

To: Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board (1)

Date: 12th December 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 The programme of activity and the performance of the Customer Service department was last considered at Finance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Board in July 2018 therefore this note details the progress made between July and October 2018.

3.2 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.

4 Performance

4.1 Performance across Customer Services

Month	2017 Calls Answered	2017 Capture Rate	2017 Average Wait to Answer	2018 Calls Answered	2018 Capture Rate	2018 Average Wait to Answer
January	22979	66%	6:46	23272	61%	9:50
February	20757	69%	5:34	20922	74%	5:38
March	24657	67%	5:33	23169	70%	7:07
April	19095	66%	6:12	22416	66%	9:24
May	20405	62%	7:22	23300	69%	7:58
June	24403	74%	4:56	22927	75%	6:25
July	23120	76%	4:25	24699	77%	5:51
August	23188	72%	5:23	23520	80%	5:16
September	24745	69%	6:46	23485	76%	5:56
October	25145	77%	5:01	26901	85%	3:37
November	23274	75%	6:06			
December	16412	79%	4:39			

- 4.2 An additional 6117 calls have been answered than for the same period last year.
- 4.3 The average wait to answer and the capture rate are significantly improved in the latter part of the year against the first half of the year. There remains however more to do to reach the desired targets of 95% answered and 80% answered in 60 seconds.
- 4.4 Productivity at an advisor level continues to be monitored across the service and regular coaching sessions and 121 meetings take place to maintain a focus on performance in both quantitative and qualitative terms.
- 4.5 The management team monitor performance on a daily basis and take appropriate action to for example; amend breaks, change agent activity between telephone and email/administrative work, determine leave allocation, prioritise training activity etc.

5 Benchmarking

The last Scrutiny Board discussion highlighted a desire to undertake benchmarking to understand how performance is measured in other local authorities. Since then we have joined with a number of colleagues from across the country as part of the 'Local Authority Contact Centre Forum'. The forum offers the opportunity to share information virtually and meets every six months, Coventry hosted the last meeting. Not all local authorities replied when asked how they measured performance however the following is a summary of the respondents metrics;

- a) Some authorities have no stated performance targets
- b) Some authorities do not target the percentage of calls answered however of those who do the targets are variable from 70% to 95%. We are one of only two local authorities who are targeting 95% of contacts to be answered
- c) Very few authorities target time to answer (wait time), of those who do it varies between answered within 120 seconds and 60 seconds. We are one of three local authorities who are targeting 60 seconds.
- d) We have no visibility of actual performance from other local authorities at this stage however a discussion on this subject took place at the last forum meeting. Feedback suggests that all authorities are facing challenges surrounding performance with resource levels reduced to support the realisation of savings. Areas that are proving particularly challenging are the services that have longer call durations where there are extensive wait times.

6 Staff turnover

- 6.1 The last Scrutiny Board discussion highlighted a requirement to consider staff turnover rates within the service. The national context;
 - a) Average UK contact centre turnover rates stand at 26% against an average turnover rate of 15% in other industries
 - b) The most cited reasons for turnover within contact centres are;
 - i) Stress due to high demand and a tight focus on performance
 - ii) The roles are not generally seen as long term career options with many individuals intending to move into different positions as they arise
 - c) Turnover has an indirect cost in terms of ongoing recruitment and training effort and impacts performance. Whilst high turnover rates are acknowledged the industries response is to;

- i) Operate a tiered grading structure based on skill level
- ii) Introduce tailored reward packages/incentive schemes
- iii) Create career pathways that open up opportunities to progress within an organisation
- iv) Create a fast moving and engaging culture promoting collaboration and belonging to encourage advisors to commit to the organisation

6.2 Coventry's contact centre turnover

	Total 'leavers'	Total attrition rate	External leavers 'other'	% of total leavers	External Leavers	% of total leavers	Internal Transfers	% of total leavers
2017	11	10.68%	2	18%	7	64%	2	18%
2018	21	21.12%	1	67%	14	5%	6	29%

6.3 Turnover in the contact centre has been assessed for the last two years and leavers have been categorised in three different ways; 'External Leavers 'other' – this is where individuals have left due to performance issues which usually occur in the probationary period, 'External Leavers' – where alternative employment has been found outside of the organisation and 'Internal Transfers' where individuals have moved to another role inside the organisation.

6.4 The level of turnover in the contact centre has increased to 21.12% overall. Much of the turnover correlates with the national picture

- a) Our emphasis on performance has increased this year with the introduction of coaches, considering the quality of service offered and the monitoring/management of performance at an individual level. This change in focus has seen some of our longer standing team members move on in their careers and exit the organisation
- b) The change in performance focus has also enabled us more overtly identify and acknowledge our performers. Thus, an increase in staff engagement and a continued focus on recruiting competent individuals has seen a number of people successfully enter more senior roles

6.5 Our response to turnover within the contact centre environment has been;

- a) We have two advisor grades within the contact centre environment to acknowledge the different levels of knowledge and technical competence needed in each environment. We now actively encourage our performers in the lower grades to apply for the more senior advisor positions (though we do not compromise in terms of recruitment standards/expectations) and indeed roles across the organisation. While this adds to the leaver rates we consider this to be positive turnover
- b) We publically acknowledge our high performers on our wall boards and in e-mails to the whole team. Placing equal if not greater emphasis on our top performers has had a real impact on the culture within the team
- c) For high performers, their coaching sessions have been used to help them to consider career preferences and to undertake practical preparation for interviews and assessments for other roles within the organisation
- d) There is a greater emphasis placed on staff engagement through a calendar of fun and charitable events to build a greater sense of team

- 6.6 There remains more to do to continue to build on the work undertaken so far and we are keen to launch two new initiatives next year;
- a) The team have designed a broader recognition scheme intended to celebrate individuals who demonstrate the organisational behaviours. Initial discussions with the Chief Exec challenged us to be bolder in our thinking, it is likely that this will go live mid 2019
 - b) Ongoing team engagement through an effective suggestion scheme and ownership for business change will be an area that we will look to explore during the second half of next year.

7 Customer feedback

- 7.1 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.
- 7.2 The collation of customer feedback (through services available on our CRM) both online and through our telephone services went live mid-June. This was undertaken on a pilot basis for customers using Registrars services. This approach has now been extended to include Benefits and Council Tax services, Pest Control, Rubbish & Recycling and Street Scene.
- 7.3 Surveys will be linked across all remaining CRM services by the end of January 2019, this will enable a much broader understanding of the customer experience across the organisation via the telephone and on-line channels.
- 7.4 A total of 2721 surveys have been sent out for both telephony and online service requests (June to November) with 452 responses, around 16.5%. The feedback has been largely positive:

Rating	Telephone	Online
Excellent	185	83
Good	39	64
Satisfactory	14	47
Unsatisfied	4	13
Poor	0	3

- 7.5 We have received no negative feedback about the contact centre staff in any of the surveys, this has instead been extremely positive and is something that we utilise in performance discussions with team members.
- 7.6 There is more to do to continue to develop our understanding of the Customer Experience across the organisation and we will continue to evolve our approach as we move forwards to consider;
- a) How we obtain feedback on our face to face channel so that we are able to consider service across all channels
 - b) Consideration needs to be given as to how the information is shared across the organisation in a positive way and encouraging of ongoing improvement
 - c) Reporting requires further exploration to understand not only the customer views but to also demonstrate what has happened as a consequence of their feedback

8 Digital focus

- 8.1 We recognise the need to drive the digital agenda to not only support organisational efficiencies but to also keep pace with the increasing demand for self-serve options. A board has been convened to prioritise work which is aligned to the One Coventry agenda. There are a number of initiatives being progressed;
- a) Alongside the migration to Skype for Business, alternative contact centre telephony is being considered to secure a stable platform for our customers and to support longer term efficiencies. Site visits are underway and initial discussions have been held with suppliers. The practical work necessary to make this change will commence in the new year.
 - b) An inbound E-post solution is part way through being rolled out which sees physical post being opened, sorted, scanned (and indexed in back office systems where appropriate) and presented in electronic format to services and individuals across the organisation. It is expected that the roll out of this will conclude at the end of this financial year
 - c) An outbound postal solution is now in place that will allow services and individuals to send their outbound mail directly the Post & Print team. In the new year we will prioritise working with teams who generate large amounts of post to roll this out which will drive efficiencies and speed up the mailing process.
 - d) We are in the process of devising a digital maturity model which will help to determine a prioritised plan of on-line development work. This will build on the existing web offer and continue to drive up the use of self-serve while at the same time identify the longer term opportunities to progress greater digital integration and automation

Name: David Ashmore

Job Title: Director of Customer Services and Transformation

Phone: 024 7683 3200

Email: David.Ashmore@coventry.gov.uk