



Customer Services

Corporate Resources O&S Committee

1 Purpose

- 1.1 To inform Members of the work previously undertaken by the former Governance, Resources and Customer Services O&S Committee on customer services, to assist your committee in making sure that the committee adds value and supports the Executive in producing the best possible outcomes for the city.

2 Work Undertaken

- 2.1 Over the last three years, the Governance, Resources and Customer Services O&S Committee has maintained a focus on customer services issues. The aim was to ensure maximum improvement in customer services and end-to-end service delivery.
- 2.2 The Committee covered the following areas:
- Meetings with customer services officers, service heads and Service Birmingham to ask:
 - What can directorates do to make the customer experience better?
 - What can Service Birmingham do to make the customer experience better?
 - Visits to (and updates on) the Contact Centre;
 - Reports on:
 - Customer satisfaction;
 - Complaint handling;
 - Channel shift;
 - The BCC website.
- 2.3 Last year, the Committee conducted an inquiry to support the development of the Birmingham Promise – a report back on this has been scheduled for your November meeting.

3 Key Findings

The “End-to-End” Process

- 3.1 At the start of this work, the Committee found that many Members and most of the public held the contact centre largely responsible for customer services failures. Whilst there were complaints about the contact centre, the Committee found the picture to be more complex. There were



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failures at each point of the customer journey and there was no measurement of this “end-to-end” customer journey which meant the source of poor performance was often obscured. Members found that both contact centre and service areas were often internally focused, and there was often a tendency to blame the other when things went wrong.

- 3.2 On their visits to the contact centre, Members mostly found the advisors to be polite and knowledgeable. Nonetheless there were examples of poor practice – some of it driven by the contract (e.g. limiting the time spent on calls so that advisors could take more calls).
- 3.3 Members also considered the role of the City Council service areas in delivering good customer services, and found that there were issues here too. At the root of the issues were governance arrangements to ensure compliance and better joint working, including:
- A lack of compliance by service areas with agreed processes in relation to the contact centre and Customer Relations Management (CRM) system;
 - A large amount of “bespoking” of the CRM system over the years which has made the overall system complicated and more difficult to control and test;
 - How the contact centre numbers were used, for example putting the contact centre number on letters when there is already an officer dealing with a case.
- 3.4 In addition, not all services were using the contact centre – Adult’s, Children’s and Housing Rents are delivered in separate call centres. Web, IVR (Interactive Voice Recognition), email and face to face contact is managed separately within customer services or neighbourhood offices. The disparate nature of how and where citizen contact is managed leads to:
- An inconsistent customer experience;
 - An inconsistent message;
 - Many routes into the council;
 - No single view of how citizens are being treated / served.

“One Contact Vision”

- 3.5 In the last year, the contact centre has been brought back “in-house” (from November 2014). The key benefits identified were that it would provide the City Council with cashable savings, increased visibility and flexibility over its services – the City Council would be able to service the citizens of Birmingham through one ‘front door’ into all council services.
- 3.6 The aim was to provide a consistent quality of service across all contact channels and improve customer satisfaction and the experience to make any contact with the council easy for the communities it serves.
- 3.7 As part of the move, therefore, the “One Contact vision” was launched, to rationalise all the customer contact into one customer services department:



- One door – One very obvious and very well sign posted route into the council either digitally or by phone;
- One and done – A passion from the customer services team to ensure contact is reduced to an absolute minimum and wherever possible delivering success from a single contact;
- One set of content – Citizens would be served the same consistent and high quality information and also be able to perform the same transactions irrespective of channel or agent;
- One easy experience – to make it easy for citizens to request services with the least amount of effort, irrespective of channel. Agents will be knowledgeable, courteous and helpful, leading and supporting customers through to a satisfactory resolution;
- One voice of the citizen – Citizen feedback is vital and Customer Services will be the centre of excellence within the council providing expertise in collation, analysis and feedback of citizen insights. The feedback will form the basis of a rolling programme of improvements (not only reporting raw statistics or customer sound bites but providing actual practical actions leading to improvements not only in customer satisfaction but in demonstrable efficiency savings across all council services).

Measuring the Customer Journey

- 3.8 As noted above, there was no measurement of the end-to-end process and this made it difficult to see precisely where things were going wrong. One of the ways in which this is now being addressed is through improved customer surveys.
- 3.9 Prior to last year, **customer satisfaction** with the corporate Contact Centre managed by Service Birmingham was previously measured through an end of call survey which Advisors elected whether to send citizens through to. Customer Satisfaction was a KPI under the Service Birmingham Contact Centre contract and its average monthly performance for customer satisfaction was well above the contractual target of 85% despite anecdotal feedback from citizens that suggested otherwise.
- 3.10 In March 2014 Customer Services took the decision to suspend the Service Birmingham customer satisfaction measurement and commission an independent survey through a third party, InsightNow, who then sent SMS and email surveys to citizens.
- 3.11 The results from these surveys which ran throughout March and April 2014 showed a 49.4% satisfaction with Contact Centre services and 43.2% satisfaction with the end-to-end service. Service Birmingham's reported performance for February had been 97%.
- 3.12 Customer satisfaction is measured via:
- A survey is sent via SMS to citizens within 24 hours of them having called the Contact Centre. They are asked six questions. This survey aims to measure satisfaction with the Contact Centre;



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- A further survey is sent to citizens when a job is shown as completed within the Customer Relations Management (CRM) system. This asks seven questions and aims to measure the satisfaction of the citizen's end-to-end experience.
- The lack of a mechanism to resolve conflict between contact centre and service areas and a lack of clarity about where ultimate responsibility for resolving conflict lies: there are many areas of natural tension and speedy, emphatic resolution is needed.

3.13 This enables both the quality of the call and the quality of the overall service to be measured – something which had not been done before.

3.14 A report showing analysis of data – including trends over time and by service area – will be included on your agenda today.

Channel Shift

3.15 The Committee heard that channel shift targets are not being met. Members noted the need to encourage people to use the on-line reporting – and that that is best done by showing that it gets results when people do use it. Member use of on-line reporting and use of the app was also encouraged (and now forms part of the member induction).

The Website

3.16 Committee members received an update on the website at their meeting in March 2015. This covered the considerable amount of changes which have been implemented over the last year, including:

- The home page changed in order to provide easier access to the highest volume services;
- The "Do It Online" page changed to ensure that high volume transactional services are prioritised;
- Directorates and Customer Services have reduced out of date and redundant information on their pages. This reduced pages from 10,000 in 2012 to just over 4,500 in January 2015;
- The "Contact Us" page has been re-designed and focusses on encouraging citizens to stay online.

3.17 Since the meeting, webchat has been introduced.

3.18 Next steps include the replacement of the Content Management System – Customer Services are currently working with Service Birmingham on the evaluation of a new content management system to replace Fatwire.

Complaint Handling

3.19 Complaint handling was last considered by the Committee in September 2013. A report on complaints has been included on your agenda.