapt and equally to highlight areas where we/team members might be performing well.

- Undertaking a quality assurance role through mystery shopping and the evaluation of service delivery. The findings of this will be used to inform training, development and performance management in the service.
- Delivering coaching and training within the service to support the development of individuals within their role.

6.3 The next household survey will be conducted in the Spring and will include 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.

6.4 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.

Name: David Ashmore

Job Title: Director of Customer Services and Transformation

Phone: 024 7683 3200

Email: David.Ashmore@coventry.gov.uk