

Birmingham City Council

Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date 14 October 2022

Subject: Customer Service Programme Task and Finish Group Update Report

Report of: Chair of Customer Services Task and Finish Group

Report author: Nikki Spencer, Delivery Manager, Customer Services Programme

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To update the Committee on work of the Customer Service Programme Task and Finish Group and agree how the work of the Task and Finish Group will be progressed.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members note the update report and agree the next stage of the work for the Task and Finish Group as set out in Appendix 1.

3 Appendices

- 3.1 Appendix 1 – Customer Service Programme Task and Finish Group Update Report

Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group Update Report

Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee
14 October 2022

Customer Service Programme
Putting people first, all the time, every time.



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Programme Status

Year 1 programme activities to 'Fix the Basics' as originally set out in the Customer Service Strategy and associated Enhanced Business Case (EBC) approved by Cabinet in December 2021.

Through user research and data analysis, understand the current customer and staff experience for high demand services.

Initial phase focussed on Waste Management, Housing Repairs, Bereavement Services and Highways, providing a set of commitments to deliver.



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Customer Service Programme User Research

Appendix 1

GOAL:

“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 that will increase/improve satisfaction.”



Bereavement Services

28 Recommendations
13 Programme
15 Service
8 inflight with programme



Housing Repairs

13 Recommendations
10 Programme
3 Service
6 inflight with programme



Waste

13 Recommendations
6 Programme
7 Service
5 inflight with programme



Highways

10 Recommendations
5 Programme
4 Service
1 out of service scope

Bereavement Services

example of recommendations presented to service leads

Appendix 1

Code	Insight	Recommendation summary	Recommendation detail	Initial rating	Delivery Accountability
A	Citizens find the process of laying their loved one to rest complicated and confusing, at an already difficult time. There is a lack of clarity over what choices a family has, who does what and when. Relatives call sites as they don't trust the accuracy of the information on the website, but note our website page view analysis does demonstrate that citizens are visiting the BCC web site pages for the bereavement service guidance and information on the service offerings.	Create clear guidance taking relatives through each step in the process and their options	Create clear guidance taking relatives through each step in the process and their options, detailing who is involved and who is responsible for what, approximate timelines and costs (including BCC service fees and what is/not included), documentation requirements, what to expect and what to do if these expectations are not met. Consider including recommended suppliers. This guidance should start from the point of death and include registering a death. It should include the process if relatives are not using a funeral director. Conduct an audit of the current guidance available online and understand how we can tailor/expand this. This guidance should be available both online and in paper format. Distribute to partners to reach customers as soon as they need that information. Ensure it is available in a range of formats and languages.	Medium	Programme
B	Wildlife can have a negative impact on grave sites, which can be distressing for the family.	Communicate with relatives that wildlife can be an issue in graveyards	Communicate with relatives that this can be an issue and recommend particular plants and flowers that wildlife will not disturb (e.g. deer and rabbit resistant herbaceous plants)	Medium	Rejected (as already inflight)
C	Some grave sites are not well maintained over time.	Communicate with relatives their responsibility of maintaining a grave	Communicate with relatives their responsibility of maintaining a grave, including the rules/requirements around plastic flowers. Recommend ways of establishing a low maintenance grave and the grave maintenance service offering.	Low	Rejected (as already inflight)
D	Documentation is often paper based and time consuming to manage for bereavement staff and partners. There is often duplication of forms, missing information and the need to scan in documents or manually input details.	Eliminate as much of the physical paperwork as possible as part of the new system	Eliminate as much of the physical paperwork as possible by ensuring the new bereavement system has capability to upload, share and view documentation for all partners, as well as input data via forms directly and make use of digital signatures. Ensure this is possible for all types of funerals. Offer support to those partners that need it to adopt new system. Note: Can only build online forms for non-statutory docs, all statutory docs need to remain on paper with the new system having ability to upload a scanned version / attachment to support digital record.	High	Programme
E	Burials are complex and have many variations, so bookings need to be taken via phone currently. This is time consuming for bereavement staff and funeral directors, and limits when bookings can be made.	Review the process for booking burials to understand how we could simplify the service	Review the process for booking burials (including statutory and non-statutory requirements) to understand how we could simplify the service. Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to take bookings for burials online. There is an opportunity to learn from Solihull Council about their system that allows for this.	High	Rejected (as already inflight)

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Appendix 1

Code	Insight	Recommendation summary	Recommendation detail	Initial rating	Delivery Accountability
F	In some cultures back filling graves (i.e. by hand) after the burial is a tradition and a sign of respect. Often a back fill is a lengthy process, and requires a staff member to stay on site at the grave whilst this is being done. Currently relatives can only choose to back fill themselves or have a manual fill using a digger, and are not always aware that they can change their minds part way through.	Offer a partial back fill/ partial manual fill option for relatives	Offer a partial back fill/ partial manual fill option for relatives, so they can honour their loved ones in this way, but relieve the burden of time spent by the staff overseeing the process. Consider different charging options to accommodate these traditions. Ensure relatives are aware of what their choice entails before the funeral (e.g. the average time it takes for 2 people to fill an adult grave).	Medium	Rejected (as already inflight)
G	Some funerals run over time, which has a knock on impact for later bookings and for staff.	Communicate to citizens the overrun charge, ensure they are aware of where responsibility lies	Communicate to citizens the overrun charge and ensure they are aware of where responsibility for this penalty lies (i.e. funeral directors)	Medium	Rejected
H	Some burials are well attended by mourners. This can mean that graves already in use in the vicinity are stood on by mourners. This is viewed as disrespectful by some.	Clearly demarcate graves, ask ministers to request mourners are mindful of where they stand	Clearly demarcate where graves are, create narrow paths between rows of graves to help show where citizens should stand. Ask ministers to request that mourners are mindful of where they are standing at the start of graveside ceremonies.	Low	Rejected (as already inflight)
I	The current system is unable to notify funeral directors of updates and changes to their bookings.	Ensure the new digital system has the capability to keep funeral directors updated	Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to keep funeral directors updated without having to make manual checks on the system.	Medium	Informed new solution spec
J	The current system has no high-level view of all bookings a particular funeral director has with BCC. Currently in order to get this view, the funeral director needs to click through to 'cancel' all bookings.	Ensure the new system can provide funeral directors with a view of all current bookings	Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to provide funeral directors with a view of all current bookings with the council.	Medium	Informed new solution spec
K	The process for delivering a burial or cremation differs across BCC's bereavement sites. This creates additional confusion for funeral directors and staff that may work across multiple sites.	Consider which sites are most streamlined and effective and how to standardise across all sites	Consider which sites are most streamlined and effective. Consider how to standardise the process across all sites based on best practice.	Low	Rejected (as already inflight)

Code	Insight	Recommendation summary	Recommendation detail	Initial rating	Delivery Accountability
L	Some funeral directors give incorrect information to citizens about BCC's availability to conduct funerals.	Have online view of ceremony availability across all sites for citizens	Host an online view of ceremony availability across all sites so citizens are able to book the slot that works best for them. Ensure this view reflects when sites are expected to be temporarily closed down due to short staffing, due to annual leave for example. Ideally this would be additional functionality as part of the new bereavement system.	Low	Rejected (as already inflight)
M	The process of reassigning ownership of a grave is complicated, lengthy, and requires a lot of time from staff to support customers through this process. Often customers lose copies of deeds.	Review the current process of reassigning grave ownership	Review the current process of reassigning grave ownership. Consider how to better inform citizens about the process and what is needed at each stage - this could be written guidance, or something more interactive like a video.	Medium	Informed new solution spec
N	There is some disconnection between the various bodies that need to be made aware of a death, both within BCC and across the system. This results in citizens having to tell multiple agencies that someone has died and repeat information to different parts of the same organisation.	Explore how we can better join up and share information internally between Bereavement and Registrars	Explore how we can better join up and share information internally between Bereavement and Registrars. Consider the 'Tell us once' scheme and how we can bolster existing information, advice and guidance. Establish an open dialogue between other partners across the system (e.g. coroner, funeral directors etc) to explore opportunities to become more joined up.	Medium	Rejected (as already inflight)
O	The process of applying for a permit for a headstone is lengthy and time consuming for bereavement staff, stone masons and relatives.	Review the process and timelines of putting a headstone on a grave and how requests are currently prioritised	Review the current process and timelines of putting a headstone on a grave and how requests are currently prioritised. Provide access to the new bereavement system for stone masons and use that portal for all documentation. Provide guidance on the process and timelines to relatives.	High	Informed new solution spec
P	Stone masons are often posted invoices from BCC for each individual permit, which creates a lot of manual paperwork for both parties.	Explore possibility of sending invoices to stone masons via BCC's current finance system	Explore the possibility of sending invoices to stone masons via BCC's current finance system or using the new finance system for this. Investigate if an integration can be added between the current / new finance system and the new Bereavement system to output the invoice.	Medium	Rejected
Q	Some sites are confusing to get around, for example finding appropriate parking and the right location for ceremonies. Some locations have names that are similar to other local sites, meaning citizens go to the wrong site. All of this adds to the stress on the day of a funeral.	Consider how to make sites easier to navigate around, including signage and site maps	Consider how to make sites easier to navigate around, including signage and site maps. Consider how we could name sites in a way that removes confusion for visitors. Consider including all site information on the BCC service web site pages and new system. Could it be included as part of the booking confirmation for funeral directors that they could send on to relatives, or could relatives view this information on the system.	Low	Informed new solution spec

Code	Insight	Recommendation summary	Recommendation detail	Appendix 1	Delivery
				Initial rating	Accountability
R	The service generally operates during core hours (Monday – Friday 8:30am – 4:30pm). Sutton New Hall does operate seven days a week. In some cases, partners need to contact Bereavement services outside of these hours, but are unable to (e.g. Muslim burials over the weekend in other areas of the city).	Consider establishing an out of hours process to enable Muslim burials to proceed at pace	Where there is appropriate lighting, services could be conducted into the early evening in the winter. Consider if there is demand to establish an out of hours process to enable Muslim burials to proceed at pace across the whole of Birmingham, for example could we offer an out of hours service for Muslim burials that cannot wait at a premium charge?	Medium	Rejected (as already inflight)
S	The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated the local staffing issue. Some of the staff working in the service long term are agency staff, which carries a higher cost than permanent staff.	Consider how we could bring some of the long-term agency staff into the service as permanent staff	Consider how we could bring some of the long-term agency staff into the service as permanent members of staff, reducing costs and the negative impact of short notice periods on the service. Consider how to make the service (and wider council) attractive as a career path. Update and improve guidance documentation for new staff, ensure staff have online access to remain connected to their colleagues across sites.	Medium	Rejected (as already inflight)
T	There are a number of phone numbers and email addresses that the service must manage	Consider moving to one main service contact number and mailbox with a triage team handling general enquiries - opportunity to use the Corporate Contact Centre	Consider moving to one main service contact number and mailbox. There is an opportunity in the Customer Services Programme for this service to use the corporate contact centre to help log, triage, track and report all enquires received, in one place. This would help to reduce the volume of enquiries the Bereavement service receive via the triage process, leveraging best practice technologies for voice, IVR, routing of calls & omni handling of non-voice contacts like email, chat, social media all managed via a single process & technology. This would support the single phone number/email strategy.	High	Programme
U	No key performance indicators available	Consider moving to one main service contact number and mailbox with a triage team handling general enquiries - opportunity to use the Corporate Contact Centre	Identify key service operational and financial KPIs so that the service can get an overview of how the service is performing on a regular basis. Consider using power BI to report from BACAS data to create visual, dynamic dashboards. The dashboards can also be used to setup service KPIs.		Programme
V	Citizens make general enquires about the condition of cemeteries and ask for help in completing deed replacements and transfers. Some of these calls can take a long time and can result in repeated calls from the same citizens.	Look at ways to promote the creation of Cemetery Friends groups to help provide general information and news relating to local cemeteries	Look at ways to promote the creation of Cemetery Friends groups to help provide general information and news relating to local cemeteries. Work with existing Friends groups to spread awareness including the benefits of having a Friends group can make by raising funds or applying for government funding to improve the condition of cemeteries.	Low	Rejected

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W	User feedback is not available – this was suspended during the pandemic to enable the service to prioritise core services (funerals and memorials).	Consider restarting service customer feedback (make available in online and offline) - opportunity to use corporate solution to measure satisfaction levels already in place	Restart capturing customer feedback in both online and offline formats. There is an opportunity to work with the Customer Service Programme to repurpose the corporate solution for customer satisfaction to log, monitor, review and report. Signposting to service feedback, could also be added to the existing service web pages and form part of a service request in the new Bereavement system. This will ensure we have a consistent measure of satisfaction and will allow us to benchmark/measure at intervals of the end-to-end journey.	High	Programme
X	The complaints data shows the most common root cause problems to be: 'Not the quality or standard expected' 'Failure to deliver a service' 'Disagree with policy or procedure'	Regularly review the complaints data to identify repeat complaints and common trends	Regularly review the complaints data to identify repeat complaints and common trends. Work with the complaints leads to see how they can be avoided through service improvement plans.	Medium	Rejected (as already inflight)
Y	The complaints data shows the response target for stage 1 citizen complaints was 73% in 2019, 69% in 2020 and 41% in 2021. This shows a gradual decline in responses provided to citizens within 14 working days and could be attributed to the level of demand experienced during the Covid-19 pandemic. It could also be down to the complaint leads prioritising waste management complaints.	Monitor the dates between complaints being submitted and the bereavement team receiving notification by the complaint leads to ensure there are no internal delays.	Monitor the dates between complaints being submitted and the bereavement team receiving notification by the complaint leads to ensure there are no internal delays. This will ensure the team have enough time to investigate complaints and provide a response within the set number of working days. Request regular reports from the complaint leads to check for the team is improving their stage 1 response times.	Medium	Service
Z	Additional income generation opportunities	a. Review fees of core services to understand where the service makes the most revenue b. Review possible package options to encourage relatives to buy additional services	Review fees of core services to understand where the service makes the most revenue, to understand how the service can maximise income Review possible package options to encourage relatives to buy additional services, e.g. maintenance or borders for graves Consider offering longer lease lengths or renewal options for grave leases to generate additional income	Medium Medium Medium	Rejected (as already inflight) Rejected (as already inflight) Rejected (as already inflight)



Co-ordinating O&S helping to ensure end-to-end customer service improvement through Task & Finish Group

- **Scrutiny of the recommendations that the service area need to consider and prioritise**
- **Holding Directorates to account on how the customer strategy is being embedded with a view to driving up standards**
- **Co-ordinating O&S Committee to endorse these actions**