

**Report of the Chief Officer, Customer Access and Welfare  
Report to the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee**

**Date: 27 January 2020**

**Subject: Customer Contact and Satisfaction**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for call-in?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, access to information procedure rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

- 1.1 This report provides the annual update on customer contact and satisfaction levels with customer services delivered through Customer Access on behalf of the Council.
- 1.2 It provides:
  - An update on two key areas, and a response to a request for additional information, which were raised in response to the annual report presented to the November 2018 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee;
  - An overview of customer contact, satisfaction and developments through the Council's corporate customer services function – Customer Access;
  - An update on the audit of customer contact with members;
  - An analysis of formally logged complaints through the Customer Relations teams;
  - An overview of the customer care standards.
- 1.3 The report outlines the work which has taken place in order to ensure services are delivered in the most cost effective way whilst aiming to put customers first at a time of budgetary constraint. Whilst satisfaction levels with Customer Access remain high there are ongoing challenges and teams are working hard to mitigate these.
- 1.4 Based on the information provided in this report, it is the view of the Chief Officer for Customer Access and Welfare that the Council's processes and procedures around

customer contact and satisfaction are deemed adequate and acceptable, given the prevailing financial climate and the demand for services. Improvements will continue to be made in order to deal with the challenges we face and to deliver a more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council.

## **Recommendations**

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to:

- note the information provided;
- support the work outlined to develop the approach further;
- recognise the developments outlined which will further enhance customers' experiences; and
- suggest areas where they would like to see further focus.

## **1.0 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report responds to the queries from the November 2018 Governance and Audit Committee report on customer satisfaction and provides an update on customer contact and customer satisfaction with Council services. It does this by considering the component factors i.e. scale and scope of customer contact; levels of customer satisfaction with the provision of customer services; and, information from the Council's formal complaints process.
- 1.2 It outlines work that is taking place to develop approaches which put the customer at the heart of the work and enables the council to better understand the customer experience and look at ways to enhance this.
- 1.3 Finally it assesses the information and asks Governance and Audit Committee to note the assessment and provide challenge and comment to support further development in this area.

## **2.0 Background information**

- 2.1 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee have received regular annual reports for a number of years on the Council's contact and satisfaction. At the November 2018 Corporate Governance and Audit Committee meeting the Annual Report on Customer Contact and Satisfaction report was discussed. There was a request to focus on the following 2 key actions to continue to address challenges in respect of;
  - telephone waiting times – an update on this is provided at paragraph 3.4.2;
  - transitioning to digital channels, by ensuring training and support is provided as a priority in order that service users are not disenfranchised from the services they need to access. The continuing focus on the customer and customer needs is threaded throughout this report. Training is provided to contact centre staff and all community hubs provide support to customers when they need it in relation to digitally enabled services. In addition Libraries are leading on the Digital Leeds Initiative (as outlined in paragraph 3.5.6).
  - In addition, information was requested on financial settlements arising from insurance claims and this is provided at paragraph 3.7.4.
- 2.2 Information has been collected from a variety of sources to inform this report and to provide a picture of customer satisfaction. It aims to provide assurances that the customer is at the heart of service delivery and to show a focus on continuous improvement.
- 2.3 Work continues to take place within budgetary constraints. There has been some additional funding secured for the contact centre, following staff reductions and reduced performance, which has resulted in improved performance. Considerable work continues to ensure focus on the needs of the customer whilst developing smarter working to achieve efficiencies and reduce costs.

## **3.0 Main issues**

3.1 The majority of customer contact with the Council is managed at the first point of contact through Customer Access. This part of the report provides a picture as to how customers are contacting the council through the access routes managed by Customer Access and how performance and satisfaction are measured. Data and information is provided along with an outline of developments which are planned in order to continually improve performance.

The access channels for customers provided by Customer Access are:

- Face to Face access through the Council’s community hubs, one stop centres and community libraries;
- Telephone access through the Council’s corporate contact centre;
- Digital access through the Council’s website, on-line transactions and e-mail.

## 3.2 Face to Face - Community hubs, one stop centres and libraries

### 3.2.1 Community Hub Developments

3.2.1.2 Over the last 12 months the following community hubs have been refurbished and re-opened to the public – Morley, Otley, and Hunslet.

3.2.1.3 During this time Guiseley Library building was closed and the library facilities moved into the newly refurbished Aireborough Leisure Centre. A new community hub and library has also been opened within Kirkgate Market.

3.2.1.4 Other work currently ongoing is the work to refurbish Armley Hub. The work to refurbish the site is taking place in 2 phases so that it can stay open during the work. Phase 1 which is the community hub area has been completed and re-opened and phase 2, the library area has now begun.

3.2.1.5 The work to refurbish Burmantofts Housing Office is also underway and will create a community hub that will be opening in February 2020 and plans are also being progressed for community hubs in Crossgates, Beeston and Farsley.

### 3.2.2 Face to Face contact

3.2.2.1 The level of contact is shown below:

Channel	Apr 18 – Sep 18	Apr 19 – Sep 19
Community Libraries - Visits	869,881	734,529
Books Issued	888,058	855,371
PC usage	179,096	185,792
Central Library - Visits	276,423	272,051
Books Issued	210,943	206,136
PC usage	47,673	37,357

3.2.2.2 Due to decommissioning of the customer relations management system there is no footfall data for community hubs for 2018. Work is ongoing with DIS to develop and implement a new IT system (CATS – see update later within this report) that includes a footfall reporting function. The new CATS system is still being developed, but some basic data is already available and this shows footfall for April to Sept 2019 as 268,443.

3.2.2.3 The libraries data detailed above shows a decrease in the current year, which is in line with the trend nationally. However, it is important to note that during both periods some of the community libraries were closed for refurbishment for periods of time and as above, facilities to record footfall were not available whilst work was taking place to improve IT systems. It must also be noted that data regarding visits is only available at sites where IT systems are still in place to record visitor numbers, with only 52% of sites recording data. As the roll out of CATS happens across the city, better quality data will become available going forward.

### **3.2.3 Face to Face Services – Customer satisfaction:**

3.2.3.1 For face to face contact, the average customer satisfaction score continues to be 99% ie responses 4 and 5 in a 5 point rating survey - this level has remained constant now for the last 5 years. Surveys are paper based and located within Hubs. The results are input by each Hub and collated on a monthly basis, then validated annually in October by external staff to ensure results are a fair representation.

3.2.3.2 The most recent Customer Services Excellence assessment was undertaken in October 2019, and the overall assessment rated the service as 'Strong'. The following comments are taken from this assessment:

- You regularly develop new approaches to consultation ensuring that you get good feedback not only about your core services, but also what your communities want from their hubs, and from your community initiatives
- There is considerable evidence that staff are very good at sharing information and using it to reduce avoidable contact. In very many cases staff are able to deal with issues at the first point of contact, but in those services where there is a longer intervention with the customer, staff make it clear, for example, where further information is required and provide customers with dates for completion of the service
- The Service is very busy, responding to a range of issues within communities and it seems that the level of change and continuous improvement is happening almost on a daily basis. There remains a very strong customer focused culture within individual Hubs. Managers, supported by their staff, have taken responsibility to develop, lead and inspire this new focus on local needs. Information provision is good. Satisfaction levels remain very high and service delivery is good. There are few complaints, and when these occur they are managed speedily and effectively.

## **3.3 Impact of Universal Credit**

3.3.1 Help to Claim is a nationwide service launched by Citizens Advice in April 2019 and funded by a grant from central government. This scheme replaces the previous Universal Support service provided by local authorities which has now ceased. In Leeds this has meant that those seeking to claim Universal Credit are no longer directed to the Council's Community Hubs for assistance and are instead directed to the 'Help to Claim' services of local Citizens Advice. UC claimants are still welcomed into the Community Hubs to access the self-service computers, however any in-depth enquiries are referred to the Citizens Advice services. Between 1<sup>st</sup> April and 31<sup>st</sup> October 2019 Community Hubs handled 5,000

enquiries relating to Universal Credit, over half of which were to signpost to Citizens Advice and DWP support, this signposting is expected to continue to increase.

3.3.2 When a customer in receipt of a DWP legacy benefit claims UC the DWP notify the local authority to stop the corresponding housing benefit claim. A target of 10 working days to action this notification is set. Once a customer claims UC they are unable to return to legacy benefits, including housing benefit.

3.3.3 As of October 2019, housing benefit claims in Leeds had reduced by 12,055. Of these 6,049 were council tenant claims and 6,006 private and housing association claims. The main reason for this reduction is due to people moving to universal credit, however for a minority of cases other reasons such as change in earnings will apply.

3.3.4 Council tax support take up has increased since Universal Credit full service roll out. Total take up at October 18 was 12,692, and in December 19 was 21,658. Most of this increase is for people of working age although there is also a very small increase for those of pension age. The maximum council tax support is 75% of the council tax charge so a charge-payer claiming UC will always have a minimum 25% council tax to pay from their own income (Council Tax Support Policy). Work is taking place within the service to integrate council tax and benefits in order to ensure the support required is available

## **3.4 Corporate Contact Centre**

### **3.4.1 Contact Centre progress**

3.4.1.1 Joint working to improve the customer experience has continued following the recommendations put forward by the Citizens and Communities Scrutiny Inquiry into Reduced Repeat Customer Contact in 2016 and the internal programme within Customer Access championing the Voice of the Customer.

3.4.1.2 This joint work focussed on the high-volume services of Housing and Council Tax and Housing Benefits, looking at the causes of repeat contact to the contact centre. The work carried out for the scrutiny inquiry helped to identify factors that contributed to service failure and promoted closer working between these services that has continued to improve service delivery.

3.4.1.3 As a result of this closer working, changes have been made to processes to ensure that enquiries are being dealt with by the most appropriate person first time to help reduce repeat calls and also reduce the number of calls being transferred between departments.

3.4.1.4 Within the Council Tax work stream, the development of CATS (Customer Access Transactional Service), has meant that staff are now able to record the reason for customer contact. This has allowed Council Tax and Customer Access to work together to analyse why customers make contact and identify areas for improvements.

3.4.1.5 Service redesign work is already underway with Council Tax (see paragraph 3.6.2) and is planned to commence with Housing in the New Year. Both pieces of work are to be completed using a 'people centred' design approach to ensure the needs of customer and staff are being addressed.

3.4.1.6 Following the successful Voice of the Customer pilot, this process has been rolled out across the whole of the contact centre. Customer Services Officers (CSO's) are asked

to identify processes which they feel were creating frustrations for customers and staff alike. This has led to improvements being made to processes which in turn has improved the customer experience. Call times have reduced due to simplifications in process / improved handling and financial savings are also being made.

3.4.1.7 All service improvements that are introduced are tracked to ensure that they result in improving service delivery for customers.

### **3.4.2 Contact Centre Contact**

3.4.2.1 The level of customer contact is shown below.

<b>Channel</b>	<b>Apr 18 – Sep 18</b>	<b>Apr 19 – Sep 19</b>
Telephone	816,165	687,528
E-Mail	135,316	110,215

3.4.2.2 For the period April 2019 to September 2019, the contact centre saw a reduction in both telephone and email contact against the same period for the previous year. These reductions are in part due to service redesign work and improvements to web services, however it must also be noted that from February 2019 calls for the Leeds Housing Options (homelessness service) were transferred back to the service and the service averaged 2,000 calls per month. The service has worked to gain meaningful and robust performance data. This is now available and shows, for November and December 2019, an answer rate of 100% of calls offered, 85% within target (20 secs) and the remainder within 60 secs. This is being monitored on a monthly basis.

3.4.2.3 To tackle long wait times on Housing lines additional funding was provided to the Contact Centre by Housing to enable them to recruit more CSO's to take Housing related calls from April 2019 and deliver an average 1 minute wait time on Housing Lines.

3.4.2.4 As a result of the additional funding, 30 CSO's (26.24 FTE) were recruited enabling call wait time on the Housing lines to be reduced from an average of 10 minutes at its worst to an average of 60 seconds now. The actual number of calls answered – ie – not abandoned - has also improved from 90% at its worst to 98% now as customers are getting through first time.

3.4.2.5 The lines now with the longest wait times are the Council Tax and Housing Benefit lines which averages at 11 minutes for Council Tax and 16 minutes for Housing Benefits. This is an increase from the same period last year which was 10 minutes on both lines. There has been an increase in calls to these lines, with nearly 5000 more calls this year. This team has seen the most attrition of staff in the last year and recruiting and training new staff on these lines takes several months.

3.4.2.6 Work is ongoing to reduce call volumes on these lines through enabling customers to self-serve. There are continuing issues with third party suppliers being able to deliver their self-serve products on time and to our quality requirements.

3.4.2.7 Work to increase staff satisfaction and retain staff within the contact centre started last year and includes;

- *Developing the contact centre as a career pathway for apprentices to a range of customer-related jobs within the council.* There are currently 15 apprentices within the contact centre working across a range of services. Recruitment is ongoing on a quarterly basis and as part of the programme apprentices are given the opportunity to shadow other areas of the council to provide them with an overview of how departments operate and how this links into the contact centre.
- *Engaging staff within the contact centre through greater involvement in improvements and recognition for a job well done.* The contact centre have developed a working group called 'Your Voice' which is made up of staff from across the contact centre and is a forum for staff to raise concerns, identify areas for improvement and recognise staff achievements. This will build on the work already completed as part of the Voice of the Customer programme.
- *Planning for the future to ensure technology supports our vision for customer access now and in the future.* The contact centre is due to deploy EVR technology (Enhanced Voice Recognition) which will allow customer calls to be connected through to the correct department without the need for complicated Interactive Voice Response options. The telephony platform and subsequent software is due to be upgraded in April 2020 which will provide additional functionality that will allow improvements to be made in the way calls are connected, enhanced reporting functions and improvements in the way staff are scheduled.

### **3.4.3 Contact Centre - Customer Satisfaction:**

3.4.3.1 The approach to customer satisfaction surveys changed in 2019. Previously, at the end of a call, the CSO would ask customers if they could transfer them to complete a survey. However this meant that staff could choose who they put through to the survey and who they did not.

3.4.3.2 In January 2019, a new customer feedback survey system was introduced that randomly select customers to call back following their telephone enquiry. Following the move to this new system the general satisfaction scores have fallen from 95% in 2018 to 89% in 2019. However, the system provides more detailed feedback on what specific areas are impacting on satisfaction.

3.4.3.3 What has been clear from the new survey is the satisfaction with our staff knowledge and empathy is high, with average scores of 89% and the main dissatisfaction is with the amount of time they have had to wait for their call to be answered on certain lines. The number of customers happy with the wait time for housing lines was 48% in April, however with the additional staffing this has increased to 77%. For Council Tax and Benefits lines the scores are 46%, although customers rate knowledge and empathy at 89%.

3.4.3.4 Where feedback is received about an individual CSO, this is now sent back to the relevant Team Leader within an hour of the initial call so that they can provide the relevant feedback or coaching that may be required as close to the call time as possible.

### **3.4.4 Contact Centre development:**

3.4.4.1 During the next 12 months the following will be developed to improve satisfaction:

- Detailed evaluation of the new telephone surveys and relevant changes as required;
- Increased use of the satisfaction survey data to provide targeted coaching and feedback for CSO's;
- Extend the use of the new survey tool to other channels to allow for better analysis and comparison;
- Continue to develop a performance dashboard which will pull together information from different areas of Customer Access to provide enhanced detail on the changes needed to improve the overall customer experience.
- Develop a personalised CSO dashboard so they are able to see their own performance on a daily basis.

## 3.5 Digital Services

### 3.5.1 Digital Access Team

3.5.1.1 Over the past year the Digital Access Team has grown with specialists now in place in user research, content strategy, social media, development and design. The team is responsible for making online services simpler, clearer and faster and the content easy to find, read and understand.

3.5.1.2 To manage our site, achieve consistency in quality and compliance with legislation (e.g. GDPR, Web Accessibility), new standards for web content are now in place helping the council to deliver a better digital experiences to citizens of Leeds. A content review work programme is currently being undertaken which focuses on covering all current content by the end of 2021.

### 3.5.2 Council website

Channel	Apr – Sep 18	Apr – Sep 19
All website page visits	9,071,497	8,838,300

3.5.2.1 The above comparison shows the volume of all website page visits. More customers are now able to find the information that they need quickly due to the ongoing work to improve the web content which is based on customer research undertaken by the Digital Access Team.

3.5.2.2 Work continues with emphasis on a customer centric approach to managing the website content and online services. In practise this means that user research and testing, takes place so that what is built is designed for people, rather than teaching people how to use them after they have gone 'live'.

3.5.2.3 One of the most common reasons for a difficult-to-navigate online services is because the set-up is derived from the business structure of the organisation, rather than from customers' needs. To stop this from happening research takes place on how customers interact with the council online and testing with the customers helps to:

- understand what people need to interact with the council about and how to design the website to help customers to self-serve easily online;
- understand where current content, design or navigation is failing and how to improve it by looking at what works well, and
- validate solutions with real customers before they are committed to.

### 3.5.3 Self-service online transactions

3.5.3.1 The following transactions have taken place

Channel	Apr – Sept 18	Apr –Sept 19
Self-service online transactions (not including calls answered by IVR)	984, 918	1,205,648
Percentage of digital services contact via on-line transactions (not including IVR)	66%	74%

3.5.3.2 There has been an increase in the number of transactions undertaken over the first 2 quarters of the year in comparison to the same period last year.

3.5.3.3 The rise in use of online transactions for Highways, Waste and Environmental services has coincided with the number of gross calls received for these areas reducing by 9,990. Further work is taking place to increase channel shift through:

- continuing to base web content and services on customers' needs;
- training Customer Service Operatives to more effectively promote all online services;
- improving telephone services; and
- investigating opportunities for making future improvements through artificial intelligence.

3.5.3.4 Along with the success of the bin app, the council website's 'Check your bin day' page continues to be heavily used. To date, the number of users have increased in 2019/20 by 20% to 369,240.

3.5.3.5 Repeat contact for digital services has fallen by 24%, the most notable reduction has been for Waste service. The customer satisfaction of the online users of these services continues to be varied. Response rate is from approximately 10% (3,411) of our self-service customers and almost 50% (1,471) of these are from users of Waste services. Learning from, and working with stakeholders on addressing the issues raised continues.

#### April – Sept 2018

Survey question	All	Waste	Highways	Environmental Services	Unwanted items
How easy was it to make your request?	73%	68%	74%	75%	71%
Were the updates you received clear and accurate?	85%	83%	78%	80%	97%
Customers happy with the service received	62%	47%	59%	65%	92%

### April – Sept 2019

Survey question	All	Waste	Highways	Environmental Services	Unwanted items
How easy was it to make your request?	74%	63%	72%	70%	83%
Were the updates you received clear and accurate?	83%	77%	80%	78%	93%
Customers happy with the service received	62%	44%	58%	78%	96%

Work is ongoing to increase customers' satisfaction in relation to reporting missed bin collections. There are two areas the service are concentrating on to support an improvement in collections:

- introduction of the new role of Chargehand who will take on the responsibility of updating the in-cab technology;
- re-planning routes across all collections black, green and brown to eradicate the known problem routes.

The ongoing Customer Access Transactional Services project and service liaison work is aiming to further improve the online content for customers. Implementation work following the scrutiny inquiry into waste management services is ongoing and this will address customer satisfaction. Progress on this will continue to be tracked by Scrutiny.

### 3.5.4 Emails received for Digital Services

Channel	Apr – Sept 18	Apr –Sept 19
Emails received for digital services	11,385	8,782

This year's comparison shows lower figures as it no longer includes 'bounce-backs' e.g. automatic replies received from email accounts. This reduction highlights the further progress that is being made through work such as the diversion of Waste and Leeds Homes email contact to our online channels.

### 3.5.5 Social media

Social media work helps to:

- have a trusted voice that can quickly reach a large amount of people;
- be a proactive provider of information before significant volumes of offline content is generated, and
- actively build online reputation rather than simply reacting to contact generated by events or issues.

Followers	Facebook	Twitter
April 18	23,800	23,959
September 18	26,937	23,946
April 19	29,922	24,560
September 19	32,472	24,909

The vast majority of customer services activity is carried out on Facebook and the growth in the number of followers shows no sign of stopping. This option allows people to engage on the platform they're most comfortable using, in their own time, at their own convenience, and the council has the opportunity to drive website traffic and actively promote the benefits of our self-service systems.

Facebook	Apr 19	Sept 19
Enquiries received	693	1,656*
Response times	17.19 mins	18.22 mins

\*September 2019 saw a huge peak in refuse and council tax enquiries

There are a number of high profile campaigns coming up this year to promote, and include:

- Changes to bin collections over Christmas
- Recycling unwanted Christmas presents
- Myth-busting gritters
- Primary school application deadline (mid January)
- Preliminary work to encourage Govdelivery sign-ups for Council Tax
- E-billing promotion

### 3.5.6 The Digital Leeds Initiative

3.5.6.1 Across Leeds, thousands of adults still lack the basic skills they need to participate in today's increasingly digital world. People who are offline miss out on all the benefits the internet has to offer, for example help to find work, saving money or keeping in touch with friends and family. The 100% Digital Leeds initiative, led by Leeds Libraries, is working with partners across the city to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to learn these skills and access the equipment they need: [www.digitalinclusionleeds.com](http://www.digitalinclusionleeds.com)

3.5.6.2 The council's network of 34 public libraries provide access to over 500 public access PCs, a wide range of digital resources ranging from access to e-Books and comics, to *Life in Britain*, an online study resource for citizenship tests and regular 'Discover Digital' supported learning sessions. In addition work is taking place with organisations that have an established relationship with those lacking basic digital skills and are helping to support them to embed digital inclusion within their practice in the ways which best suit them and their service users.

3.5.6.3 The council offers free Digital Champions training to anyone active in the community; they go on to inspire others, improve people's confidence and help raise awareness of the online world. They do this through being supportive, encouraging and patient. Partner organisations can also borrow 4G enabled iPads, free of charge, to pilot different approaches to digital inclusion. In this way, the council supports people in council premises accessing council service and also supports the increase of digital inclusion more widely

## 3.6 Other development work happening in Customer Access

### 3.6.1 Decommissioning of C360 & Build / Development of CATS

3.6.1.1 C360 is the IT system currently being used by Customer Access and was introduced in December 2017 when Seibel Customer Relations Management was decommissioned. It provides online forms for customers (or Customer Service Officers) to request services from Waste, Highways, Planning and Environmental Services.

3.6.1.2 In October 2020 C360 will become non-compliant with PSN and therefore will be decommissioned. Work is currently underway to replace this system and also re-introduce the facility to be able to record and report on all customer contacts which is not available in C360.

3.6.1.3 User research has been carried out with the CSOs in hubs and the contact centre which indicates that the current (reduced) level of customer contact recording means that many customers have to fully explain the history of their enquiry at appointments thereby extending the time of these.

3.6.1.4 The new IT system, CATS (Customer Access Transactional Services) for Customer Access will be able to record and report on all customer contact and for customers to be able to carry out the transactional services that they currently do on C360.

3.6.1.5 CATS allows CSOs to log all customer contact and the types of enquiries and actions taken. This will provide performance information for the Contact Centre and the Hubs and enable targeted resource planning and training to ensure that sites and phone lines are staffed to the correct resource and skill level.

3.6.1.6 The ability to log footfall (the number of customers using Hubs) went live in Hubs and the Contact Centre in April 2019. In November 2019 the functionality to create customer records and to log their contacts against them went live in Merrion Hub. This functionality will be rolled across the city over the coming months.

3.6.1.7 The transactional forms currently used by customers to request services will begin to move over into CATS from Spring of 2020, allowing the full decommission of C360 by October 2020. The functionality of the CATS system will continue to increase over time allowing CSOs to send work requests on to other Directorates and to integrate directly with relevant back office systems.

## **3.6.2 Council Tax – Service Design**

3.6.2.1 Over the last 12 months a 'people centred' design approach has been taken to improving the customer experience. It considers the whole process from the first point of contact by the customer right through to how the information is handled in the back office and across all our contact channels (face to face, telephone, online & letter). Workshops have taken place with customers and staff which have resulted in the following changes:-

- **Improvements to the automated attendant telephone system – IVR.**  
This now has one simple menu, no more than three levels to it and no more than four options on any menu. Customers are redirected to the web where they are able to complete an action such as student info, change of address etc. so they don't have to listen to the whole IVR before being told to go online.

New options now direct customers to the automated payment line, the Recovery Team within Council Tax or to the Valuation Office information

when relevant so that they are removed from the queue at the earliest opportunity rather than these calls going into the Contact Centre only to be redirected after speaking to a CSO.

The new IVR went live in September 2019 and since then the transfer of calls between members of staff has reduced by 70% and overall costs in the first month have reduced by £4K as the IVR is handling more calls than it previously did

- **Improvements to the website journey for customers wanting to report a change of address.** Customer's wanting to report a change of address is one of the top phone enquiry types to the contact centre. Through working with customers it became clear where the blocks were to them easily being able to report a change of address on line. Changes have now been put in place and tested with customers. This showed that they were able to complete their enquiry significantly quicker than previously and the changes went live in late November 2019.

**3.6.2.2 Landlord contact** - Contact from landlords and letting agents wanting to report a change in a tenancy accounts for over 20% of contact into the Contact Centre. Not all required information is provided initially and this creates extra work for Council Tax as they have to contact them again for the missing information. Work will take place with landlords to determine where improvements can be made to ensure that all relevant information is captured first time, reducing the need for a second contact and improving processing times.

## 3.7 Customer Relations

### 3.7.1 Complaints Performance Overview

3.7.1.1 The table below gives an overview of the number of complaints received by each directorate over the first 2 quarters for 2018/19 and for 2019/20.

	Complaints (Stage 1)		Complaints (Stage 2)		Ombudsman Cases	
	Apr to Sep 18	Apr to Sep 19	Apr to Sep 18	Apr to Sep 19	Apr to Sep 18	Apr to Sep 19
Communities & Environment	1086	970	75	81	11	14
Resources & Housing	1095	1391	147	184	32	24
City Development	176	156	40	28	10	12
Adult Social Care*	210	295	34	3	12	7
Childrens Services	170	180	14	4	29	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>2737</b>	<b>2992</b>	<b>310</b>	<b>300</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>69</b>

\* Complaints are risked assessed and dealt with accordingly. Whilst the terms 'stage 1 and stage 2' are not used in the ASC context they have been used here for ease of comparison. Informal resolution is encouraged and the 'stage 2' is conducted by an independent investigator.

3.7.1.2 Current performance shows that larger volumes of complaints are received by Resources & Housing and Communities & Environment. Comparing Q1 and Q2 from

2018/19 to the same period in 2019/20, overall the total number of complaints received have increased. Key points from this high level information show:

- Complaints in Communities & Environment have reduced at stage 1, with escalation to stage 2 increasing a little. The largest number of complaints received within Communities & Environment have related to Waste Management, however the number of Waste Management complaints have reduced from the same period in the previous year;
- There has been an increase in complaints received by Resources and Housing at both stage 1 and stage 2. The largest number of complaints relate to Housing Leeds. Complaints received by Housing Leeds have increased on the same period in the previous year;
- Complaints received by City Development services have reduced.
- Adult Social Care complaints at Stage 1 have increased over the same period but have reduced significantly for stage 2;
- There has been a small increase in stage 1 complaints for Children's Services and a decrease in stage 2 complaints.

3.7.1.3 Expanded details of the key areas and actions being taken within each directorate are provided in Appendix 1.

### **3.7.2 Local Government Ombudsman contact**

3.7.2.1 In the Local Government Ombudsman's annual letter it indicated that they had addressed 180 cases to the Council over the course of 2018/19. The largest number of cases addressed related to Education & Children's Services. In comparison, in 2017/18 a total of 189 complaints and enquiries were addressed

3.7.2.2 In his annual letter dated 24th July 2019, the Local Government Ombudsman has stated 'As ever, I would stress that the number of complaints, taken alone, is not necessarily a reliable indicator of an authority's performance'. Alongside this details are published for all authorities on cases, outcomes and compliance. The Council has performed favourably compared to our peers.

3.7.2.3 Not all cases lead to formal investigation, there were 47 cases which were formally investigated in 2018/19. Of these, 21 complaints were upheld, giving an uphold rate of 45%. Of similar authorities, the uphold rate was 66%. In 2017/18 there were 62 cases formally investigated, 41 of these were upheld which gave an upheld rate of 66%

3.7.2.4 In 2018/19, compliance with remedies was 100%, covering 23 cases. The average for similar authorities is 99% with non-compliance being rare. Compliance was late in 2 cases giving 93% rate within timescale.

3.7.2.5 Over the first two quarters of 2019/20, the number of cases addressed by the Ombudsman has reduced from the same period in the previous year.

### **3.7.3 Members audit update**

3.7.3.1 Earlier in the year, Internal Audit began a piece of work looking at the ways in which Members are able to raise queries within the council. Initial work with the Group Support Offices indicated that over 4,500 issues were formally logged as member casework over the course of 2018/19. Queries received within the Group Support Offices

then tend to be dispersed to the relevant service area to investigate and respond accordingly.

3.7.3.2 Members may also escalate queries directly within services, and the areas that generate the highest volume of queries have dedicated mailboxes that are set up to receive Member contact. Utilising the dedicated mailboxes offers some control over the process for handling Member queries, for example contact received through the mailboxes should be logged, acknowledged and responded to within a defined timeframe.

3.7.3.4 However, the work to date has identified opportunities to further join up systems and processes with a view to achieving greater consistency in the handling of queries across the authority. Discussions have taken place across a number of teams and service areas to further understand some of the challenges faced and to look for ways of strengthening the process. Whilst the progress of this piece of work has been held up in recent months, Internal Audit is intending to revisit the area and will report separately to the committee on the outcomes.

### 3.7.4 Financial Remedies

3.7.4.1 Following the report on Customer Contact and Satisfaction in November 2018, it had been requested:

*That future reports to this Committee should incorporate financial settlements arising from Insurance claims;*

3.4.7.2 Insurance claims are dealt with separately from complaints. Included are details the settlements made by Corporate Insurance concerning Housing claims in the last 2 years:

2018/19 Financial Year				2019/20 Financial Year to 31 Dec 2019			
Property Damage Claims	Personal Injury Claims	Claims for Both	Total Paid	Property Damage Claims	Personal Injury Claims	Claims for Both	Total Paid
211	110	11	£425,011	159	57	14	£218,446

3.4.7.3 Claims can take some time to be settled and the numbers above relate to claims received in each quarter (irrespective of when the claim occurred) and payments relate to payments made in the quarter (also irrespective of claim occurred date).

3.4.7.4 The committee is asked to note that compensation payments are offered only where officers have assessed that they are fully justifiable and appropriate governance arrangements are in place to monitor and control such payments.

3.4.7.5 Some compensation claims are more suitably addressed under the complaints policy, and the following show where this has been the case:

2018/19	15 cases have led to settlements totalling £1,835.37
2019/20 (to end Dec 19)	9 cases have led to settlements totalling £1,379.61

### 3.7.5 Future Developments

3.7.5.1 Improvements have been made to the reporting information available around complaints, with further improvements in development. The changes made and further planned changes will remove the need for the majority of manual manipulation of complaint data and will provide information tailored at different levels, from top level (numbers, outcomes and broad trends) to more granular information around trends within key service areas. The intention is to make information readily available in BI dashboards for services to monitor complaint volumes, supporting this with detailed analysis provided around trends by Customer Relations.

3.7.5.2 To support the improved reporting output re-categorisation is underway around Housing complaints, with the intention to review classifications in other high volume areas, to assist in providing clear information concerning specific trends and areas for focus. Alongside this, consideration is being given to how best to present complaints data alongside service workloads to gain a true reflection of where the largest number of complaints are received. This will better support appropriately targeted work and service development.

3.7.5.3 Additionally, work is underway to provide greater learning from complaints and streamline the administration process, including exploration of avenues for quality assurance on complaint responses (both internally and externally) and automation of some aspects of administration to provide greater capacity within Customer Relations to focus on outcomes of complaints.

3.7.5.4 Work is continuing to take place to develop the approach to customer services training. It is anticipated that there will be a clear pathway that articulates need and offer and this will be available later this year.

## **3.8 Customer care standards.**

3.8.1 A review has taken place of the customer services standards and these have been updated and shared widely with directorate leadership teams. At CLT on 12 November 2019 the customer care standards (appendix 2) were agreed. They provide a generic view that is relevant to all services, and have been renamed customer care to establish ownership across the council rather than being associated to Customer Services only.

3.8.2 The intention is that the standards can be used by services to reassure customers, help drive behaviours and to support the work around customer care training. The standards clearly complement our values and will be used in a similar way to support behaviours and performance. The standards will be helpful to challenge current practise, behaviours and approach.

## **4.0 Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and Engagement**

This report has not been consulted on as it outlines the progress and developments in relation to different aspects of customer contact and satisfaction. However, it highlights where consultation is taking place or planned to take place with the public.

### **4.2 Equality and Diversity/Cohesion and Integration**

An equality impact assessment has not taken place in relation to this report, but specific work areas described within it have, where appropriate.

### **4.3 Council Policies and Best Council Plan**

The work described above is in line with council policies and the city priorities. The following key performance indicators are in the Best Council Plan 2019 – 2021:

- Level of complaints
- Proportion of customers using self-service when getting in touch with the council.

### **4.4 Climate Emergency**

The council declared a climate emergency in March 2019 with the stated ambition of working to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030 for the city. Many of the changes and efficiencies gained when working with customers is through moving to online services, where possible and appropriate, and this negates some of the need for travel and reduces waste.

### **4.5 Resources and Value for Money**

- 4.5.1 All work takes place within the agreed budgets and with a focus on making improvements so that efficiencies can be achieved.

### **4.6 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call in**

- 4.6.1 There are no legal implications, Access to Information and Call in issues associated with this report.

### **4.7 Risk Management**

- 4.7.1 There are significant risks of an organisational, reputational and service delivery nature, associated with poor customer contact and satisfaction levels. The actions taken to improve council processes and procedures around customer contact and satisfaction help to mitigate the risks.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

- 5.1 The above sections have highlighted a range of information and data showing customer contact, satisfaction levels and complaints, which together provide a holistic picture. As has been demonstrated, significant work has taken place to understand how, and make changes to, improve contact using the most cost effective routes without compromising accessibility, given the prevailing financial climate. Work continues to find new ways of working to improve customer contact further using a customer centric approach. This ensures that changes are more effective and better meet everyone's needs.

- 5.2 In the next 12 months further improvements will be made which will have the customer care standards at their heart. This will inform training and will support a right first time and enabling approach for front line staff
- 5.3 Based on the information provided in this report, it is view of the Chief Officer for Customer Access and Welfare that the Council's processes and procedures around customer contact and satisfaction are deemed adequate and acceptable, given the prevailing financial climate and the demand for services. Improvements will continue to be made in order to deal with the challenges faced and to deliver a more consistent experience for customers who contact the Council.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

Corporate Governance and Audit Committee are asked to:

- note the information provided;
- support the work outlined to develop the approach further;
- recognise the developments outlined which will further enhance customers' experiences; and
- suggest areas where they would like to see further focus.

## **7.0 Background Documents**

None.

## **Commentaries on Complaints in Key Services Areas**

This section provides information on complaints. Whilst the council does get significant numbers of compliments they are not routinely collected and recorded in all directorates. This is an area that is recognised needs to be improved as there is potential learning that can be taken from this. An example of where compliments are routinely collected is in Adults and Health where they evidence that the directorate is meeting the key qualities people expect from health and social care services. Overall customers talk about being treated with dignity, kindness and respect and staff being caring and responsive to their needs in times of crisis.

The section below highlights the services generating the highest level of complaints in each directorate, and trends and learning identified from these complaints.

### **Resources & Housing**

#### **Housing**

##### **Complaint issues and trends – Housing**

The volume of complaints received in Q1 and Q2 has increased compared to the previous financial year, the increase seen more in Q2. More complaints have been received by Housing Property than Housing Management. This is partially attributable to the different approach in the complaints process applied by Housing Property, including the handling of Member enquiries as formal complaints. Following feedback from Members, customers and staff, this approach has been reviewed and from January 2020 a more flexible approach to complaint and Member enquiry handling will be applied, with a renewed emphasis on resolving issues quickly and quality conversations with customers, without losing the ability to learn from complaints.

Common issues raised in relation to Housing Property complaints have concerned timescales for incomplete works in relation to repairs and customers being unhappy with the level of service received. The current classification of complaints and Member enquiries is being reviewed to enable more detailed analysis of issues raised and enable targeted service improvement activity.

Noting the current process of allocating Member enquiries as formal complaints within Housing Property, the volume of complaints received by Housing Management are around a third of Housing Property. The issues raised have commonly concerned where a customer has felt that they have received a poor level of service and complaints concerning staff conduct are at a similar level.

The rate of escalation to stage 2 of the policy had been around 10% over 2018/19.

##### **Learning points & development – Housing**

As referenced above, complaints volumes have increased, particularly around repairs. To support improvement in this area, additional work is needed to understand more clearly the cause of complaints and to develop remedies to prevent future complaints. As Housing management and Property come together as the Housing service, work is happening to

strengthen complaints handling to ensure that it is more customer focused. It is felt that the new approach to complaint handling being applied from January 2020 will allow additional capacity to achieve this.

Work is underway to expand and re-categorise the complaint classifications to provide specific focus on areas for development. Following a working group between Customer Relations and Housing, classifications have been developed and are being tested to ensure suitability and usefulness of the reports these will inform.

Following the updates to complaint classification, work is planned to present complaint reporting alongside records of work completed by Housing. In doing this, the volume of complaints received can be contextualised to ensure that detailed analysis and reflection can be focussed on areas receiving the largest proportion of complaints based on output.

Beyond this, focus is being placed on guidance for and expectations of investigating officers and the manner in which complaints are addressed and remedied. The aim of this is to ensure complaints are responded to quickly, with positive outcomes being provided to reduce the number of complaints escalating. Feedback on this guidance has been sought from tenant panels to ensure a customer centric approach is maintained.

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## **Communities & Environment**

### **Waste Management**

#### **Complaint issues and trends – Waste Management**

The volume of complaints received by Waste Management in Q1 had reduced substantially from the volume received in the previous year, which had been impacted by adverse weather. The volume of complaints received over Q2 was similar to that received in 2018/19, which overall has seen the volume of complaints decrease over the first half of the year.

The types of issues raised in Waste Management complaints in 2019/20 have commonly concerned missed collections, which account for over half of all complaints. Brown bin collections have been the most common cause of missed collection complaints.

Considering 2018/19 overall, the volume of Waste Management complaints had increased from 2017/18. An unprecedented number of complaints were received in the early part of the year after a winter of extreme weather followed by a warm and wet spring, which had placed additional demands on the service. Following this, complaint volumes had remained steady for the remainder of the year and were comparable to 2017/18.

The rate of escalation to stage 2 of the policy had been around 6% over 2018/19.

#### **Learning points & development - Waste Management**

The collection of residual and dry recycling waste (black and green bins) is always prioritised over the collection of garden waste due to the nature of the material being collected having the potential to cause greater nuisance if uncollected. There will be times when the performance of the collection of garden waste, still a free service in Leeds, will

be affected by that prioritisation. However, a service review including of all collection streams is ongoing with the work on garden waste collections now being well advanced and ready for implementation as the service recommences in 2020. Other imminent changes such as the proposed emergency Traffic Regulation Order to improve vehicular access and changes already made to the crew roles will further improve garden waste collection service in 2020.

## **Customer Services**

### **Complaint issues and trends – Customer Services**

There has been an increase in the number of complaints received by the Contact Centre in Q1 and Q2 2018/19. The Contact Centre takes calls for 27 services, with calls to the Council Tax line generating the largest number of complaints.

The common issues in complaints raised across Contact Centre services relates to the length of time that a customer has to wait for their call to be answered, followed by issues relating to isolated errors when processing requests.

### **Learning points & development – Customer Services**

Whilst the number of complaints received by the Contact Centre is low in the context of the volume of calls received (nearly 750,000 calls answered in 2018/19), focus is placed on looking to reduce the potential for complaints where possible.

Where an outcome from a complaint highlights that a process could be reviewed or sharpened, proactive action is taken around this to ensure all staff have the skills and knowledge to assist customers.

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## **City Development**

### **Complaint issues and trends – City Development**

The volume of complaints received across City Development have historically been low, and in Q1 and Q2 2019/20, these have reduced from the numbers received over the same period in 2018/19.

The services which have received the greater number of complaints in City Development have been Planning and Highways. In relation to Planning, the issues raised in complaints commonly concern how an application has been considered. Complaints considered by Highways commonly concern road closures or resurfacing, numbers are low however.

### **Learning points & development – City Development**

Whilst the number of complaints received across the directorate are low, focus is maintained on providing learning and development from complaints, which is supported by regular reporting to management where any potential issues can be identified and addressed.

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## **Adults and Health Directorate**

### **Complaint issues and trends – Adults and Health**

In the 2018/19 reporting year the main issues people raised related to complaints about quality of services, including perceptions that the services provided were not meeting the needs identified and a lack of communication between the partner organisations involved in the care.

Staff attitude and conduct were also raised. This related particularly when difficult conversations took place about assessment decisions and care fees. Many complaints that mention staff attitude and conduct are part of a bigger complaint that also includes dissatisfaction with decisions to do with the outcome of an assessment.

People were also unclear about what people can expect from social care services and a lack of clarity about how health and social care dovetail with one another and when things go wrong being unclear who to go to.

Other concerns related to inconsistency in home care provided by commissioned independent care providers. Concerns such as carers not reading the care plan prior to delivering care and support resulting in tasks being missed or care being delivered incorrectly.

The other main issue raised by families in relation to homecare was poor communication between the care provider and the service user's family and care workers completing calls too quickly and poor recording on the care log.

### **Learning Points and Development – Adults and Health**

Examples of where learning has taken place and resulted in changes includes:

- Issuing guidance to staff about the minor works scheme, so they were clear about adaptations that could be provided under this;
- Identifying and delivering training and development required to raise standards of the practice around Disabilities Grant Scheme funding decisions;
- Creating an information leaflet about the appeals procedure which occupational therapists now share when they visit to carry out an assessment;
- Introducing a new telephone system to forward missed calls and voicemail messages to officers' e-mail accounts to ensure that calls and messages would be responded to;
- Working with an independent commissioned provider to improve the service via implementing an improvement action plan which included addressing the scheduling software, and issuing guidance to improve effective communication between care workers and family members.

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## **Children's Services**

## **Complaint issues and trends – Children’s Services**

The most notable theme from the recent complaints is the continued rise in complaints regarding special educational needs. Due to the rise in the numbers in this cohort, both the service and schools have faced challenges to ensure appropriate provision to meet need is provided. Customers also complain of problems with communication with the service. There are plans to increase resource in this area.

Other themes include a rise in challenge to assessments carried out on their family. Some of these are questioning the accuracy of information used but many are around the decisions that have been made following assessment. This was an area that was decreasing but has seen an increase this year.

An area that generally sees higher numbers is the lack of/manner of social work support. This highlights the difficulties in maintaining a relationship with a family through assessments that are necessarily intrusive and often involve difficult decisions. Social workers are encouraged to approach these situations restoratively offering high support along with challenge.

## **Learning Points and Development – Children’s Services**

Due to the ongoing pressures on the Special Educational Needs (SEN) service, there are plans to increase resources in this area. However, it has been important to note that some of these complaints are around implementation of the Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPS) in schools. Through increasing partnership working with schools and other agencies, and involving parents in these conversations, lasting resolutions to complaints that may have occurred again in some instances, have been achieved.

The Restorative Early Support (RES) teams are now working with families at an early stage to remove the need for them to be formally involved with social care services. RES teams meet with families and agencies involved with the child and use a process called Rethink to identify family based resolutions to problems. These teams have now been able to become involved to identify and resolve concerns before they become formal complaints.

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