

# Annual Assurance Report on Customer Contact

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> March 2022

Report of: Neil Evans Director of Resources

Report to: Corporate Governance and Audit Committee

Will the decision be open for call in? Yes No

Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? Yes No

## What is this report about?

### Including how it contributes to the city's and council's ambitions

- The report provides assurance over the control environment in place for customer contact and customer satisfaction in the following areas:
  - Face to face services
  - Contact centre and digital services for customers
  - Compliments and complaints
- There are defined standards, policies, processes and structures in place that provide the basis for a customer centred approach to customer contact within the Council. The report provides information that shows the extent to which these are embedded and complied with in practice.
- The report acknowledges the challenges that have impacted upon customer satisfaction during the year and provides assurance that the control environment is being adapted and strengthened further. There is a sound framework for monitoring and challenging performance in relation to customer contact and satisfaction, and there are robust plans in place for improving the customer experience.

## Recommendations

- a) The Corporate Governance and Audit Committee is asked to note the assurances provided that
  - the appropriate systems and procedures are in place in respect of the Council's control environment for customer contact and satisfaction; and
  - there are robust plans in place for improving the customer experience.

## Why is the proposal being put forward?

- 1 The terms of reference of the Corporate Governance and Audit Committee require the Committee to consider the adequacy of the Council's policies and practices to ensure compliance with statutory guidance and the adequacy of the Council's corporate governance arrangements.
- 2 This report provides assurance to the Committee that the appropriate systems and procedures are in place in respect of the Council's control environment for customer contact and satisfaction. The report includes information on the extent to which the standards, policies and procedures in relation to customer contact and satisfaction have been complied with.
- 3 The systems and processes that support the Council's arrangements for customer contact and satisfaction are set out at Appendix A. Each directorate considers these in the light of their services and develops arrangements that are appropriate, proportionate and helpful to them and our customers. Customers may access the services provided by each directorate through the Council's website, the Contact Centre or through Face-to-Face services. The attached statement sets out the standing arrangements for the internal control of customer contact and satisfaction through these channels, and provides evidence of monitoring and compliance over the reporting period from January 2021 to December 2021. Information is also provided for the period from January 2020 to December 2020 for the purposes of comparison.

## What impact will this proposal have?

### Wards Affected:

Have ward members been consulted?       Yes       No

- 4 Maintaining a clear focus on delivering high quality public services is at the heart of the Best City Ambition and it is essential that we have in place appropriate arrangements to ensure that the Council's values are routinely demonstrated in our interactions with customers; that customers receive a high quality, efficient and effective service when they contact us; and that there are robust processes to receive and act upon customer feedback. This report outlines the arrangements that are in place to achieve this and the approach that is being taken to deliver a seamless service for customers that contact us.

## What consultation and engagement has taken place?

- 5 This report is provided for information and has not therefore been subject to consultation.
- 6 Engagement with relevant service areas and colleagues has taken place for each of the improvement activities detailed within the report.

## What are the resource implications?

- 7 The customer contact services detailed within this report have been delivered within the budgets allocated for 2021.
- 8 Additional one-off staffing resources required to achieve the performance standards for the Contact Centre outlined in this report cost £564K. It is proposed that this is funded from the Strategic Contingency reserve. Given the ongoing impact of COVID-19 on service delivery across the Council, this reserve, along with funding unforeseen budget pressures and ensuring the Council becomes more financially resilient, will also be used to fund the

recovery of affected services following the pandemic. This includes targeting the backlogs of work which have built up in some services.

### **What are the legal implications?**

9 N/A

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

10 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.

### **Does this proposal support the council's 3 Key Pillars?**

Inclusive Growth       Health and Wellbeing       Climate Emergency

11 The work outlined in this report supports the Council's ambition to be an efficient, enterprising and healthy organisation by making better use of resources and exploring the use of modern technology.

12 The work aims to improve the end-to-end customer experience and ensure that services are delivered in the most cost-effective way with a clear focus on delivering high quality services for our customers.

### **Options, timescales and measuring success**

#### **a) What other options were considered?**

13 Consideration has been given to focussing solely on operational improvements within the Contact Centre pending the digital improvements that are currently being developed. This was discounted as it was considered that this would reduce the pace of improvement. It was determined that all opportunities to improve the customer experience and performance should be evaluated and progressed where business cases identified a benefit.

#### **b) How will success be measured?**

14 Progress against the actions detailed within this report will be closely monitored and delivered within defined timescales.

#### **c) What is the timetable for implementation?**

15 Improvement activity timescales are detailed within the report.

### **Appendices**

16 Appendix A: Customer Contact and Satisfaction – Statement of Internal Control

### **Background papers**

17 N/A