

**REPORT OF SERVICE DIRECTOR – CUSTOMERS, GOVERNANCE AND  
EMPLOYEES****PERFORMANCE UPDATE AND CHANGES TO THE CUSTOMER SERVICE  
CENTRE OPERATING MODEL****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to provide Committee with:
  - a) A performance overview of the work and support provided by the Customer Service Teams to support COVID and Council services over the financial year.
  - b) Information about the lessons learned and changes that have been made to ensure that there is, and continues to be enough flexibility, resource and resilience in place to manage the continued demand on the team this year and in previous years, particularly for the most vulnerable residents.
  - c) To seek approval from members to agree the new operating model and structure and establish the changed and new posts required to ensure the team can continue to support departmental and external demands, remain flexible and have resilience in place to be able to quickly react to change and emergency situations.

**Information****Performance Information**

2. The Customer Service team has been challenged with increases in demand from departments (changes), increases in overall demand and to support development that will drive channel shift and self-service.
3. Last year, and this year, the team have also been challenged with several emergency situations relating to weather which is not a new thing. Each year the team have worked hard to balance resources and demand and manage this within budget. For the last 5 years this has been a struggle and demand from customers and departments has often outstripped resources - and this is likely to continue, putting more pressure on the team which would impact service levels and delay the technical work required to drive self-service and make us more efficient.
4. Over the last few years, the team dealt with several emergency flooding situations and associated payment requests. Other service-related demands were also supported and each year there are more and more 'emergency' situations which have required support. The team,

historically, has had some resilience in place to be able to provide the required support. However, budget reductions and demand increases have tipped that balance, with resources now so tight that the team's resilience, flexibility and ability to manage demand has reduced over time and this is now at a critical level.

5. This year the team have been faced with the most challenging year to date.
6. COVID-19 support provided by the team has been outstanding. The team pulled together (with a lot of financial support from Public Health) and continued to keep the front door open for business but have also provided extensive support for the most extremely vulnerable residents, when they needed it most.
7. The Design and Build Team have been making changes to services and processes, in real time and as the organisational needs developed. They reacted to service requests and changes to service delivery with speed and expertise, enabling seamless service delivery.
8. The team have always been open to change and agile to react however the last 3 years have been particularly challenging.
9. A snapshot of the volumes and performance is provided below (See Appendix 1 CSC Performance and Lessons Learned for full details):

VOLUME	TYPE	CONTEXT
>67,000 calls	Clinically extremely vulnerable (CEV)	Inbound and outbound calls to the vulnerable to offer support during the pandemic (1 <sup>st</sup> 2 <sup>nd</sup> and 3 <sup>rd</sup> lockdowns) and during recent flooding. Arranging food, support and medication for those shielding.
>2500 hours	Overtime	Working additional hours, weekends and bank holidays to ensure no-one was left without support.
>4000 calls	Test and Trace	Since October the team have been supporting the government to collate contact information and to trace those who have been in contact with positive test cases. More recently the team have also picked up support for Lateral Flow Tests being completed across Nottinghamshire.
>4100 Social Media responses	All things COVID related	Responding to and supporting requests and questions that came in via Facebook and Twitter.
>4800 change requests	Process and systems changes	The Design and Build team supported the development of many

		new processes as services changed their offers during the pandemic. These included changes to call routing, development of the Volunteer Support hub and the design and build of many new online forms and processes.
>10,000	NHS vaccination enquiries support via phone and email (forecast year-end)	The team began supporting the NHS in the last week of January, with 1700 calls and emails in the first 3 days. Feedback on the support provided has been exceptional with >88% being resolved within the first call.
>4600	Supporting vaccination appointments for care staff	Vaccination calls and booking appointments for: care staff working in commissioned service delivery; foster parents; Carers, Personal assistants and other essential frontline workers.
>667,000 contacts	Overall enquiries, across all channels (forecast year-end)	Significantly higher than in previous years.

## Lessons Learned

10. Some key lessons have been learned from previous years and from 2020/21 which has been an exceptional year:

- a) There was a need to react quickly and to break down barriers ***and this happened.***
- b) When everyone puts their mind to it and have a common goal, we can achieve magnificent things.
- c) The Customer Service team have been outstanding and are very passionate about the work they do and work as one team.
- d) The team can be relied upon to deliver whatever has been asked of them.
- e) The pandemic has enabled the team to review processes and structures and implement an operating model that works well and can flex to emergency situations quickly and efficiently.
- f) Everyone has been committed, tolerant, supportive and understanding of each other's needs, putting their own personal circumstances aside to simply get on with the job. They are also very proud of their achievements throughout the pandemic.
- g) Recruitment and training had to be changed and delivered in a more flexible and interactive way – this is now working well. This now needs to be built upon by the new Training team and embedded into the way the team now work.
- h) The management team have provided invaluable support to staff to ensure they were kept updated regularly, fully briefed and had some time out when everything became too much. They increased 1-2-1 support, kept in touch regularly and ensured all the team needs have

been met in terms of working at home equipment. The team and their wellbeing are very important to the management team – they are the lifeblood of the centre.

## **Rationale for change**

11. A number of points have fed into the changes to the operating model and structure:

- a) The Customer Service Centre (CSC) has been open 12 years with volumes and demand continuing to increase each year. The centre's enquiry levels have grown from 250,000 to 606,000 last year (121% increase in demand).
- b) Since 2010 the customer service budget has reduced by over 50%.
- c) This year demand has been even higher due to COVID-19 support requests with a forecast of over 667,000 enquiries.
- d) Service redesign and change requests continue to be required and technical staff.
- e) Complaints and Information requests are now part of the overall Customer Service team.

12. The CSC budget has been overspent for the past 3 years which has meant delays in change being delivered and a push back on some requests which has not been ideal. This is due to the following:

- a) Increases in demand and the work the team are being asked to support in emergency situations (flooding, legislation changes, weather related and flood support grants).
- b) A 10% increase each year in adult social care work along with an increase in the last 2 years of >3 minutes in the overall call duration (CSC take over 120,000 calls for Adults).
- c) The team are carrying out far more complex work and triage has increased for ASCH (adoption of strengths-based approach and 3-conversation model). This has meant that more requests for support have been resolved at the first point of contact for social care from 67% to 80% (Note: 120,000 calls p.a. with 3 additional minutes each equates to 6 FTE over a 12-month period).
- d) Additional work has also been absorbed to support children's social care.
- e) There has also been increases in transactional call volumes for Schools and Registration.
- f) Additional pressures and demand have meant that our Design and Build team have not spent the amount of time they needed on 'progress' and driving self-service.
- g) Changes to legislation in 2018 increased the number of Blue Badge enquiries received and their complexity (hidden disability applications).

13. Along with Customer Service volumes the Design and Build team are being asked to support council-wide with technical support to:

- a) Develop and redesign new processes (online and at the CSC).
- b) Design and build new online forms and solutions to drive self-service.
- c) Manage web changes and support with Accessibility project work.
- d) Develop and support the new Community Hub and COVIZ (Public Health system to support, log and provide data relating to Test and Trace) with improvements and changes.
- e) Develop, design and build a Members hub to support members to access important information quickly and easily (work underway).
- f) Manage and co-ordinate text solutions (used extensively across COVID contacts and being adopted more and more to support service delivery).

## New Operating Model and Structure

14. In October members sanctioned additional funding for the CSC (£300k) to provide the CSC with the additional resources required to balance resources, flexibility against being able to manage demand. It is effective from April 2021. This will ensure the team have sufficient enough funding in place to build upon what is already a very solid foundation. It will provide:
  - a) Resources to be able to plan effectively and drive self-service.
  - b) Technical expertise and resources in place to provide a timely response to development requests and process changes.
  - c) A team who can continue to provide exceptional support to residents and internal departments/services.
  - d) The ability and resources in place to be able to flex quickly to support emergency situations.
15. During 2020 the team implemented a new temporary Operating Model that ensured there were sufficient resources to have the right people in the right roles to be able to respond quickly to the many changes and challenges faced.
16. This new model consists of two teams:
  - a) **Operational Delivery** – Frontline workers responsible for frontline service delivery, this includes support for social care, transactional enquiries and complaints and information requests – across all channels (phone, social media, email, SMS).
  - b) **Design Build and Support team** - This team is responsible for all change requests, process redesign, call centre systems, My NottsApp, Staff training, development and induction, basically everything to ensure operational delivery happens.
17. The model works well (as shown in the performance over the last 12 months) and delivers the resilience to support demand and change, along with the ability to respond quickly and effectively to any emergency situations in the future. It also provides sufficient frontline delivery staff and ensures customer satisfaction remains high (See Appendix 2 - Structure).
18. Changes being made within the new base budget from April 2021 will enable teams to implement the new internal operating model and establish new posts. This new model will:
  - Rationalise the support functions by merging the Design and Build team, the Training and Development team and Customer Support team under one manager to maximise support for the centre and to develop and enhance the technical capabilities within these teams.
  - Establish 8 new advisor and 1 Team Leader post to support demand and to ensure there is continued support and resilience in place to quickly respond to emergencies.
  - Create and implement the internal Training and Development team to train and develop new and existing staff. They will continue to establish creative new ways to train, induct and coach staff virtually and (safely) in-house. This team will also scope training programmes to support the ongoing development of the Customer Service team. This team played a key role this year to ensure staff are knowledgeable, customer focussed and have the right information available in order to provide timely and accurate advice and guidance.
  - Establish an additional post within the Design and Build team, Lead Technical Officer, who will be responsible for the support and development of the team technically, drive the self-

service agenda, manage priorities and resource availability and ensure technical projects are kept on track.

<b>Role and number</b>	<b>Salary</b>
Lead Technical Specialist x 1 (Band B)	£32,234
Team Leader x 1 (Band A)	£27,741
Level 2 Social Care Advisors x 6 (Grade 4)	£21,748 ( <b>Total £130,488</b> )
Level 3 Transactional Advisors x 2 (Grade 3)	£19,312 ( <b>Total £38,624</b> )
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£229,087</b>

### **Other Options Considered**

19. The Pre-Covid model was considered, however reverting to this model would not allow the flexibility and speed of delivery that is required within the 'new world' and the way the organisation is likely to continue to work in the future. This would be a backward step and would not build on the learning, great work and solutions put in place during the pandemic.

### **Reasons for Recommendation**

20. The Customer Service Team pride themselves on the service they provide and wish to continue to provide an improved service for the people of Nottinghamshire. Over the years the team have always strived to ensure this is done in the most cost-effective way possible.
21. The additional advisor capacity that the proposed changes would create will enable customer service to manage increased volumes effectively across all areas, ASCH, Blue Badges, Registration Services and School Admissions (where volumes continue to rise).
22. Merging the Design and Build team and support functions under one manager and the addition of other resources will give more resilience and support for process changes, driving self-service and digitalisation, supporting the new accessibility legislation and developing and improving technical solutions (e.g. System integration, Online support hub, Webchat and the roll out of text solutions).

### **Statutory and Policy Implications**

23. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, data protection and information governance, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, service users, smarter working, sustainability and the environment and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Data Protection and Information Governance**

24. There are no data protection or GDPR issues arising from this report as all the information contained is generic and cannot be attributed to individual employees.

## **Financial Implications**

25. The changes are in line with the Customer Service Budget (including additional agreed budget sanctioned for ongoing resilience, stability and flexibility) for 2021/22.

## **Human Resources Implications**

26. The new model will create opportunities for permanent and temporary staff at the CSC. There are no adverse impacts on staffing.

## **Safeguarding of Children and Adults at Risk Implications**

27. There will be more capacity available to take and manage these enquiries, particularly to support Public Health, Adults and Children's social care.

## **Implications for Service Users**

28. Current customer satisfaction levels will be maintained and potentially increased as there will be more capacity to manage seasonal peaks, emergency situations and increased demand during 2021/22.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

1) That members agree to approve the new posts, revised structure and operating model, as set out in Appendix 2 effective from April 2021.

**Marjorie Toward**

**Service Director – Customers, Governance and Employees  
Chief Executives Department**

**For any enquiries about this report please contact:**

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## **Constitutional Comments (GR 04/02/21)**

29. Pursuant to the Nottinghamshire County Council constitution, this Committee has the delegated authority to consider the content of this report and to make the recommendations contained within it – subject to all appropriate consultation having taken place in accordance with the Employment Procedure rules where applicable.

### **Financial Comments (SES 05/02/21)**

30. The financial implications are set out in paragraph 25 of the report. The changes are in line with the Customer Service Budget (including the additional budget for pressures and resilience of £300,000) for 2021/22.

### **Human Resources Comments (JP 08/02/21)**

31. The revised structure and any new posts have been subject to review by the Job Evaluation Team. Recruitment to additional posts will follow the Authority's Recruitment and HR procedures.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

- None

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

- All