Sheffield City Council

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

18 April 2019

Report of: Director of Policy, Performance and Communications

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Subject: Customer Experience Programme update

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Author of Report: James Henderson, Director of PPC

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Summary:
This report has been requested by OSMC to provide an update on progress towards implementing the Customer Experience Strategy. It covers work completed since the last report was presented in April 2018, and also sets out a range of forthcoming activity.

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Type of item: The report author should tick the appropriate box

Reviewing of existing policy	
Informing the development of new policy	
Statutory consultation	
Performance / budget monitoring report	
Cabinet request for scrutiny	
Full Council request for scrutiny	
Community Assembly request for scrutiny	
Call-in of Cabinet decision	
Briefing paper for the Scrutiny Committee	X
Other	

The Scrutiny Committee is being asked to:
Consider the contents of the report; note progress made; note and comment upon the emerging results of the Customer Survey; provide any views for areas of concern or suggested focus for the Customer Access project described at paragraph 4.4 onwards; and comment upon the proposed next steps.

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Background Papers:
- Customer Experience Strategy
- Customer Experience Progress Report – April 2018

Category of Report: OPEN

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Report to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee

Customer Experience Programme Update

1.   Introduction

1.1   Following previous reports to Overview and Scrutiny Management Committee on 1 December 2016 and 19 April 2018, the committee have asked for a further update on progress within the Customer Experience Programme.

1.2   This report focuses on developments over the last twelve months, and also updates OSMC on the emerging findings from the recent customer survey which was designed to enable the programme to track the impact that it is having on how Sheffield citizens use and experience our services.

2   Background

2.1   As described in previous reports to OSMC, the overarching objectives of this programme of work are to deliver an improved customer experience through:

- making sure that we get things right first time for our customers when they contact us;
- ensuring that there is a consistent experience for customers regardless of which service they are using or which 'channel' they are using (e.g. phone, website, face to face)
- reducing avoidable contact by seeking to resolve issues quickly and to the customer's satisfaction
- making a proactive offer of services, by using our knowledge and intelligence to identify where a customer might benefit from using another SCC service (e.g. if somebody has contacted us about a blue badge application, also asking whether they would want to apply for an assisted bin collection)
- using intelligence-led design to ensure that our services are designed around the needs of our customers rather than what is easiest for services
- having a single view of the customer across systems and services
- promoting self-serve first, recognising that most people want to deal with the council on-line in a time and place that suits them, whilst maintaining other channels for customers who do not want to or are not able to use online services.

2.2   The expected benefits of the strategy are two-fold. Firstly, we seek to significantly improve the experience that customers have of accessing

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customer services – we know from our research that prior to the strategy people were often unable to access services in the way that they wanted to, leading to significant frustration. Secondly, by getting the Customer Experience Strategy right, we can support the delivery of wider change within the organisation and contribute to the delivery of savings by being able to provide lower cost routes to service; by creating new online services to reduce the need for manual intervention; and by avoiding failure demand when a customer tries to access a service online and cannot.

2.3   The programme focuses on three core areas: supporting the organisation to take a user-led approach to the design and delivery of services on an end-to-end basis; creating the core capabilities needed for the organisation (both technology and organisational capacity); and ensuring the exploitation of those core capabilities, principally through engaging with work being undertaken in the Place Change Programme and the Improvement and Recovery Programmes.

3   **Recent progress**

3.1   Core Digital Capabilities

3.1.1   As previously reported, there are a number of important capabilities that need to be in place if we are to be able to create true end-to-end digital service journeys that meet customer needs. The first of these to be put in place was the new **online forms** capability, which allows customers to make requests, applications, reports and to contact the council at any time on a device of their choosing.

3.1.2   This capability has now been fully released (at the time of the previous report to OSMC, this was in beta testing), and subsequently all existing forms hosted directly on the old website have been replaced with the new Forms capability. This includes all highways fault reporting forms, as well as a range of other existing forms (e.g. application to join a library). The Digital Services Team (DST) has replaced a range of forms currently hosted through the existing Lagan Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and DST will continue to work with Customer Services across the CRM upgrade (see below), replacing forms as required. DST are continuing to enhance the experience where they detect user errors by calling customers and fixing issues based on feedback.   Additional temporary capacity has been brought into DST to ensure forms are replaced in line with CRM go live.

3.1.3   However, there remains a significant backlog of work to replace the range of downloadable print and return forms currently on the website with responsive

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online forms. This will be an area of focus for the service in the period ahead, but is likely to take some time to complete.

3.1.4   As of 29 March, new **online payments functionality** has been introduced. This was a critical step in being able to offer seamless online services, particularly as our previous payments platform was at the end of its life and offered a poor customer experience. The new payments platform is now fully aligned with the look and feel of the council website, as well as meeting all industry standards for security etc. Online payments are now being used for Council Tax, Business Rates, Housing Benefit and a number of other services, including parking.

3.1.5   A process is being put in place for services that did not previously have an online payment option to be able to set this up using the new system. As with the forms capability there will be a need to phase the introduction of payments for new online services because of the available capacity.

3.1.6   Additional modules of the system will be introduced over the period ahead to enable direct debits to be set up, as well as providing accounts functionality to allow individuals to log in and see forthcoming payments, balances etc.

3.1.7   The upgrade of the **Customer Relationship Management** system is progressing. Although subject to some delays, it is now envisaged that this will go live later in 2019. This will bring a number of important benefits including reduced running costs, significantly improved functionality, and seamless integration with the web platform. Through the use of the new CRM it will become significantly easier to automate transactional services that currently rely on manual interventions. This should both reduce the time taken for a service to be delivered and be more cost effective for the authority.

3.1.8   In the last year, Digital Services Team has also taken on responsibility for the **Sheffield Directory**. They are now in the process of reviewing this key resource in delivering our responsibilities under the Special Educational Needs and Disabilities code of practice and the Care Act. The team is engaging with both citizens and partners to understand their needs with a view to improving the experience of providing online information to these vulnerable groups.

3.1.9   The new **SCC intranet** was launched in March 2019 and replaced the previous intranet which ran on unsupported software. The new site was designed and developed entirely in-house following the learning that had been done through the development of the website. This has resulted in substantial avoided costs for the authority in the order of £500k. By co-designing the intranet with staff, the information on it is arranged in a more logical way and

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is easier to find. The intention is to continue to develop new functionality for the intranet to improve its usefulness and productivity of staff. For example, work is ongoing to develop a new online recruitment process for managers, replacing what is currently a complex set of tasks with a single end-to-end approach.

3.1.10 The focus of the programme has not been exclusively on improving the council's digital offer. Substantial pieces of work have been undertaken this year to improve the way in which some non-digital services work, including the redesign of the service offer at Darnall Library, and work to support the Fostering Service to focus on the experience that people have when they are applying to become foster parents in the city.

4   Future Activity

4.1   A range of further activity is planned for the year ahead. This includes working with the Place Change Programme to introduce the ability to make **bookings and appointments** on the website. It is planned that the first service to introduce a booking facility will be Pest Control, which should take place later in 2019, subject to approval of a business case. When aligned with the recently introduced payments capability, this will mark the point at which it will be possible to complete for the first time a fully transactional journey on the SCC website – the customer will be able to find out about pest control, let the service know about their requirements, book an appointment, pay for the service, and for the workflow to be automatically routed through the line-of-business system to place the job and add this to work rosters.

4.2   The programme team is also working with Adult Social Care to seek funding for a proposed project to develop an **adult social care digital offer** that enables self-care and prevention, while creating an online experience that captures the feel and benefits of a good social work conversation. A response is due back from the potential funding provider soon and, if approved, work will begin shortly to begin to develop this. This would be in addition to, rather than a replacement for, more traditional approaches.

4.3   Alongside this, DST will continue to work through the backlog of services where the online offer needs to be enhanced, redesigned or developed, including the review and rewriting of content, the development of new forms, integration with line-of-business systems, and utilisation of the functionality described above (payments, bookings etc.). We will also seek to introduce a new authoring model to devolve responsibility for the maintenance and upgrade of web pages from the central team to portfolios to allow the central team to focus on the strategic improvements to the website described in this report.

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4.4 However, the focus for the programme for the year ahead is likely to be on a substantial project to improve the **access that the council provides for customers through its face-to-face and telephone services**.

4.5 This is based on a series of hypotheses that the programme has developed that our approach to face-to-face and telephone is inconsistent and fragmented, meaning that people do not always get the experience of Sheffield City Council that we would want. We also believe that there are high levels of failure demand at the moment where people are either unable to access our services (e.g. because a phone call isn't answered) or because it hasn't been possible to progress their query during the first contact.

4.6 Additionally, because our online services are not as developed as we need them to be and are not yet meeting the expectations that the public has of them, too much of the capacity that we do have within our face to face and telephone channels is being used for simple transactional services that could and should be available online. This is frustrating for the customer and does not represent a good use of our resources.

4.7 It is important to stress that this project would look at the entirety of our face-to-face and telephone access and will not be looking solely at Customer Services (i.e. First Points and contact centre). This is because we know that very large numbers of the customer contacts that we receive do not come through Customer Services but instead come to a range of service-specific provision, and that we believe there is a lack of consistency and clarity about how this is provided and to what standards.

4.8 Face to face and telephony is an area that has not been examined as a whole for a number of years; the programme believes that as well as opportunities to improve the direct customer experience through these channels there may be a range of other opportunities to join up services and to improve our approach to early intervention and prevention by taking a more customer-centred view of why people are contacting us.

4.9 This project is currently in the scoping and discovery phase, and therefore the precise objectives and benefits to be realised have not yet been determined. The committee's views on areas of focus for this project would be welcome.

5 Customer Survey

5.1 We have recently finished the fieldwork stage of a survey of the Council's customers. This has been commissioned to enable the programme to understand the impact of the work that has been undertaken to date; how the

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expectations of customers have changed since the last survey in 2015, and to allow us to baseline the work of the programme for the next phase of work.

5.2   Some initial headline results are shown below although this does not represent a full analysis as the survey is not due to close until 16 April 2019.

5.3   Overview

To date (8 April 2019), over 1500 survey responses have been submitted compared to 305 in 2015. The survey still has a further week to run and therefore we are looking to increase the number of responses further. However, this represents a good response and will enable us to undertake meaningful analysis of the results.

We know that surveys such as this tend to be self-selecting in terms of who answers them, and that this can skew the results. For example, we know that over half of the people who have responded so far are in the 55-74 age groups and that women have been more likely to respond than men. As a result, we have undertaken additional work with groups under-represented in the survey to make sure that we can understand their views.

5.4   Assessment

Things are getting a bit easier…

Enquiry resolution at the first point of contact has increased by around 9 percentage points across telephony and 18 percentage points on-line. Provision of information or the ability to find the information needed has seen a smaller improvement across telephony of 2 percentage points but impressively, **a 14 percentage point improvement has been experienced across our on-line information.**

However overall experience still needs to improve and this would indicate that **we need to be more ambitious and work harder to understand customer need, preference and expectation**.

Overall Experience Face to face: 52% highly satisfied or satisfied. Face to face contact is generally used for making applications, accessing general information and discussing sensitive issues.

Overall Experience On-line: 49% highly satisfied or satisfied. 48% find the website easy to use, 70% found all they needed and 58% had their issue completely resolved online.

Overall experience Telephony: 22.28% highly satisfied or satisfied. Feedback is that it takes too long or people don't know the right number to call.

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5.5   Customer Preference

As predicted and in-line with the previous survey, **our customers want to undertake the majority of interactions digitally**. They generally prefer to access information, report issues and make applications and pay for services on line or via email. Paying for services via an app is an emerging preference as is accessing general information via social media.

The majority of customers appear to want to receive service and application updates via email or to be able to access the information themselves on-line.

74% of respondents want to pay their bills on line and 69% want a secure customer account where they have access all their council services.

There are **emerging requirements for webchat functionality** to support on-line enquiries (53% of respondents) and significant appetite for a dedicated on-line adult social care self-help offer (43% of respondents)

5.6   Key Customer Insights

Value – customers have increasing expectation in terms of customer standards. Poor experience makes people feel significantly undervalued and not cared for contributing to growing apathy towards the Council. When the experience is good, it's really valued and is often down to the individual.

Customers want to do things on-line but can't always find the right form or feel frustrated by clunky processes.

Customers don't always feel like they have a choice or lack knowledge in how they can interact with the council which leads to frustration and dissatisfaction. Access is confusing or misunderstood.

6   **Recommendations**

6.1   The Committee is asked to:
- Consider the contents of the report
- Note the progress made towards the achievement of the Customer Experience Strategy goals
- Note and comment upon the emerging results of the Customer Survey
- Provide any views for areas of concern or suggested focus for the Customer Access project described at paragraph 4.4 onwards
- Comment upon the proposed next steps

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