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**Democratic Services Section
Legal and Civic Services Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

16th February, 2022

MEETING OF STRATEGIC POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following items will also be considered at the meeting to be held remotely at 9.30 a.m. on Friday, 18th February, 2022.

Yours faithfully,

Ronan Cregan

Deputy Chief Executive

AGENDA:

9. Operational Issues

- (e) Minutes of Meeting of Customer Focus Working Group (Pages 1 - 4)
- (f) Addressing Period Poverty (Pages 5 - 6)

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Customer Focus Task and Finish Working Group

Wednesday, 9th February, 2022

CUSTOMER FOCUS TASK AND FINISH WORKING GROUP MINUTES HELD REMOTELY VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Members present: Councillors Black, Bunting and Hutchinson.

In attendance: Mrs. R. Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director;
Mr. P. Gribben, Head of Digital Services;
Ms. C. McCann, Customer Focus Programme Support Assistant;
Mr. C. Quinn, Customer Services Manager;
Mr. P. Patterson, Digital Development Architect;
Mr. G. McErlane, Digital Development Architect;
Mr. J. Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer; and
Ms. C. Donnelly, Democratic Services Officer.

Apologies

An apology for inability to attend was reported for Alderman Rodgers.

Chairperson

In the absence of the Chairperson, the Working Group agreed that Councillor Bunting would Chair the meeting.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 8th September, 2021 were agreed as an accurate record of proceedings.

Declarations of Interest

No Declarations of Interest were reported.

Customer Focus Programme update – operational review of Customer Hub findings and recommendations

The Customer Services Manager provided the Members with an update on the Customer Focus Programme's operations from April 2021. He pointed out that the hub had received 1300 requests for service from Elected Members, 75 percent of which were dealt with within four days, he added that, on average, 36 Members were contacting the hub monthly.

He referred to the independent health check carried out by Navigation Partners to assess the Customer Hub's performance. He highlighted to the Members the initial observations that had been made by Navigation Partners, which included:

- That there were strong committed staff with a dedicated management team;
- Despite challenging delivery timescales during unprecedented times, the Hub had delivered to schedule;
- The customer experience was improving and the services had reached a stabilised phase; and
- That there was opportunity to assess the current positioning and processes to support its growth and drive to effectiveness.

He reported that the recommendations focused on areas where optimisation of customer service could be realised or processes implemented to support the growth of the services, including the following:

- Telephone system changes;
- Operational improvements;
- Service performance;
- Measures and key service performance indicators;
- Process and prioritising change; and
- A repeatable onboarding process.

He outlined actions which were to be taken to manage the fluctuating demand of increased services, including resource planning, forecasting and workforce management, resource requirements meeting demand and the delivery of improvements to knowledge management as part of a new service onboarding process. He updated the Working Group on the key performance indicators (KPIs) for quality and service performance and outlined how the measures undertaken will inform the KPIs.

He detailed the onboarding process by explaining the steps to be undertaken to move from transition to transformation, including scoping the service, managing transition, embedding the service to reach full service design and transformation.

The Customer Services Manager reported that, the Corporate Management Team had updated on the review of the Customer Hub operation and had agreed to note the recommendations and approach set out for the transitioning and transformation of services.

The Customer Focus Programme Director informed the Working Group that Building Control was to be the next service to be onboarded to the Customer Hub which would incorporate a new building control operational system, and that the approach will be reviewed and refined to use as a template to onboard further services to the Customer Hub.

The Working Group noted the update.

Elected Members Blueprint - exploring information needs

The Customer Focus Programme Director outlined to the Working Group how the Customer Focus Programme had been assessing the needs of elected Members in order to tailor the Customer Hub to the needs of the Elected Members.

She informed the Members that the app had been enhanced so that Members would be able to directly contact the officer responsible for each issue. She reported that work had been continuing with services to improve their responsiveness to requests and that the app would allow tracking of issues, to allow Members to monitor the progress of issues raised.

She highlighted that dashboards were being developed for senior officers to provide data on service specific issues and analytics were beginning to be developed. She added that, moving forward, a workshop would be held with Members to assess their needs and that a survey would be carried out for all Members and that the Members' Portal would be reviewed with the Task and Finish Working Group to assist the Elected Members with the day-to-day work with their constituents.

The Task and Finish Working Group noted the update.

Chairperson

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Subject:	Addressing Period Poverty
Date:	18th February, 2022
Reporting Officer:	Ryan Black, Director of Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Margaret Higgins, Lead Officer – Community Provision

Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to provide an outline of possible interventions to address the issue of period poverty.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	<p>The Committee is requested:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. to approve the provision of free sanitary products in designated staff and public toilets; ii. to approve the provision of free sanitary products in identified leisure centres, city centre toilets and parks and open spaces; and iii. to note that work is ongoing with community and voluntary sector partners to address this issue as part of overall approaches to lessen the impact of poverty.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Background</u>
3.1	<p>Members may be aware that the provision of free sanitary products has been a consideration for the Council over the t few years. Officers have considered how best to address this issue within the Council area and brought a report to the Women’s Steering group on 2nd December outlining options. Following consideration of available resources, it is recommended that the following actions should be undertaken by Council;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the provision of free sanitary products in designated staff and public toilets
3.2	<p>Given the costs and anticipated level of use, it is recommended that the Council provides access to free sanitary products in two female bathrooms in both the Cecil Ward and 9 Adelaide buildings, as well as in one female staff bathroom in the City Hall and the accessible bathroom on the ground floor of the City Hall (6 in total). This would not require installation of a vending machine and facilities management staff would ensure stock replenishment.</p>

<p>3.3</p> <p>3.4</p> <p>3.5</p> <p>3.6</p> <p>3.7</p> <p>3.8</p>	<p>There would be minimal cost associated with this element, which could be covered through existing budgets.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to free sanitary products in identified leisure centres, city centre toilets and parks and open spaces that are the most appropriate locations to ensure availability of products for those in greatest need <p>Free to access products will be provided in identified locations for an initial one-year pilot. Officers have identified that providing access in a range of Council facilities (which can be accessed without charge) will allow those who are most in need to access free products. This approach will be reviewed to assess demand and emerging issues and officers will bring back further recommendations to the Committee on whether the scheme should be extended or reviewed, alongside an assessment of associated costs.</p> <p>For a number of years and particularly as part of community responses to the Covid pandemic, community/voluntary and other organisations across the City have and are providing free sanitary products to those in need. This is usually through individual care packs which may include sanitary products, as well as underwear and hygiene products. These care packs are provided to different groups, including rough sleepers, refugees and asylum seekers, people who live in homeless hostels, teenagers living in poverty, people who depend on food banks and community/youth groups.</p> <p>The Council has allocated considerable resources to support this activity in this financial year and anticipates that further resources will be made available from DfC to support this work in the next financial year. In the past number of weeks, the Council has made another allocation of almost £250,000 to support the provision of food and essential supplies. Partners have reported that the cost of sanitary products mean that they are a key need that any response to poverty has to consider.</p> <p>In addition to the areas of work outlined above, the Community Awareness and Waste Education teams are currently developing a business case that will provide a pilot initiative that provides access to free or reduced cost reusable sanitary products. This project will raise awareness and encourage increased use of these products, which will reduce ongoing costs for individuals and also have a benefit to the environment by reducing the amount of sanitary waste that is produced.</p> <p>A further detailed report on this issue will be brought to the People and Communities committee for consideration. Given that this is a new concept, officers anticipate that there will be significant public interest.</p> <p><u>Financial implications</u></p> <p>Costs for the initial pilots can be provided through existing budgets so there is no requirement for an additional financial resource at this stage. Further detail on ongoing costs will be provided following the review of the pilot.</p> <p><u>Equality, Good Relations or Rural Needs implications</u></p> <p>Many of the individuals who would benefit from this project are from S75 groups, in designing the project, consideration will be given to ensuring access to all groups.</p>
<p>4.0</p>	<p>Documents Attached</p>
<p>4.1</p>	<p>None</p>