



**Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Tuesday, 13 September 2016**

<b>REPORT TITLE:</b>	<b>CUSTOMER CONTACT UPDATE</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>STRATEGIC DIRECTOR, TRANSFORMATION AND RESOURCES</b>

**REPORT SUMMARY**

This report has been produced in response to issues and queries raised by the Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Overview Committee.

It summarises the work underway to develop a new approach to Customer Contact for Wirral Council and its partners.

The project will form part of the council's new Transformation Programme.

Customer Contact affects all wards within the borough

**RECOMMENDATION/S**

This report is for noting.

## **SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

### **1.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S**

1.1. None

### **2.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

2.1. None

### **3.0 BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

3.1. The Transformation and Resources Policy and Performance Committee on 22 March 2016 reviewed a report from IT Services on the proposals to replace the council's Customer Relationship Management (CRM) solution.

3.1.1. Councillors raised a number of concerns relating to:

- The ability of Councillors to access officers directly regarding casework and issues
- The ability of residents to report urgent issues e.g. dangerous structures
- The benefits of enhanced communication between members and officers
- The ability of members to communicate with back office services by email.
- The ability of any new solution to be accessed via the internet (not intranet)

3.1.2. With the exception of the final point, these concerns relate to the council's strategy for customer contact rather than the technical specification being developed, and as a result, the Transaction Centre Manager was asked to provide an update report to committee on how these concerns can be addressed.

3.1.3. Following changes to the scrutiny arrangements, this report is being circulated to the Business Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **3.2. Customer Contact Transformation**

3.2.1. Customer Contact has been identified as one of the major transformation initiatives for the council in the coming years.

3.2.2. Customer expectations have changed dramatically over the past few years, mostly driven by technology and the ability of residents to carry out much of their day to day business online, "anytime, anyplace, anywhere". The council needs to change, not only in order to meet these expectations, but to ensure we utilise our resources in the most efficient way possible.

3.2.3. Like many other authorities, and organisations such as HMRC, we have recognised that our online provision, simply did not achieve to deliver the level

of Channel Shift we anticipated. This does not mean that we should go backwards, but we must accept that we need to do far more to ensure our digital services fully meet customer's needs. Rather than 'driving people online', we must ensure that digital provision is the simplest and most effective way to do business with the council. The future approach will not remove the ability for our customers to contact us by telephone or face to face, this will always be an option for the residents and customers of Wirral.

### **3.3. Future Model of Customer Contact**

3.3.1. The principles informing our new model of customer contact are that it must:

- Make it easy for customers to get what they need through digital transactional services and high quality information, advice and guidance content.
- Make sure those who struggle to use digital services can get help
- Develop staff to be problem-solvers, and use customer insight to prevent any problems recurring in future
- Find ways to share information and expertise with partners, so we can help our customers together
- Provide support in an emergency

3.3.2. As part of this model, we will provide increased opportunities for members and community groups to support residents who need help in accessing Wirral's services through the development of 'Assisted Digital' provision.

3.3.3. We will also work closely with members to help them carry out their roles effectively, and efficiently. This will include providing training, improving communication between officers and members, and identifying how councillors needs can be met efficiently.

3.3.4. The new model will be developed in an agile and iterative way, so that customers can benefit from improvements to services as soon as possible.

3.3.5. A number of initiatives have already commenced which are noted below for member's reference.

### **3.6. "Getting it Right"**

3.6.1. The following initiatives have already been completed, or are underway to improve the ability of customers to access the information and services they need.

Position in Queue and Call Waiting Time indicator	This feature has been implemented across the Call Centre with the aim of setting customer expectations about waiting times. A number of teething problems have been identified relating to the way waiting time is calculated, and these are being addressed.
Acceptance of Electronic Documentation	We have now begun accepting electronic submission of documentation for a number of services. This will reduce the need for customers to visit One Stop Shops.
Reduction in Message Length	Following feedback, we have now reduced the length of the automated messages our Call Centre customers have to listen to.
New call centre scripts	We have revised call centre 'scripts' to ensure customers are asked for all of the necessary information at first point of contact.
Google search	Our website search functionality now uses google search, enabling customers to find website content much more easily.
Live Chat	We are planning to pilot Live Chat on our website over the next few months, so that customers having difficulty online can get real-time support.
Customer Call Back	We are investigating the functionality for customers to 'hold' a place in the queue, and receive a call back when an agent is available.
Service Level Agreements	We are working to define service level agreements with back office services, so customers can be given timeframes for their issues to be resolved.
Call Performance Screens	We are installing screens within the call centre that give visibility of activity/queue length, so that extra resources can be allocated when customers need them.
Member Engagement	We are planning to run a series of member open-house sessions within Cheshire Lines. These will be an opportunity to share service information with members, and for members to raise any casework issues with appropriate officers.
Additional Staffing	A number of additional fixed term roles have been created in the call centre to reduce customer waiting times.

3.6.2. A further update on the work of IT Services to replace the CRM system, as outlined to the P&P committee on 22 March 2016, is expected in the near future.

#### **4.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

4.1. Funding for the additional fixed term contracts referenced in 3.6.1 will be provided through the transformation fund

#### **5.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. There are no legal implications.

## **6.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: ICT, STAFFING AND ASSETS**

6.1. There are no Resource Implications.

## **7.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

7.1. There are no relevant risks.

## **8.0 ENGAGEMENT/CONSULTATION**

8.1. None

## **9.0 EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

(c) No because of another reason which is:

This report is an update on a plan of work being developed. Equality implications will be reviewed as part of all service design activity, and relevant decisions.

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## **APPENDICES**

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>