

**Corporate Services
Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

10th July 2013

Customer Services Business Unit

Recommendations

That the Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider the report, asking questions in relation to its content and making recommendations as considered appropriate.

1.0 Key issues

1.1 This report provides an overview of the Customer Service Business Unit.

2.0 Executive summary

2.1 The Customer Service Business Unit provides a front facing service to members of the public on behalf of Warwickshire County Council (WCC). It plays a crucial role in supporting WCC to deliver its strategic priorities in meeting customers' needs. The Unit also manages WCC's relationships with the media and provides practical support functions to WCC services. Through its Warwickshire Direct branded services, it delivers customer focused services on behalf of all the Groups within WCC. In 2012-13, through the various delivery routes (channels), the unit had over 6,000,000 contacts with WCC customers. The Unit also provides customer-facing services for a number of our public sector partners, including Warwick District Council and Warwickshire Police. The current annual budget for the Customer Service Business Unit is £9,951,949.

3.0 Customer Service Business Unit – background and context

3.1 The Customer Service Business Unit plays the corporate lead role in the development of WCC as a customer focused organisation. Its purpose is to:

- Enable customers to access all public services through 'one front door' comprising face to face, telephone and electronic channels
- Provide an accessible library and information service with particular emphasis on the needs of children and families, older people and vulnerable/disadvantaged groups
- To ensure that information is readily available for service users, citizens and staff and to promote the County Councils reputation

- To provide a trusted and accessible Registration Service

3.2 Customer service is one of the most visible and significant aspects of organisational performance. Meeting customer needs through effective customer service enables service excellence, and high levels of customer satisfaction, which in turn has a beneficial impact on staff morale and motivation. The Customer Service Excellence Standard is a framework which allows WCC to test how it is doing in meeting customers' needs, understand and identify what is being done well and also improvements required to ensure the customer is at the heart of all WCC does. The Customer Service Business Unit leads this work on behalf of WCC.

3.3 The Business Unit's objective is to ensure that WCC's customers will:

- **Get** – information, advice, service and help. A quick response and not be passed around lots of people.
- **Know** – the information that they are given is correct and the service provided will be value for money.
- **Trust** – WCC to make things simple to understand and to treat information confidentially.
- **Feel** – that the enquiry is understood, that WCC wants to help and cares that every enquiry matters.

3.4 The Business Unit consists of the following services:

- **Communications** – the service manages press contact with local, national and specialist media, a PR service for pro-active campaigns, reputation management enabling WCC to take control when bad news breaks, social media channels through Twitter, Facebook and more, media training, design work ensuring branding and corporate identity, print services, and ensuring all WCC staff are kept informed.
- **Customer relations** – the service manages customer feedback, ensuring that WCC listens to feedback from customers and learns from this to improve service delivery to customers.
- **Customer Service Centre** – the service delivers support to WCC services as well as to Warwick District Council. During 2012-13, it dealt with:
 - 342,814 WCC switchboards calls;
 - 156,867 WCC service calls;
 - 147,253 Warwick District Council service calls;
 - 9,951 blue badge applications processed;
 - 778 concessionary bus pass applications processed;
 - 8,974 emails responded to, on behalf of Highways;
 - 1,544 web feedback emails dealt with;
 - 3,840 web feedback emails forwarded to specific services; and
 - The Warwickshire Local Welfare Scheme is also managed by the service; it is anticipated this will generate 9,000 customer contacts per year.

- **Library and Information Service** – the service delivers a network of 19 WCC libraries, provides support to 13 community managed libraries, operates five mobile libraries which cover the whole of the county, provides a home delivery service for those who are housebound or in residential care, holds community events and activities throughout the year across the county and also delivers services on behalf of the District and Borough Councils and Warwickshire Police. During 2012-13, there were 1,917,593 visits to libraries and 1,721,544 loans issued. Whilst part of the Customer Service Business Unit, the Library service falls under the Terms of Reference for the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- **One stop shops** – the service delivers a network of 15 One Stop Shops which not only deliver services for WCC but also on behalf of District and Borough Councils and Warwickshire Police. During 2012-13 405,624 customer service enquiries were dealt with.
- **Registration Services** – the service provides four main registration offices in Warwick, Rugby, Stratford and Nuneaton. As well as providing services in relation to births, marriages and deaths, it also provides nationality checking and conducts citizenship ceremonies. The service also provides a ‘Tell Us Once’ service where when registering a birth or death, WCC can also inform other government organisations. During 2012-13:
 - 5,294 births were registered;
 - 4,222 deaths, including still births, were registered;
 - 3,737 marriage notices were issued;
 - 66 civil partnerships ceremonies were held; and
 - 29 citizenship ceremonies were held, welcoming 510 new British citizens.
- **Web** – the service supports all web design and management. During 2012-13:
 - 3,553,905 visits were made to the website;
 - 10,816 (82%) of school admissions applications were made online;
 - 24,457 school closure texts were sent out;
 - 317,170 library books were renewed online; and
 - 48,468 library book reservations were made online.
- **Business development and service improvement** – the service supports business development and service improvement with respect to the corporate customer service agenda. The team also leads the work corporately for Customer Service Excellence.

4.0 Future priorities for the Business Unit

- 4.1 The Business Unit has already been through a process of transformation in reshaping services to deliver efficiencies whilst also improving the quality of service to customers. Services have been pulled together where it makes

sense for the customer to do so; for example, libraries, One Stop Shops and Registrars now all sit together within one service area. The on-going Library Transformation Programme has seen the required efficiencies delivered, but by working closely with our staff, customers and communities has also seen the sustained presence of library services across the county with enhanced services for those who are most vulnerable, for example, the home delivery service for those who are house bound or in residential care.

4.2 The experience the Unit has in transformation and service redesign provides opportunities to explore new ways of delivering services to and for customers that increases access for the customer but also the quality of the outcomes achieved for them.

4.3 The priorities for the Customer Service Business Unit for 2013/14 and beyond include:

- Progressing the 'one-front-door' agenda which minimises and simplifies the routes for customers to access WCC services, whilst ensuring these are delivered in the most efficient and effective way. For the customer, this means being able to access a whole range of services that are important to them through one point of contact and experience a seamless customer journey with the minimum number of transfers between services.
- Progressing the 'digital by default' agenda where we are able to identify services that could be transferred to online processes which deliver efficiencies and also provide a quicker and more informative service to customers. Current successes include the schools admission application process with 82% of applications processed online. Future service provision could include highways public contacts, access to adult social care advice, information and support, booking of speed awareness courses and online booking of concessionary bus passes and registration appointments.
- Continue with the Library Transformation Programme and explore the opportunities created by bringing libraries, One Stop Shops and registrars together in one service. For the customer, this will see more services provided through a wider network of community-based services.
- Delivering targeted campaigns which focus on and support the delivery of the seven key ambitions of WCC which in turn ensure customers are aware of the services and support they can access. These campaigns will pull services together to deliver joint and integrated support to customers.
- Widening the scope of the services offered by the Business Units to services across WCC and also to partner agencies, improving customer access and simplifying the processes they must go through to access services.

- Achieving the Customer Service Excellence accreditation, on behalf of WCC as a corporate body.
- Delivering the required efficiencies required of its services whilst seeking to improve our customers experience as part of this.

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