

# Report to Overview and Scrutiny Committee



## Date of meeting:

<b>Portfolio:</b>	<b>Customer</b>
<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Customer Service Programme Annual Report</b>
<b>Officer contact for further information:</b>	Rob Pavey (01992 564211)
<b>Democratic Services Officer:</b>	Rebecca Perrin (01992 564243)

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## Recommendations/Decisions Required:

**(1) That the Committee not the report detailing the work of the Customer Programme in 2018/19 and its future direction from 2019/20.**

## Report:

1. This report updates the progress made against the objectives Customer Service Programme within the original transformation work by the Council. The Customer programme work is due to be reset within the terms of the new Select Committee framework and the report will explain the work already underway to meet these new objectives.

The original Customer Service Programme had four key objectives.

- Civic Offices Reception;
- Corporate Contact Centre (CCC);
- Systems and Digital Development;
- Customer Satisfaction

All four of these elements remain relevant and will be taken forward as part of the new programme framework which will be described later. Current progress is laid out in the following paragraphs.

2. The **Corporate Contact Centre (CCC)** has continued to evolve and grow as more services are integrated to achieve the resolution of customer enquiries at the first point of contact. The services that have been integrated so far have largely been identified through the process mapping work undertaken to split functions in line with the Common Operating Model – Customer, Business Support and Technical. Whilst some services have integrated into the CCC there remain large areas of operation which sit outside. These larger areas are Housing and Revenues and Benefits, although Revenues and Benefits does have a ‘sister’ Contact Centre but not yet integrated. The process mapping so far has largely been vertical in design i.e. looking at the process within the service and not looking at its touchpoint with other services, and more importantly, not from the customer’s journey and experience. Housing and Revenues and Benefits will be subject to future service re-design based on mapping the Customer journey. Work has started already on Revenues and Benefits and work on Housing Services will commence in the coming months. Customer journey mapping truly enables services to be designed around the needs of our customers and the results of this work will be presented to the Stronger Communities Select Committee. Once the customer journey work has been undertaken the full customer service design in these areas can be achieved.

3. To give a current position statement of the CCC the services that have been integrated in 2018/19 to build on existing service provision have been:

- Parking and Street Furniture;
- Grounds Maintenance;
- MOT bookings;
- Local Land Charges

The call volumes that are now going through the CCC have risen from around 81,000 in 2017/18 to 118,000 in 2018/19. With the aim of the CCC to resolve customer enquiries at the first point of contact without having to be transferred to another service area the performance indicator measuring this is key. In 2017/18, 27% of contacts were resolved at first point of contact and in 2018/19 this had risen to 35%. There is therefore a strong incentive to move more types of service contact into the CCC to raise the number of first contact resolutions and to continually review processes with the back-offices to achieve this. The appointment of a new Customer Service Manager will provide the capacity to allow the integration process to accelerate.

4. One area that has moved into the Customer team is Member Services. Members are a customer with specific requirements that the Customer team can provide a resilient and focussed support. The team will support Members on the digital journey and paperless agenda and also provide a specific service to triage all Member contact effectively and monitor these to ensure timely responses for Members

5. The major piece of work on **Systems and Digital Development** has been the launch of the new website in early January. The focus of the new website is transactional to encourage customers to self-serve and help the Council achieve back-office efficiencies. The transactional element of the website remains a work in progress as more processes become available for customers to transact in that way. The move to the new website was accelerated due to security concerns around the former website's platform and unfortunately there remained some elements that were incomplete although key transactions were functioning as expected. This is reflected in the customer satisfaction data in paragraph 9. Most of those initial issues were around:

- Broken links;
- Look and feel of the website, and
- Navigation to transactions.

Specific customer feedback, further explained in paragraph 10, has enabled officers to prioritise work to improve and develop the website.

6 As an indication of the usage of the new website the number of visitors for the period January to February 2019 was 172,674 and in the comparable period for 2018 this number was 141,452. This shows an increase of 22% compared to last year which is good news. Further breakdown of the figures is shown in the table below:

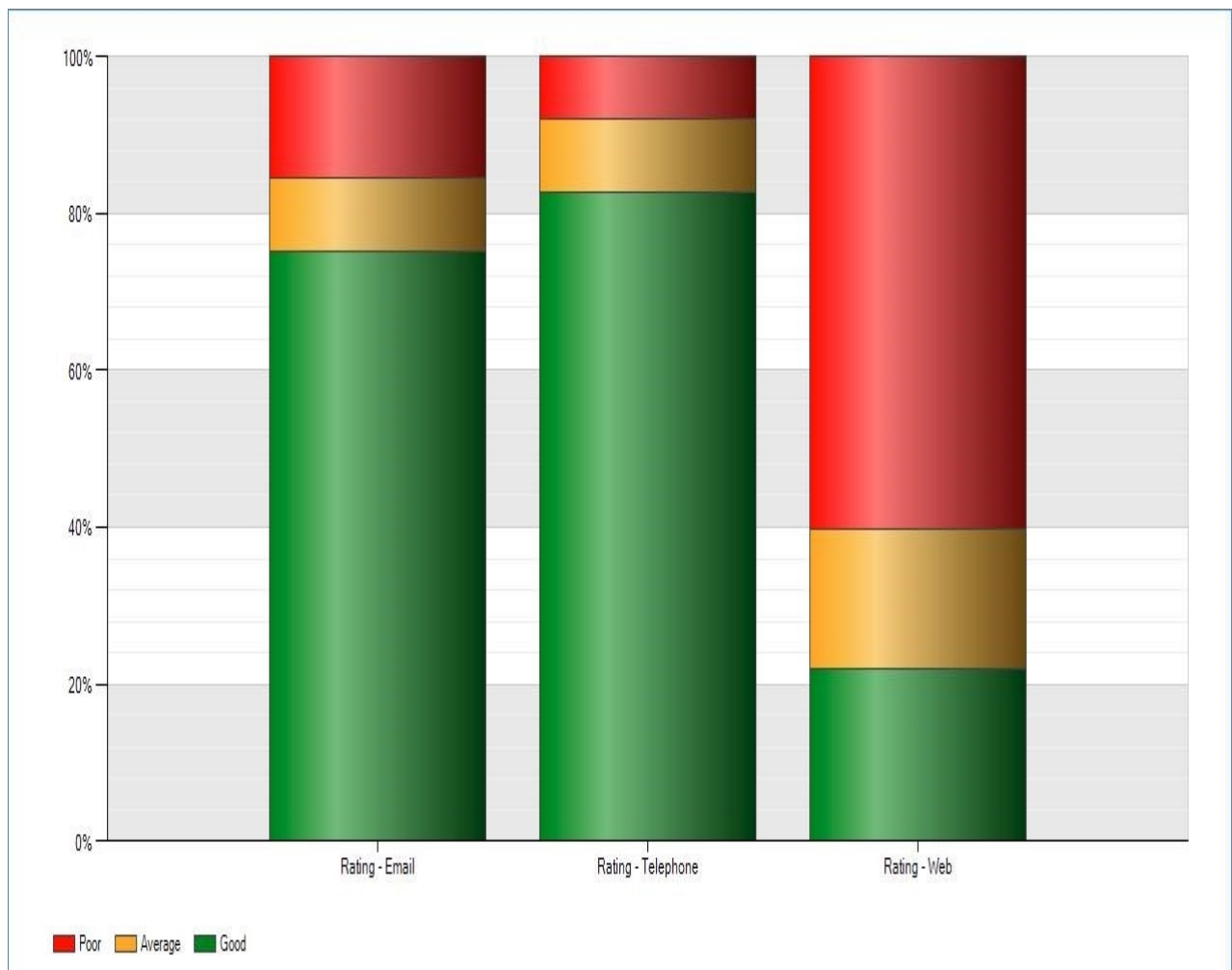
	<b>1 Jan 18 – 28 Feb 18</b>	<b>1 Jan 19 – 28 Feb19</b>
Visits	141,452	172,674
Page views	766,950	986,905
Unique visitors	86,310	115,687
Returning visitors	18,185	19,555

<b>Device</b>	<b>1 Jan 18 – 28 Feb 18</b>	<b>1 Jan 19 – 28 Feb19</b>
Desktop	75,298 (53.2%)	99,818 (57.18%)
Mobile	49,518 (34.8%)	57,701 (33.4%)
Tablet	16,996 (12.0%)	15,155 (8.8%)

7 Key data that will be assessed in the coming year will be the number of self-serve transactions that are being carried out with the aim that the Council sees an upward curve in this respect. This information will form part of a new quarterly report on Customer Excellence that will be presented to the Stronger Communities Select Committee.

8 Other systems and digital development work has been completed and remains on-going, Work that has been completed include over 40 forms being converted to digital providing back-office efficiencies. Other on-going projects around the digital agenda will be discussed later in the next phase of the Customer Programme work.

9. **Customer Satisfaction** is the key indicator for the Council's performance demonstrating how well the Council has put the customer at the heart of everything it does. There has been a shift in how customer satisfaction is measured. Previously customer satisfaction has been measured by a snapshot survey during the year giving a picture at that particular point in time. During this year the Customer team has introduced a feedback process called Govmetric which is available to customers to provide feedback on each contact with the Council via telephone and e-mail through the CCC and website visit. Using the Govmetric tool the Customer Satisfaction information between January to March 2019, since the launch of the new website, looked like this: .



	<b>E-mail</b>		<b>Telephone</b>		<b>Web</b>	
	Volume	%	Volume	%	Volume	%
<b>Poor</b>	186	16	27	8	2,028	60

<b>Average</b>	112	9	31	9	599	18
<b>Good</b>	896	75	278	83	742	22

10. The power of the feedback really comes in the specific comments made. As can be seen the website feedback is currently disappointing but the numbers showing dissatisfaction needs to be seen in the context of the number of visits that are made. A lot of the dissatisfaction came just after the launch and many of these have now been fixed. There are however key themes that have emerged and to which officers are devoting resources to resolve such as:

- Making payments other than Council Tax;
- Difficulty in finding out how to apply, report or book anything; and
- Broken links to external websites for transactions – this is due to re-skinning that is needed (making the external website have the look and feel of the EFDC version)

11. It is extremely hard to get a holistic view of customer satisfaction but this method, shown as emojis on the website and e-mails, or by automated voice surveys following telephone calls, gives the Council up to date customer feedback with options for specific comments. The Council can therefore be more responsive to service delivery issues. Currently, only services that run through either of the CCC or Revenues and Benefits have this feedback tool available for e-mail and telephone but that already constitutes a major proportion of customer contacts. As more services are integrated into the CCC a more complete analysis of customer satisfaction will be available. Officers will continually look to develop ways of capturing customer satisfaction data to ensure our services remain relevant and are performing well. Again, the feedback and customer satisfaction data will form part of the quarterly report to the Stronger Communities Select Committee.

12. The table below shows a breakdown of **complaints** received since April 2018 by stage and service area:

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Stage 1</b>	<b>Stage 2</b>	<b>Total</b>
Governance	3	0	3
Customer Services – Revenues/Benefits/ Debt Recovery	13	2	15
Planning	42	7	49
Commercial & Regulatory Services	7	0	7
Environmental Licensing	1	0	1
Housing and Property Services	106	15	121
Contract and Technical Services	16	0	16
Car Parking	29	2	31
Waste and Recycling			
Community and Partnership Services	2		2
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>245</b>

The average time to respond to a complaint was 5 days. The Complaints policy provides 10 days to provide a response. Should customers still not be satisfied with the Council's response after Stage 2 their complaint can be referred to the Local Government or Housing Ombudsman. The cases that the Ombudsman bodies investigated and their findings are laid out in the table below:

<b>Finding</b>	<b>Local Government Ombudsman</b>	<b>Housing Ombudsman</b>	<b>Total</b>
Fault	1	3	4
No Fault	2	4	6
No Maladministration	0	5	5
Outside Jurisdiction	1	0	1

Discontinued/Not investigated	3	2	5
Premature/Out of Time	1	4	5
Local settlement	1	0	1
Outstanding/in progress	3	3	6
Assessment only	1	2	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>36</b>

The higher level of complaints to the Housing Ombudsman is common nationally.

### The Future Customer Programme

13. This report has so far provided an analysis looking back on performance for this financial year and this type of monitoring will continue for future Member consideration through the quarterly select committee report previously mentioned. Working with the Overview and Scrutiny Task and Finish Panel the work of the Customer programme has been reset to have an increased outward perspective and a greater increased emphasis on future customer need which help inform our next generation of services. The Civic Offices Reception and systems and digital development remain key aspects going forward. The two broad strands of work are therefore firstly, achieving **Customer Excellence** in the services that we deliver. This is about the services that we are currently delivering and ensuring they meet customer need and looking outside the organisation to look at that end-to-end customer journey. Key Performance Indicators on Customer Satisfaction and Resolution at First Point of Contact will assist Members in assessing our success in achieving Customer Excellence.

14 An example of a specific piece of work being undertaken reflecting the end-to-end customer journey is a working group with external partners, including the DWP, and charities aiming to mitigate the effects of Universal Credit on our customers and on our services. Whilst the Council does not administer Universal Credit its effects are felt within the services we provide such as rent and debt collection, benefits administration, Housing or safeguarding. The aim is to make Universal Credit operate as effectively as possible within our District for the Council, its customers and partners by joining up work and support for claimants. Its findings will report to the Stronger Communities Select committee.

16 The second strand is around **Behaviour and Insight**. This work is aimed at providing the information to enable the Council to future-proof its services by meeting changing customer needs. The work will involve gathering and analysing data to really understand our customers and the changing trends within that base. It will involve looking at the journey our existing and potential partners are on to see what opportunities may exist for joint provision to improve the whole customer experience. An example has been explained around Universal Credit, which is happening now, but this aspect will also look at medium and long-term opportunities.

17 As an example, an obvious challenge for the Council in the coming years is the new service demands from the residents and businesses arising out of the Local Plan, through the building of 11,400 homes and associated commercial and employment opportunity. What will the customer demand look like in the future and can we most effectively and efficiently deliver our services to match that need. How can the Council provide those services that meet customer needs to most effect and deliver best value? There is a lot of work going on currently around the digital agenda to deliver these services in the future. The Customer team is involved with the work of the Digital Innovation Zone, led by EFDC, and involving other public and private sector partners, which is looking at digital opportunities in the future for service provision.

18 The Customer team has embarked on a project with a charity called Citizens Online which is aimed at increasing the digital skills of our customers to help them access our services digitally, increase their employability skills, and help reduce poverty and social isolation. It will create a

network of Digital Champions across the district to support our residents. This work also involves many external partners and organisations to help deliver the aims of the project. Progress on this work and the future strategy to embed the achievements in future service provision will be taken to the Stronger Communities Select Committee. The aim is to introduce a lead to a network of around 500 Digital Champions with partners across the District to support our residents in the use of technology to access services.

19. A significant piece of work that Citizens Online are doing on behalf of the Council is to provide the Council with a digital maturity assessment of our residents and partner organisations. This will provide the data that will help inform and plan service delivery, particularly digitally and with partners where appropriate. It is the type of analysis that the Council has not had before and will help future-proof services for our customers.

20 In conclusion the Customer Programme continues to evolve. The number of services integrating into the CCC grows but there is still more to do over the coming year. This will enable the number of customer enquiries resolved at the first point of contact to increase. The new website has experienced teething problems but the good news is that it is being used significantly more and as more transactions can be self-served by customers, the more resources proportionately the Council devote to those of our community that really need our help.

**Resource Implications:**

None

**Legal and Governance Implications:**

None

**Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:**

None

**Consultation Undertaken:**

None

**Background Papers:**

None

**Risk Management:**

None