

Birmingham City Council

Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Friday 14th July 2023



Subject: Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group Supplementary Report (Highway Repairs)

Report of: Councillor Sir Albert Bore
Chair Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny

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1. Purpose

1.1. The purpose of this supplementary report is to provide an update to the 14th July report on the actions of the Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group, established following the Customer Service Programme update report to Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2022.

2. Recommendations

Co-ordinating O&S Committee:

- 2.1. Notes that the Task & Finish Group has completed its review of the recommendations submitted to service leads for Bereavement Services, Housing Repairs, Waste Management and Highway Repairs
- 2.2. Agrees that the Task & Finish Group should ask service owner Committees to follow up any further action required to ensure that the identified end-to-end customer service improvements are implemented.
- **Neighbourhoods:** Waste and Bereavement Services
 - **Sustainability & Transport:** Highway Repairs
 - **Homes:** Housing Repairs
- 2.4. Supports the further work of the Task & Finish Group to scrutinise how senior managers are responding to feedback from the Customer Standards Workshops to embed the Customer Service Strategy.

3. Update on Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group

- 3.1. Appendix A and Appendix C provide the outcomes of all Task & Finish Group meetings with the service area sponsor/leads for improving the customer experience and details the recommended opportunities for improvement.
- 3.2. Feedback was previously submitted to the committee (9 December 2022) on Bereavement Services, Housing Repairs and Waste Management; and a supplementary update (27 January) on Highway Repairs.
- 3.3. In this second review, it was noted the overall positive progress has been achieved in implementation by service leads of the Customer Service Programme service improvement recommendations but more still needs to be done to achieve 'Best in Class' customer service and ensure the best customer journey for our users to improve satisfaction levels and reduce complaints.

3.4. Highway Repairs

- 3.4.1. The Task & Finish Group met on 7th July 2023 with the Assistant Director for Inclusive Growth also attended by Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor, Strategic Product Manager and Product Owner. This supplementary update to the report has been issued following the meeting to review the recommendations and provide an update to the 12th December status review previously provided.
- 3.4.2. There has been a change of Assistant Director for Highways and Infrastructure since the original insights were gathered and previous updates were made. The new AD has affirmed that he is passionate about the customer and will inject pace and effort into putting these recommendations, and additional measures to improve the customer experience, in place. A customer improvement group has been established with senior managers to develop a Highways Customer Improvement Plan which will look to address not only the existing insights but also any additional insight gathered through the course of this work and to drive that plan forward. The customer improvement group has been tasked with developing a draft Highways Customer Improvement plan by the end of September 2023.
 - 3.4.2.1. A detailed piece of work is underway with business support, to analyse the root cause of complaints which is scheduled to conclude at the end of August 2023.
 - 3.4.2.2. Work has also commenced to exploit the technology we now have and to maximise communication between internal systems, ensuring information can be accessed first hand, giving greater visibility and enabling quicker and more robust responses. It is envisaged this will be an ongoing, continuous exploitation and improvement process.

- 3.4.2.3. A series of engagement sessions have been held with the service contractor, Kier's customer and leadership teams - covering improvements to processes, quality of responses and the need for BCC values, attitudes and behaviours to be reflected in these.
- 3.4.3. Approximately 90% of member enquiries to the complaints teams are first time service requests, rather than complaints. The complaints teams are not sufficiently resourced to handle these enquiries. A working group has been established to address this issue. The first meeting of the group took place on 10th July (chaired by AD for Customer Services and Business Support). The group will map current access routes and identify how enquiries can be handled differently. The portfolio lead and informal cabinet have also been briefed on the issue and on the measures being taken to resolve it.
- 3.4.4. Business Support to the highways service is now operating as a single, amalgamated team to manage service enquiries and complaints, reducing duplicated effort.
- 3.4.5. An internal review is being carried out using insight that is now available into all Highway enforcement functions (including parking, permits and licences). The review will establish the current demand for these services, how these requests are reported and presented and how resources can then be prioritised and are deployed most appropriately. A bolder approach to enforcement will be taken. Messaging will also be improved - both in terms of communicating what is being done but also managing expectations where action is not taken. The draft from the internal review of Enforcement is scheduled for the end of October 2023.
- 3.4.6. In summary, a total of 10 service improvement recommendations were presented to Highway Repairs, and to date 2 have been implemented and 8 have an implementation status of 'in progress'.

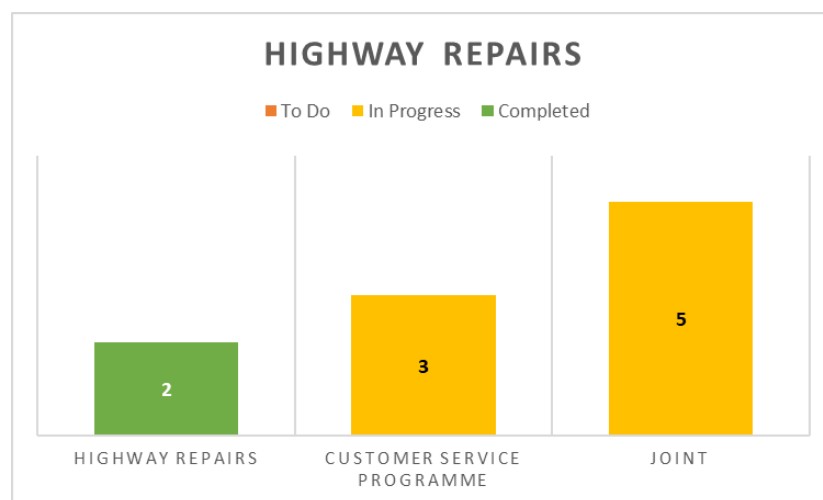


Figure 1 - Highway Repairs Status Overview

4. Any Financial Implications

- 4.1. The original Enhanced Business Case sought and approved total funding of £1.7m for Year 1 in December 2021. The Customer Service resource profile forecasts budget spend at the identified £ 1.7m costs allocated to the programme in final Quarter of 2021/22 and 2022/23.
- 4.2. The savings that are currently set out in the MTFP increase by £600k in 2023/2024, and phase 2 of the programme will help to deliver these and also identify future potential savings of over the next 2 years.
- 4.3. There are no procurement implications or financial implications of the recommendations in this report.

5. Any Legal Implications

- 5.1. The Council is under a duty under Section 3 of the Local Government Act 1999 to make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency, and effectiveness.
- 5.2. The City Council will carry out this work under the General Powers of Competence Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

6. Any Equalities Implications

- 6.1. Overall, implementation of the Customer Service Strategy and therefore the activities of the Task and Finish Group may impact a number of the nine protected characteristics (specifically Age, Disability and Race) with the channel shift to self-serve; however the vision of the Strategy is clear and will endeavour to ensure a high quality, consistent and efficient approach to the customer journey across all channels by ensuring our customers access the right information at the right time and content is accurate and up to date regardless of the channel.

7. Background Documents

- 7.1. [Customer Service Strategy](#)
- 7.2. [Our Customer Charter](#)

8. Appendices

- 8.1. C: Status overview of the Customer Service Programme recommendations (Highway Repairs)