

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present key observations on the Annual Customer Feedback Report for 2016-17 (the full report is available on request), update the Committee on progress since our last report and advise Members on our future plans.

2 Context

- 2.1 During 2016-17 the new Contact Us customer feedback IT system was rolled out across the whole of the Council.
- 2.2 This is the first opportunity to reflect on how adopting new digital way of working practices have impacted on the way this Council encourages and responds to customer feedback.
- 2.3 Customer feedback, whilst extremely valuable, needs to be seen in the context of the huge number of services delivered every day in this Council to its customers. Please see the table at the end of the report, which illustrates just how large that customer contact is. Whilst the table provides an incomplete picture it serves to illustrate that customer feedback is less than 1% of all the services delivered to customers in the Customer Services Business Unit alone, let alone the much larger range and size of service delivey across the Council as a whole.

3 Executive Summary (See Tables at end of report)

- Our Let's Get Digital Campaign aims to encourage and enable our customers to provide as much of their feedback as is practical through digital channels
- 76% (2920) of all customer feedback handled in the period April 2016 – March 2017 (3818) has come via the digital web channel, which is an important new development made possible by the adoption of the Contact Us recording system.
- Trend analysis shows that as the new Contact Us system has been adopted in a phased way across the Council the overall volume of customer feedback received by the Council has increased significantly.
- The web team undertook a major redesign process to filter out a lot of the frequently asked questions and frequent service requests so that customers could directly self serve using the Council's website. This is an ongoing review and redesign process which aims to continue identifying and reshaping services and information to enable customers to easily find what they need by themselves.
- 44% (1613) of all the 2016/17 data collected in Contact Us relates to Ask a Question customer feedback option.
- 99% of all Questions registered are coming via the digital web channel.

- 95% of all Questions are answered within the 5 day target timescale.
- Complaints registrations (1198) under Contact Us have increased by 358% over a 5 year period.
- Compliments registrations (408) under Contact Us appear to show a significant reduction, but this does not include the separately collated compliments data of 515 compliments for Registration Services. This will need to be incorporated into the Contact Us data for following years. 38% of the Compliments registered in Contact Us relate to Communities Group
- There has been a slight increase in Comments registered, probably due to the increased accessibility of the Contact Us system for customers.
- The primary focus of Complaints for all Groups is around services issues but in Communities Group there are also higher levels of disagreement with policy.
- There is a high overall level of compliance with the Council's Complaints timescale targets for the corporate complaints procedures.
- Compliance with statutory targets for Children's Social Care Complaints has increased to 56% - the Council's timescale compliance target for this service is 60%.
- Compliance with targets in Adult Social Care also show a significant improvement at 40% - the target is 60%.
- 96% of all complaints have been resolved locally with 46 complaints escalating to formal investigation or review.
- There have been 10 adverse Local Government Ombudsman decisions relating to services provided by the People Group in the period but none for any other services. For further information see the Local Government & Social Care Ombudsman – Annual Review and Summary of Upheld Complaints report to Cabinet 10th October.
- The Internal Audit Review of Complaints Handling provided a Moderate risk assurance rating for the Council. An action plan has been completed to address learning points.

4 Key Observations:

- Digital transformation is underway with customers enabled and keen to provide their feedback on line and real time recording is available for the first time.
- Lots of work has already been done to make it easier for customers to switch from direct contact to digital self service via our webpages, but there is clearly a great deal more that can be done to develop this even further.
- Managing channel shift and maintaining channel choice for vulnerable customers is challenging and we are gaining experience all the time to help us to do this successfully
- We have asked for significant changes in work practices from our front line staff in implementing the new Contact Us system. There is work still to be

done to support the culture and behavioural changes required to ensure that our staff make the most effective use of the system available.

- One trend identified is the decreasing level of compliments recorded. It is possible that compliment recording is not being prioritised and so are going unregistered. We have emphasised to all Groups the need for more effective recording and a reminder advice and guidance has been provided to system users.
- The registering of complaints has increased. When this is unpicked further, People Group complaints have stayed relatively static but the growth in complaints activity is within the Communities and Resources Groups. Further, these are mainly complaints which have their origin in direct customer contacts so it seems clear that this is a previously “unheard” sector of the public who are feeling encouraged and enabled to make their concerns heard digitally but who for whatever reason do not seem to have been using the channels which were available to do this before.
- This growth in complaints activity has a significant impact on the Council’s capacity and capability to respond within operational services. The Customer Relations Team has also seen a very significant increase in the volume of formal independent investigation requirements and advice and support required for customers and staff. This is being closely managed and monitored.
- Customer expectations are that digital services will have quicker responses than non-digital and there is a real issue about what standards we set and try to maintain in this new environment and how we share these with our customers. We know the following are key basic satisfaction drivers for customers:
 - ✓ Ease of contact
 - ✓ Effective communication during the process
 - ✓ Confidence in the fairness and openness of the process
 - ✓ Timeliness of response
 - ✓ Confidence in the quality of the review and those undertaking it

5. Future Plans:

- **Future functionality of key system:** In 2017 the current Contact Us system is being reviewed to evaluate its successfulness and to determine our future functionality requirements. As part of this process, we will be looking at how to improve the data analysis and reporting capabilities so that we can ensure we are making most effective use of this customer intelligence. A particular focus will be on ensuring we are able to track and monitor learning from customer feedback and that we can obtain more direct feedback from customers about their experience of how we have responded to their feedback. Effective registration of positive feedback will also be strongly encouraged so that there is a balanced reflection of both positive and negative customer feedback.

- **Survey of Complaint Handling:** We will also have the results of our telephone survey of customers who have had their complaints handled by us, and we will be looking to ensure that learning from that process is shared and taken full advantage of to improve our services.
- **Making best use of Customer Insight:** We will also be extending the reach of the customer data we have access to and improving how we analyse and use it to improve our services. In particular, ensuring there is effective dialogue and action arising from learning from complaints to influence future service development and delivery.

Context-setting Data on Customer Contacts with this Council:

	WEB CHANNEL USERS	CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE TELEPHONY	ONE FRONT DOOR OUTLETS	NON DIGITAL FULFILMENT	RECEIVED DIRECTLY TO SERVICE TEAMS
Customer Feedback via Contact Us (including Compliments, Comments, Complaints and Questions) – source: reporting out of Firmstep system for 2016/17	2740	414	47	-	437
Transactions for which there is a digital service solution * fulfilled by the Customer Services Business Unit in 2016/17 – source: CS Business Unit monitoring of channel shift 2016/17	344,489	67,388	208,071	283,247	-
Illustrative data demonstrating the volume of potential customer contact activity across the Council outside of that reported by the Customer Services Business Unit	-	-	-	-	**3,671,247 incoming phone calls ***6,240,000 Current annual total usage activity reported within our google email system

***Digital services fulfilled within the Customer Service Business Unit**

- Home fire safety check
- Copy certificate ordering
- Blue Badge application and renewal
- Pothole report
- Streetlight fault report
- Bridges and culvert fault report
- Concessionary travel bus pass renewal
- Library membership application
- Library item renewal
- Library volunteer application
- Library book request/reservation
- 11+ exam application

** The number of external calls made into all 16 WCC BTS Call Logged sites for the period 01.04.16 to 31.03.17, 24/7, 7 days a week (This figure includes all incoming calls whether answered, busy or unanswered but does not include those sites which are not BTS call-logged. Call logged sites cover the majority of larger WCC sites, such as Shire Hall. This does not include internal to internal calls or outgoing calls.)

*** This overall traffic figure is based on a weekly reported figure of approx. 120,000 email usage, this includes SPAM, and both internal email contacts between officers and outgoing email contacts from officers to external email addresses. More detailed breakdown of email traffic is currently unavailable.

Data by Group

GROUP	VOLUME OF CUSTOMER FEEDBACK					
	QUESTION	COMPLIMENT	COMMENT	COMPLAINT	OTHER*	TOTAL
Communities	776	152	201	514	74	1717
Fire & Rescue	48	2	18	5	1	74
Resources	341	46	66	184	35	672
People	119	34	38	294	35	520
Not designated to a Group	329	174	108	201	33	845
TOTAL	1613	408	431	1198	178	3818

GROUP	NUMBER OF QUESTIONS
Communities	776
People	119
Resources	341
Fire & Rescue	48
Not designated to a Group	329

GROUP	Questions Responded to in Timescale (5 working days)
Communities	96%
People	87%
Resources	93%
Fire & Rescue	90%

GROUP	NUMBER OF COMPLAINTS
Communities	514
People	295
Resources	184
Fire & Rescue	5
Not designated to a Group	201

GROUP	CAUSE FOR COMPLAINT							
	Service Issues	Staff Conduct Issues	Communication Issues	Financial Issues	Discrimination Issues	Physical Environment Issues	Policy Disagreement	Other
Communities	65	30	15	0	0	40	36	264
People	126	19	14	28	0	3	4	86
Resources	48	19	3	0	0	12	8	68
Fire & Rescue	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	2

GROUP	OUTCOME					
	UPHELD	PARTLY UPHELD	NOT UPHELD	WITHDRAWN	TRANSFERRED	OTHER
Communities	31	15	100	8	11	273
People	41	27	66	10	13	99
Resources	33	2	29	11	10	69
Fire & Rescue	1	0	2	0	0	2

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS	
Problem	Learning Improvement
Libraries: Complaint regarding the system used to “cleanse” library card database when cards remain unused for a long period of time.	The complaint highlighted the lack of clear guidance for customers about what happens when a card is not used. Improved information and advice was made available on the Council’s libraries web pages, and staff were reminded about how the system works so that they can explain this clearly to customers who ask about this.
Registrars: Complaint about charges for cancellation of a marriage booking.	The complaint showed that the current information on the web pages needed to be clearer and more easily understood. Changes were made to make sure that customers could be clear about the costs of cancellation.
County Highways/Transport Planning: Complaint was about reinstatement of the highway after work by utility companies.	The Council had, as a gesture of good will, agreed to some remedial works with a customer who was unhappy about the state the highway had been left in. However, it had failed to explain clearly why the remedial works requested by the customer were not appropriate, and what was actually being offered was a good will gesture only. As a consequence, Highways now ensure that any goodwill gestures are clearly explained in writing and the limits of these clearly understood by the customer.
Estates and Smallholdings: Complaint from a prospective tenant about how they responded to his application as a disabled person who was ex-armed services.	The Council identified that there was low levels of awareness of the Armed Forces Covenant across the Council. A significant awareness-raising campaign has been undertaken to promote the Council’s commitment to the Covenant, and to ensure staff are aware of and engage with the Communities Group Localities and Partnerships Team, where there is a specific Armed Forces Covenant Project Officer, and the Equality and Diversity Team in

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS	
Problem	Learning Improvement
	Resources Group.
Adult Social Care: Complaint about financial information on assessment and charges for residential care.	The Council identified some weaknesses in the proper identification and explanation of funding thresholds by front line staff. It is reviewing staff training in this area as part of the Learning and Development Plan for 2017/18.
Children's Social Care: Complaint about how the breakdown of an adoption arrangement was managed.	The Council recognised that part of the difficulty was that the different roles of the Post Adoption Team and the Children's Social Care Team were not clear enough for parents. Written information is now provided to parents about this, and staff are better prepared to explain the differences in their roles.
Waste Management: Complaint about charges made to customer for disposal of a number of fluorescent tubes.	The Council recognised that the current guidance to customers on its web pages regarding the disposal of household waste and any discretionary charges was not clear. The web pages have been updated to make clearer the charging policy for disposal of waste, and listing the conditions and factors that will inform any discretionary charging decisions. Front line staff have also been supported to understand the discretionary factors and their role in determining charges.
Trading Standards: Complaint about level of local response to concerns raised about a product and the way it is being marketed.	The Council recognised that Trading Standards could improve the way it explained to customers the choices it makes about how best to use information given to them by customers, including if it determined the need to refer an issue to a more appropriate alternative investigating Agency. It also recognised the importance to customers of understanding when concerns they have about the way local Trading Standards are responding are formally placed into the Council's complaints procedures. Improved guidance for staff has been issued, and how to improve information to customers is being explored further.
Children's Social Care: Complaint about how foster carers were dealt with when concerns were raised about their practice.	The Council asked the customers to be part of a learning event for staff to look at how to manage information-giving in very sensitive situations, and to enable staff to reflect on the consequences of delays

EXAMPLES OF LEARNING FROM COMPLAINTS

Problem	Learning Improvement
	and miscommunication in such sensitive situations.

GROUP	TIMESCALE TARGETS	TIMESCALE COMPLIANCE	LGO INQUIRIES	ADVERSE LGO DECISIONS
Communities	80%	88%	11	0
People Adult Social Care Children's Social Care	60%	41% 40% 56%	35	10
Resources	80%	72%	1	0
Fire & Rescue	80%	80%	0	0