

Birmingham City Council

Sustainability & Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee

18 April 2024



Subject: Customer Service Programme Co-ordinating OSC Task & Finish Group – Highways Repairs Update

Report of: Mark Shelswell, Assistant Director
Highways & Infrastructure
Wendy Griffiths, Assistant Director
Customer Services, Business Support & Digital Mail

Report author: Nikki Spencer
Lead Delivery Manager, Customer Service Programme
Digital & Technology Services

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide the background as detailed in the 14 July 2023 report on the actions of the Task and Finish Group, established following the initial Customer Service Programme report to Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2022; and a subsequent report on the 9 December 2022 and a supplementary report on 27 January 2023.
- 1.2 This background report will enable Highways and Infrastructure leads to further update Sustainability & Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee on any recommendations actioned since the last reporting period.

2 Recommendations

That the Committee:

- 2.1 **Notes the report.**

3 Background

- 3.1 Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed the following recommendations on 14 January 2023:
 - 3.1.1 Note the Task and Finish Group had completed its review of the recommendations submitted to service leads for Bereavement Services, Housing Repairs, Waste Management and Highways Repairs.

3.1.2 Agree the Task and 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.

3.1.3 Support further work of the Task and Finish Group to scrutinise how senior managers are responding to feedback from the Customer Standards Workshops to embed the Customer Service Strategy.

3.2 Sustainability and Transport Overview and Scrutiny Committee were agreed as the lead for Highways Repairs.

4 Any Finance 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 forecasted 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 The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

6.1.1 eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Act;

6.1.2 advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;

6.1.3 foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

6.2 The Committee should ensure that it addresses these duties by considering them during work programme development, the scoping of work, evidence gathering and making recommendations. This should include considering: How policy

issues impact on different groups within the community, particularly those that share a relevant protected characteristic; Whether the impact on particular groups is fair and proportionate; Whether there is equality of access to services and fair representation of all groups within Birmingham; Whether any positive opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and/or good relations between people are being realised.

- 6.3 The Committee should ensure that equalities comments, and any recommendations, are based on evidence. This should include demographic and service level data and evidence of residents/service-users views gathered through consultation.

7 Appendices

- 7.1 Appendix A: Supplementary Report Highway Repairs Task & Finish Group Report to Co-ordinating OSC 14July23 V1.0.
- 7.2 Appendix B: OSC Task Finish Group - Highway Repairs Status Overview Jul23 V1.0
- 7.3 Appendix C: Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group Report to Co-ordinating OSC 14July23 V1.0

8 Background Papers

- 8.1 There are no background papers.

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

Report author: Nikki Spencer
Lead Delivery Manager, Digital & Technology Services
Nikki.Spencer@birmingham.gov.uk
07766 924234

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'.

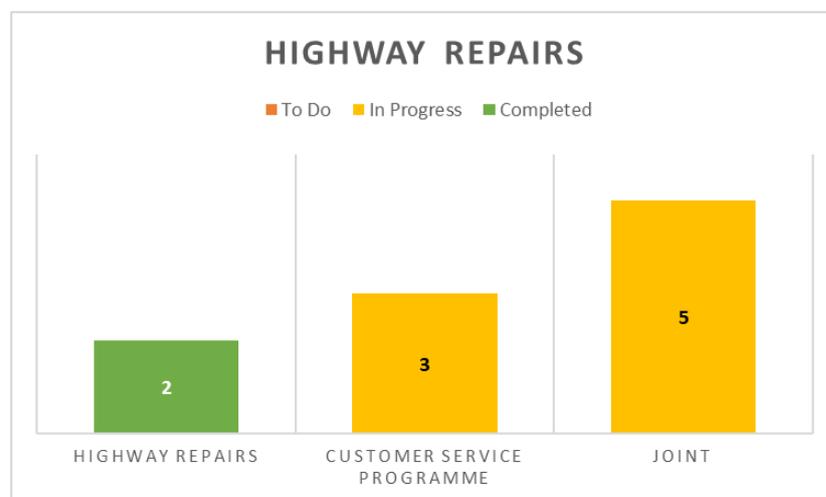


Figure 1 - Highway Repairs Status Overview

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)

HIGHWAY REPAIRS

RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED TO SERVICE LEADS

Overview: In Spring 2022 the Customer Service Programme conducted user research with our customers to understand the current customer experience by targeting high demand services accessed digitally and offline, in order to identify a model customer experience, based on best practice, to increase/improve customer satisfaction.

Code	Original Insight	Original Recommendation - detail Update against recommendation following December 2022 Task and Finish Group <i>Update against recommendation following June 2023 Task and Finish Group</i>	Priority Rating	Delivery Accountability R = issues / blockers A = underway and on track G = completed
44	The response to complaints from contractors isn't always to an acceptable quality.	<p>Explore how the service might establish a shared quality standard for responses to complaints, and how we can hold ourselves and our partners to that standard. Consider making adhoc checks of complaint responses to ensure quality standard is acceptable.</p> <p>Refined 04-Nov: Customer Responses in general from the BCC Customer Services are not of sufficient quality in the view of the responsible service area (i.e. Highways). Whilst much of this issue can be resolved through improved wording in responses (particular automated responses), some quality improvements will require process and/or systems changes in conjunction with BHL/Kier as a our highways services provider. Outbound response from CXM shared with service, pair writing to commence. Identify any system changes front office/back office. Iterative content development i.e. released as signed off.</p> <p>Update 12-Dec: At the moment systems don't talk to each other as well as the should do; systems need to be joined up and quality of responses needs improvement - needs to be clear on the request and timescale of outcome and aligned to contractor responses; part cultural piece with Keir - subscribed updates on the progress of repairs raised; new technology that can be embraced and a common approach/consistency between services e.g. Housing repairs. The PFI contract will be lever for alignment with contractors.</p> <p>Status Update 07-July: <i>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 this insight but all those gathered below and any additional insight gathered through the course of this work and to drive that plan forward. A representative from Kier attends the group. The customer service programme also has a seat on the group. The group has been tasked with producing a draft Highways Customer Improvement plan by the end of September 2023</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>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.</i></p> <p><i>A series of engagement sessions have been held with 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.</i></p> <p><i>An understanding is in place on the Customer Service strategy, behaviours and use of information and technology with bidders for the procurement of the remainder of the term of the PFI contract, to ensure that there is no further hiatus when the contract is awarded.</i></p>	Medium	Programme
45	Councillors are not always using the form that has been created for them to submit their requests, instead using the highways or general complaints inboxes (resulting in delays in responding due to additional processing time and time spent on manually copying content from councillor's emails into iCasework)	<p>Reinforce messaging to councillors that they must use the correct process, and when they don't respond by asking them and making it very easy for them to do so - e.g. include link to the form and instructions on what to do</p> <p>Refined 04-Nov: To deliver the recommendation Highway Service needs see a clearly defined set of outcomes and an agreed delivery plan from D&CS to address this issue. Comms & engagement piece to reinforce the process of Member enquiries. Review of current content, information, advice and guidance required.</p> <p>Update 12-Dec: Members are generally starting to use the systems in place but they won't use the forms as they don't have the time - use of the complaints teams is the corporate approach. 85% come through the complaints team exceptions for urgent/critical items that will go direct to services. Most Highways are enquiries and not complaints which takes time from the complaints team. New system/process - clarify the route to enable better processing of requests that are not complaints - narrative needs to better reflect the expectations of Members (members need to work out which complaints team to send their queries to); some requests need multiple services to be co-ordinated to resolve as a priority.</p> <p>Status Update 07-Jul: <i>Note, this insight applies across services and is not specific to highways. 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 is scheduled for 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.</i></p>	High	Programme
46	In Highways there are two business support teams broadly doing similar work. They are working in silos and rely on 'middle people' to work effectively	<p>If our understanding of this situation is right, review the roles, responsibilities and function of these two teams and consolidate into one, redirecting freed up resource elsewhere in the service should it be found that there is duplication of effort.</p> <p>Refined 04-Nov: In Business Support (City Operations dedicated support from Business Support) there are two teams doing similar work to manage service enquiries and complaints. They are working in silos and rely on 'middle people' to work effectively. Review of the current business support structure, policies and working practices in Digital and Customer Services on behalf of the Highway service required.</p> <p>Update 12-Dec: <i>Need one team to own it and close the task down</i></p> <p>Status Update 07-July: <i>Business Support to the highways service is operating as a single, amalgamated team. Updated as complete.</i></p>	High	TBC should be DCS not programme COMPLETE

47	The service reported finding it difficult to prioritise activity because sometimes everything is considered 'urgent'.	<p>Consider how the service might establish more effective prioritisation processes. Test these with staff to ensure they will be effective and allow staff to focus on things that are a genuine priority.</p> <p>Refined 04-Nov: Short Discovery piece to inform current process, pain points and opportunities from the end to end dropped Kerb service.</p> <p>Business requirement need to be provided by Highways to identify the needs for the new licencing scheme</p> <p>Update 12-Dec: From a process perspective there is a need to define what is classified as urgent and the ability to prioritise work. Members need to be able to identify cases that are urgent based on their community knowledge - it is a more difficult process to evoked highways enforcement (catching people in the act, capacity to resource), Section 184 Highways Act - letters are currently issued to the address. Preventative action (fencing, bollards, etc) may be an option and there is funding available to support this type of activity but resources are limited. Use of a transportation capital budget for rare instances where Members identify as a priority - requires further exploration</p> <p>Status Update 07-July: 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.</p>	Medium	Service with Programme support
48	The Clean Air Zone website is confusing, and it is unclear if zones are in the CAZ or not. CAZ charges are not clearly explained on the website. There is no pre-notification or warning of a CAZ fine. Fines come as a surprise to many customers, which can be confusing and distressing.	<p>Review the webpages and quality of communication about the CAZ. Use a content designer to ensure all written communication is clear and accessible. Test the new content with customers to ensure there is no ambiguity. Ensure zones and times are clearly indicated online so charges do not come as a surprise to customers. Should the development of a BRUM account app happen in the future, the service could consider making use of push notifications to alert customers that they have entered a CAZ and give them, for example 10 minutes to exit the zone should they have entered if unintentionally.</p> <p>Refined 04-Nov: This needs to be worked through with the CAZ team. Highways and Infrastructure are only responsible for penalty charge notices if drivers do not want to pay the 'fine'. The CAZ charge and communications and messaging about payment of the charge is dealt with by the CAZ team. However staffing of customer frontline in Parking needs to be investigated.</p> <p>Update 12-Dec: Tell Us Once - single view of customer, if a citizen tells 'The Council' something they believe their data will be updated for every dept. Front end visibility and communication of CAZ</p> <p>Enforcement of CAZ has a dependency of the frontend</p> <p>O&S - we acknowledge there are two teams in two different directorates and this needs to be resolved.</p> <p>Status Update 07-July: CAZ and its communications (website, signage etc) sits with transportation. Highways are responsible for enforcement when drivers incur a CAZ penalty charge. Feedback has been provided to the CAZ team within transportation and web pages / Brum Breathes website content has been improved. A CAZ colleague was also invited to customer panel and feedback was provided by the Panel on improvements to the FAQs, to be issued with PCNs. Communications have therefore been refined with the customer in mind, albeit there are legal constraints around what must and can be said. Whilst the two teams sit in different directorates, they do not sit in silos and communications between the 2 teams are joined up.</p>	Low	COMPLETE
49	Complaints can come to the service from multiple sources, which can make it difficult to spot duplicates, which can result in duplication of effort from the service.	<p>Status Update 07-July: Insights 49 to 51, as well as the recommendations and updates against these insights, are all interlinked.</p> <p>Contract variations to complete the delivery of new technological solutions are in progress. The service is looking at how it will exploit the new technology to get greater visibility and provide better access to services for customers. There will be a cost involved to exploit the new technology which will need to be agreed. When delivered and fully exploited, it will be possible to identify if a request has already been raised for the same service (e.g. pothole) and to opt in to receive updates against this request. It will also be possible to be more pro active (e.g. raise requests around broken streetlights before the customer has flagged the issue). This will help reduce duplication and avoidable contact. Principles including user centred design, accessibility, automation, harnessing and integrating available technology and pro active communication with customers and members will be embedded across service offerings to ensure that solutions provided meet user and stakeholder needs. Contract Variations are being discussed with Procurement and subject to approval will be followed by a 9-12 month project to deliver the revised customer offer.</p>	High	Highways and Business Support with programme support
50	Customers want to be able to easily report issues on the go. Currently the reporting solution is clunky, customers find the map difficult to use and it doesn't work at all on some devices.	<p>Status Update 07-July: See update against insight / recommendation 49.</p>	High	Inflight with service - programme to support customer elements
51	When the service area seeks to engage with service users, they typically use the same group of customers to represent the people of Birmingham.	<p>Status Update 07-July: See update against insight / recommendation 49.</p>	Medium	Programme
52	Customers found there is sometimes a lack of communication on why something has happened or why a decision has been made. This keeps customers in the dark about things they care about and isn't open or transparent.	<p>Status Update 07-July: See update against insight / recommendation 49.</p>	Medium	Solution review inflight by Service, programme to support once finalised

53	Customers report that the quality of repairs is not always to a good standard.	<p>Ensure the SLA between us and partners is clear and known. Consider including information online about the expected quality of repairs, what qualifies for a repair and what repairs we will/will not make, e.g. why we only fill in a large pothole when there are other smaller potholes within the immediate area. This will help to better manage customer's expectations and will be information the contact centre and the service can refer customers to.</p> <p>Refined 04-Nov: Understand the current performance standards are for the service, how these are raised and reported on. Do customers know these standards, how does this feed into the contractual agreements with Contractors and managed. Do we need to make this data visible and transparent. what is the mechanism of reporting defect quality issues? Opportunity to offer a commercial service offering through our suppliers/contractors to offer an enhanced service.</p> <p>Update 12-Dec: Being taken forward as a performance measure discussion with the service provider and ensure repairs are conducted by contractors in a timely way; quality of responses reviewed to ensure they are meaningful and in plain language - how the data is managed and fed back to contractors and customers; providing visibility of the standard of performance. Member example to be provided as to where the system hasn't worked - stewards are not engineers they are customer service/engagement experts - test the process.</p> <p>Status Update 07-July: As referenced under the update against insight / recommendation 44, there is an ongoing piece of work to analyse the root cause of complaints which is due to be completed by the end of August 2023. This root cause analysis will feed into the Highways Customer Improvement Plan also referenced which is due to be drafted by end of September 2023. This more pertinent information is also being fed back to contractors who are receptive to the messages that are being received. End to end satisfaction is not currently being measured but this will be possible with the updated technology solution which means the service will no longer be dependant on the contractor agreeing to provide information back to BCC, Member examples have been provided where the system hasn't worked.</p>	Medium	Inflight by Service, Programme to advise
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Birmingham City Council

Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Friday 14th July 2023



Subject: Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group
Report of: Councillor Sir Albert Bore
Chair Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny
Report author: Nikki Spencer
Lead Delivery Manager, Digital & Technology Services
Nikki.Spencer@birmingham.gov.uk
07766 924234

1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to provide an update to the 9th December and supplementary 27th January 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. Background

- 3.1. Following approval of the Customer Service Strategy by Cabinet in December 2021, the Customer Service Programme was established in January 2021 for an initial 12-month period, to implement the Strategy deliverables and 'Fix the Basics'.
- 3.2. Phase 1 saw the programme deliver a number of customer benefits' from the creation of an [easy-read Customer Service Strategy](#), co-creating Our [Customer Charter](#), establishing the Customer Panel; to the cleanse and improvement of 948 web pages and counting; roll out of products such as the Landlord's Portal and features for automated advanced payments.
- 3.3. The user research the programme conducted of four high volume, high priority service areas for the Council resulted in a set of service improvement recommendations which highlighted opportunities for services to improve the customer experience and increase customer satisfaction.
- 3.4. This report follows the Task & Finish Group's first review of the recommendations submitted to the Highways, Waste, Bereavement Services and Housing Repairs service leads, reported to Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee in January 2023; and the further action to ensure the identified end-to-end customer service improvement are implemented.
- 3.5. This round of Task & Finish Groups was also attended by Committee Chairs for Neighbourhoods, Homes and Sustainability and Transport to enable an effective transition of the responsibility of these committees and provide continuity in what we've done, where we've got to, and what is outstanding and still needs to be done.

4. Update on Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group

- 4.1. Appendix A provides 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.
- 4.2. 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.
- 4.3. 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.

4.4. Highway Repairs

- 4.4.1. The Task & Finish Group is due to meet on 7th July 2023 with the Assistant Director for Inclusive Growth also to be attended by Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor, Strategic Product Manager and Delivery Manager. A supplementary report will be issued following the meeting on the review of previous recommendations and a status update provided.
- 4.4.2. In summary, a total of 10 service improvement recommendations were presented to Highway Repairs, and all 10 retain an implementation status of 'to do'.

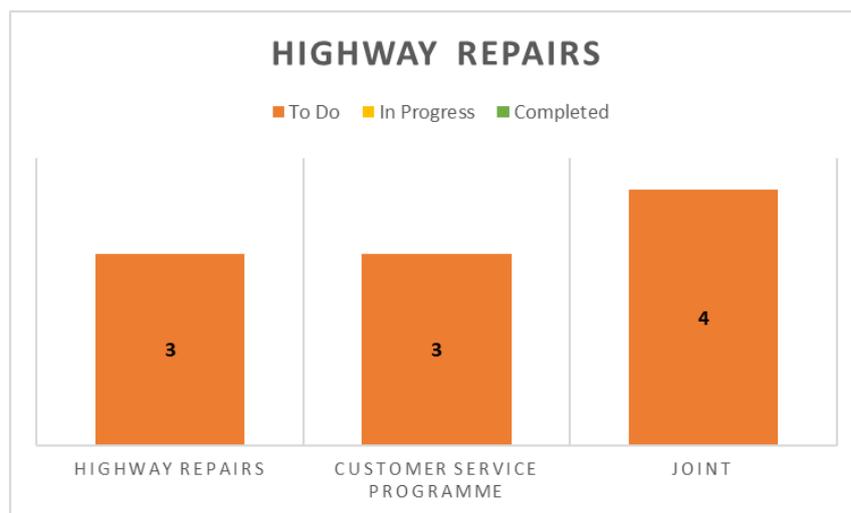


Figure 1 - Highway Repairs Status Overview

4.5. Bereavement Services

- 4.5.1. The Task and Finish Group met on 12th June 2023 with Assistant Director, Regulation and Enforcement, Head of Bereavement Services, Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor and Strategic Product Manager, Lead Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status updates provided and clarified by the service leads.
- 4.5.2. Clear guidance has been created and improved content published on 'What to do when someone dies', and also clearly communicating to relatives' grave ownership and responsibilities in grave maintenance. Further work is required to include Coroners Service in online guidance and progress a small print run of the offline guidance.
- 4.5.3. A review of all onsite signage will be completed.
- 4.5.4. The top 20 paper forms have been prioritised for redesign and digitisation and will include automated advanced payment features, eliminating manual paperwork and enabling customers to complete requests in an easy and efficient way.
- 4.5.5. Exploration of technical options is underway to inform user need requirements for a new bereavement system / funeral directors' portal to support online

burial bookings, giving Funeral Directors' the ability to view, book and be updated.

- 4.5.6. A partial manual/mechanical back fill option is available to relatives on request where the resources to enable this are available. Resources to increase availability will be considered as part of any future operating model.
- 4.5.7. There are standardised processes, based upon best practice, in place across all sites. There are also individual standardised processes for particular sites which are based upon the specific needs of the site.
- 4.5.8. Recruitment of staff remains an issue within the service. There also needs to be a corporate response to more easily recruit agency staff as permanent staff.
- 4.5.9. In summary, a total of 28 service improvement recommendations were presented to Bereavement Services, and to date 10 have been implemented and 18 have an implementation status of 'in progress'.

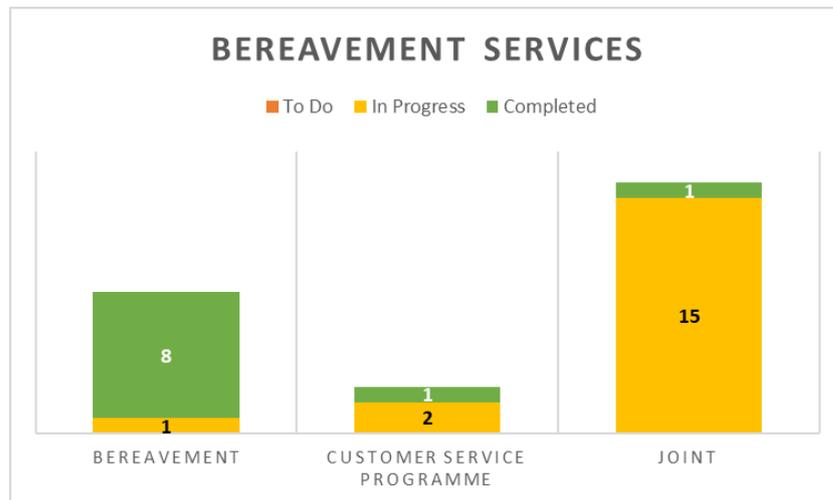


Figure 2 - Bereavement Services Status Overview

4.6. Waste Management

- 4.6.1. The Task and Finish Group met on 9th June 2023 with the Assistant Director, Street Scene and the Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor and Strategic Product Manager, Lead Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status updates provided and clarified by the service leads.
- 4.6.2. The in-cab technology has been in place and in use in all vehicles since late January 2023 and addresses a number of the recommendations, although there are separate issues regarding provision of in-cab technology in rented vehicles. Work was undertaken to cleanse the data and the crews are monitored on their usage and reports are produced showing any problems; and work can be reallocated in real time to minimise missed collections, which is monitored by Service Managers.

- 4.6.3. A session with Neighbourhoods Overview and Scrutiny is being planned to provide a more in-depth view of the in-cab technology.
- 4.6.4. Missed collections are tracked, monitored and reported on a daily and weekly basis. The reports are showing an improvement in missed collections (alongside a significant reduction in missed collection complaints - down by 41% this April compared to April 2022). However, it is fully accepted that things are still not right, and more work is needed - particularly for the now vacated Montague Street (relocated to new Atlas depot in May 2023), and Lifford Lane depots where missed collections remain off target.
- 4.6.5. HMO's / Exempt accommodation continue to be an issue but work is underway to ensure that, where these properties are licenced, the appropriate bins are provided and the correct use of bins is monitored.
- 4.6.6. The service has a stable workforce (previously, the level of agency staff covering full time posts was approximately 30%). The service still operates with 23% agency cover for sickness and leave but teams are kept together where possible.
- 4.6.7. Over 70 of the older vehicles have been replaced, providing a more reliable service with a planned procurement to replace the remaining vehicles.
- 4.6.8. Working with Corporate Communications to develop simple comms for residents when there has been a need to remove their broken bin or pod.
- 4.6.9. In summary, a total of 12 service improvement recommendations were presented to Waste Management, and to date 6 have been implemented, 3 are 'in progress', and 1 retains an implementation status of 'to do'.



Figure 3 - Waste Management Status Overview

4.7. Housing Repairs

- 4.7.1. The Task and Finish Group met on 14th June with the Director, Asset Management Housing, Interim Head, Housing Repairs with the Customer

Service Programme Operational Sponsor, Strategic Product Manager and Lead Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status updates provided and clarified by the service leads.

- 4.7.2. The BRUM account process to report 'track a repair' has been end to end tested and issues highlighted, for example, some of the information submitted was not getting passed on to the contractor. The new functionality is now confidently expected for end August / early Sept. The delay was due to a dependency on the pending NEC (Housing Management software) Upgrade. Work is also in process into the quality of repairs and repeat calls about the same issue.
- 4.7.3. An option for tenants to book / manage their own repair appointments will be delivered as part of the changes to the Brum account. There is also ongoing work by repairs teams to look into and maximise appointment availability which has diminished. This work is expected to conclude by the end of September 2023.
- 4.7.4. Live updates to keep customers informed about changes regarding a repair, for example notifying a tenant that a contractor is running late, has been included in the Repairs Contract 2024, allowing text communication between operative and customer and live tracking.
- 4.7.5. Analysis of missed appointments due to no access is being carried out, to identify trends / customer profiles and check if our comms processes are working or need improvement. Findings to date are that process are not always being followed. Many customers say they were not aware of appointments, so focus is on the evidence around text and phone ahead which is part of the current process. This analysis is expected to conclude by December 2023.
- 4.7.6. Customer satisfaction on call handling is measured for randomly sampled calls – satisfaction levels are routinely around 80% for the way the agent handled call. Feedback is provided to service area and agents as appropriate.
- 4.7.7. The [Birmingham Choice](#) site is currently being reviewed and updated to make information more available to our customers. In addition there is a link on the front page of Birmingham Choice to a '[Housing Advice Pack](#)'. This gives customers information on numbers on the Housing Register, numbers of lets completed, waiting times, other housing options, etc.
- 4.7.8. The online information, advice and guidance on damp, condensation and mould has been reviewed and was updated 27 February on birmingham.gov.uk.
- 4.7.9. In summary, a total of 13 service improvement recommendations were presented to Housing Repairs, and to date 4 have been implemented and 9 have an implementation status of 'in progress'.

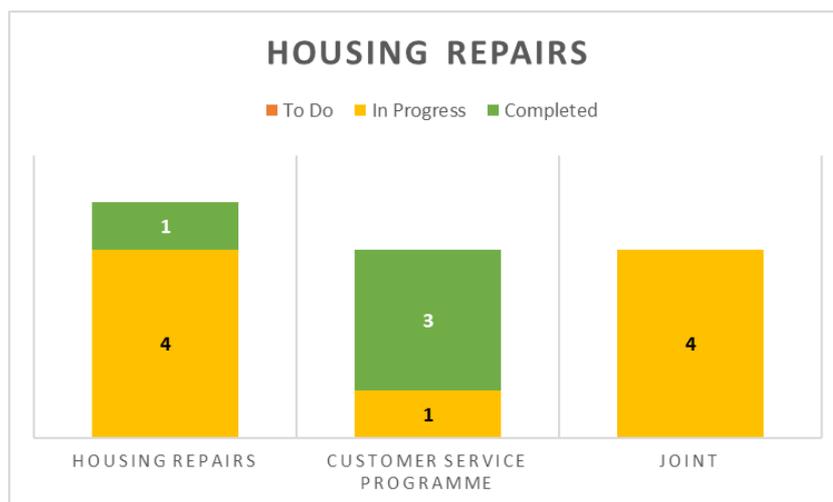


Figure 4 - Housing Repairs Status Overview

5. Any Financial Implications

- 5.1. 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.
- 5.2. 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.
- 5.3. There are no procurement implications or financial implications of the recommendations in this report.

6. Any Legal Implications

- 6.1. 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.
- 6.2. The City Council will carry out this work under the General Powers of Competence Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011.

7. Any Equalities Implications

- 7.1. 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.

8. Background Documents

8.1. [Customer Service Strategy](#)

8.2. [Our Customer Charter](#)

9. Appendices

9.1. A: Status overview of the Customer Service Programme recommendations