

To:	Corporate Resources & Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date:	7 February 2018

Update on Customer Services Service Delivery and Citizen Satisfaction measurement

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides an update to the Corporate Resources & Governance Overview and Scrutiny Committee on customer service delivery via the corporate contact centre and the associated citizen engagement and satisfaction levels.
- 1.2. Regular reports have been submitted to Overview & Scrutiny in July and November 2015, September 2016 and March 2017 updating on progress in customer satisfaction and improvements to support that increase. This report will provide an update on initiatives undertaken in the contact centre since the last report to Overview & Scrutiny, improvements in service delivery for transferred services and changes to customer satisfaction measures.
- 1.3. The report will outline the planned future improvements to service delivery for those requesting services, support or information from the council.

2. Background

- 2.1. The contact centre receives two million telephone calls and approximately 60,000 emails a year and is therefore the largest touch-point the council has with users of council services.
- 2.2. Customer Service is also responsible for the website which receives 44 million page views a year.
- 2.3. The contact centre transferred in house in November 2014. At the time levels of customer satisfaction with services delivered via the contact centre were very low at 49%. As part of the transfer signification savings of £4m per annum were achieved. Since transfer further cumulative savings of £900k per annum were achieved, with plans to achieve further savings of £400k in 2018-19 increasing to £700k in 2019-20.
- 2.4. Against this background the direction of travel in citizen satisfaction with the services received via the contact centre has continued to increase. This is enabled by close working between the contact centre and services to identify

and deliver service improvements and where possible the increase in provision and take up of services and information via online solutions.

3. Contact Centre Service Delivery Improvement Initiatives

- 3.1. A number of initiatives have been undertaken to improve service delivery and citizen experience during 2017. Details of some activities are outlined below.
- 3.2. **Council Tax - One and Done Pilot**
Customer Services introduced a six month pilot for Council Tax in June 2017. The pilot evaluated the impact of enabling staff in the contact centre to do more for the citizen at the first point of contact. This pilot was initiated as a result of feedback from citizens and staff that identified the necessity to increase what could be dealt with in the initial telephone call and reduce what was being sent to the service to deal with, which caused unnecessary delays in enquiry resolution from a citizens perspective
- 3.3. The pilot team were given additional training on further Council Tax activities that would normally be dealt with by Revenues back office, giving them the ability and skill to:
 - Consolidate and make payment arrangements for council tax debts up to £5,000
 - To enable affordable arrangements the ability to extend the payment plan outside the current financial year.
 - Amend council tax liabilities over the phone
- 3.4. The pilot was evaluated after 6 months against a number of objectives all of which were achieved. The objectives were:
 - An improved citizen experience, this was evidenced in CSAT feedback with advisor willingness to help scoring 4% more for the one and done team members in December when compared to the other advisors dealing with Council Tax enquiries.
 - Reduction of 16% in hand offs to the back office.
 - Improved income generation – over a 4 month period the team took £431,391.65 in payments over the telephone
 - Improved debt recovery - 3116 arrangements set up by the team of which 2524 were still in payment at the time of evaluation.
 - A reduction in repeat calls/call volumes - the pilot team have a 17% repeat contact rate compared to 24% of the other advisors dealing with Council Tax enquiries.
- 3.5. The pilot is the first step in increasing is what can be done at the point of contact. Plans are to extend this to include Housing Rents, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support. Discussions are underway with the Assistant Director Revenues and Benefits to progress this. By enabling staff to deal with all Council Tax, Rents and Benefits in more depth at the first point of contact will result in a much improved and joined up experience for citizen's

contacting the council regarding those services. It will also support the single view of debt across Revenues and Rents allowing consolidated arrangements to be made as well as ensuring benefit entitlement is identified and actioned for those who are entitled.

4. Transfer of telephone services to the Corporate Contact Centre

- 4.1. In autumn 2016 both Housing Options and CIAS (Children's Information and Advice Service) transferred into the Contact Centre. Since their transfer a number of activities have been undertaken with both services to enable improvements in service delivery. This supports the council's strategy to have a single contact centre that deals with all telephone enquiries received in a central point that is focussed on identifying and implementing improvements to service delivery for citizens and businesses in Birmingham.
- 4.2. **School Admissions telephone calls**
School admissions contact fluctuates with peaks at certain times of the year, particularly:
 - Opening of applications
 - Application closing dates
 - Secondary school offer day
 - Junior and Reception offer day
- 4.3. Customer Services led on a series of workshops with the service area to develop strategies to manage peak demand times; this included using a database of parent email addresses to send a newsletter ahead of the offer day and information on the website was reviewed to ensure it met the needs of parents. The email advised parents when to expect the offer of a school place by email, provided information and sign posting concerning appeals and when the disclosure of waiting lists would start.
- 4.4. Online applications increased to 95% for the 2018 academic year from 80% the previous year. The average volume of applications received each year is 30,000.
- 4.5. This improvement along with the work done on offers outlined in 4.6 ensured an improved experience for parents who were unable to use the online solution or experienced difficulties as the capacity to deal with telephone calls increased. As a result answer rates for the application period improved in the first week of September from 48% in 2016 to 61% in 2017, when applications for both secondary and primary schools opened. This known peak in call volumes is historic and an area of focus for transfer to online information and advice where possible. The month of September answer rates improved from 70.6% in 2016 to 76.4% in 2017. All of the above was achieved within the same resources and budget.
- 4.6. Email offers were sent as early as possible on the offer day, by doing this it reduced the likelihood that parents called the contact centre chasing up the offer. Web pages were also reviewed and simplified and information regarding the application process was made a lot clearer. We are currently

working with school admissions to identify what information needs to be provided to manage citizen expectations of appeal outcomes and as a result reduce the number of appeals received after offers are made in March and April 2018.

- 4.7. The improvement activities above resulted in a 15% reduction in calls received during offer week when compared to the previous year. The effectiveness of this was also recognised externally with the achievement of an award under the category - Best use of email at the UnAwards. The judging panel considered “how have you used email in your comms and digital strategy this year to deliver real benefits and positive outcomes?” <http://www.comms2point0unawards.co.uk/new-page/>

Also as a result of these changes ‘one and done’ also increased, in September 2017 the contact centre managed 85% of calls without transferring to the schools 2nd response team, a significant increase from 72% in September 2016. This has had a positive impact on citizen experience with reduced delays in enquiry resolution as more enquiries are dealt with at the first point of contact. This improvement also helps the schools 2nd response team resource capacity to focus on the planning and processing of applications and appeals.

5. Housing Options telephone calls

- 5.1. Calls for Housing Options transferred to the contact centre in October 2016. Post transfer the reregistration of all those on the Housing register took place, this commenced in February 2017 and ended in May 2017. During that time an additional 5 people joined the team to deal with the increase in enquiries.
- 5.2. Prior to the reregistration campaign improved performance was evident as a result of embedding Contact Centre disciplines such as adherence and appraisal targets. For example with the same number of staff dealing with enquiries 18% more calls were answered in January 2017 in comparison to January 2016.
- 5.3. Supported by the changes and the temporarily funded increase in staff numbers to deal with the anticipated increase in call volumes associated with the reregistration process we saw call answer rates reach 90% for the first time in June 2017. Further details are in table 1 below.
- 5.4. These improvements were supported by full implementation of workforce management to ensure efficiencies were achieved supported by embedding a proven change process so any changes that may impact the service are fully scoped prior to go live.
- 5.5. To continue building on these improvements and to respond to future challenges Relationship Managers work closely with the service area to identify issues and resolve them to completion.

Table 1: Call volumes and answer rates for Housing Options

Month	2016		2017		Volume Increase / Decrease	Volume Increase / Decrease %	PCA Increase / Decrease
	Answered	% Answered	Answered	% Answered			
January	8,722	69%	10,332	69%	1,610	18%	0%
February	7,791	52%	10,822	72%	3,031	39%	20%
March	8,636	60%	14,003	71%	5,367	62%	11%
April	8,090	58%	7,616	55%	-474	-6%	-3%
May	8,799	69%	8,978	76%	179	2%	7%
June	8,075	56%	12,214	91%	4,139	51%	35%
July	7,311	54%	11,000	86%	3,689	50%	32%
August	6,438	45%	12,659	90%	6,221	97%	45%
September	6,782	55%	12,329	81%	5,547	82%	26%
October*	Data Issue		12,257	79%			
November	9,708	88%	13,332	91%	3,624	37%	3%
December	7,900	87%	8,878	91%	978	12%	4%
Overall	88,252	63%	122,163	79%	33,911	38%	16%

6. Working with Waste

- 6.1. Customer Service is actively supporting the targeted improvement work which is currently underway, to make recommendations that will improve and stabilise service delivery. The use of case studies and independent reality checks, along with management information on reported and escalated missed collections, is helping to identify priority areas for focus and review.
- 6.2. This work also includes the review of the process flow for reports for missed collections which should help to identify and implement improvements that will have a positive impact on the citizen experience and our responsiveness to reports of missed collections.
- 6.3. We have been working closely with the waste service to support improved advice and information to citizens. To support this Customer Service Resolution Champions have been working in the 2 largest waste depots, Perry Barr and Lifford. This closer working has proved to be a success with staff able to escalate repeat enquires immediately in the depot and provide feedback to the contact centre and citizens on issues in a timelier manner. This means that there is improved resolution and access to up to date information for escalated citizen enquires which are dealt with by the resolution champions. As a result it has been agreed with waste to extend this initiative to the Redfern Depot in February 2018.

7. Customer Satisfaction

7.1. **Background**

The Contact Centre receives two million telephone calls a year. Historically the contact centre was measured through an 'end of call' survey whereby advisors could choose which citizen's took part in the customer satisfaction survey. This reported an average satisfaction score of 97% despite anecdotal citizen feedback providing evidence to the contrary.

7.2. From November 2014 to 31 July 2017 an SMS survey was sent to citizens' mobile phones within 24 hours of them having called the contact centre. They were asked a number of questions to measure satisfaction with the contact centre. A further survey was also sent via email to citizens to measure their satisfaction with the end-to-end experience. This survey was sent when a job was shown as completed within the contact centre's customer relationship management (CRM) system, which held details of the citizen's interactions with the Council.

7.3. However this method of measuring customer satisfaction did not support benchmarking with other local authorities. This meant that it was difficult to determine if the satisfaction levels reported indicated a good or poor level of service when compared to other local authorities or similar organisations, something this committee has requested. As a result the findings of the Institute of Customer Service have been used to support benchmarking in the past.

7.4. Customer Services re-procured customer satisfaction measurement services in mid-2017 and appointed a new provider in August 2017. The new provider undertakes satisfaction surveys on behalf of 40+ local authorities and it is hoped over time this will allow improved benchmarking. All of those authorities utilise the end of call survey method.

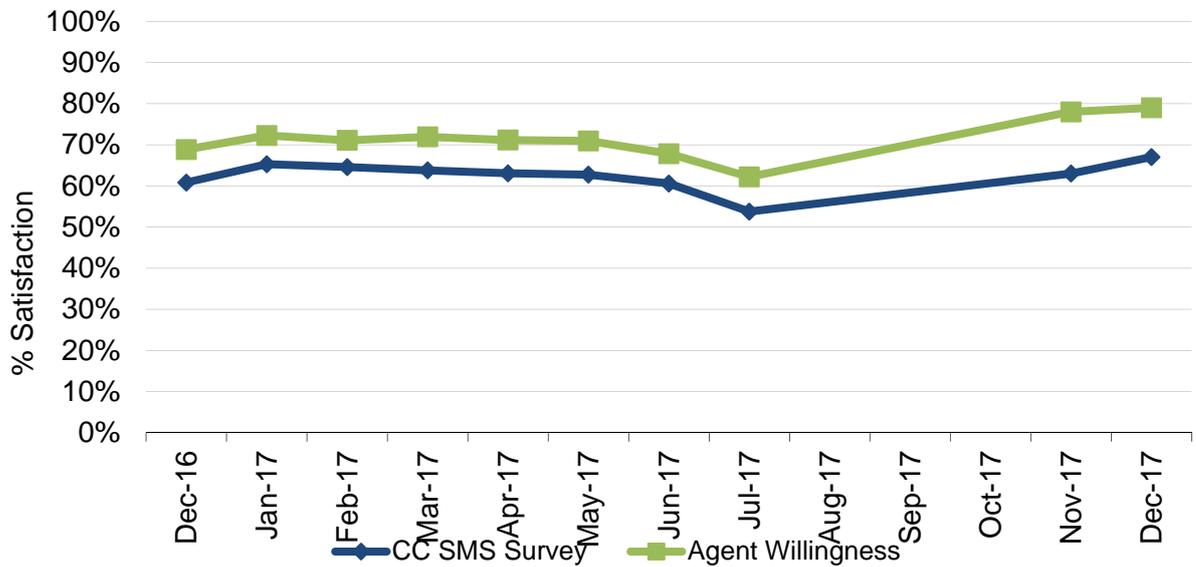
7.5. When the new system was first implemented for benchmarking purposes the end of call survey was used, for a short period in October and November 2017. The first question was used to measure satisfaction levels; this question is used by all other local authorities also. This resulted in satisfaction levels of 86% and 89% being recorded and at 89% would have placed Birmingham in the region of mid-point in the table. The table below outlines the published table of top 10 authorities for December 2017, with the top 10 achieving 92% or greater.

Table 1: Top 10 authorities' results December 2017

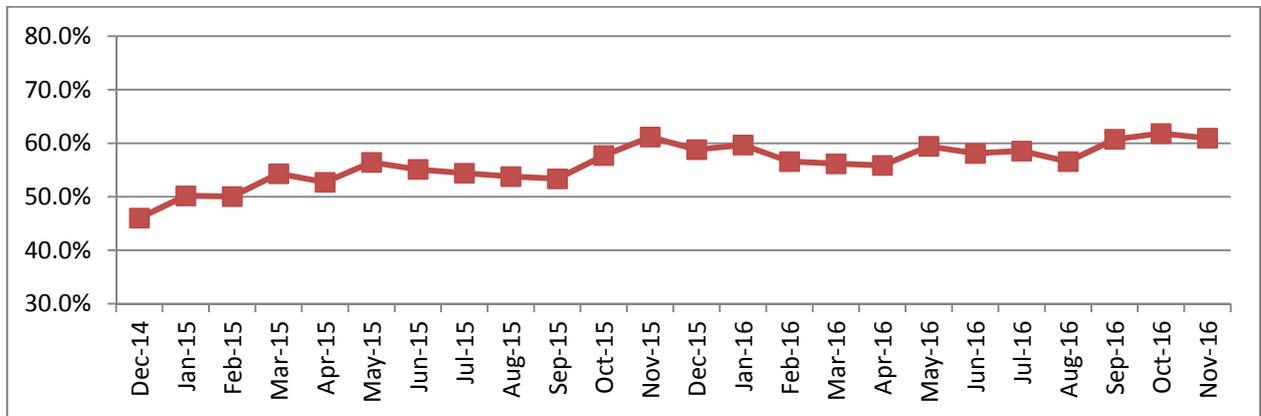
Telephone			Dec-2017	
Council	Type	Population	Total Feedback Responses	Net Satisfaction
↔	District	105078	434	0.98
↔	Unitary	148127	584	0.98
↑	District	90301	254	0.96
↑	County	796728	1373	0.95
↑	County	1393587	844	0.94
↓	District	85382	659	0.94
↑	District	151906	354	0.94
↑	Unitary	158649	3287	0.93
↑	Unitary	173658	981	0.93
↑	District	83957	377	0.92

- 7.6. After undertaking the pilot in October and November the Contact Centre has recommended measurement of customer satisfaction via SMS. A text message is sent to citizens' mobile phones within 24 hours of them having called the Contact Centre. We are also continuing to carry out outbound surveys via telephone with citizens who have no access to SMS.
- 7.7. Email surveys are no longer sent to citizens to measure their satisfaction with the service delivery experience. The main reason for this change is the feedback from citizens does not differentiate between the experience speaking to someone in the contact centre and the service delivery experience resulting from that contact. From the citizen's perspective the feedback provided is on both the quality of interaction and the resultant service delivery.
- 7.8. The customer satisfaction score is taken from the citizen's response to the question "How would you rate your overall experience when you contacted the council?" See Appendix A for questions used in the SMS survey.
- 7.9. As at December 2017 customer satisfaction measures via SMS survey and outbound calling were reported at 67% compared to 61% in December 2016. This is in line with the Institute of Customer Service measure for local authorities for January 2017 of 67%. Graphs 1 and 2 below outlines the direction of travel for customer satisfaction and agent willingness help. This does not include the end of call survey which is used for benchmarking purposes only.

Graph 1: Customer Satisfaction and Agent Willingness to Help
Customer Satisfaction

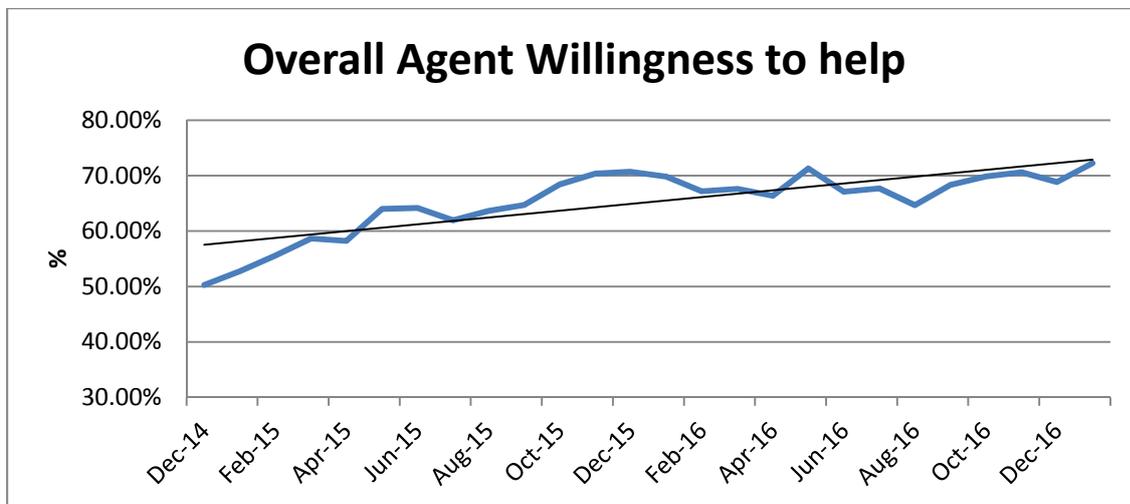


Graph 2: Levels of Customer Satisfaction as a % Dec 14 to Nov 16



7.10. Advisor 'willingness to help' is at 80% as at December 2017 an improvement of 11% since December 2016 at 69%. Graph 3 below outlines the continuous improvement in this area. Under the new survey this score is achieved if a citizen chooses the option the advisor was willing to help or did what they could.

Graph 3: Levels of Satisfaction with Agent Willingness to Help as a % Dec 14 to Jan 17



- 7.11. Citizen satisfaction results are received by Customer Services on a real-time basis with the ability to drill down to individual Service Areas. Customer Services can see both positive and negative commentary from citizens.
- 7.12. The Relationship Managers within Customer Services work with the Service Areas to develop Action Plans to address the areas of concern identified as a result of the feedback via the citizen satisfaction survey.
- 7.13. The changes have enabled improvements in the timeliness, collection, measurement and reporting of customer satisfaction. However it is still difficult to undertake meaningful benchmarking and this is something that we will continue to strive to do. This could be achieved by end of call survey on an annual basis.
- 7.14. Customer satisfaction measurement will also be rolled out to other channels including web in 2018 and will enable a cross-channel understanding of citizen satisfaction. This in turn should provide insight that will support the increased take up of online services via the BRUM account.

8. Contact Centre Complaints

- 8.1. Complaints regarding the way calls are handled at the Contact Centre have remained low. The Contact Centre deals with approximately 2 million calls and 60,000 emails a year, during 2017 365 complaints were received about the contact centre. This equates to 0.02% of contacts resulted in complaints. We ensure that all complaints are fed back to the individuals and we track how many complaints each advisor receives, if there should be an instance where an advisor is receiving repeat complaints we will take appropriate action to enable them to improve their skills through coaching and training. If an improvement is not achieved managers will utilise the appropriate HR policy. The same activities take place where negative feedback is received

via the customer satisfaction survey. Complaints are also used to inform service improvement initiatives.

- 8.2. During 2017, 228 compliments were received via the Your Views reporting, the same method of reporting is used for complaints. A number of positive compliments are also received on the customer satisfaction surveys.

9. Contact Centre Recognition

- 9.1. We are now in the second year of our 'Golden Call' awards; these awards recognise staff who achieve 100% quality scores. We hold these awards monthly and staff are awarded with a certificate and a small trophy which is presented by senior management. These have also been presented by the Lord Mayor and the Chief Executive. To achieve a 100% score the member of staff needs to evidence significant call handling skills and in many cases will need to go above and beyond.
- 9.2. We ensure we display photographs of the events on our recognition board which also holds details of compliments received from citizens about advisors. All compliments received about advisors are reviewed monthly and each advisor who receives one receives a 'well done' email from senior management. Whilst these are small touches, feedback shows that this is a real motivator for staff and that recognition and a simple 'thank you' goes a long way.
- 9.3. Positive feedback has also been received from HLB (Housing Liaison Board) chairs /members regarding the contact centres performance. Comments have been received on the improved experience over the last 3 years since the transfer of the contact centre in house and that staff are polite and handle repairs issues very well.
- 9.4. Advisors that receive good feedback from citizens in the customer satisfaction survey will receive that feedback via their Team Manager. That feedback is given as soon as possible after the feedback is submitted via the survey.

10. Citizen Engagement

- 10.1. A number of engagement activities have taken place with the citizen's panel. The purpose of the panel is to obtain citizen feedback on proposed changes prior to implementation.
- 10.2. These included the current website, where the citizen panel engaged in a number of activities that informed the final outcome. Post go live the website received positive feedback and was recognised in a number of awards in 2017, these were Honoree status in the Webby Awards (International), winners of the public vote and gold status in the Lovie awards (33 countries) and the Plain English Campaign Website Award.
- 10.3. The following comment was made by the Plain English Campaign in relation to the website. *When the time came to revamp their website, Birmingham City*

Council felt that the best results would involve the contribution of its users. So they collaborated with locals through the design process, and the results are excellent.

The new website is a joy to use, and is a credit to everyone involved. It looks great, is easy to navigate and is a vast improvement. Perhaps this example will set a precedent other city councils might follow?

- 10.4. The citizen panel have also provided insight and feedback on other changes including amendments to notifications and letters and the introduction of other online solutions for parking and home options. They will also be actively involved in providing feedback on the BRUM account during the project.

11. Next Steps

- 11.1. Next steps include building on the improvements to the council's website with the implementation of the BRUM account, which will allow the improved delivery of online services to citizens. This was briefed to committee in detail at the January 2018 meeting.
- 11.2. As was done with the website, citizens will inform the design and build of the BRUM account. The inclusion of services on the BRUM account will be supported by service reviews to ensure processes support the delivery of high quality services to citizens and businesses within the city.
- 11.3. Citizen satisfaction measurement will be extended to include the website and the services delivered online via the BRUM account.
- 11.4. A review of satellite contact centres that remain outside the corporate contact centre will be undertaken to determine whether they should transfer to the corporate contact centre or remain in situ supported to by customer service to achieve improvements where needed.
- 11.5. The extension of the one and done pilot for council tax in February 2018 and further extension to include other areas during spring / summer 2018 enabling an improved joined up experience across multiple services for citizens. This work will be done within existing budgets.
- 11.6. Continue to deliver efficiency savings outlined in 2018-19 and longer term financial plans.
- 11.7. The extension of the placement of Resolution Champions in the waste depots in February 2018 and continued working with Waste service to support targeted improvement work.
- 11.8. The work with admissions to manage parent / carer expectations and reduce appeals received in March and April 2018.
- 11.9. Continue to explore opportunities to undertake meaningful benchmarking for citizen satisfaction. Initially this will be an annual survey using the end of call transfer.

Appendix A - Question Set
SMS Survey

You recently contacted Birmingham City Council, we would like to hear about your experience, please click on this link to complete a short survey. Thank you

1) Firstly, how would you rate your overall experience when you contacted the council?

Good, Average, Poor

2) On that occasion, did we resolve your enquiry?

3) Was this the first time you had contacted the Council about your query?

- i. Yes
- ii. No

3a) *If 3 = ii*

How many times did you previously have to contact the council regarding your enquiry?

- i. Once
- ii. Twice
- iii. 3 or more time

4) Thinking about the advisor you spoke to; how would you rate their willingness to help?

Willing, Unwilling, Did what they could

5) Do you have anything else you would like to tell us about your experience?