



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Update on Customer Focus Programme</b>
<b>Date:</b>	21st May, 2021
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	Ronan Cregan, Deputy Chief Executive, Director of Finance & Resources
<b>Contact Officer:</b>	Rose Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues</b>
1.1	Members are reminded that, in February 2021, they received an update on the Customer Focus Programme which included plans for a new Customer Hub function to be operational from 29 March 2021.
1.2	This report provides Committee with an update on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the implementation of the Customer Hub; and</li><li>• the development of an Elected Members' mobile app and plans for roll out of the app to all Members.</li></ul>
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Members of the Committee are asked to recommend that, in accordance with the Council decision of 4 <sup>th</sup> May 2021, the Chief Executive exercise her delegated authority to:  1. note the update on the implementation of the Customer Hub function;

	<p>2. note the update on the development of a mobile application for Elected Members and plans to roll this out to all members starting in June 2021; and</p> <p>3. agree that Party Group briefings be held in June 2021 to obtain Members' feedback on their Customer Hub experience and to promote use of the new mobile app.</p>
3.0	<b>Main Report</b>
3.1	<p><b><u>Background</u></b></p> <p>Our vision of customer focused services and associated blueprint for the Customer Hub were presented at the May 2020 Committee meeting and aim to ensure that we deliver:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Optimised customer contact – professionalising resources and providing modern digital and telephony systems with access to real time data on contact performance</li> <li>• Channel shift – moving where possible to digitally enabled self-serve solutions</li> <li>• Customer centricity – designing our services around the needs of our customers.</li> </ul>
3.2	<p>The Customer Hub blueprint attached at <b>Appendix 1</b> remains as is, putting our customers at the heart of everything, ensuring we provide a consistent and professional service, affording our customers choice and convenience. This means improving and aligning all our access to service channels – telephone, face to face, website, and social media.</p>
3.3	<p>As part of this blueprint, the Customer Hub operation went live as planned on 29 March 2021. The Customer Hub operation consists of 16FTEs covering from 8am to 6pm, Monday to Friday, as a hybrid team working from Cecil Ward Building and from home, providing a first point of contact for a range of customers.</p>
3.4	<p>The first phase of this new function deals with customer contact for all departments and services, across a number of channels (online, telephone, email). Initially the hub will manage all customer contact for cleansing/waste and calls formerly through the main switchboard and corporate complaints numbers. All other direct dial telephone numbers remain unchanged.</p>
3.5	<p>As part of the blueprint for Elected Members attached at <b>Appendix 2</b>, the Customer Hub provides specific services for Elected Members in the form of a direct phone line and email account and both these channels also went live on 29th March 2021.</p>

### **Implementation of the Customer Hub Function**

3.6 Preparation for implementation of the Customer Hub intensified from January 2021 to March 2021, completing the initial establishment of staff, filling 16 posts; development of systems and processes and delivery of training and development.

3.7 The first six weeks of operation have seen some challenges with double and single bank holidays which traditionally are followed by high call volumes.

### **Resources and Capacity**

3.8 Planning for the Customer Hub anticipated call volumes in the region of 750 per day however actual call volumes in the first weeks of operation have been significantly higher. Day one of operation saw 1,049 calls and the day after the double bank holiday at Easter we received more than 1,600 calls. Email traffic has also been high accounting for one third of overall contacts. **Appendix 3** provides an analysis of the Customer Hub throughput for the month of April 2021.

3.9 Because call volumes have been higher than anticipated we have been closely monitoring call queues, prioritising them and assessing the impact on staffing requirements.

3.10 Over these first few weeks of operation there have been resource constraints due to staff being recruited to other jobs and absence, coupled with a high demand for services. To achieve operational stability we have used temporary staff as an interim measure and are in the process of increasing and extending these arrangements whilst backfilling or recruiting temporary posts for a period of 6 months. We have also brought forward the recruitment of an additional 2 permanent posts within the agreed establishment.

3.11 Integral to this formative stage has been the inclusion of staff and Trade Unions in understanding the impact on staffing requirements during the transition and the early stages of operating the new Customer Hub.

### **Hand offs to Departments/Services**

3.12 Work has been completed to co-design processes including the handoff from customer hub to services in other departments. The implementation initially is on a 'wide and thin' basis i.e. a basic level of information and signposting for customers is provided at the first point of contact for all services across all channels. Handoffs processes have worked well in general and are being refined as issues arise.

**Dedicated Services for Elected Members**

3.13 As stated, the Customer Hub went live with specific services designed for elected members – a dedicated telephone line and email account. In the first month of operation one or both of these channels have been used by 40 elected members. A profile of elected members engagement can be found at **Appendix 4**.

**A mobile App designed and developed for Elected Members**

3.14 We continue to work with the Customer Focus Task and Finish group of Elected Members to develop a third contact channel, a mobile application which will enable members to raise issues, keep track of their cases and review their history of cases.

3.15 A prototype app was developed which members of the Task and Finish group have tested and at a recent workshop the group fed back on their experience and recommendations for improvement. We are grateful to elected members for their time and input to the development process. The app has been developed by Digital Services who are currently making changes based on members’ feedback before making the first version of the app available to all members.

**Our approach to rolling out the app**

3.16 A briefing note was recently issued to Party Group Leaders setting out the approach to rolling out the members’ app. This will be followed by a note to all members asking members to book a slot with Digital Services Trainers from week beginning 7 June 2021. Each slot will be used to facilitate members downloading the app and receiving training on use of the app. Two Digital Services Trainers will be involved in this process, with each Trainer providing continuing support to their group of members. This approach was successfully used by Digital Services to roll out MS Teams to elected members.

**Further Engagement with Elected Members**

3.17 It is proposed that a series of Party Group briefings should take place during June 2021. The purpose of the Party Group briefings would be to engage with elected members to get their feedback on their Customer Hub experience to date to enable the Customer Focus team to inform service improvements and to facilitate a demo and promotion of the new Elected Members’ app.

<b>4.0</b>	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b>
4.1	<p>The Committee agreed, in November 2017, that a budget of £500k be set aside for the customer focus project.</p> <p>Resource requirements for operation of the Customer Hub are provided for within existing Budgets.</p>
<b>5.0</b>	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></b>
5.1	No implications
<b>6.0</b>	<b><u>Documents Attached</u></b>
	<p>Appendix 1 Customer Hub Blueprint</p> <p>Appendix 2 Elected Members Blueprint</p> <p>Appendix 3 Customer Hub Dashboard</p> <p>Appendix 4 Profile of Elected Members engagement with the Customer Hub</p>