

Integrated Digital Services – Service Centre Performance

Date: 25 March 2024

Report of: Chief Digital and Information Officer

Report to: Scrutiny Board – Strategy & Resources

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

Brief summary

This report provides Strategy & Resources scrutiny board with an update on Service Desk performance and initiatives being introduced to improve the quality of the service provided.

This report seeks to reassure Strategy & Resources scrutiny board that lessons have been learned from the past and robust processes are embedded to ensure service performance is maintained.

Recommendations

Strategy & Resources Scrutiny board are requested to consider and note the positive assurances set out in this report.

What is this report about?

IDS Service Centre performance update and other initiatives

- 1 The effective performance of the IDS Service Centre underpins successful delivery of services to citizens, patients, visitors and businesses by the Council, Health, and other partners.

Following questions at Resources Scrutiny Board in September 2021, the performance of the Service Centre has been a reoccurring agenda item which provides details on the progress made to maintain and improve the delivery of its services.

Further detail is provided covering:

- a) Service Centre new structure and extended service offering
- b) New recruitment approach and onboarding process
- c) Service Centre performance levels for the past 24 months
- d) Future vision for Service Centre

What impact will this proposal have?

- 2 Amongst many tasks, every month the Service Centre answers circa 7400 telephone queries, handles approximately 1000 requests generated by customers via the self-service portal and triage 110 000 emails held in our filtering system. It is a busy team with 53 posts and a high rotation of staff; since 2020, 60 new staff have been recruited and trained. It is nearly a brand-new team of people.
- 3 As seen in 2021 for example, the performance of the team has always been very susceptible to drops in staffing numbers, recruitment, and training. Sustained staff shortages lead to an increase of workload for others and directly impact staff morale.
 - a) Appendix B illustrates how staffing levels drop quarterly due to internal progression and projects.
 - b) Recruitment has a double impact on staffing levels, as work to fill vacant positions is undertaken by existing Service Centre resources.
 - c) Staffing availability is also impacted during onboarding of new resources or training of existing ones as resources are trained by other members of the team.
 - d) Staffing availability can be impacted during major issues due to the increase of queries and the need for additional communications and internal administration.
- 4 Whilst staffing rotations are unavoidable, the Service Centre worked on ways to ease the impact of short-term staffing reductions when training and recruiting.
 - a) The structure of the Service Centre had been the same for about 20 years and did not allow the team to work more flexibly and provide a bespoke service to customers.
 - b) Recruitment has a double impact on staffing levels, as work to fill vacant positions is undertaken by existing Service Centre resources.
 - c) Staffing availability is also impacted during onboarding of new resources or training of existing ones as resources are trained by other members of the team.
- 5 Actions taken:
 - a) Earlier in the year, the Service Centre moved from a hierarchical organisational structure to a flat one with clearer roles and responsibilities for each job. This change of approach allowed the team to have a more dynamic approach to succession planning; it has improved communication and the relationship of staff across the team despite staff having different working patterns and working from home. It has also improved the team spirit whilst allowing us to be more responsive.
 - b) Advertising our extended hours to new applicants so that new staff are involved in providing cover for the out of hours Enhanced access service to ICB, GPs and LCC staff (this service was a statutory requirement which became live in October 2022)
 - c) Since the Service Centre recruits quarterly, there was a need for a rolling advert to advertise one of the key entry level positions. It aims to reduce the time it would take to release an advert each time we have a vacancy. Furthermore, the Service Centre have reviewed their job adverts to make them more current, more inclusive, appealing, and competitive. Service Centre vacancies are also advertised on several platforms to attract and increase visibility and enable the team to backfill faster.
 - d) Working with Generation UK to support our local community by allowing unemployed people into a life-changing career in IDS that would otherwise be inaccessible to them whilst maintaining a diverse team.

- e) The Service Centre have reviewed the approach and content of the training sessions so that new starters are able to work independently as early as 4 weeks into their training.
- f) The major incident process has been streamlined to reduce the amount of administration and reporting. It is now only focussed on council wide systems. Locally based systems have a streamlined version of the process. In addition to messages on the Service Centre phone lines and SharePoint site, major issues have also been communicated via the LCC Colleague Facebook page to make sure key information on council-wide systems is readily available to all staff on or off the network and reduce the impact to the Service Centre.
- g) A dedicated phone line as part of the Service Centre IVR for Assistive Technology users so that more resources can help underpin the service, reduce waiting times, and provide a like for like experience for all staff.
- h) The IDS daily operations scrum and the Service Centre performance reports have been automated to reduce manual input, repetition, error, improve the graphical interface, release resources, and save time. An extract can be seen in Appendix D.
- i) Maintaining staff moral and improving communication for a hybrid team are at the forefront of the day to day running of the Service Centre. This can be reflected in the buddy system where every junior colleague has access to a dedicated mentor as well as their manager. Team meetings take place twice monthly as well as team days that are packed with events to enable the team to update their technical skills, their soft skills and learn from one another.
- j) Celebrating the team's success is equally important. Customer feedback is gathered after every interaction with the team and compliments and complaints are fed-back to individuals. Compliments are emphasised with the whole team so that it is clear what a good job looks like. This year, the Service Centre Recognition Award was launched, it mirrored the council wide recognition award but was more relevant to the team. It helped the team celebrate their own success by nominating their managers and colleagues.
- k) The Service Centre run regular customer service and satisfaction surveys throughout the year. Most of the customers are keen to share their positive experiences and feedback for our agents which reflects how happy they are with the service offer. Results for these surveys are consistently high, as seen in Appendix C, with the team receiving an average of 4 or above out of 5 for the two main questions, also seen in Appendix C. This demonstrates the Service Centre's commitment to delivering excellent customer's experience and shows that, despite a high turnover of staff, the team are committed to training and always delivering excellent customer service.

6 Further planned actions

- a) Progress foundation work required to achieve the Service Centre automation ambitions including the introduction of chatbots to deal with queries.
- b) New tools including more self-service options will be investigated.
- c) Working with schools and colleges to increase visibility of our vacant positions and career opportunities including the Supported Internships program to allow young people with Special Education Needs to have a career in IT.

7 Future vision

- a) The IDS Service Centre is one of our main entry routes into an IT career with the Council, this is an ongoing key strand of our workforce plan to bring in new talent, provide training and skills so they are ready to move into other roles within IDS. We expect ongoing turnover and have many success stories of staff who started in our Service Centre and who have remained with us for many years building their careers.

- b) With the Service Centre proven success in staff retention and succession planning for IDS, more effort will be spent in advertising career opportunities using a variety of channels including engagement with schools, colleges, and the 3rd sector.
- c) In addition, our long-term vision for the Service Centre includes significantly more use of automation and bot technologies to simplify and speed up the service to customers. These technologies will allow the customer to self-serve and free up the IDS Service Centre staff to provide an enhanced offering on the phone, this could include training and guidance sessions on new technologies being deployed by IDS.

How does this proposal impact the three pillars of the Best City Ambition?

- Health and Wellbeing
- Inclusive Growth
- Zero Carbon

- 8 The delivery of robust ‘lights on’ support directly supports the three key pillars.
- 9 The combined team for Council and ICB directly supports the Health & Wellbeing agenda.

What consultation and engagement has taken place?

Wards affected:

Have ward members been consulted? Yes No

- 10 The lead member for Resources is consulted and briefed on all key IDS initiatives.

What are the resource implications?

- 11 Management of IDS resource capacity is undertaken by IDS Prioritisation and Resource Allocation forum.

What are the key risks and how are they being managed?

- 12 Resource availability – Work is managed through the Prioritisation and resource allocation forum where decisions can be made around the scheduling of work or the need to source additional capacity.
- 13 There is currently a freeze on all recruitment due to the financial challenge. If this remains in place for an extended period, due to the high turnover of staff in the Service Centre, this will start to impact on service performance.
- 14 Prioritisation of work – The Digital Board will review all potential requests for work and ensure that only those that are a priority are brought forward to IDS for consideration.
- 15 Effective provision of services from the IDS Service Centre directly link to corporate risk LCC15 – Major ICT failure.

What are the legal implications?

- 16 There are no specific legal implications relating to this report.

Options, timescales and measuring success

What other options were considered?

17 None

How will success be measured?

18 Ongoing review of KPI achievement – see Appendix A for detail.

19 Ongoing review of capacity available for Service Centre activities versus project support.

20 Staff progression and retention within IDS.

21 Continue receiving consistently high service result from customers' feedback.

What is the timetable and who will be responsible for implementation?

22 Ongoing

Appendices

- Appendix A – Service Centre Key Performance Indicators (KPI)
- Appendix B – Service Centre SLA performance Quarter 2 2020 – Present
- Appendix C – Service Centre Customer Satisfaction survey results Oct 2021 – Nov 2023
- Appendix D – Service Centre Dashboard (Power BI)

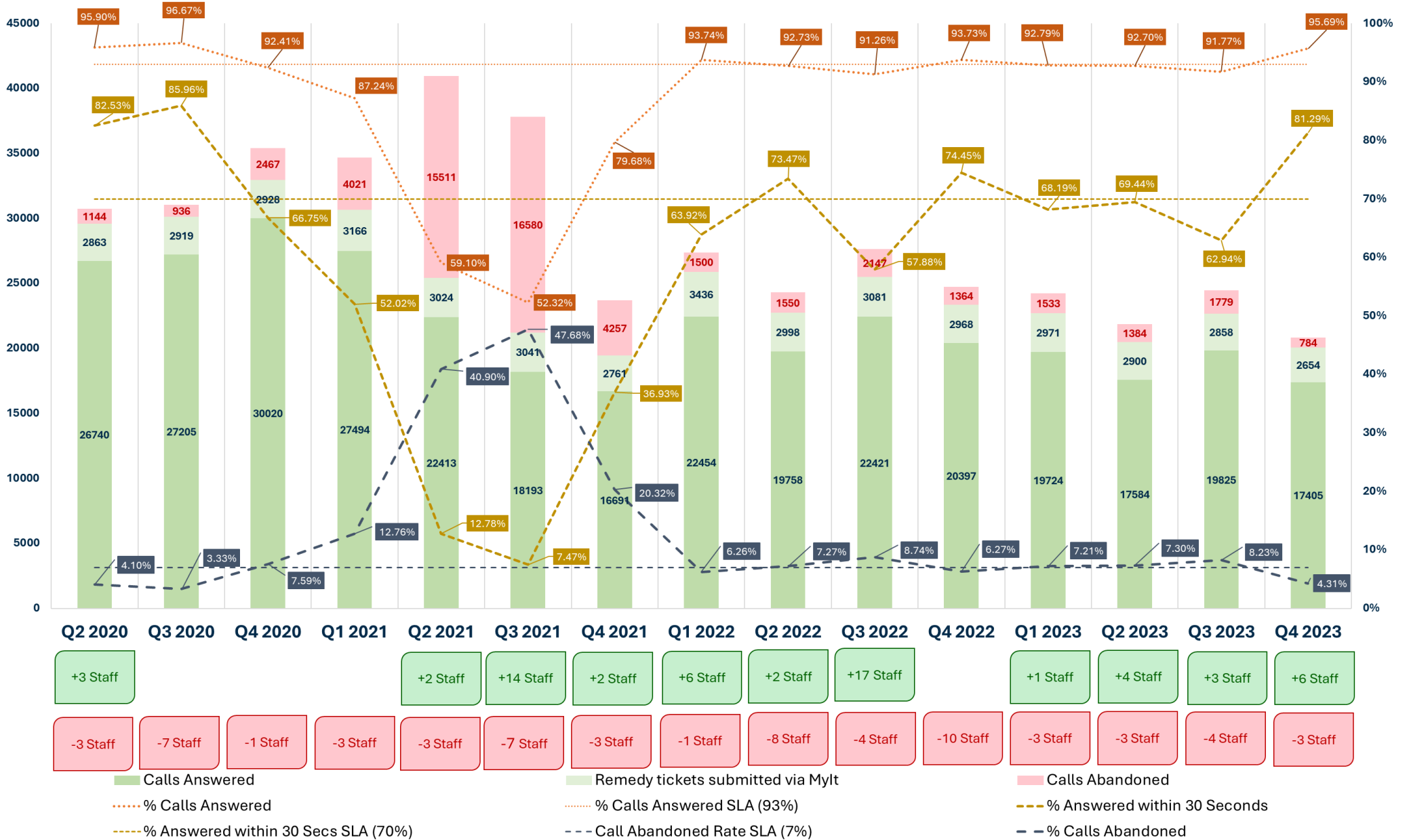
Background papers

- No

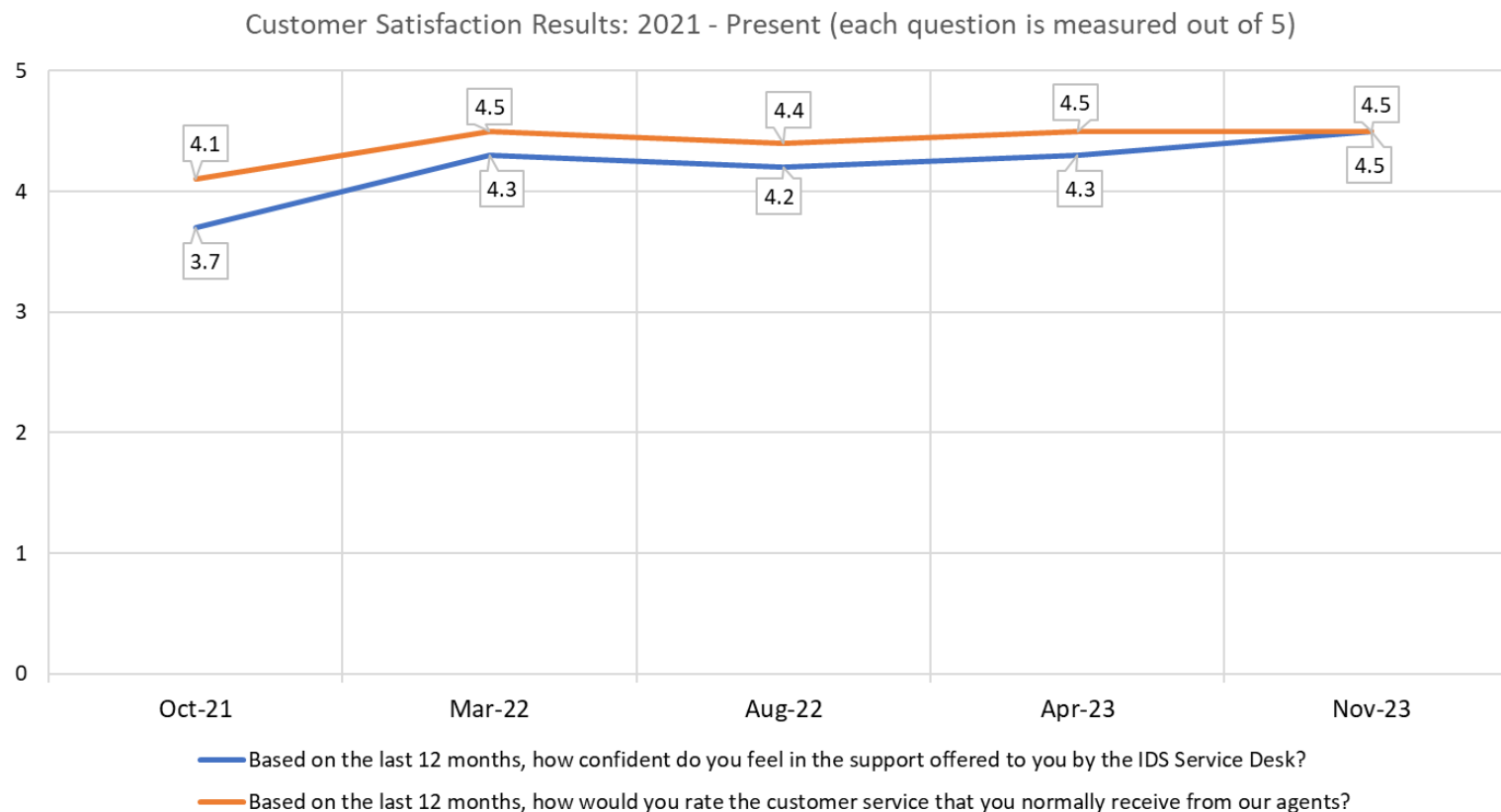
Appendix A – Service Centre Key Performance Indicators (KPI)

Service Centre	Description	Target (per month)
Call Pickup Rate	% of incoming service centre calls answered within 30 seconds	70%
Call Answer Rate	% of incoming calls answered without the customer abandoning prior to our agent pickup	93%
Call Abandonment Rate	% of calls queued to an operator but abandoned prior to pickup	7%
First Time Fix	% of calls resolved by an operator during the initial call	70%

Appendix B – Service Centre SLA performance Quarter 2 2020 – Quarter 4 2023



Appendix C – Service Centre Customer Satisfaction survey results Oct 2021 – Nov 2023



Full survey data:

Period	Start Date	End Date	Duration (weeks)	Num of survey responses	Num of calls during period	% of replies
Oct-21	04/10/2021	08/10/2021	1	50	1034	4.84%
Mar-22	01/03/2022	25/03/2022	4	116	6550	1.77%
Aug-22	15/08/2022	26/08/2022	2	155	3478	4.46%
Apr-23	10/04/2023	28/04/2023	3	140	4292	3.26%
Nov-23	01/11/2023	30/11/2023	4	111	6574	1.69%

Appendix D – Service Centre Dashboard (Power BI)

[Click here to access the Dashboard](#)

