Birmingham City Council
Coordinating Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Date: Friday 9th December 2022

Subject:	Customer Service Programme Task & Finish Group
Report of:	Councillor Sir Albert Bore
	Chair Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny
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1   Purpose

1.1   The purpose of this report is to provide details on the actions of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee Task and Finish Group which was established following the Customer Service Programme and Update report to Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny Committee in September 2022.

1.2   Year 1 of the Customer Service Programme activities focussed on 'Fixing the Basics' as originally set out in the Customer Service Strategy and associated Enhanced Business Case (EBC) approved by Cabinet in December 2021.

1.3   Through extensive user research and data analysis, the programme sought to validate the strategy commitments by trying to understand the current customer and staff experience when engaging with Council high demand services.

1.4   The programme has delivered a number of customer benefits in year one including the creation of an easy-read Customer Service Strategy, a co-created Customer Charter, introduced a Citizen Panel, the refresh and cleansing of approximately 800 web pages to date; and end to end discovery of 4 high volume, high priority service areas for the Council providing a set of recommended opportunities for services to improve the customer experience and increase customer satisfaction. (Figure 1)

Figure 1: Number of service improvement opportunities identified from the Customer Service Programme's initial user research

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

1.5. Work is ongoing to define and develop quantifiable and measurable benefits against the programme's current scope of work and will enable improved visibility, tracking and reporting of proposed benefit categories, such as efficiency, customer satisfaction and complaints reduction, A mandated engagement approach for services would ensure service accountability of the recommended opportunities for improvement and drive forward the associated service and business change required for benefit realisation benefits.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Task and Finish Group continues to ensure the identified end-to-end customer service improvements are implemented.

2.2 The Task and Finish Group completes its review of the recommendations submitted to service leads for Bereavement Services, Housing Repairs, Waste Management and Highways.

2.3 In a second phase of the work, Task and Finish Group meets with senior managers to scrutinise how their services have responded to feedback from the Customer Service workshops to embed the Customer Service Strategy and drive up standards.

2.4 Co-ordinating O&S Committee to endorse these actions

2.5 Supports the implementation of Customer Service Programme Phase 2 as outlined in the December 2022 Cabinet Report. (Appendix A)

3 Update on Customer Services Programme Task and Finish Group (TFG)

3.1 Appendix B provides an overview of the outcomes of TFG meetings held with the service area sponsor / leads for improving the customer experience and details

the recommended opportunities for improvement identified from the user research conducted by the programme.

3.2   **Bereavement Services**: TFG held on 24th November 2022 with Assistant Director, Regulation and Enforcement, Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor and Product Owner in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status update provided and clarified with further comments and recommendations from OSC taken onboard by the service AD. (Appendix B)

Workshops with the service leads and Customer Service Programme have also commenced to prioritise the recommendations and create a service improvement plan and roadmap, clearly defining delivery accountability with the items within scope of the programme added to the Customer Service Programme Phase 2. Specific examples include but are not limited to:

3.2.1   Additional income generation opportunities under review (e.g. core service fees, package options for additional services, longer leases/renewal options).

3.2.2   Single contact point for customers by onboarding the service to Contact Centre telephony solution.

3.2.3   Reduction of long-term agency staff and resourcing is a challenge and the service is looking to backfill the eight current vacancies.

3.2.4   Sutton New Rd site open until 7pm. Service is investigating if there is demand for the other sites to establish out of hours provision to enable Muslim burials to proceed at pace.

3.2.5   Service agreed site signage and site maps to make sites easier to navigate around, would improve the customer experience.

3.2.6   'Tell us once' and the appointment of a HoS for both Bereavement and Registrars which will join the process up and enable better sharing of information.

3.3   Specific concerns were raised by OSC in relation to opportunities 'rejected' by the service which require further consideration:

3.3.1   Capability of Oracle to send invoices to stone masons via BCC's current finance system.

3.3.2   The new bereavement system has the capability to provide funeral directors with a view of all current bookings with the council, made complex due to the different processes adopted across sites.

3.4   **Housing Repairs**: TFG held on 29th November 2022 with Head of Service for Housing Management, Customer Service Programme Operational Sponsor, Product Owner and Delivery Manager in attendance. All recommendations were reviewed, and status update provided and clarified with further comments and recommendations from OSC taken onboard by the HoS.

3.5   OSC commended the on-going work kicked off within the service and the efforts undertaken to improve the customer experience and satisfaction. Particular

reference was made to the critical nature of the following improvements and the potential to revolutionise the service:

3.5.1 Fit for purpose measures and KPIs

3.5.2 The review of existing tenancy agreements and communication materials detailing expectations of both BCC and the tenant, as well as the escalation process if a either party is found not to be meeting the agreement.

3.5.3 Choice-based lettings – meaningful guidance required for customers which aligns to the customer journey, the 'as is' not providing the information customers require at the time they need.

3.5.4 Web content review – improving the front-end communication and guidance for customers. Customers need to understand the situation in Birmingham; realistic expectations set by the service; and customers know this information <u>before</u> they start the process.

3.5.5 The website states there's high demand for housing within Birmingham but doesn't give any example or average waiting times based on typical applications. Members can obtain regularly updates with https://www.birminghamchoice.co.uk/ which can cascaded via the Members Page. The tool contains an Average Waiting Time calculator to check the supply and demand of properties per area; and live updates on property availability. (Figure 2)

Figure 2: Birmingham Choice website

3.6 The remaining Task & Finish Groups are inflight and scheduled as detailed below. A further update will be provided once all sessions have been convened:

3.6.1 **Waste Management**: TFG scheduled for 5th December 2022

3.6.2 **Highways Repairs**: TFG scheduled for 12th December 2022

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 forecasts budget spend at the identified £ 1.7m costs allocated to the programme in final qtr. of 2021/22 and 2022/23.

4.2   The savings that are currently set out in the MTFP increase by £600k in 2023/2024, phase 2 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   Appendices

7.1   A: Customer Service Programme Phase 2 Cabinet Report V6.1

7.2   B: Status overview of recommendations

Appendix A

Birmingham City Council
Report to Cabinet
13th December 2022

Subject:	Customer Service Programme Phase 2
Report of:	Director, Digital & Customer Services
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Cllr Brigid Jones- Deputy Leader
Relevant O &S Chair(s):	Councillor Sir Albert Bore – Co-ordinating Overview & Scrutiny
	Councillor Mohammed Aikhlaq – Resources Overview & Scrutiny
Report author:	Nikki Spencer
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Are specific wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	☐ Yes	X No – All wards affected
Is this a key decision? If relevant, add Forward Plan Reference: 010705/2022	X Yes	☐ No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	X Yes	☐ No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, provide exempt information paragraph number or reason if confidential:	☐ Yes	X No

1.1 Executive Summary

1.2 The Customer Service Programme was formed in December 2021 following full cabinet approval on 14th December 2021 being received which initiated a discovery phase into areas that were not achieving the customer service standards required. The outcome of this discovery informed an enhanced business case, demonstrating how the Council will deliver significant

improvements in customer service performance by adjusting its approach and reviewing the customer experience end to end.

1.3   The programme has delivered a number of customer benefits in year one including the creation of an easy-read Customer Service Strategy, a co-created Customer Charter, introduced a Citizen Panel, the refresh and cleansing of approximately 800 web pages to date and end to end discovery of 4 high volume, high priority service areas for the Council with recommendations being played back to the appropriate department for progressing.

1.4   The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the drawdown of funding to continue to deliver the customer improvements required across year 2 and 3 of the programme in order to continue to deliver the required outputs of the Customer Service Strategy. The scope of the Customer Service Programme Phase 2, the agile and customer centred approach and the associated funding required to deliver the programme are detailed in **Table 2**: Customer Service Strategy deliverables within the time period of Phase 2 (April 23- March 25) and **Appendix A**: Year 2–4 Forecast Resource Budget Profile, of this report.

1.5   The Customer Service Programme had a number of defined outputs which created a roadmap for change and the delivery of savings. Therefore the transformational nature of the programme enables us to capitalise the funding allocated to resourcing a dedicated team. The transformation programme is based on four key priority areas which will need to be considered across all services that the Council provides:

Service improvements - delivery of customer journey improvements for the priority service areas, identified in the discovery phase by customer preference, complaints, and volume data.

Fixing the basics - finalisation of the Quick Wins & Early Momentum outputs ('fix the basics') that have been scheduled to be completed.

Programme delivery - Embedding the thinking, skills, and approach into the organisation to enable a long-term sustainable approach to transformation.

Delivery of the enhanced business case – continue to deliver the core capabilities defined in year 1 of the Customer Service Strategy that will deliver ongoing efficiencies for the Council.

2   Recommendations

2.1   Recommendations to Cabinet: -

2.2   Note the progress made by the Customer Service Programme to date since approval of the Enhanced Business Case in December 2021 (**Table 1**).

2.3   Approve the Customer Service Programme Phase 2, as defined in this report to ensure a joined-up and consistent approach to best-in-class service delivery across the Council and partner organisations, putting the customer at the heart of everything we do.

2.4 Approve the forecast resource budget profile (**Appendix A**) to invest reserves of £4.187m to deliver the Customer Service Programme Phase 2 to start in April 2023 until March 2025 as a drawdown of the already approved investment funds for Customer Service activity.

3 Background and Context

3.1 The UK saw the equivalent of more than 12 years of ecommerce growth in a single year and the pandemic accelerated the digitisation of customer interactions in Europe by three years and the partial or total digitisation of products and services by seven years, compared with the average rates of adoption in 2017-19. (Source: Digital Transformation Report in the Times (Sept 2021). We cannot stand still as this technological revolution continues to accelerate yet many of our service areas do not have an online presence. We need to be bold and embrace the innovation that has now become commonplace.

3.2 Cabinet mandated on 14th December 2021 a significant shift in how we improve the Services we provide to Customers. This mandate initiated the formation of the Customer Service Programme (Phase 1) with a vision to deliver significant improvements in performance and implement the Council's new [Customer Service Strategy](#) which aims to embed change and improve how the Council delivers its services to citizens through all access channels.

3.3 Research conducted by the programme during phase 1 validated earlier anecdotal insights:

- customer service standards across the Council are inconsistent
- opportunities to digitalise and automate to improve interactions are not being taken up
- customers feel overwhelmed with having too many access points
- a large amount of our online content is poor and needs improving
- we receive high volumes of complaints and have high costs associated to managing failure demand activity (chase ups, etc)

3.4 In addition to the lack of consistency across different services, we needed to acknowledge that expectations from our citizens are increasing, they expect to be able to transact with the Council through a variety of access channels including online, and for those services to be good, to keep them informed and simply work without hiccups.

3.5 Since the start of the programme in January 2022, with an initial 12-month timeline to 'Fix the Basics' as outlined in the Customer Service Strategy commitments, the customer service programme undertook analysis of existing BCC data sources (i.e. Online Brum; Corporate Contact Centre, CSAT and Online Fire & Send) to identify the Top 60 services our customers engage with most frequently.

The analysis highlighted high volume services such as those detailed below, which it should be noted, also aligns with the services outlined within the Council Leader's Top Ten Non-Negotiables:

- Housing (repairs, applications and ASB)
- Waste (garden waste renewal, replacement and missed bins)
- Highways (repairs, fly tipping, report pavements)
- Revenues & Benefits (benefit entitlements)
- Education & Skills (school admissions, child bus pass)
- Bereavement Services (register a death)

3.6 To understand the current customer experience for high demand services, the customer service programme conducted an initial discovery phase focused on Waste Management, Housing Repairs, Bereavement Services and Highways. Through user research and data analysis the programme sought to understand the current customer and staff experience, including pain points and user needs, in order to identify a model customer experience, based on best practice that will increase/improve satisfaction.

3.7 Based on evidence from the research, a high-level common 'gold standard' customer experience was developed that is intended to be broadly applicable to any service area; and provide the north star underpinning the activity of the Customer Service programme.

Figure 1. Visual extract of the target 'gold standard' customer experience

3.8 In addition to the development of the 'gold standard', findings from the research provided the following insights:

About our customers:

- People are proud of Birmingham
- There are mixed views of the council
- Trust in the council (and Government as a whole) is low
- There is an awareness that the council is stretched
- There is some discontent around political and contractual structures within the council

Research themes:

- Most people commented on a lack of communication when interacting with council services
- Decisions aren't made transparently, there is a lack of understanding about why things happen
- There is an expectation that the council should be proactive – some things shouldn't need customer interaction
- People should be treated empathetically

What good customer service looks like:

- People don't need to submit a formal complaint when things go wrong
- People want the council to be held to account but won't always take action to do so
- Examples of good customer service include being kept informed, being treated with empathy and ease of use
- A general belief that the council can achieve 'good customer service' but expectations are low
- Customers expect the council to make improvements around training and culture.

3.9   As a result of the programme's Discovery work, 116 recommendations / opportunities to improve customer satisfaction and associated insights have been presented to the relevant service areas to date (i.e. Bereavement 28, Waste 13, Highways 10, Housing Repairs 13 and Housing Management 52), which demonstrates the scale and complexity of improvement work still required in some service areas in order to 'fix the basics' end-to-end to achieve that 'gold standard customer experience' for their service users.

Each recommendation / opportunity detailed the insights gathered from user research conducted with our customers, with supporting storyboards (visual representation of a theme of actions and/or events gathered from the Discovery user research), personas (snapshot of a typical service user highlighting their user needs, and positive and negative experiences), and user journeys (detailing the experiences a user has when interacting with a service area). Three key themes emerged:

- **Communication**: with customers, within services and between services

- **Complaints and feedback**: asking at the right time, making it easy to give feedback and action being taken by the service as a result

- **Use of digital and technology**: we need to address the paper based, manual processes and maximise what is already available

3.10   This discovery informed the programme's next stages of work with the service areas:

- **Bereavement Services**: To provide clear, accessible guidance (end to end) to help people understand how to lay a loved one to rest in Birmingham; transition of service into the Contact Centre (single contact number).

- **Culture Change**: To embed the principles of Our Customer Charter ensuring all 11,000 provide a basic level of customer care – putting people first all the time, every time

- **Waste (prototype & testing)**: Investigate how we can enable proactive digital communication between the Waste service and residential customers e.g. against missed, assisted collections and garden waste

- **Housing Management**: To develop a common understanding of the current end to end journey of a housing tenant. Agree options to proto-type and test with users using evidence-based user needs

- **Web Content Review**: To ensure customers access the right information at the right time and content is accurate and update. Applying an iterative approach to the improvement work and ensuring alignment to the standards outlined in the new Content Strategy and Content Governance guidelines, also developed by the programme. (**Figure 2. Overview of web audit reports for prioritised services).**

- **Customer Panel**: Giving our customers a voice - to take an active role in shaping the services we deliver to make sure we continually meet people's needs. The Customer Service Programme has established a Customer Panel of core citizens members based on the 2022 ONS Census data; and work to continuously improve the panel in terms of diversity, purpose and role; and to establish a wider cohort of member will continue during Phase 2 to ensure the group is truly representative and reflective of Birmingham's diverse community.

3.11 With the endorsement, buy-in and engagement of directorate services, the inflight workstreams and the growing product backlog (pipeline of improvements) present opportunities for BCC to achieve outcomes such as:

- Improved customer service across a range of priority service areas
- A method/internal capability for delivering ongoing service improvements
- Improved reputation for the Council and reduction in complaints
- Reduction in costs as failure demand is tackled
- Cultural change and the embedding of agile practice through delivery

3.12 Analysis of the Council's customer contact showed:

- Contact is not managed in a structured or uniform way - we have fewer than 2% of services managed within the contact centre, resulting in excessive points of contact.

- We don't ask customers what they think or gather knowledge to improve - Only 5% of our service areas ask customers about satisfaction and where we do, the satisfaction level is only 60%.

- We are not using our customer portal (Brum Account) to its full capacity. Only 21% of service areas have services available on our customer portal.

- Non-standardised web forms: we have 119 forms online. The functionality is not uniform, and, in some cases, forms still need to be printed off and for a wet signature to be added.

- Unclear access points for Customers, Visitors, Businesses and Tenants to information, advice guidance or trading opportunities.

- Difficult to navigate website with jargon and often out of date content.

Figure 2. Overview of web audit reports for prioritised services
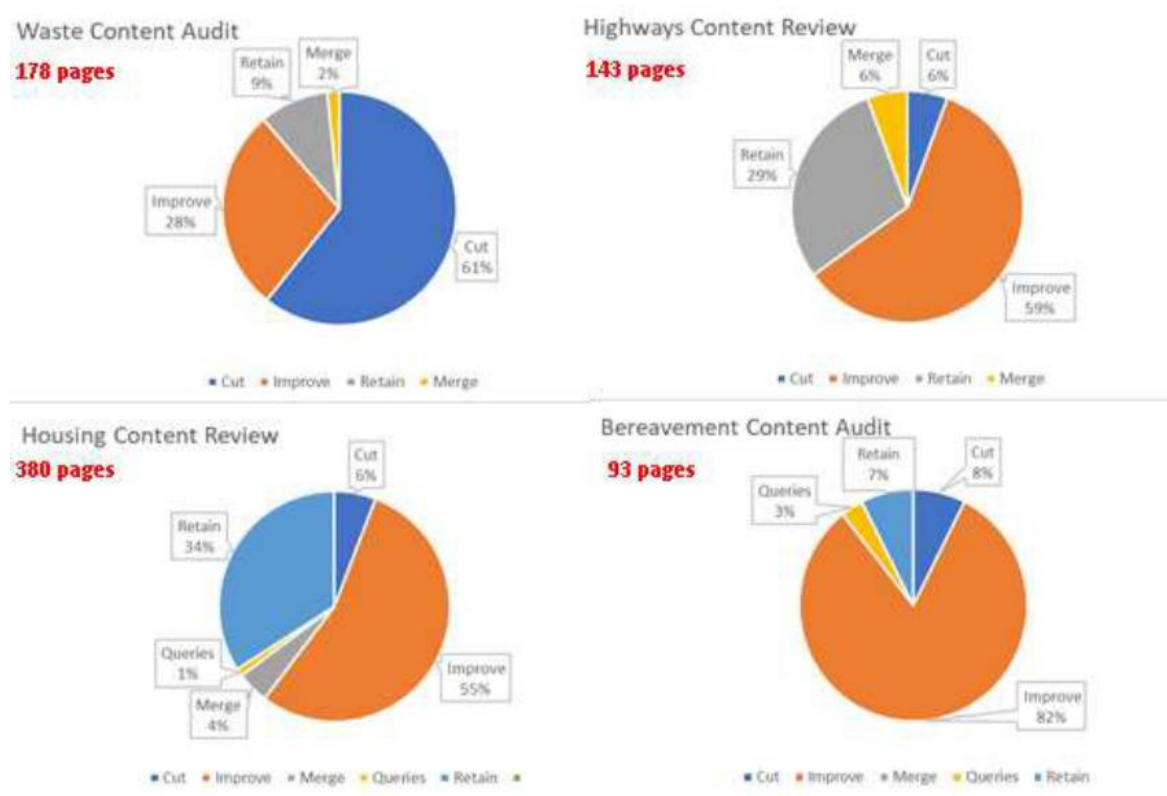
3.13 The programme is "**Everyone's Battle Everyone's Business – together we will tackle inequalities**" aware and through discovery user research is shaping customer access to services against the protected characteristics to ensure content is accessible and easy to understand for all our communities (e.g. Deaf people can now call the Council's Contact Centre in British Sign Language with SignVideo, connecting users to a registered BSL interpreter. They'll confirm you're calling Birmingham City Council and will start the conversation in BSL to facilitate service requests.

3.14 In addition, the programme also contributes to the five key principles of EBEB to drive systemic change and guide our work to become a council that puts equity at the heart of our policy making and services:

- **A focus on equity** - We will focus our approach on equity.

- **Actively listening to the voices of lived experience** - We will put those who are affected by inequalities at the heart of designing solutions.

- **Understand the diverse range of views and perspectives of citizens and ensure solutions are based on the widest available evidence** - We will take an intersectional approach to understand how people experience inequality according to their social class, age, gender, ethnicity, disability and sexual orientation.

- **Language counts** - We will aim to use plain language in our publications that is jargon-free and easily understood and will also develop a shared understanding of the terms used to describe inequalities.

- **Place matters** - we will focus on place-based approaches that improve access to opportunities.

3.15 In order to ensure all programme engagement was reflective of Birmingham's diverse community, participation was based on the ONS 2022 Census data and all user research with our customers conducted by the programme to date has been rigorous in the analysis and application of the sampling mix.

3.16 The Customer Service Programme is working with our customers to maximise opportunities to tackle inequality and address both long-standing and novel challenges facing the city, including customer service improvements.

3.17 Our Customer Service Strategy will enable the Council to organise our services around demand; leverage the city's many opportunities for the benefit of local people; connect with customers in a way that improves their quality of life and drive innovation within the organisation and across partnerships by making sure we put in place the necessary strategies and capacity to enable it to happen. The Customer Service Strategy complies with the Council's Delivery Plan 2020-2022 and will contribute to the following outcomes and related priorities:

- Using innovative technology and processes to support making Birmingham an aspirational city to grow up and live in.

- Optimising services to support making Birmingham a great city to live in

- Focus our resources on the people that need it most, making Birmingham a fulfilling city to age well in

3.18 Improving customer satisfaction/experience is further compounded by organisational culture and although creation of the first iteration of Our Customer Charter (developed and tested with our users) communicates the principles, standards and behaviours expected of all our 11,000 employees; embedding a change in culture of this scale (i.e. across all levels, from the front

line to our managers, the board and even our members) takes time and the shift in culture required to become truly user needs focussed and put people first, all the time, every time should not be underestimated. Having said this, the Customer Standards Workshops rolled out by the programme has seen engagement steadily increase, with nearly 1,000 staff participating following the go-live launch in September 2022, and a Forward Plan of engagement scheduled to March 2023. However, further work is required to evaluate the change, and further embed the principles via continual learning and application of the standards in practice.

3.19   The Customer Service Programme [Phase 1] delivery approach aimed to help Birmingham City Council's maturity on its journey towards being a truly 'person centred' organisation...'Putting people first, all the time, every time'. The programme adapted well to the new way of working, partnering with contracted supplier Methods during the first year, building organisational capability and experience as well as helping the organisation to embed the approach, so that continuous improvement to customer service becomes second nature.

3.20   The purpose of this report seeks approval to invest reserve funding for Years 2-4 of the Customer Service Programme to deliver customer improvements to commence in April 2023. A view of the scope of the Customer Service Programme, the agile and customer centred approach and the associated funding to deliver the programme are detailed in **Appendix A**.

3.21   The Customer Service Programme continues to map out and prioritise with service leads the 116 recommendations/opportunities for customer journey improvements identified in the discovery phase. The outputs have provided the programme with a roadmap for change for Phase 2 which are based on four key priority areas to start in April 2023 until March 2025:

- **Fixing the basics** – continued implementation of the web content improvement plan, pipeline of the identified Top 50 prioritised services, and a roadmap of engagement for all Council services.

- **Service improvements** - delivery of customer journey improvements for the priority service areas, identified in Discovery to understand the current customer experience for high demand services.

- **Programme delivery** – Customer Service Programme Phase 2 delivery of the Customer Service Strategy for the period up to March 2025, and embedding of the thinking, skills, and approach into the organisation to enable a long-term sustainable approach to continuous improvement and modernisation.

- **Delivery of the benefits** – continued delivery of the capabilities defined in the Customer Service Strategy, where validated by the evidence, data and insights gathered by the Customer Service Programme's user research. With an ambition to deliver end-to-end, reusable solutions (i.e. Advanced payments) that may potentially deliver savings for the Council and can be

used by other business areas during and beyond the programme to achieve efficiencies. However, it should be noted, without a mandated strategic approach for services to engage and be accountable (i.e. take ownership) to the identified recommendations/opportunities for improvement, enabling and driving forward the associated service and business change required, realisation of any financial benefits and/or efficiencies will be adversely impacted.

In order to deliver the outcomes outlined there is a dependency on other cross-cutting programmes with a range of core capabilities which will impact this work including:

- **Smart communications** – chat bots and other automations to handle and improve customer enquiries.

- **Robotic process automation** – for appointment reminders and reducing double keying of information e.g., Care plans and financial assessments.

- **Pre-emptive demand reduction** – for example garden waste renewals.

- **Customer service improvements** – prioritising individual customer service and efficiency improvements, implementing best practice and user centred design principles.

The services we have worked with to date are outlined in the Leaders Top 10 non-negotiables and continuation of the programme is vital to ensure an improved customer satisfaction/experience.

3.22 Our Customer Service Strategy established a key set of principles and promises, positioning work and priorities within the context of 'A fit for purpose council', using a sustainable process and approach to sustain the strategy beyond the lifetime of the programme, an ambition Phase 2 will endeavour to continue to achieve, with a vision to not only raise standards but set standards and strive for a 'best in class' relationship with our customers.

3.23 Customer expectations of the Council are rising. Our customers expect services that are reliable, joined up around their needs and involve them as equals. They benchmark our performance against the likes of Uber and Amazon, Spotify, and Expedia. These changes in expectation fundamentally challenge how our services need to be designed; how they are led; our approach to innovation and how we drive change and improvement in a consistent and reliable manner across the Council as a whole. This applies not only to services run by our customer services team – it means all services, from children to adults, from street cleansing to parking enforcement, treating customer, citizens, and service users with respect. This will require a step change in our approach rather than incremental changes at the margins or digitising what remain effectively paper based or manual processes. The world has moved on and so must we.

3.24 There is sometimes a lack of trust between our Customers and the Council. Customers expect a much greater level of involvement in decisions that affect

their lives, be they the big things that have a bearing across the City as a whole, or the little things that have a big impact in their street or neighbourhood.

3.25 In this context, getting the basics right means more than relentless reliability, it also means understanding and then exceeding expectations, and in turn that means an approach to service delivery that is open, reflective, and humble. The test for our services should be whether, they are consistently putting citizens first, building trust and designed around citizen needs.

3.26 Our recent success in delivery of the Commonwealth Games; and meeting the challenges posed by covid19 has given us much for the Council to be proud of, but we need clear ambition to make sustainable changes to how the Customers experience the services the Council provides. It is within this context underpinned by the Customer Service Strategy that continued delivery by the Customer Service Programme is required.

3.27 Our Customer Service Strategy was developed with the following principles:

- o We will work better together with you
- o Make quicker decisions for you
- o Reduce your need to contact us
- o Tell us once
- o We will put the citizen first
- o Taking a proactive approach to customer service

3.28 Figure 3 below, provides a high-level summary of how the Customer Service Programme relates to our parent portfolio and to other strategic transformation initiatives across the Council.

Figure 3. Fit for Purpose Council portfolio breakdown.
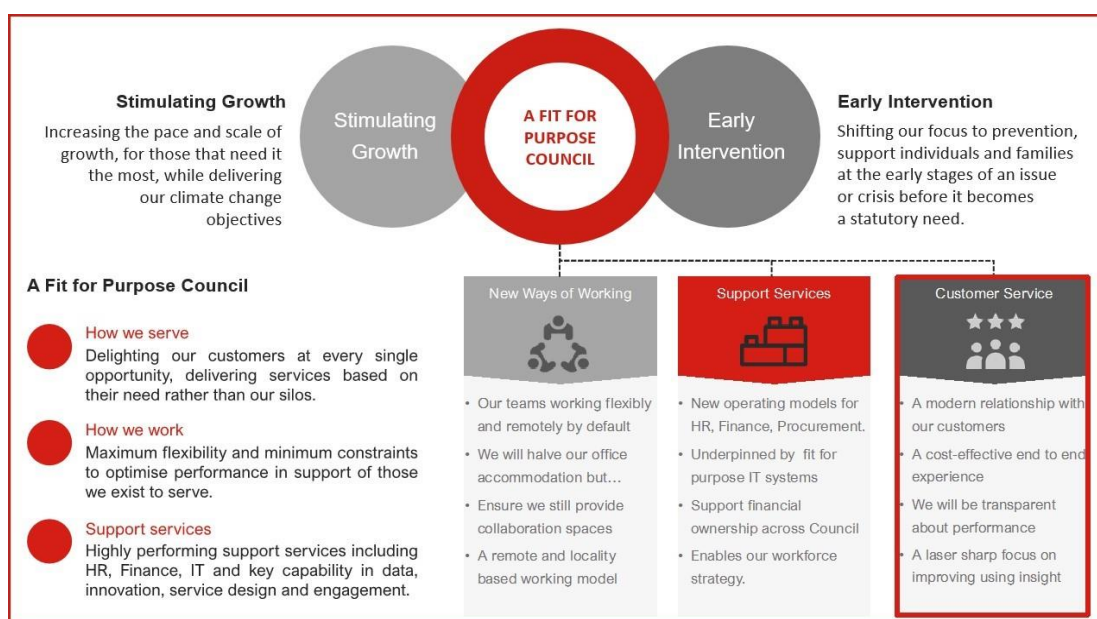
4   Table 1. Current Progress against Strategy Commitments from January 2022:

Commitment	Timeline	Status
A Customer Focussed Council		
Our contract with you We will develop a customer charter, setting out the customer service standards you can expect from us.	May 2022	Completed
Communicating change We will launch an annual customer services communications plan	January 2022	Completed
Owning customer service We will ensure that all 11,000 of our staff have completed customer centricity training	December 2022	In Progress
Giving you a voice We will launch customer service panels, for citizens, young people etc	August 2022	Completed
Testing our services We will recruit and launch our first mystery shopping teams	August 2022	In Progress
Understanding you We will use publicly available data sets to really understand the make-up of those in Birmingham and use this information to help shape our services	December 2022	In Progress
A Connected Council		
Getting our information right We will review and update information and materials we provide about our services on our website	September 2022	In Progress
Speeding up your frequent tasks We will identify the top 50 service requests and prioritise digitising them, with many to be available online	August 2022	Completed
Helping you stay on top of things We will be able to send you simple reminders for your appointments	June 2022	Phase 1 Completed
A Smarter Council		
Redesign our customer service set up We will create a new team to provide earlier support and intervention, bringing together the parts of the Council providing the top 50 targeted and specialist services	January 2023.	In Progress
One view of you We will develop our single view of you, sharing data safely and securely across the top 10 service areas.	December 2022	In Progress
Keeping you informed We will identify the top 5 activities you would like to know about in your area (e.g., planned roadworks) and trial pre-emptively tell you, by text or email	December 2022	In Progress
A Connected city		
Signposting for you We will identify the top 50 non-Council service requests and	March 2022	In Progress

ensure we prioritise and signpost to them on our website		
Easy searching We will improve search capabilities on our website, so it is easy to find the right service provider for your needs	March 2022	Completed
Asking you to help out We will trial using digital technologies with a first cohort of 10 citizens, linking them to family and friends who can help with their care	January 2023	In Progress

5 Year 2-4 Forecast Resource Budget Profile

5.1 The Forecast resource budget profile of £ 4.2m is detailed in **Appendix A** of this Cabinet Report.

The original Enhanced Business Case sought and approved total funding of £1.7m. The Customer Service resource profile forecasts budget spend at the identified £ 1.7m costs allocated to the programme in final qtr. of 2021/22 and 2022/23.

5.2 As stated earlier in the report, to date the Customer Service Programme has achieved a number of benefits such as creating a Customer Strategy, Customer Charter, cleansing down of web content, creating a customer panel, see the table below for further detail.

5.3 The Customer Service Programme has developed a comprehensive proposal for change, using agile project management principles. In doing so, the programme will be cognisant of other parts of the portfolio to determine the type of council that Birmingham needs to be in the medium and longer-term to deliver its vision and ambitions.

5.4 The Customer Service Programme is an overarching, cross-cutting programme and requires the Council to manage customer service improvements as a set of portfolios of works in line the Customer Service Strategy. Thus ensuring a joined-up and consistent approach to best-in-class service delivery across the Council and partner organisations, putting the customer at the heart of what we do.

5.5 The Customer Service Programme will continue to use the current programme governance to ensure the overall performance, benefits, risks, and issues are strategically aligned so that future Customer Service is fully understood and agreed by key stakeholders. Customer Service Design Principles will be established to assure new solution designs, ensuring that each component meets the requirements and are fit for purpose with the overall architecture / corporate strategy in meeting customer needs.

5.6 The Customer Service Programme will implement and embed a sustainable process and approach to deliver the strategy using internal resource during the lifecycle of the programme.

6   Table 2 - Customer Service Strategy deliverables within the time period of Phase 2 (April 23- March 25):

Commitment
A Customer Focussed Council
Owning customer service We will ensure that all 11,000 of our staff have completed customer centricity training
Testing our services We will recruit and launch our first mystery shopping teams
Understanding you We will use publicly available data sets to really understand the make-up of those in Birmingham and use this information to help shape our services
Unblocking services We will have reviewed all our major processes to remove unnecessary steps and blockers
Sector leading customer service We will create a customer service Centre of Excellence
A Connected Council
Getting our information right We will review and update information and materials we provide about our services on our website
A single front door We will have a broader range of services through our, dedicated and specialist customer service team
Speeding up your frequent tasks We will identify the top 50 service requests and prioritise digitising them, with many to be available online
Speeding up your frequent tasks We will develop the technology to share your information, in a safe and secure way, so that you don't have to keep repeating information to us approach
Helping you stay on top of things We will be able to send you simple reminders for your appointments
Personalised service alerts and reminders We will personalise automated reminder texts and emails, based on your circumstances and preferences (e.g. channel, time, messaging etc), so you never have to miss a deadline or an appointment with us
Digital to promote healthy lifestyles We will identify the top 50 service requests and prioritise digitising them, with many available online
A Smarter Council
Connecting our Teams We will create a network of customer service champions across services, to work together to identify new ways of working better for you.
Redesign our customer service set up We will create a new team to provide earlier support and intervention, bringing together the parts of the Council providing the top 50 targeted and specialist services
One view of you We will develop our single view of you, sharing data safely and securely across the top

10 service areas.
Getting ahead of demand We will look for ways to work smarter, pre-empting your contact wherever possible across the top 10 service areas
Pointing you to services We will identify the top 20 related services (e.g. school applications and local summer activities) and start automating linked messaging
Keeping you informed We will identify the top 5 activities you would like to know about in your area (e.g., planned roadworks) and trial pre- emptively tell you, by text or email
A Connected city
Signposting for you We will identify the top 50 non-Council service requests and ensure we prioritise and signpost to them on our website
Community hubs We will conduct a review of our properties to identify the best locations for community hubs / one stop shops, with partners
Asking you to help out We will trial using digital technologies with a first cohort of 10 citizens, linking them to family and friends who can help with their care
Located together for you We will co-locate with other service providers and partners, able to jointly support your needs, by December 2024.

6.1 In the adoption of an agile approach, the programme will continue to seek to implement the strategic objectives above. The individual projects will be prioritised for delivery into the programme product backlog based on the value they bring to the both our customers and the Council. The three delivery teams established during year 1 will continue to build solutions that are designed collaboratively with real users of that service. Teams will continue to be timebound to solution delivery to ensure that the programme remains on track and gets solutions into people's hands quickly to test and iterate swiftly. Dedicated Change team support will be required to embed the solutions into service areas as well as report back the benefits that have been realised as a result of any change.

7   Options Considered:

7.1 The approach to the cost savings requires a mandated approach to which services need to comply and respond to, in order to realise any financial benefits and/or efficiencies. Projects will be prioritised into the delivery schedule based on the value they bring to the both our customers and the Council; size and scale of complexity; pace i.e. ability to deliver any potential quick-wins, as agreed with the service areas.

7.2 The option of not completing the programme has been considered and discounted as this would have significant customers and organisation impact for the following key reasons:

- Satisfaction with Council Services would not improve and our reputation for providing services would continue to worsen

- The capabilities identified have utility capability that can be used multiple times and are required for the modern relationship with customers and implementation of the Customer Service Strategy.

8 Consultation

8.1 The Leader, Cabinet Member for Finance and Resources, and Chair of Overview & Scrutiny Committee have been consulted.

8.2 Phase 2 Programme scope was informed by consultations and engagements with stakeholders across the Council including, but not limited to:

- Council Leadership Team

- Customer Service Governance Board and Steering Committee

- Overview & Scrutiny Committee Chairs

- Officer Consultation regarding Finance, Legal, Procurement, HR, Communications.

9 Risk Management

9.1 The ongoing risks will be managed in Phase 2:

Table 4 – High level risk management

Description	Impact	Mitigation
There is a risk that services' lack buy-in and engagement to adopt the strategy and that new processes will not realise benefits in line with the programme's aims.	High	Service commitment to providing an appropriate level of internal resources to support work across all services in-scope for redesign will be sought. A detailed time-based resource plan will be provided in support of this request. Corporate Governance has been established via the Customer Service Programme Board.
There is a risk that cashable savings will be absorbed as service efficiencies if they are not clearly defined for each programme area.	High	The cashable savings which must be attributed to the programme are detailed in the existing the eight MVP Business Cases. A status breakdown per business case and service commitment is provided in the Enhanced Business Case.

There is a risk that an appropriate level of resources will not be dedicated to the programme resulting in it being unable to deliver at pace or with the necessary momentum.	High	The programme has set aside specific budgets to second staff over to the programme and support with delivery. Backfill arrangements shall be confirmed in advance of commencement. Regular monthly meetings held with the Finance Business Partner updating on spend to date and forecast for the programme lifespan.

9.2   These risks are incorporated into the programme risk register and are regularly managed/mitigated.

10   Compliance Issues

10.1   The recommended decisions are consistent with the Council's priorities, plans and strategies, supporting the Council's stated commitments to ensure we are a truly customer centric organisation.

11   Legal Implications

11.1   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

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

12   Financial Implications

12.1   Total forecast spend on the programme is £ 4.2m as per section 5 above.

12.2   The savings that are currently set out in the MTFP increase by £600k in 2023/2024, phase 2 will help to deliver these and also identify future potential savings of over the next 2 years.

12.3   There are no procurement implications of the recommended decisions for Phase 2 as defined in this report.

13   HR implications

13.1   Any required changes to current job roles or current operating model will be done so in line with Birmingham City Councils Policies and Procedures, incorporating a full engagement/consultation process with Trade Unions and employees. All new roles will be recruited to in accordance with Birmingham City Councils Recruitment and Selection Policy and Procedure, supporting Birmingham City Councils commitment to mitigate against compulsory redundancy where possible, any new roles will be prioritised to employees at risk of redundancy.

14   Public Sector Equality Duty

14.1   An Equality Impact Analysis EQUA1000 has been completed and is attached at **Appendix B**.

15   Background Documents

15.1   Report to Cabinet dated 14th December 2021 – "Customer Service Strategy Enhanced Business Case and Delivery"

16   Appendices:

16.1   A – Year 2–4 Forecast Resource Budget Profile

16.2   B – Equality Impact Analysis

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED TO SERVICE LEADS

Code	Insight	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, 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. **Status Update 24-Nov**: clear online guidance developed and published: what to do after someone dies, offline guidance is awaiting sign off and coroners review	Medium	Programme
B	Wildlife can have a negative impact on grave sites, which can be distressing for the family.	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) **Status Update 24-Nov**: Wildlife is an on-going issue that is being managed by the service	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
C	Some grave sites are not well maintained over time.	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. **Status Update 24-Nov:** we need to articulate clear guidedlines for people, eg; plastic fading flowers, look at signange in the graveyards etc	Low	Service: work started/ongoing
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 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: we need to chase the timeline for this (scanning) and circulate the timeline*	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 (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. *Status Update 24-Nov: Process for booking burials, looking at putting this all online whilst retaining telephone access for those offline*	High	Service: work started/ongoing

	Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Status
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, 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). *Status Update 24-Nov: the service is trying to find a scheme that work, however there is also an impact on staffing and time required etc.*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
G	Some funerals run over time, which has a knock on impact for later bookings and for staff.	Communicate to citizens the overrun charge and ensure they are aware of where responsibility for this penalty lies (i.e. funeral directors) *Status Update 24-Nov: service need to be better on the comms but down to funeral directors to manage these situations*	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 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: agreed*	Low	Service: work started/ongoing
I	The current system is unable to notify funeral directors of updates and changes to their bookings.	Ensure the new bereavement system has the capability to keep funeral directors updated without having to make manual checks on the system. *Status Update 24-Nov: Need a system that keeps funeral directors updated, has the current functionality for scope to be improved with assistance from the Customer Service Programme required.*	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 bereavement system has the capability to provide funeral directors with a view of all current bookings with the council. *Status Update 24-Nov: as row-I above*	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. Consider how to standardise the process across all sites based on best practice. *Status Update 24-Nov: O&S concerned about this being rejected.*	Low	Rejected
L	Some funeral directors give incorrect information to citizens about BCC's availability to conduct funerals.	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. *Status Update 24-Nov: part of the new system requirement to online and digitise etc, giving better guidance to customers*	Low	Service: work started/ongoing
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. 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: agreed*	Medium	Informed new solution spec

	Issue	Recommendation	Priority	Status
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. 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: we have a 'Tell us once' policy and the service in the process of appointing a HOS for both Bereavement and Registrars which will join the process up better*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
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 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: agreed*	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 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: ensure stone mason invoices can be processed through the Oracle system. O&S - should not be rejected.*	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 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: agreed that website is useful but signage at the sites themselves need to be improved.*	Low	Informed new solution spec
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).	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? *Status Update 24-Nov: Sutton New Rd open until 7pm. Service is investigating if there is demand for the others to be open late. Looking to visit Bradford.*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
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 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: staffing is currently challenging and looking to backfill vacancies, currently 8 vacancies*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
T	There are a number of phone numbers and email addresses that the service must manage	Move 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - work started/ongoing*	High	Programme

			Risk	Category
U	No key performance indicators available	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. *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - work started/ongoing*	High	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. 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - work started/ongoing*	Low	Service: work started/ongoing
W	User feedback is not available – this was suspended during the pandemic to enable the service to prioritise core services (funerals and memorials).	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. *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - help required from the Customer Service Programme on what the service can do*	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. Work with the complaints leads to see how they can be avoided through service improvement plans. *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - work started/ongoing*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
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. 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. *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - work started/ongoing using root cause analysis to improve, complaint volumes very low*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
Z	Additional income generation opportunities	A. Review fees of core services to understand where the service makes the most revenue, to understand how the service can maximise income *Status Update 24-Nov: Agreed - work started/ongoing to review income generation opportunities*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
		B. Review possible package options to encourage relatives to buy additional services, e.g. maintenance or borders for graves *Status Update 24-Nov: as at point a. above*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
		C. Offer longer lease lengths or renewal options for grave leases to generate additional income *Status Update 24-Nov: as at point a. above*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing

HOUSING REPAIRS

RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED TO SERVICE LEADS

Code	Insight	Recommendation	Initial Rating	Delivery Accountability
19	Customers find it difficult to explain what the issue is online. They are unsure if their issue qualifies as an emergency or not, so often they find it easier to ring up and speak to someone. Staff find that some customers believe everything is urgent, meaning there is a gap in expectations and a lack of common understanding.	Review the BRUM account reporting process and content to understand how we might clearly communicate the different levels of severity of repairs. Make it easier for customers to tell us what the issue is, improve triaging and reduce the need to ring. Test these changes with users and iterate based on feedback. BCC might should explore implementing a simple decision tree, diagnostic tool for customers to use. *Status Update 29-Nov : new functionality available enabling customers to report, diagnose and track a repair, end2end view of the repair request and timelines. Target go-live Mar23 for online capability and automation. Link to Rows 20 & 22*	Medium	Programme
20	Customers believe that BCC aren't proactively maintaining housing stock due to a lack of funding, which causes things to become worse over time, resulting in more expensive repairs. Sometimes the wrong people are sent to do the repairs work. Customers experience varying standards of quality of repair, some of which is poor. This results in the need for repeated contact about the same issue.	Improved triaging will help ensuring the right tradesperson is sent to a job. Service level agreements detail the agreed standards of quality and timeframes expected. These are known, documented and publicly available in an accessible format. Customers are served information about the SLA and expectations appropriately, through the service, and don't have to hunt through the website for them. BCC and its partners consistently meet agreed standards. BCC are already exploring how they could make use of smart technology to track and maintain its infrastructure and assets e.g. in housing and highways. This will enable the council to proactively address issues as they arise, often before they become a major problem that is expensive to fix. *Status Update 29-Nov : Housing stock maintenance will reduce demand by modernising Housing stock and Housing Revenue Review also in progress. Increase of capital spend by £ 50m by Apr23 (inc. retrofit, reprocurement will faciliate adoption of new KPI 'right first time' to ensure cases are reviewed accordingly; currently at 40% decency level of housing stock which is not acceptable and service is increasing the level of stock surveys completed, as a result. Link to Rows 19 & 22*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing
21	Some tenants don't look after their properties to an appropriate standard, resulting in the need for additional repair work, putting added pressure on the department.	Review existing tenancy agreements and communication materials detailing expectations of both BCC and the tenant, as well as the escalation process if a either party is found not to be meeting the agreement. Ensure clear documentation is readily available on line in a range of accessible formats and languages. *Status Update 29-Nov: Tenancy conditions require lengthy process and is currently under review with consultants Campbell & Tickell as part of the Housing TOM - review outcome target: Dec22, implementation kick-off Jan23 - recommendation in scope so will be picked up and output communicated to tenants. Tenancy conditions are robust however visibility of diagnostic trees and customer journey could be better, e.g. tenancies currently end on a Friday and begin on a Monday (other LAs adopt a more flexible approach) setting customer expectations would be key to improving customer satisfaction. Voids end2end review also in progress. Strongly supported by O&S as current process results in lost tenancy days/revenue loss and this opportunity presents potential financial gain for BCC.*	High	Service/Programme: work started/ongoing

#	Issue	Response	Priority	Category
22	For some customers it is a lengthy process scheduling in an appointment via the contact centre. Some customers wish to be able to self serve and book/manage their own appointments.	BCC is already developing an online booking system showing available appointments that customers can self book in Housing. Use the user stories developed as part of this work to ensure this system is user need led and fit for purpose. *Status Update 29-Nov : In scope for Housing Online - communication module is an element within the configuration capability of the portal enabling self-service and customer appointment scheduling. Link to Rows 19 & 20*	High	Inform new solution spec
23	Customers are asked for feedback twice, by both BCC and contractor partners. BCC's request typically comes via SMS and a contractor's request comes via PDAs (personal digital assistants). Feedback is crucial for both BCC and contractors to understand how they can improve service delivery. Contractors want to work more closely with the council, to increase shared understanding of ways of working and processes, for example Northgate systems only track repair activity to measure workload, and cannot track conversations. Some customers receive a request for feedback from BCC for a repair that hasn't yet been carried out.	More joined up/partnerhsip working between the council and contractors, so customers don't feel the organisational boundaries. Make use of a single point of feedback that can be shared with our repair partners. Ensure contractors do not ask customers for feedback whilst still in their home. *Status Update 29-Nov : Housing Satisfaction Measures end2end process asking for feedback based on the service being delivered (enquiry type); New regulations require specific questions to be asked of tenants via a survey and an associated action plan put in place for resolution. Wider tenant satisfaction measures - Apr23 and target publication Jun/Jul23. *(Joint delivery by Service and Programme) Feedback via contractors - Steve Wilson leading on service improvement work for City Housing programme and has shared the recommendations and our customer charter principles to aid the partnership relationship.*	Medium	Service/Programme: work started/ongoing
24	Sometimes customers are not informed if a contractor will not be attending as planned, meaning they may stay at home all day waiting for someone to come who never arrives. Conversely, sometimes contractors arrive without an appointment being booked in, and the customer is not aware of the visit.	Keeping customers informed about changes to their case, particularly when it directly affects them is fundamental. The appointment notification system will help with this if it has the functionality to provide live updates - for example notifying a tenant that a contractor is running late and they will now arrive at 4pm instead of 2pm. *Status Update 29-Nov : 'As-is' functionality customers receive and SMS text appointment confirmation from contractors and an 24-hr reminder from the contractor. Functionality to track engineer to the doorstep and notify customers of any delays is not yet implemented. This needs to be 2-way functionality for customer and contractor and although may already have the capability; implementation approach will be key. To be noted: Demonstrates the benefits of the programme, as this user need was not part of the original procurement detail but as a result of the user research conducted by the Customer Service Programme, this functional requirement will now be incorporated in the new tender process. Strongly supported by O&S - if we get this right, it will revolunise the service; timeline for activity required. Link to Row 25*	Medium	Inform new solution spec
25	Customers sometimes miss repair appointments, which is costly to the service.	The service are currently in the process of trying to implement an automated reminder system that will remind the customer 48 hours and 2 hours before the scheduled appointment. Ensure this process is fit for purpose through user testing. Track the impact on rates of missed appointments. *Status Update 29-Nov: due to 'cost per property' model, costs would remain the same (i.e. no reduction in contractor costs) but increased contractor efficiency would improve the customer experience and satisfaction. Service exploring the use of the communications module within the Northgate solution to support 'getting this right first time' and improving the customer journey (review of volume of missed appointments will be key). Link to Row 24*	Medium	Service: work started/ongoing

#	Issue	Recommendation / Status	Rating	Type
26	Customers are able to place multiple requests for a repair, which can result in duplication within BCC. In one case 22 jobs were booked for the same property, on different dates. Reference numbers are provided over the phone, but customers don't necessarily take a record of these. Customers are given a separate reference number for each issue in a house.	Explore how BCC can manage cases without using reference numbers, for example assigning a case to a household or customer - this could reduce the possibility for duplication and would improve the customer experience of the service. *Status Update 29-Nov: scope of user need, tenants with multiple repairs to be assigned a property-based rather than job-based unique reference number enabling a customer and contractor view of multiple/outstanding jobs under one referemce. Housing Management review as part of potential failure demand and repeat jobs; need to properly analyse the Northgate data on all outstanding jobs and top 50 reporters. If stock decency can be increased then the volume of repairs will reduce. O&S: long term repairs data may highlight fundamental issues and enable a more proactive approach using the insights to requirements and a long term view for planned maintenance.*	High	Programme
27	Contractor colleagues are unable to manage information on the housing repairs system. For example, to update details such as phone numbers, or to include a warning about a tenant they must contact BCC directly to get this changed.	More effective working closely with partners, sharing data and systems, to improve efficiencies and the experience customers have of the service. *Status Update 29-Nov: Data sharing dependency and how we capture contractor data and feed this back into the single customer record; potential use of the comms module to push our reminders across City Housing. Link to Tenant Satisfaction Measures O&S: Proactive approach required to address this recommendation and plug the tenant data gaps.*	High	Programme
28	Customers are sometimes promised that a manager will be in touch to discuss their case, but this never happens. For some customers, conversations feel scripted and unnatural.	Customer centricity training for the contact centre will help to ensure staff have the training and skills to effectively manage cases and support customers, delivering a high quality of customer experience. *Status Update 29-Nov: Customer Standards Workshops to embed principles of our customer charter 'putting customers first all the time, every time'. O&S: require an update on the issues coming out of the workshops as part of the next phase of Task and Finish Group work .*	Medium	Programme
29	Data shows that there were over 70,000 calls related to housing applications	The website states there's high demand for housing within Birmingham but doesn't give any example or average waiting times based on typical applications. This would help set customers expectations in believing they will get accommodation relatively quickly. It also doesn't let the customer know how many applications are currently on the council housing waiting list. Providing this information may be useful to customers or creating a quick assessment questionnaire asking basic information to provide an estimate of the time it may take to get accommodation would be useful. *Status Update 29-Nov: administration of the process if the issue due to capacity/vacancies, was reduced to 4,000 applications; new allocations policy and new functionality development within the system will assist but need to get backlog figures reduced (average 6-week waiting period) - service to provide figures and report back. Automation being led by Jamie Harrison - greater visibility will negate the 70,000 calls received for application updates; as well as managing expectations on timelines. Choice-based lettings requires a content review - is the guidance meaningful for the customer and aligns to the customer journey, the 'as is' not providing the information customers require at the time they need. Proactive engagement with tenants to downsize is in progress. Regular update notes to Cllrs on current status - Average Waiting Calculator available https://www.birminghamchoice.co.uk/ but how this is communicated needs addressing e.g. cascade link on the Members' page. O&S: historical levels are far too high; escalation to Housing O&S for visibility*	High	Programme

30 Data shows over 20,000 calls were made by customers checking their rent/council tax balance

Ensure customers are made aware how they can view their balance online via the BRUM account
Status Update 29-Nov: Online rent account account, payments calculator, payment history and notifications all live in the Brum Account. Need shift to self serve to irradicate calls for simplier enquiries.
Service provide 12-week support at the beginning of the tenancy journey, communicating the expectations of tenants.

Medium	Programme

Some contractors have a FLAG initiaive in place as well as sending out leaflets to tenants on how to deal with damp for example, they are happy to share this information with the council
Status Update 29-Nov : Contractor comms/leaflets can add value to tenant guidance and could be distributed via .gov.uk, tenant comms and newsletters. City Housing DMT to define approach and response

Medium	Service

WASTE MANAGEMENT
RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED TO SERVICE LEADS

Insight	Recommendation	Initial Rating	Delivery Accountability
Slab in the cab is currently used at the driver's/team leader's discretion n.b. Note correction - it is a planned/structured pilot to ensure any issues are fully addressed before going live, taking into account lessons learned from earlier less successful roll-outs.	With the early success of the current soft pilot of slab in the cab, the service should ensure more drivers to adopt this system to ensure consistency in quality and reporting across the service. *Status update 05-Dec: A new Transformation Director has been employed to drive this forward and ensure all technology (Kit -Krew In-cab Technology) is in place and fully operational by end of Dec22, which includes a robust staff training programme which is fully supported by all Trade Unions. The Business Support Team have worked closely with Assistant Service Managers and crews to ensure all round data is up to date and accurately reflects day-to-day collection routes; and the kit will also flag Assisted Collections to avoid them being missed. All crews will be mandated to use the in-cab technology to report anomolies such as broken bins, contamination or bins that have not been presented which will feed back real time to the Managers of the service who will be monitoring daily collections; and taking proactive action to address any missed collections in the event of vehicle breakdowns, road blocks, etc. The technology will free up manager time to better support the crews; and the real time data visibility will be available for the Contact Centre to better equip Agents to respond factually and accurately to customer enquiries, which in turn should reduce customer complaints.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
At some depots, the rate of missed bins can be high. Customers do not always get their missed bins resolved in a timely manner, with some getting their bin emptied at the next scheduled collection. This means that in some areas public trust can be low in the service.	Make use of slab in the cab across the service to reduce the rate of missed bins across the service, reducing complaints and additional work for back office staff. Review the current policy in place for collecting missed bins within 48 hours to ensure it is achievable for the service and change this target if not, to better manage customer expectations. *Status update 05-Dec: Currently the process of crews reporting missed collections happens at the end of each shift, the new in-cab technology will enable real time reporting of bins that have been missed for a variety of reasons such as road blocks, parked cars, bin not presented. This data will be captured and held in a single system so the Contact Centre will have visibility of missed bins so in the event of a customer contact, accurate data can be relayed. As well as this, managers will proactively follow up any multi-service issues causing regular repeat missed collections such as parking enforcements, illegal skips on highways, etc. that may prevent collection. Also because managers will be able to see crew performance in real time if a vehicle breaks down and can not complete a round, the work can be allocated to other crews who may have capacity on the same day to pick this up, however this will require proper engagement and agreed processes with Trade Unions for managers to follow. As part of the customer programme activity, in the Brum Account, citizens are able to report a missed bin at another property by entering the property address in the location field of the form. Whole road reporting was removed as the service found this was being inappropriately used as it was thought it would expedite a missed bin collection. Accuracy of reporting missed collections should be improved as a result.* **O&S** - *The ability for concerned residents to report HMO missed bins needs to explored, as currently this can only be reported if the property location of the missed bin is known.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
The waste service is currently using the 'task and finish' approach, which means crews often go home earlier than their official finish time. This means managers are unable to reallocate dropped work, so that it can be done on the same day.	Use slab in the cab to reallocate dropped work before crews return to the depot. *Status update 05-Dec: see row 32*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
Team leaders want to have a consistent and reliable team. However, they are not always informed of who will be in their team ahead of time, creating confusion and frustration. In addition, team leaders are not always told if their truck is going to be out of action due to an MOT or repairs ahead of time.	Consider how to improve the line of communication between team leaders and management. Ensure there is a feedback loop in place for waste crews to feedback on their issues day to day *Status update 05-Dec : Large recruitment process underway to fill all permanent vacancies . However the service will retain 23% of agency cover for sickness, annual leave, etc. to enable permanency of each round to improve consistency of collections. In the event of planned vehicle maintenance alternative vehciles should be sourced in advance and if not possible the work reallocated between other crews with capacity.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing

Issue	Recommendation / Status Update	Priority	Status
The way complaints are dealt with is inconsistent across the service. The waste service still receive iCasework, rather than these complaints going directly to the complaints team.	Review the complaints process and ensure alignment across all teams, agreeing who should deal with complaints. Consider having an overflow route, should volume become too high. *Status Update 05-Dec : The new Complaints process was launched April 2021 and City Operations which includes Waste Services now have a dedicated complaints handling team which is embedded and sits alongside the operational teams at each depot. This improves the trunaround time for complaints and although this is a high volume area the SLA of 90% is now consistently achieved. The in-cab technology will further enhance complaints responses and will enable the team to provide more personalised responses. If volumes reduce, efficiencies in administrative activities will be made.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
Customers don't always following guidance around disposing of their waste correctly as well as the kerbside policy. This leads to missed bin collections and therefore additional customer traffic to BCC and sometimes complaints. BCC don't often communicate why a bin hasn't been collected, which leads to confusion and frustration with customers.	Review current guidance for how the public should correctly recycle and what should not be put into refuse bins. Ensure all guidance and policies are easy to read and accessible in a range of languages and formats. Establish a live update system that is connected to slab in the cab, so customers know when and why their bins have not been collected. *Status Update 05-Dec: Review current guidance for how the public should correctly recycle and what should be put into refuse bins working with 'Keep Britain Tidy' to try and define and find a way of telling residents they've done something wrong. Options being explored are: Tag & Flag new guidance - you've received a tag; tag and flag to resident what they did wrong; what they can and can not put into bins; tagged bins will automatically re-routed to residual waste - don't want to move into a removal of bin situation but we do want to review the communications and consider video clips of residents putting the right rubbish in the right bin instead of leaflets. Education and bin stickers to clearly show what can be placed in bins. HMO team are reassessing the Landlord responsibilities and ensure there is enough literature and information contained and landlords are suitably educated on their duties and responsibility to inform tenants of requirements - reinforcement at a regular basis. The current bin specification, which is 25-pages long needs to be reviewed, improved and simplified.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing with support from the programme
Sometimes crews need to take a broken bin away. There is nothing for them to provide to the customer telling them what has happened and when the new bin will arrive.	Develop some simple comms in a range of languages and formats for crews to have in the trucks, to post through a customer's front door in this instance. *Status Update : In-cab technology allows driver to report broken bin and locations in real time to organise a repair or replacement bin. The service are reviewing the current bin procurement approach, and are exploring an Amazon -type procurement approach to enable the despatch of bins directly to residents homes as opposed to bulk order and storing of bins in depots. This will enable a much more proactive and faster response time to replacement bin requests.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing with support from the programme
Sometimes rubbish is accidentally dropped during rounds. The public can at times become aggressive and there are road rage incidents towards the crews.	Review the training crews get to better equip them to deal with difficult members of the public and to ensure they clear up any rubbish that is dropped during the process of collecting bins. *Status update 05-Dec: It is mandatory for all crews to pick up any dropped refuse or spillage that fall from the bins at the point of collection when being lifted into the truck. Any reports of non-compliance will be monitored and performance managed by depot managers. The street cleaning rounds now follow the black bag collection crews. Any residual waste that has been fly-tipped or black bags that have been opened by pests can now be reported by crews with a pinned location using the In-cab technology; requests will be automatically assigned to the appropriate service to resolve to avoid multiple reports of the same issue and customer complaints.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
Staff highlighted that due to traffic issues on their rounds they miss around 15 streets a day resulting in many missed bins.	Consider how to leverage slab in the cab to reallocate dropped work as efficiently as possible and how this information is relayed back to the customer both digitally and non-digitally. *Status update 05-Dec: The in-cab technology will be able to record if there is vehicle or access issues or the crew is stuck in traffic; using the technology so that we can communicate to residents and Members access issues have resulted in collection not being able to take place. Being made aware in real time will allow depot managers to reschedule asap*	High	Service: work started/ongoing
Not all streets are included on the digital form when reporting a missed bin collection, making this a painful process for some customers.	Review the current maps in use. Consider moving to a live version of maps in the missed bin/recycling form to ensure that all roads are current. Enable a customer feedback loop when maps are not up to date. *Status update 05-Dec: Dependency on LLPG data between the mapping solution and the line of business application which needs to in sync in order for the report to be submitted and actioned by the service. Taking this approach could lead to an increase in failure rate and we will need to understand how much of an issue this is considering we are using local and national LLPG data.*	High	Service: work started/ongoing

Customers have expressed that paying for garden waste is not value for money especially when this type of waste is missed or not collected.	Note: We understand legislation around garden waste has recently changed and local authorities may no longer be able to charge for garden waste. *Status update 05-Dec : We are looking to introduce reoccuring payments (direct debits) for residents to pay for their garden waste collections, this will mean that they will be automatically subscribed to the service each year without the need to renew annually which is resource intensive. When we move to automatic subsription this will enable the service to effectively plan the routes for the year ahead as opposed to being reactive every month and making manual adjustments which increases the potential for dropped work. We are aware that there are pending changes to the Environment Act which may impact on the type of service offered to residents however no decisions have yet been made/communicated.* *O&S - recommends a move to an automatic renewal system; once residents sign up we tend to retain them (very few cancel)*	**Low**	**Programme but pending legislation**
For some customers waste collections have been missed multiple weeks in a row with no explanation or update about when their waste will be taken away.	Consider reviewing the current mechanism for informing a customer their collection will not be done on a single occasion or for multiple occasions. *Status update 05-Dec: See Row 32 - Covered by KIT implementation - pulls all the repeats together to be provided with a hotspot of issues.*	**High**	**Service: work started/ongoing**
Customers are unsure how to use bins correctly. For example the pod should host cardboard, but is often too small for the cardboard customers need to recycle. Some people swap their recycling round so the cardboard goes into the main bin. In addition, customers aren't always clear what to do to manage a missed bin (especially if it's a bag) without creating additional issues such as rodent infestation.	Review current guidance and comms in place informing customers how their bins can be used, including what to do whilst waiting for missed bins to be collected. *Status update 05-Dec : See Row 36 - Keep Britain Tidy and HMO engagement*	**Medium**	**Service: work started/ongoing with support from the programme**