

Our Council Transitional Committee

Thursday 10 March 2022 at 4.00 pm

To be held at the Town Hall,
Pinstone Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH

The Press and Public are Welcome to Attend

Membership

Councillor Dawn Dale
Councillor Zahira Naz
Councillor Christine Gilligan
Councillor Penny Baker
Councillor Simon Clement-
Jones
Councillor Julie Grocutt
Councillor Bryan Lodge
Councillor Cate McDonald
Councillor Colin Ross
Councillor Kaltum Rivers

PUBLIC ACCESS TO THE MEETING

A copy of the agenda and reports is available on the Council's website at www.sheffield.gov.uk . You may not be allowed to see some reports because they contain confidential information. These items are usually marked * on the agenda.

Members of the public have the right to ask questions or submit petitions to Transitional Committee meetings and recording is allowed under the direction of the Chair. Please see the [website](#) or contact Democratic Services for further information regarding public questions and petitions and details of the Council's protocol on audio/visual recording and photography at council meetings.

PLEASE NOTE: Meetings of the Transitional Committee have to be held as physical meetings. If you would like to attend the meeting, you must register to attend by emailing committee@sheffield.gov.uk at least 2 clear days in advance of the date of the meeting. This is necessary to facilitate the management of attendance at the meeting to maintain social distancing. In order to ensure safe access and to protect all attendees, you will be asked to wear a face covering (unless you have an exemption) at all times when moving about within the venue.

It is also recommended that you undertake a Covid-19 Rapid Lateral Flow Test within two days of the meeting. You can order tests online to be delivered to your home address, or you can collect tests from a local pharmacy. Further details of these tests and how to obtain them can be accessed here - Order coronavirus (COVID-19) rapid lateral flow tests - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk). We are unable to guarantee entrance to observers, as priority will be given to registered speakers. Alternatively, you can observe the meeting remotely by clicking on the 'view the webcast' link provided on the meeting page of the website.

If you require any further information please contact Rachel Marshall email rachel.marshall@sheffield.gov.uk

**OUR COUNCIL TRANSITIONAL COMMITTEE AGENDA
10 MARCH 2022**

Order of Business

- 1. Welcome and Housekeeping Arrangements**
- 2. Apologies for Absence**
- 3. Exclusion of Public and Press**
To identify items where resolutions may be moved to exclude the press and public
- 4. Declarations of Interest** (Pages 5 - 8)
Members to declare any interests they have in the business to be considered at the meeting
- 5. Minutes of Previous Meeting** (Pages 9 - 12)
To approve the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10th February 2022.
- 6. Public Questions and Petitions**
To receive any questions or petitions from members of the public
- 7. Customer Experience Strategic Review** (Pages 13 - 40)
Report of Policy and Improvement Officer
- 8. Our Council Transitional Committee Activity Report March 2022** (Pages 41 - 44)
Report of Policy and Improvement Officer.

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ADVICE TO MEMBERS ON DECLARING INTERESTS AT MEETINGS

If you are present at a meeting of the Council, of its executive or any committee of the executive, or of any committee, sub-committee, joint committee, or joint sub-committee of the authority, and you have a **Disclosable Pecuniary Interest (DPI)** relating to any business that will be considered at the meeting, you must not:

- participate in any discussion of the business at the meeting, or if you become aware of your Disclosable Pecuniary Interest during the meeting, participate further in any discussion of the business, or
- participate in any vote or further vote taken on the matter at the meeting.

These prohibitions apply to any form of participation, including speaking as a member of the public.

You **must**:

- leave the room (in accordance with the Members' Code of Conduct)
- make a verbal declaration of the existence and nature of any DPI at any meeting at which you are present at which an item of business which affects or relates to the subject matter of that interest is under consideration, at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.
- declare it to the meeting and notify the Council's Monitoring Officer within 28 days, if the DPI is not already registered.

If you have any of the following pecuniary interests, they are your **disclosable pecuniary interests** under the new national rules. You have a pecuniary interest if you, or your spouse or civil partner, have a pecuniary interest.

- Any employment, office, trade, profession or vocation carried on for profit or gain, which you, or your spouse or civil partner undertakes.
- Any payment or provision of any other financial benefit (other than from your council or authority) made or provided within the relevant period* in respect of any expenses incurred by you in carrying out duties as a member, or towards your election expenses. This includes any payment or financial benefit from a trade union within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992.

*The relevant period is the 12 months ending on the day when you tell the Monitoring Officer about your disclosable pecuniary interests.

- Any contract which is made between you, or your spouse or your civil partner (or a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest) and your council or authority –
 - under which goods or services are to be provided or works are to be executed; and
 - which has not been fully discharged.

- Any beneficial interest in land which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, have and which is within the area of your council or authority.
- Any licence (alone or jointly with others) which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, holds to occupy land in the area of your council or authority for a month or longer.
- Any tenancy where (to your knowledge) –
 - the landlord is your council or authority; and
 - the tenant is a body in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest.
- Any beneficial interest which you, or your spouse or your civil partner has in securities of a body where -
 - (a) that body (to your knowledge) has a place of business or land in the area of your council or authority; and
 - (b) either -
 - the total nominal value of the securities exceeds £25,000 or one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that body; or
 - if the share capital of that body is of more than one class, the total nominal value of the shares of any one class in which you, or your spouse or your civil partner, has a beneficial interest exceeds one hundredth of the total issued share capital of that class.

If you attend a meeting at which any item of business is to be considered and you are aware that you have a **personal interest** in the matter which does not amount to a DPI, you must make verbal declaration of the existence and nature of that interest at or before the consideration of the item of business or as soon as the interest becomes apparent. You should leave the room if your continued presence is incompatible with the 7 Principles of Public Life (selflessness; integrity; objectivity; accountability; openness; honesty; and leadership).

You have a personal interest where –

- a decision in relation to that business might reasonably be regarded as affecting the well-being or financial standing (including interests in land and easements over land) of you or a member of your family or a person or an organisation with whom you have a close association to a greater extent than it would affect the majority of the Council Tax payers, ratepayers or inhabitants of the ward or electoral area for which you have been elected or otherwise of the Authority's administrative area, or
- it relates to or is likely to affect any of the interests that are defined as DPIs but are in respect of a member of your family (other than a partner) or a person with whom you have a close association.

Guidance on declarations of interest, incorporating regulations published by the Government in relation to Disclosable Pecuniary Interests, has been circulated to you previously.

You should identify any potential interest you may have relating to business to be considered at the meeting. This will help you and anyone that you ask for advice to fully consider all the circumstances before deciding what action you should take.

In certain circumstances the Council may grant a **dispensation** to permit a Member to take part in the business of the Authority even if the member has a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest relating to that business.

To obtain a dispensation, you must write to the Monitoring Officer at least 48 hours before the meeting in question, explaining why a dispensation is sought and desirable, and specifying the period of time for which it is sought. The Monitoring Officer may consult with the Independent Person or the Council's Audit and Standards Committee in relation to a request for dispensation.

Further advice can be obtained from Gillian Duckworth, Director of Legal and Governance on 0114 2734018 or email gillian.duckworth@sheffield.gov.uk.

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Our Council Transitional Committee

Meeting held 10 February 2022

PRESENT: Councillors Dawn Dale (Chair), Zahira Naz (Chair), Christine Gilligan (Deputy Chair), Penny Baker, Bryan Lodge, Cate McDonald, Colin Ross, Barbara Masters (Substitute Member) and Kaltum Rivers

Non-Council Members in attendance:-

Eugene Walker – Executive Director of Resources
Alice Nicholson – Policy & Improvement Officer
Elyse Senior Wadsworth – Head of Business Strategy and One Year Plan Theme Lead
Paul Taylor – Head of Customer Services.
Rachel Marshall – Principal Committee Secretary

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1. WELCOME AND HOUSEKEEPING

1.1 Welcome and housekeeping arrangements were explained.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bryan Lodge and Councillor Julie Grocutt.

3. EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS

3.1 No items were identified where resolutions may be moved to exclude the public and press.

4. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

4.1 There were no declarations of interest.

5. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

5.1 Minutes of previous meeting held on 7 July 2021 were agreed to be a true record.

6. PUBLIC QUESTIONS AND PETITIONS

6.1 There were no public questions or petitions.

7. CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS AND EXPECTATIONS

- 7.1 The Committee received a report of Eugene Walker, Executive Director of Resources setting out the 2 main application of standards and how they can help to improving customer experience.
- 7.2 Present for this item was Elyse Senior-Wadsworth (Head of Business Strategy and One Year Plan Theme Lead) and Paul Taylor (Head of Customer Services). It was acknowledged that the current standard being offered to customers is below expectation and the Committee have been asked to use their knowledge and experience to describe the future experience of a customer, what their ambitions are for customers so that Council officers deliver improvements that make steps towards an ambitious commitment to customers. Identify any gaps in knowledge and understanding.
- 7.3 The report contained information on Customer Focus – New Beginnings. It highlighted the significant improvements to be made, knowing what ‘good’ would look like, the Role of Standards, the LGA Peer Review, Getting it Right, Members Steering the Vision and Members setting the right application of Quality of Standards.
- 7.4 A presentation was also shared and contained slides on shaping the future, who the customers are, accessible services and future steps.
- 7.5 Members of the Committee made the following suggestions:
- To make use of the technology available, look at reducing the volume of calls, log housing repairs via a designated online system, keep customers informed if someone is not able to attend a repair, phase sending out communications to reduce call volumes in any one day, ensure communications arrive before weekends, use mobile phones or voice activated systems to allows customers to book time slots for a call back, access a service within a reasonable time frame of 15 minutes, build in efficient and continuous data management, share caseloads between officers so staff absence does not delay a service, give customers reference numbers to act as a unique identifier to their query, communicate a response time, do not promise on things which cannot be delivered.
 - Form a set of overarching principles of how people are treated throughout the whole of the service.
 - Explore a phased approach to targeted work so that by the end of the 3 years the right standard is implemented across the organisation.
 - Look at where other councils have got things right and to look at some positive examples of good practice within SCC and to learn from previous mistakes.
 - Provide some statistics around wait times and call volumes and potentially use a chat feature to filter out some volume of queries.

It was recognised by Members that officers are working hard and that this piece of work is to explore the systems that need to change in order to provide support to allow them to do their jobs.

- 7.6 The following responses were given:
- The LGA peer review highlighted a lot of improvements that are to be made. An initial starting point should be made where there will be a greater

impact. It was highlighted that by gaining an insight into the customers experiences will help reshape the service to meet customer needs and that the correct use of technology can be explored. It was noted that having measurable and reasonable standards is important.

- It was stated that moving to a qualitative approach is also important i.e dealing with customer queries in one go as opposed to rushing, which could result in further call backs. Technological improvements are being explored and for those customers that can access technology would help clear the queues for those that cannot.
- A designated repair line would still be presented with similar challenges due to the same resources but could potentially be made smoother by getting through more quickly.
- It was explained that by using a standards framework for the whole organisation, an improved service and experience would be delivered.
- It was explained that the data management would need to be improved by looking at how contacts are managed for a continuous experience for customers and looking at how to improve the connectivity of core council systems. A customer portal and the costs to this are currently being explored. It would be the hope that customers could create an account and track the progress of their queries.
- It was suggested to look at other areas of the council where learning has taken place and apply this into creating standards.
- It was explained that it is important to establish who the customers are when setting standards and this can be as broad as people who live, work and visit the city. It is thought that there is approximately a 3-year work plan concerning this piece of work and establishing a starting point is important.
- It was noted that setting expectations which can be achieved is also important as is the importance around accessible services and inclusivity.
- The industry standard framework standards in the report were referred to and Members were asked to explore which ones would be best to adapt moving forwards. It was explained that there is the hope to use the self-assessment tool to provide feedback to Members at the next meeting.
- Members were also asked for their suggestions to collate 'Postcards from the Future'.
- It was explained that benchmarking is taking place from work with other authorities including Birmingham, Leeds and Cardiff. It was stated that compliments are being captured and recorded where possible.
- It was stated that a web chat feature is on the verge of being released which will hopefully reduce volumes of calls and queries. Other web chat features and functionality are also being explored.
- Members were welcomed to come and listen in at the contact centre to get a feel for what is said.
- The ripple of effects of the pandemic were explained.

7.7 RESOLVED: That the Committee:-

- a. Set some overarching principles about how customers are treated in initial phases.

- b. Look at targeted work in key areas of concerns with the highest level of issues.
- c. (i) Specific Members to work with officers prior to the next meeting to formulate a report ready for the next meeting.
(ii) Alice Nicholson to arrange a session for Members and officers.

8. DRAFT WORK PLAN

8.1 The Committee received a report of the Policy and Improvement Officer on the Draft Work Plan.

8.2 Present for this item was Alice Nicholson (Policy and Improvement Officer). The report contained information on the work plan of the Committee, that has included the Future Approach to Priority Budgeting, Customer Experience and Performance Management.

It was suggested that the Committee continues doing some more work in relation to customer service standards and expectations as a workgroup and that this be the core agenda item for the 10th March meeting.

8.3 **RESOLVED:** That the Committee:-

Continue with the work around customer service standards and expectations, and this be brought to the last meeting on 10th March for consideration.



Report to Our Council Transitional Committee 10th March 2022

Report of: Policy & Improvement Officer

Subject: Customer Experience and Customer Service

Author of Report: Alice Nicholson
alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk

This Committee's focus of work was around Customer Experience and Customer Service, to advise on how we can deliver the One Year Plan commitment to improve customer experience. The Committee carried this out through a whole Committee briefing, workgroup evidence sessions, to determine what standards and expectations should look like. With this final session to advise and inform the ongoing work of the Council's Customer Service review.

The main paper for Committee consideration under this item is "*Our Council Transitional Committee – Strategic Review – Customer Focus*" and two appendices to that.

The Committee is being asked to:

Note the report appended to the papers "*Our Council Transitional Committee – Strategic Review – Customer Focus*" agree the recommendations in Section 5 of that report be fed into the Strategic Review of Customer Experience, and the recommendations form the basis of handover from the Chair of Our Council Transitional Committee to the appropriate Committee and Committee Chair in the New Committee System from May 2022

Background Papers: Sheffield Council Constitution
Category of Report: OPEN/CLOSED

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1. Background and Context

Customers in all their guises are the primary reason we all work in public service, whether that be on an individual experience level or accumulative impacts across groups and communities. Yet resoundingly the quality and / or timeliness of customer contact is all too often not good enough and, in some areas, a significant issue. This is seen in our performance data but also the increasing voice and challenge of elected members.

Building on the work of the Committee this report sets out what the key workstreams of activity will be to shape a fundamentally better offer to customers and some recommendations. These recommendations will be fed into the Strategic Review of Customer Experience but also form the basis of the handover from Cllr Dawn Dale as chair of the Our Council transitional committee and the Committee Chair in the Committee System following May's elections.

Through an unprecedented degree of change and financial pressure we need to ensure that through these very difficult months that what comes through is a renewed and cross council commitment to our customers.

The Council's customer base is broad and should be thought of in distinctly different groups.

- Universal customers (waste management, council tax, voters)
- Key customer groups (tenants, job applicants, residents receiving social care services, parents)
- Customers who experience barriers in how they can access Council Services
- Customers who we identify (where we assess or determine via enforcement)
- Internal customers – how we work together for our customers

We will use insight to understand our customers and the challenges they face. Our services will be well designed and developed using innovative technologies and delivered in a way that meets our customer needs and enhances *their* experience of dealing with us.

In addition to the public meetings of the Our Council Transitional Committee representatives of the committee have met with officers to do detailed workshops style activity for further shape the approach and recommendations. These were held on the 3rd, 18th and 25th of February.

2. Considerations

Finance

There are no financial savings identified for 22/23 linked to the Strategic Review. Being financially sustainable in the future however demands that duplication, waste, and inefficiency is removed, and all customer journeys meet the Good Service Guide criteria and are subject to continuous improvement.

Lessons Learnt and building on strengths

Our Council Transitional Committee – Strategic Review – Customer Focus

Customer Experience Programme was paused earlier in 2021. Evaluation of this has been done and although there were significant strengths as well as learning the programme did not deliver the ambition it embodied. Large scale delivery has not delivered the required outcomes.

LGA Peer Review finding;

‘Multiple well-intentioned efforts to address the challenges have been undertaken over the years but not had the desired outcome. For SCC to make meaningful inroads it will require a dedicated focus, organisational buy-in, culture change and investment – of both time and resources – to break down siloed approach to customers and transform services’

What comes next must build on the lessons learnt and the detailed insight gathered – but move forward at pace. The customer insight, areas of improvement already developed have been built into this review approach to make sure we use everything that is helpful from previous work. There are many strengths which can be read in the LGA Peer Review findings – **appendix 1**

Members have throughout their challenge to senior officers to make improvements been clear in the recognition and admiration of frontline staff and colleagues working hard to make things better. Improvements are at a system level across services and improvements should also make the day-to-day experience of staff better.

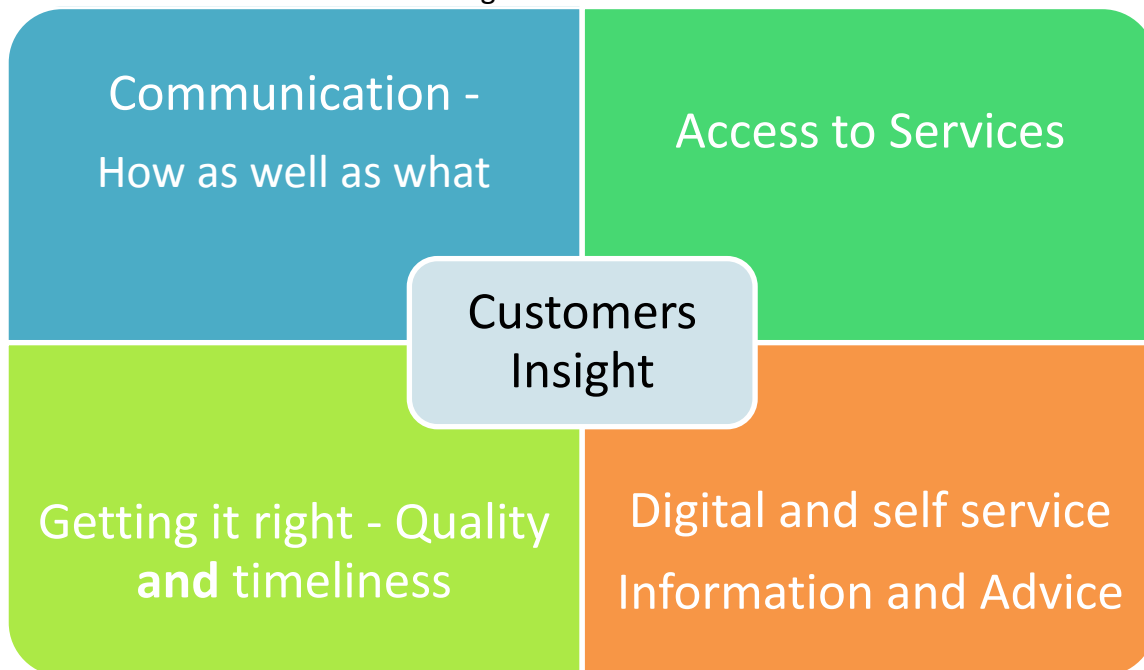
3. Approach

LGA Peer review sets out the elements which together create a Customer Service Ethos.

- Clear standards: For everyone to work to supported by performance measures and Business Information
- Staffing: Recruited, trained, and supported to deliver excellent customer service who have the autonomy and authority to make decisions when dealing with customers
- Technology tools and solutions: IT and telephony designed to support staff do their job, and meet customer needs
- Customer Insight: An understanding of and engagement with customers to design user friendly services
- User designed: Access to user designed services including online, for those customers who are happy to use them

These elements are broadly understood across SCC but it helpfully provides a clear checklist that should be used across all of the work programme to make sure efforts are holistic and customer focused. Full details can be found in **appendix 1 – LGA Peer Review**

The Committee have outside of the public meeting considered a range of evidence from officers and customers, this work has driven the recommendations at the end of this report.



4. Governance

Customer at the heart of what we do requires a shift in approach and the governance should reflect that. Standing up specific governance to guide this work positions this as something with a start and finish point, when what is needed is that it is what we all do – all the time.

Director of Customer Services and HR cannot make this shift happen alone, accountability and responsibility has to sit with everyone.

LGA Peer Review recommends work in this area should be underpinned by;

- **Organisational leadership: Senior officer and member ownership**
- **Governance arrangements: To support, oversee, monitor and scrutinise customer service**

A governance approach that reflects the need to build in a continuous improvement element as well as a programme of change activity to shape the organisational culture and commitment to working together for customers. This includes linking to other pieces of change delivery as well as delivering the work of the review.

The subgroup of the committee (who met on the 18th and 25th of February) offered feedback and input into the proposed governance approach. Most importantly recognising that some things need to get better now and other things will take longer. This group welcomed the Customer Panel which is being created as a good way to continue to capture customer voice.

4. Dependencies / Constraints

Our Council Transitional Committee – Strategic Review – Customer Focus

This Strategic Review will make it easier for customers to identify solutions for themselves but get assistance easily if it is needed. Doing this has some dependencies that will need to be managed.

- Web Platform and web form projects – making our web offer a better combination of well-designed customer journeys and a high-quality source of advice and information to reduce the need for customers to contact us.
- Automation – being more efficient will allow us to put our resources where it matters the most. The capacity to deliver automation is limited and needs to be prioritised across a range of workstream including Customer.
- Project resource will be needed as the work progresses and needs to be planned so that the resources are used in a targeted and effective way.

5. Closing recommendations and findings of the Our Council Transitional Committee

Realising the ambition of members as set out in the One Year Plan over the coming short, medium and long term has been shaped by the work of our Council transitional Committee. As we create the internal mechanism to deliver this programme of work the final Our Council meeting should note that work from this point on is based on the ambition and direction set out by the committee.

In future months and years this review will be overseen in the Committee System which comes into place following the May elections. The way this committee has worked with officers has shown the value of working in a different way to achieve a positive outcome for customers, but particularly those who need us the most.

It has been important to members and officers alike to recognise the hard work of our frontline staff. Challenging the Council to do more is not about those individuals.

Our Council Transitional Committee recommends that;

- Identify a way of working across the Strategic Review that builds on strengths, builds in the LGA Peer review findings and brings internal stakeholders together but puts **customers first – every time**.
- Reduce the need to make contact through good service delivery and design – **Good Service Guide approach (appendix 3)**
- Make good advice and guidance easily available – **self-service and self-assessment**
- Make commitments to customers about what they can expect and then deliver it – **Customer Charter, Strategy and Vision**
- Support customers who prefer one channel over another, digital first but alternatives must be effective
- All services must be accessible to everyone – **remove barriers and challenge assumptions**
- Continue to recognise the contribution of frontline staff, all members are recommended to take part in **'back to the floor'** sessions to allow them to hear first-hand the issues of customers and the skills of our staff.

Our Council Transitional Committee – Strategic Review – Customer Focus

- Use performance management and benchmarking to establish what good looks like including consideration of adoption of a standards framework– **customer service excellence**
- Develop shared ownership and joint working to achieve seamless outcomes for customers – **one council**
- Provide members with a periodic report of issues and feedback of the Customer Panel – **keep listening**

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The 15 Principles – Good Service Scale

- . Be easy to find
- . Clearly explain the purpose of your service
- . Set the expectations a user has of your service
- . Enable each user to complete the outcome they set out to do
- . Work in a way that is familiar
- . Require no prior knowledge to use
- . Be agnostic of organisational structures
- . Require the minimum possible steps to complete
- . Be consistent throughout
- 0. Have no dead ends
- 1. Be usable by everyone, equally
- 2. Encourage the right behaviours from users and service providers
- 3. Respond to change quickly
- 4. Clearly explain why a decision has been made
- 5. Make it easy to get human assistance

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LGA Remote Peer Support: Sheffield City Council Customer Service

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Sheffield City Council

17 December 2021



Structure

- Approach undertaken
- Delivering Customer Service Ethos: Benchmark
- Overview and observations
- What you told us in your own words
- Recommendations in relation to benchmarks
- Where next: Quick wins, next steps and questions



Purpose: To verify, confirm and add value from external perspective to Sheffield City Council's (SCC) assessment of the issue and objectives they have set to improve performance of its customer services operations, across all channels and the Council services accessed via this operation.

Peer Team

- Kirsteen Roe, Stockport Council, Service Director Citizen Focus
- Kathryn Rees, Stockport Council, Service Director Strategy and Commissioning
- Siobhan Coughlan, LGA Programme Manager
- Frances Marshall, LGA Programme Manager

Process: Peers reviewed a range of information to ensure they were familiar with the Council, the challenges it is facing and its plans for the future. They gathered information and views from more than 16 meetings, in addition to further research such as reports, governance meetings, website and Contact Centre call listening. They spoke to more than 30 people including a range of Council staff and elected members.

Benchmark: Delivering a Customer Service Ethos

Needs a coordinated effort across a number of related areas including:

- **Clear standards:** For everyone to work to supported by performance measures and Business Information
- **Staffing:** Recruited, trained and supported to deliver excellent customer service who have the autonomy and authority to make decisions when dealing with customers
- **Technology tools and solutions:** IT and telephony designed to support staff do their job, and meet customer needs
- **Customer Insight:** An understanding of and engagement with customers to design user friendly services
- **User designed:** Access to user designed services including online, for those customers who are happy to use them

Underpinned by

- **Organisational leadership:** Senior officer and member ownership
- **Clear agreed vision:** Customer service is everyone's' business and responsibility
- **Governance arrangements:** To support, oversee, monitor and scrutinise customer service
- **Agreed programme of work** for customer service

Overview and observations

- There is **recognition of the Council's overall performance challenges** – with the Customer Contact Centre seen as a barometer – and there is a **shared desire for improvement** from SCC's political and officer leadership, as well as wider staff core
- Addressing these issues against the backdrop of Covid 19 pandemic, changes in political leadership and organisational re-prioritisation has been challenging. Whilst the **pandemic has created additional challenges and pressures**, it has exacerbated existing fault lines, and is **not the root cause** of the performance issues
- To address the performance challenges, **customer service as an ethos** and a responsibility, **needs to be collectively owned** across the organisation
- Multiple well-intentioned efforts to address the challenges have been undertaken over the years but not had the desired outcome. For SCC to make meaningful inroads it will require a **dedicated focus, organisational buy-in, culture change and investment** – of both time and resources – to break down siloed approach to customers and transform services
- The Portfolio Holder, Director and Head of Contact Centre are working hard **to put customer service front and centre of Council's agenda**, with multiple initiatives underway to identify and address the underlying issues
- There are **great assets to build on** with skilled, knowledgeable, committed staff, individual examples of great customer services, un-tapped functionality in some systems, and a collective goodwill internally to get this right

Overview and observations

- **Clear standards and vision:** Whilst there are multiple documents stating customer service commitment, a standard approach and consistent focus on customer standards is not apparent
- **Staffing:** Frontline staff are an asset, however current structures, systems, silo working, and lack of career pathways inhibit resources being deployed in an agile and flexible manner to better manage demand. Increasing levels of customer demand on Customer Contact Centre staff risks burn out, increased absences, or individuals leaving
- **Technology tools and solutions:** IT investment over the pandemic has been transformational. Nevertheless, the multitude of IT applications, lack of integration or join-up across change processes, inadequate user testing and training results in untapped functionality and are huge barriers to productivity and customer satisfaction. IT should be an enabler to transformation, not driver of it
- **Customer Insight:** There is a renewed commitment across the Council to understand and engage with its communities. To realise this, a more holistic view is needed of SCC's customers and the services they use/need to better tailor and design how services are accessed. Frontline staff will also have valuable insights into what works well and what improvements should be made
- **User designed:** In-house resource and expertise around service re-design and business processes exist. There are some examples of where this is happening (e.g., automated Council tax balance), but there is huge scope to systematically redesign processes and services to deliver improvement - both for the customer and those supporting them
- **Organisational leadership:** The organisation's commitment to putting '*communities and people of Sheffield at the heart of everything it does, and that works hard to deliver excellence first time, every time*' is clear. Translating aspirations into actions and outcomes will require focus and actively championing from senior leadership
- **Governance and work programme:** Over time accountability for, and governance around, customer service improvement and change management has become dispersed. Strong governance, with senior political and officer sponsors, and robust programme management, will be important to provide oversight to an agreed programme of work, monitor delivery and maximise opportunities for join-up across initiatives

What people told us is working well



Fantastic staff who are committed and knowledgeable

A lot is working well in the contact centre

Close cross-organisational working in response to Covid 19

Front line on view:

- Contact Centre Team
- Professional and knowledgeable staff
- Helping people
- Signposting people

Politicians let us get on with stuff

We know the issues, challenges and have the capabilities - we now need to clearer on what the culture of delivering customer excellence means

We have a good medium-term plan for improvements: what's needed now is immediate actions

Political and officer leadership are working hard to put it front and centre of Council's agenda

Contact centre is a good launch pad into other parts of the Council

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IT transformation and digital literacy of staff has transformed over the pandemic

There is now a recognition of the independencies across Council services and customer service

Got good technical functionality in applications

Bringing together and understanding of citizen debt with finance and resources

Some examples of excellent customer service

Contact centre are a great team – we need to help them to achieve

Done a lot of thinking and talking – now we need action

Excellent training in Customer First means Contact Centre Staff are head hunted by rest of the Council

What people told us could be improved

Need to accommodate more focused time with customers

Don't analyse the data we have - just focused on doing things faster for less money

Not good at system thinking

Want permission and ability to make decisions to drive change

Too many failure loops build into the system

Resources not in the right places nor working together

Have resources but burdened with ineffective processes

Frontline view:
- Greater agency, control & closer joint working across services
- More staff
- Improved digital offer
- Fewer systems, which function effectively & are integrated
- Linkages across change projects & services
- Consistency & culture

Honest ambition for excellent customer service but lacks infrastructure to deliver

Need to progress channel shift

Want quality not quantity - e.g. getting it right first time

Decision making is slow & doesn't enable responding to challenges

Not harnessing capability properly - need support & buy-in from services & EMT

Need frontline staff input into the change agenda

Users are circumventing the system which creates more work

Offering Jam tomorrow

Not enough done to ask citizens how they want communicating with...How can we think about totality of people in the City?

No whole organisational approach

Takeaway the 'noise'

So easy to get lost if you're a customer

No single view of change across the organisation

Understand who our customers are but gap between that and making improvement

Variability is endemic across the Council

Systemic problem, but not a systemic solution

Struggling to engender flexibility between 'front' and 'back' office staff

Not seeing efficiencies would have expected



Clear Standards

- Revise, refresh and then actively promote your '**customer commitments**' as a driver of excellent customer service, ensuring these are relevant for today's digital world as well as consistently applied by staff in all roles throughout the Council
- Build basic **customer service training into induction/training** for all staff across all roles in the Council
- Establish a **customer service career pathway** with specific customer service training e.g., recognised training qualifications, for those in a dedicated customer service role to develop and build their skills
- Look at ways to **continuously check and improve** customer service standards by actively seeking user feedback, analyse your complaints and comments to understand the cause and consider carrying out mystery shopping exercises



Staffing

- **Review current staff resource** operating in customer service roles to clarify, numbers, roles, and levels of experience (NB: not just those working in Customer Contact Centre)
- Devise an approach to **utilise this resource more flexibly** as a whole organisation (as opposed to specific service areas) to better meet customer demand peaks
- To help plan this resource - **look at current suite of MI, BI and Performance data** to see if this provides the necessary data to effectively managing customer contact
- Put in place appropriate working arrangements to ensure a level footing and ‘one team’ ethos’ between Customer Contact Centre and the service areas they support. This should include arrangements for **service areas to systematically engage in with the Customer Contact Centre to set out their plans** which generate demand (e.g., mass mailings to residents) so resources can be better planned and coordinated to handle the additional work
- If staff resources, and how they work, are not addressed, there is a real risk to their wellbeing, retention, the delivery of services, as well as wider organisational reputation



Technology, tools and solutions

For customers, look at how the Council can:

- Enable **greater levels of self-service** where customers are happy to do so - via the Council website, Apps, automated telephony, text messaging, etc. to reduce the need to call the Council
- Better **shape customer's expectations** in terms of when they will hear back / get a full response, etc. to reduce the need for chase up calls

For staff, look at how services are redesigned so:

- Reflects the **end-to end process** and journey, and is better supported by the necessary IT systems
- **Rationalise and integrate the number of different IT systems** those working in a customer service roles need to do their job
- Enables a '**one and done**' approach to capturing and entering information into the IT system
- Better **join-up staff in a customer service roles and the relevant service area**, so reduces the need to rekey data



Understanding of and engagement with customers

- Review the different sources of 'customer insight' and data you currently use, to see if this is sufficient and provides a **holistic view of your customers** and the services they use/need to support your work to digitalise services (for those customers that can use it)
- **Build on previous work done** by the Council (e.g. customer experience strategy) to understand and engage with your residents and businesses across Sheffield to driver a user centre design approach
- **Look at how you currently engage with residents and businesses** via various stakeholder groups to see how this might support your work to improve customer services



User designed services

- Apply user design principles to the **redesign of Council services end-to-end** (especially where this crosses different operational areas). Be this for direct customer access, or for staff in their jobs across all channels
- **Engage in-house expertise** - within the Council's Business Change team and those design teams located in specific service areas - **before starting work on the redesign of a service** or the implementation of a new system and/or processes
- **Review in-house service design resources** to understand the skills and capacity you have, the gaps, and how you can **better deploy this resource** to the benefit of the Council, its residents and businesses
- Apply **behaviour change techniques** to support service design and demand management



Organisational leadership and clear agreed vision

- **Ownership and commitment from the top** – both by senior management and the senior political leadership – that customer service is a key priority is critical to delivering this agenda
- Articulate **an agreed vision to deliver excellent customer service** that reflects the make-up and needs of the people and communities the Council serves
- The leadership needs to **take responsibility for delivering this vision** for what good customer service looks like of for the residents and communities in Sheffield
- A **commitment to put in place necessary resources** to deliver excellent customer services
- Set out **clearly what good customer service looks and feels like and how measured**, so that can be easily understood by everyone (e.g., officers, members and customers)
- **Ensure customer service principles are embedded in everyone's work** i.e., part of JDs, induction and performance reviews
- **Empower and listen to staff so they have permission** to make change happen



Governance and Work Programme

Governance arrangements including:

- SRO for the programme overall
- Elected Member Lead
- Regular reporting to appropriate boards/committees at senior level to ensure delivered
- Agreed monitoring processes

Work programme

- All projects mapped and resourced
- Clear reporting lines for all projects
- Overall programme management arrangement to manage resources more effectively
- Clearly articulate how your programme will support channel shift and demand management
- Risk Register
- Clear on what good looks like within each programme of work





**'Doing nothing will cost
more than addressing the
issues'**



Quick wins

- Start small, take measured risk, and then expand out - do not be afraid to fail and learn
- Pilot switching on 'call back' and 'chat bot' functions as early as possible
- Identify your top transactions and prioritise redesigning processes to digitalise these to enable greater levels of self-service
- Fast track those things that can be done at scale to maximise economies of scale and impact (e.g., webforms)
- Take steps to better understand the nature of your demand, including that created in service areas e.g., cyclical mailings to plan how to better manage this business
- Apply a 'demand management' approach to reduce the need for calls (e.g., by shaping expectations, explore [EAST Framework for Behavioural Change](#))
- Tap into existing user groups to inform customer insight (e.g., tenant and lease holder groups)
- Expediate decision around existing CAPITA arrangements to ensure delivering value for money
- Create “champions” or “business change leads” within projects to ensure there is an awareness “on the ground” and their view is considered

By tackling this you will create the space to plan for the longer term changes you need to make. If you don't, there is a real risk to staff wellbeing, retention and delivery as well as organisational reputation



Next Steps

- Questions and comments
- Offer to talk through findings to other audiences if helpful
- Critical friend perspective on development of SCC's Action Plan in response to recommendations
- Peer to Peer conversations
- Insight gained through this activity to inform Corporate Peer Challenge





Report to Our Council Transitional Committee 10th March 2022

Report of: Policy & Improvement Officer

Subject: Our Council Transitional Committee Activity Report March 2022

Author of Report: alice.nicholson@sheffield.gov.uk

Transitional Committees were introduced to provide an early opportunity for Members to work on a cross party basis, advising the Executive in advance of decisions being made, as we make the transition to a Committee System in 2022/23. Transitional Committees were advisory to the Co-operative Executive, and the workplans focused on key topics for the administration, aligned to the One Year Plan. This report sets out the core activity of work this temporary Transitional Committee considered. The Committee's focus of work was around Customer Experience and Customer Service.

The Committee is being asked to:

Note the content of this report on the core activity of the Our Council Transitional Committee 2021/22

Background Papers: none

Category of Report: OPEN

Transitional Committee 1 – Our Council
Meeting Dates 2021/2022: 14th October, 9th December 2021, 10th February, 10th March 2022
Chair: Zahira Naz & Dawn Dale. Deputy: Christine Gilligan-Kubo
Exec Members: Terry Fox, Julie Grocutt, Cate McDonald
Senior Lead Officer: Eugene Walker, Executive Director of Resources

Draft Work Plan

Our Future Approach to Priority Budgeting	Discussion on longer term priorities that will inform priority based budgets.	Considered October 14 th meeting
Customer Experience and Customer Service	<p>To advise on how we can deliver the One Year Plan commitment to improve customer experience.</p> <p>Initial briefing session on aims, objectives, progress and priorities re Customer Experience Programme – leading to development of Committee’s focus and approach.</p> <p>Workgroup evidence sessions</p> <p>Briefing on Technology options and visit to Call Centre – to be arranged for the Committee before end of municipal year</p>	<p>Initial briefing session October 14th meeting – committee agreed 3 priority areas of customer service, with an overarching ask for members to define standards and expectations of customer service:</p> <p>1. Revenue and Benefits, including improvements to debt pathway, 2. Housing Repairs and Maintenance, what is the journey to getting a repair done, 3. Customer Service Experience, starting with customer complaints data</p> <p>Work group evidence sessions held November, January, February that inform concluding session 10th March 2022</p> <p>Customer Service Standards and Expectations – the future experience of a customer, whole Committee sessions 10th February 2022 and 10th March 2022 – to determine what standards and expectations should look like, advise, and inform the ongoing work of the Council in Customer Service.</p>

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Performance Management	To advise on how we can deliver the One Year Plan commitment to establish a robust performance approach and culture in the organisation to drive improvement, accountability and deliver better services for Sheffield people	Considered 9 th December meeting
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