

FOR PUBLICATION

CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT

MEETING: COMMUNITY CUSTOMER & ORGANISATIONAL COMMITTEE

DATE: 20 NOVEMBER 2014

REPORT BY: HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

WARD: ALL

KEY DECISION REFERENCE (IF APPLICABLE): N/A

FOR PUBLICATION

BACKGROUND PAPERS N/A.
FOR PUBLIC REPORTS:

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To provide an update of the current position in relation to the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan – See appendix A

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 The Community, Customer and Organisation Scrutiny Committee note and comment on the performance of the Customer Services Strategy 12 – 14.

3.0 BACKGROUND

3.1 The Customer Service Strategy sets out the Council's vision for the channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with,

its customers. Introducing automation and self-service where it makes sense, which in turn improves services allowing increased investment in the areas where reassurance is needed.

Great Place Great Service was launched in November 2013. It's key objective was to deliver channel shift on behalf of the Council. There is a key focus on channel shift. Channel shift is not intended to enhance the current traditional means of contact such as telephone or face to face contacts but aims to enable customers to self-serve where appropriate.

4.0 CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY ACTION PLAN UPDATE

4.1 Avoidable contact strategy action plan.

4.2 Ref 1.1 – 1.5 – these elements are currently being completed by the Support Services Manager on an ongoing basis.

4.3 Ref 1.6 – Northgate Citizen Relationship Management (CRM) is now being used in the Customer Service Centre (Face to Face) for key contacts such as reporting a death, moving and moving out of an address and information to back office.
This has been enforced with effect from 13th October 2014.

4.4 Channel Shift strategy action plan.

4.5 Ref 2.1 – 2.2 – Referred to Scott Webster to provide an update. The Council took the decision not to purchase the Gandlake solution due to spiralling costs.

4.6 Ref 2.3 – Self Service of payments has been operational since the opening of the new Customer Service Centre, followed by introduction of a payment machine in the Healthy Living Centre in November 2013. Floor walkers were used heavily during the first 6 months but this was scaled back as customers became more confident with using them. Floor walkers are still available to assist as and when required.

4.7 Ref 2.4 – When Paye.net was implemented the Chip and Pin functionality was integrated with the cashiering PC. This is currently being used by Licensing in the Customer Service Centre.

- 4.8 Ref 2.5 – This is very much ongoing with work currently underway to realise these efficiencies. The Revenues System Administrator in ICT is currently liaising with the software suppliers to automate both the benefits payments and Bailiff payments received by the Council.
- 4.9 Ref 2.6 – This is currently being achieved via the GPGS data data collection. This was collected in April, July this year, with further sampling due in November and February 2015. The usage data collated is fed back to service managers for their ongoing analysis.
- 4.10 Accessibility of Contact strategy action plan update
- 4.11 Ref 3.1 – Refer to element 2.6 (para 4.9) regarding GPGS data collection.
- Ref 3.2 – Consultation of this nature will be undertaken when the planned changes take place. There will be consultation around the design and implementation of the changes and then ultimately there will be a measurement of the satisfaction levels.
- 4.12 Telephone strategy action plan update
- 4.13 Ref 4.1 – 4.2 – CBC made the decision via the GPGS board in 2014 not to purchase and implement the netcall solution due to the cost and our focus was to be placed on web self-service.
- 4.14 Ref 4.3 – A service was offered to electoral services for calls to be taken in the Call Centre for the new Individual Electoral Registration (IER) process.
- The increase in both volume and complexity of the calls received in the Call Centre due the impact of Welfare Reform has resulted in no further services being offered from the Centre.
- 4.15 Mobile Phone strategy action plan update
- 4.16 Ref 5.1 - Referred to Scott Webster to provide an update. The Council took the decision not to purchase the Gandlake solution due to spiralling costs.

- 4.17 5.2 – SMS text messaging is currently being used to
- 4.18 Web strategy action plan update
- 4.19 Ref 6.1 – 6.2 - Referred to Scott Webster to provide an update. The Council took the decision not to purchase the Gandlake solution due to spiralling costs.
- 4.20 Face to face strategy action plan update
- 4.21 7.1 – The Call Centre was relocated to Venture House in January 2013.
- 4.22 7.2 – The closure of the cashiering facility based in the Revenues Hall was completed in March 2013 with the cashiering facility in the Staveley office closing in November 2013.
- 4.23 7.3 – Refurbishment of the Revenues Hall was completed with the new Customer Service Centre opening its doors in March 2013.
- 4.24 7.4 – There has been an ongoing campaign to improve direct debit take-up. A data matching exercise was undertaken to identify any customers that were paying by direct debit for either Council or Rent but not for the other. Due to the demographics of Chesterfield this remains a very difficult area to improve. There is an improvement albeit a small one.
- 4.25 7.5 – Public consultation took place in the 6 weeks prior to the closure for refurbishment.
- 4.26 7.6 – Refer to para 4.6. The Customer Service Centre houses 3 public facing pc's with internet connection for customer use. This was provided at the point the centre was opened in readiness for a self-serve function becoming available.
- 4.26 Post/paper communication strategy action plan update
- 4.27 Ref 8.1 - Council tried to put a block or limit the use of 1st class postage. A report is currently being produced by Carl Hayes

about
changing the post supplier.

- 4.28 Ref 8.2 – Council looking to roll out a document management system with back scanning – using Housing as a pilot.
- 4.29 E-mail strategy update
- 4.30 Ref 9.1 – 9.2 - Referred to Scott Webster to provide an update around channel shift.
- 4.31 Ref 10.1 – 10.2 – Currently undertaken and monitored by John Fern, although the understanding is that the volumes are relatively low.

DAMON BRUCE
HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

You can get more information about this report from
Damon Bruce (Tel. 01246 345518).

Introduction

The Customer Service Strategy sets out the Council's vision for the channels it will use to deliver services to, and interact with, its customers. It explains how the Council will meet the contact demands of its customers using the resources it has available bearing in mind the needs of the customer.

Research indicates that, faced with real cuts to real services, demand management and behaviour change offer local authorities very significant opportunities to save money over and above traditional savings approaches.

Councils need the courage to believe that they can change the way that they behave, in ways carefully calculated to improve their relationships with citizens, and thereby profoundly improve levels of trust, change behaviours and ultimately, reduce costs.

Introducing automation where it makes sense and improves services allows increased investment in the areas where reassurance is needed. The Council can be more active in managing complex scenarios. Automation can also reduce failure demand, for instance, text messaging to confirm appointment times or a customer wanting to ring 345345 to pay a bill after work in the evening.

Customer Service in 2015

By 2015 all Chesterfield residents will have been encouraged to register for their own secure on-line account. We will use annual council tax bills and election canvass forms to switch people on to using the facility and then hook them in by improving the services on offer year on year.

By entering their postcode residents will be able to see what is happening in their area and on their street, such as when bins will be emptied, a frequent information request for the corporate call centre.

People will be able to see information as it relates to them; their payment instalment due dates, how much they owe, their benefit entitlement. More importantly, they will be able to order services, pay bills and submit information via the secure log in, and monitor progress.

The information that we collect will be used to update computer systems used across the council, keeping them up to date with the latest contact details. Transactions, collected on web forms, will be imported into our document management system, ready for processing. Our front office Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system will also know who has contacted us, when and about what. We will be able to build a picture of our residents and their needs.

Many will still prefer to use a telephone. Dialling 345345 will be all that is needed. Calls will be filtered to the appropriate person or service to be dealt with in the most effective way. The majority of calls for Council services will be processed via the

call centre, using automation as appropriate, with customer service advisers helping customers with complex enquiries.

We will encourage people shy of new technology to try the changed services by assisting visitors to the newly opened Customer Contact Centre to use the self service computers. Their service requests will also be recorded in the front office CRM system, and this service will be rolled out across all venues where face to face interactions take place. Many more Council face to face enquiries will be directed to New Square.

By the time the Revenues Hall closes to the public for its refit we will have many more customers paying their regular bills by cash at Post Offices and Paypoint outlets and by direct debit, including council tenants, many of whom are already taking this opportunity, even before we are able to offer weekly direct debits.

Payments will be processed more efficiently and will be posted to accounts more quickly. Customers who still want to pay as before will be able to use the new cash machines. These will be able to read barcodes which we will print on all of the invoices and reminders that we issue. We may even be able to partner up locally with those authorities using the same income management solution to take payments for neighbouring local authorities.

Utilising these new technologies we will limit the use of paper and replace postage with electronic communications where it can be done. This will help to mitigate the increases in postage charges expected in the future.

By using social media we will improve our engagement with residents who prefer to use these services, keeping them informed and researching opportunities such as mobile phone applications.

We will continually learn from our mistakes by monitoring avoidable contact and complaints and changing things for the better. We will spread the message when we get things right so that all services can implement customer service improvements.

Chesterfield's overarching customer service strategy

"Chesterfield Borough Council will make access to its services available through appropriate and cost effective contact channels designed with the needs and preferences of its customers and council taxpayers in mind.

Chesterfield Borough Council will seek to encourage greater usage of the most effective contact methods, by creating a series of deliberate and targeted channel shifts.

Chesterfield Borough Council will not discriminate against any individual by limiting the choice of contact methods available."

Avoidable Contact strategy

"To reduce the need for our customers to contact us by reducing bureaucracy, automating processes and working with partners to provide 'joined up' services."

Ref	Avoidable contact strategy action plan				
1	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
1.1	Analyse feedback from each quarter's NI14 sampling exercise to identify area of highest avoidable contact	Remove or significantly reduce the incidence of the avoidable contact that has been identified in the quarter	D Wallace	12 mths	-
1.2	Implement further sampling and analysis as specific issues are identified	Remove or significantly reduce the incidence of the avoidable contact that has been identified in the quarter	D Wallace	12 mths	-
1.3	Review and analyse complaints to identify areas of highest incidence and risk	Remove or significantly reduce the volume of complaints in those areas	D Wallace	12 months	-
1.4	Review and analyse Ombudsman enquiries to identify areas of highest incidence and risk	Maintain low level of Ombudsman enquiries and report any recurring issues requiring action	D Wallace	12 months	-

1.5	<i>Review Freedom of Information requests to see if any data requested can be made available to the public on the website</i>	<i>Manage the database of FOI requests to minimise duplicated responses within the Council</i>	<i>D Wallace</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>-</i>
1.6	<i>Upgrade Northgate Front Office CRM system to make it fit for purpose to store and report on all customer contact information</i>	<i>Over time all customer contact will be recorded in this system for reference and analysis, including via the website and face to face</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>6 months</i>	<i>£9k</i>

Channel Shift strategy

“To design cost effective, efficient and user friendly means of contacting the Council and then encourage our customers to use the channels that work best for them.”

Ref	Channel shift strategy action plan				
2	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
2.1	<i>Purchase Gandlake software to give residents federated access to information and forms to enable self serve</i>	<i>Self service portal established for initial roll out of transactions and enquiries with automated update to CRM and Civica document management system</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>£25k</i>
2.2	<i>Encourage take up of the web access solution by publicising the provision in targeted communications, as new services are added</i>	<i>Communications will promote the MyCouncil portal, with 10% of households registered in year 1</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>-</i>
2.3	<i>Offer self service in the newly opened customer contact centre, with floor walkers to assist</i>	<i>Customers will be encouraged to self serve in future</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>-</i>

2.4	<i>Upgrade of the Council's income management system so that payments can be better processed by any service area by phone or face to face, using hand held chip & pin devices</i>	<i>Compliance with national card processing security standards effective 1.7.12 and improved income handling</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>3 months</i>	<i>£59k from existing system upgrade provision</i>
2.5	<i>New income management system allows for automated import of payments from a variety of external sources</i>	<i>Improved payments processing and information retrieval, better customer communication</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>3 months</i>	<i>-</i>
2.6	<i>Analyse existing touch points and monitor ongoing usage</i>	<i>Use data to determine promotion activities required to improve take up of channel switch</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>3 years</i>	<i>-</i>

'Accessibility of Contact' strategy

"To provide a range of contact channels for each service, with some channels providing enhanced access for customers with special requirements."

Ref	'Accessibility of contact' strategy action plan				
3	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
3.1	<i>Survey users of different channels to identify barriers and opportunities</i>	<i>Recalibrate service provision to remove barriers, improving satisfaction levels and take-up</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Minimal</i>
3.2	<i>Contact specialist community groups to request feedback as changes are implemented</i>	<i>Fine tune provision in light of feedback to improve satisfaction levels and take-up</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>Minimal</i>

Telephone strategy

“To minimise the number of contact numbers published, to provide fast access to informed officer and to reduce the amount of low value calls that our customers have to make.”

Ref	Telephone strategy action plan				
4	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
4.1	<i>Implement an automated solution enabling the council to advertise a single contact telephone number</i>	<i>Customers only need to remember one number. CSA freed up to deal with more complex calls.</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>£49k</i>
4.2	<i>Implement a speech recognition automated payments line, available 24/7</i>	<i>CSA freed up to deal with more complex calls. Increases capacity so that more calls can be directed into the call centre.</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>Included in above</i>
4.3	<i>Redirect more Council telephone enquiries into the corporate call centre taking advantage of the capacity created by introducing automation</i>	<i>Improved call answering performance and better customer service provided by customer care specialists</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>-</i>

Mobile phone strategy

“To use the emerging mobile phone technology in a tactical manner to provide better access to information for targeted user groups, to reduce costs, increase speed of communication or reduce direct contact.”

Ref	Mobile phone strategy action plan				
5	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
5.1	<i>Gandlake federated web access solution will allow for consolidation of back</i>	<i>Information held throughout the council will be brought up to</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>12 months</i>	<i>-</i>

	<i>office mobile telephone contact details across the council</i>	<i>date as customers set up federated access accounts</i>			
5.2	<i>Utilise data collected at sign up for federated access to the council website for subsequent communications with customers, e.g. text appointment reminders</i>	<i>Utilise SMS texting to reduce unfulfilled appointments and unnecessary contact</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>24 months</i>	<i>Unknown – facilities may already exist</i>

Web strategy

“To provide a single, comprehensive, easy to access and up to date website that allows anyone to transact and interact with the council 24/7.”

Ref	Web strategy action plan				
6	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
6.1	<i>Purchase Gandlake software to give residents federated access to information and forms to enable self serve</i>	<i>Increased use of website for transactions and enquiries as services are enhanced</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>Included above</i>
6.2	<i>Encourage take up of the web access solution by publicising the provision in targeted communications, as new services are added</i>	<i>Elections processes transacted via Gandlake, raising profile of website and general take-up prior to electronic canvass in 2014</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Year 2</i>	<i>£7k</i>

Face to face strategy

“To provide Face to Face services through a centralised Customer Contact Centre where appropriate by fully trained officers”.

Ref	Face to face strategy action plan				
7	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
7.1	<i>Relocation of the corporate call centre</i>	<i>Free up space for expansion of the public area of the Revenues Hall to accommodate enquiry service delivered from the Town Hall</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Oct 2012</i>	<i>For discussion with arvato</i>
7.2	<i>Replacement of the card payment system to facilitate multiple account payment and to widen availability for customers who prefer to pay by cash</i>	<i>Eventual closure of the cashiering facility in the corporate contact centre and in Staveley office</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Sep 2012</i>	<i>£4k</i>
7.3	<i>Refurbish the existing Revenues Hall as a centralised customer contact centre, including changes to payment options</i>	<i>The majority of customer enquiries delivered from one venue, increasing customer satisfaction levels and improving service delivery</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Mar 2013</i>	<i>CBC cost to be finalised</i>
7.4	<i>Campaign to improve direct debit take-up using council tax data to influence council tenants</i>	<i>Increased direct debit take-up for the payment of council tax and rent</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>4 months</i>	<i>-</i>
7.5	<i>Promotion of alternative payment methods prior to closure of the Revenues Hall to the public</i>	<i>Reduce footfall redirected to alternative cashiering facility and long term</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>3 months</i>	<i>-</i>

7.6	<i>Offer self service in the newly opened customer contact centre, with floor walkers to assist</i>	<i>Encourage and promote new service offerings</i>	<i>F Rodway</i>	<i>Mar 2013</i>	<i>-</i>
-----	---	--	-----------------	-----------------	----------

Post/Paper Communication strategy

“To reduce the amount of post and paper communication by better use of electronic channels.”

Ref	Post/paper communication strategy action plan				
8	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
8.1	<i>Wholesale review of communications across council services to challenge the use of post and paper</i>	<i>Overall reduction in postage and print/paper budget</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Year 2 ongoing</i>	<i>None</i>
8.2	<i>Adoption of alternative communication channels, service by service, starting with the largest budget areas</i>	<i>Decrease in budget spend</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Year 2 ongoing</i>	<i>Unknown, offset by savings</i>

Email strategy

“To reduce the amount of email communication by better use of electronic forms and other electronic channels.”

Ref	Post/paper communication strategy action plan				
9	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
9.1	<i>Review of email communications within service areas to implement change, where possible, starting with areas of highest traffic</i>	<i>Reduction in free text emails</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Year 1 ongoing</i>	<i>Unknown, offset by savings</i>
9.2	<i>Publicise the self serve web portal for high volume transactions using</i>	<i>Increase in use of web forms and reduction in</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Year 2 ongoing</i>	<i>-</i>

	<i>web forms</i>	<i>emails</i>			
--	------------------	---------------	--	--	--

New media strategy

“Learn from other users of new and emerging media and implement cost effective and tested new channels”

Ref	Post/paper communication strategy action plan				
10	Action	Outcome	Responsibility	Timescale	Capital cost
10.1	<i>Monitor and update the Council’s twitter account with topical service information</i>	<i>Reduce the number of repeat enquiries</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Year 1 ongoing</i>	<i>-</i>
10.2	<i>Respond to twitter and facebook questions</i>	<i>Reduce the number of telephone and improve engagement with customers who prefer this channel</i>	<i>?</i>	<i>Year 1 ongoing</i>	<i>-</i>