



Subject:	Customer Focus Programme Update
Date:	22 March 2024
Reporting Officer:	John Tully, Director of City & Organisational Strategy
Contact Officer:	Cormac Quinn, Customer Development Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Please indicate the description, as listed in Schedule 6, of the exempt information by virtue of which the council has deemed this report restricted.	
Insert number <input type="checkbox"/>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Information relating to any individual2. Information likely to reveal the identity of an individual3. Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the council holding that information)4. Information in connection with any labour relations matter5. Information in relation to which a claim to legal professional privilege could be maintained6. Information showing that the council proposes to (a) to give a notice imposing restrictions on a person; or (b) to make an order or direction7. Information on any action in relation to the prevention, investigation or prosecution of crime	
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

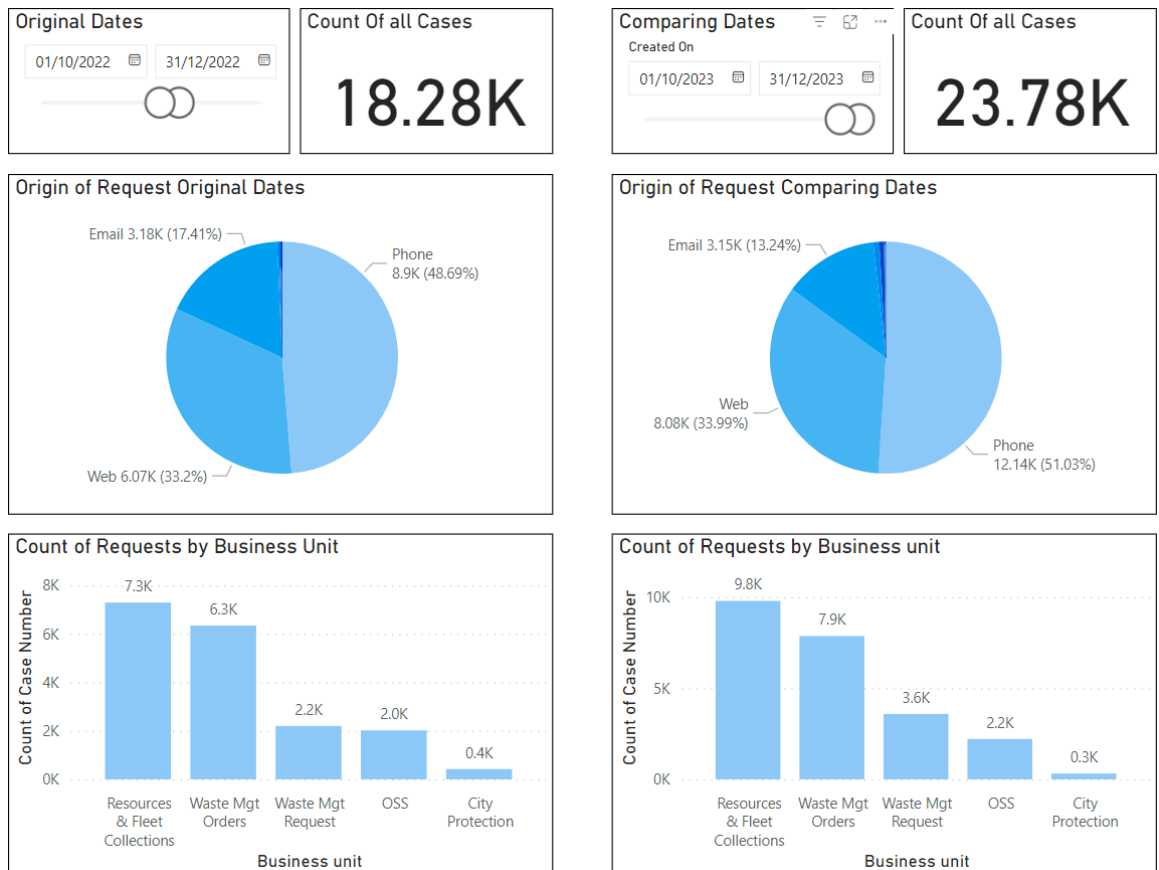
Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To update Elected Members on the Customer Focus Programme and the Customer Hub.

1.2	For Elected Members to note the intention to use bulk text message as a communication channel for upcoming changes to waste collections over the Easter Bank Holidays.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note the update and the intention to use bulk text messaging as a communication channel for changes to waste collections.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p>Customer Focus Programme and Customer Hub</p> <p>The Customer Hub was set up as part of the Customer Focus Programme and went live in April 2021 during COVID lockdowns. Whilst the Hub has been in place for almost three years, staffing establishment levels remain the same as April 2021, despite significant increases in customer contact across all contact channels.</p>
3.2	The Customer Hub has been able to provide improved service despite increasing volumes through the promotion and improvement of our digital channels and making these automated. This is across channels such as web forms and email, whilst delivering service levels via phone calls and in person visits. The Customer Hub handles around 70% of all calls to the Council and around 60% of all customer contacts including email and web forms.
3.3	The Customer Hub experiences significant service issues with massive increases in volumes when there is major disruption to operational services such as waste collections.
3.4	At present the range of services that have been onboarded to the Customer Hub are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Resources and Fleet Waste Collections Resources and Fleet Waste Management Open Spaces and Street Scene Complaints General Enquires Switchboard
3.5	<p>Customer Hub Contact Volumes</p> <p>The Customer Hub on average deals with of 550 phone calls per day. The Hub also processes emails and webforms of around the similar volume and would regularly handle around 1,000 – 1,200 customer contact per day. During high periods of demand, such as significant service disruption (Inclement weather, Bank Holidays etc) the Customer Hub can experience significantly more calls, which can be challenging.</p>

3.6 Customer Hub volumes and channels of contact is provided below for Q3 2022 and Q3 2023. As you will note there is a **significant increase in the volume of customer contact processed at the Customer Hub in comparison to the same quarter last year, an increase of around 5,000 more contacts which is a 30% increase**, this is across all contact channels, phone, web form, and in person visits to the Cecil Ward Building.

3.7 The graphic below depicts the increase in customer contacts from Q3 2022 to Q3 2024, a breakdown of the contact channel in the pie chart and a breakdown of the services in the bar chart.



3.8 It should be noted that telephone contact has also increased significantly from 9,000 contacts in Q3 2022 to 12,000 contacts in Q3 2023. The capability to answer such an increase in calls has been achieved through the targeted introduction of automations to web forms. This has enabled Assistants within the Hub to spend less time doing low valuable data entry to provide more valuable direct interaction with customers calling the Hub.

3.9 **Cost saving and Process Efficiencies**
 The Customer Focus Programme actively tracks the benefits from the products produced and handed over to services as business as usual. These products have been co-created with the operational services, the programme office and with the support of services such as Digital Services or Continuous Improvement. This ensures a collective agreement on what is to be produced, when

it is to be produced and that the service and producers sign the product off together. These are only signed off when ready to achieve the benefit they were created for.

- 3.10 It is important to note the benefits support the Belfast Agenda and that these products actively support efficiencies or cost avoidance. The introduction of automated Web forms has provided the capability for the Customer Hub to handle significantly more volume since its inception in April 2021. These improvements have allowed the staff within the Hub to focus on higher value work and more complex and time-consuming customer issues.

CURRENT PRODUCTS DELIVERED BY THE CUSTOMER FOCUS PROGRAMME

- 3.11 **Elected Members app:**
The Elected Members app was fully rolled out to all Elected Members in 2021 and to all new members on induction to Council. This is used by Elected Members to achieve the benefits of registering service requests, track these service requests, contact the officer in charge and to have visibility of the records and where requests are closed and a history of their requests.

- 3.12 The use of the app varies between Elected Members with some members making significant repeated use and others as and when required. This is to be expected as we are offering a 'digital first', not 'digital only' method of contacting the Hub for transactional issues.

- 3.13 Officers would like to explore how we could increase the uptake of the Elected Members app, since the benefits of this approach ensures that we can identify any patterns in service performance issues and improve our understanding of why service issues have arisen. Elected members are asked to note that the current average time for the Customer Hub to pass calls to services is within one hour of being received with the majority of these passed on within 30 mins or faster. Though there will of course be occasions when this is done more quickly for high priority or urgent cases.

- 3.14 **Report it app:**
A significant proportion of the work in Phase Two of the Customer Focus Programme has been supporting service delivery within Resources and Fleet Collections. This has included the design, development and deployment and operational use of a staff Report It App. This has allowed collections teams to report on the issues live "on the ground" affecting collection, for example, no access due to parked cars.

- 3.15 This has been particularly beneficial for the Customer Hub and collections managers who can view the live reporting to support decision making and provide customers with live updates on collection issues at the point of contact. This allows customers to clearly understand issues that are beyond the collection team's controls such as parked vehicles or contaminated or overfilled and damaged bins and is of major added value to the customer at the point of contact.

3.16 Previously this work would have done using manual processes, creating a considerable time lag for customer information meaning that this was of little use. Often, prior to the development of the Report It App, there would have been work that should have not been carried out for example a recollection of a contaminated bin etc.

3.17 **The Next Phase of the Customer Focus Programme**
 The programme is taking onboard views of Chief Officers as part of the planning of its next phase, in the form of a planning workshop. This will include participants from the Customer Focus Oversight and Delivery boards along with a wider group of stakeholders. The pillars/themes of the new phase have already been agreed by the Oversight board and are displayed below for Elected Members to note.

High Level Customer Focus Programme Phase 3



Automation & Channel Shift

Creation of a Strategy and design principles for provision and promotion of automated Digital Channels

By Q4 2023:

Bulky Waste Exemplar

1st service to have no online presence, fully call based with channel shift of +40%

Improvement in Cost to Serve

Potential to Automate over 10,000 calls per Ann and deflect many more

Releases Capacity for transition of other services

Informs development of Channel Shift Strategy.



Data Analytics

Development of Performance Metrics for CMT, DMT's and Operational Service

By Q4 2023:

Visualising service provision

Developing potential efficiency indicators

Utilising Information to bring insight into Service Failure

CMT Reporting - Customer Service Performance Measurement

In 2024:

Data Analytics Training for services to self-serve on Analytics



Onboarding of Services

Development and Implementation of Transition and Transformation Toolkit

By Q2 2024:

Cost to Serve Baseline

•Channel Assessment reduction of cost to serve

•SLA and Standards assessment and agreement

•Assessment of Risks and issues for Services to onboard

•Integration of LOB Systems replacement and integration with Customer Hub/Dynamics



Organisation Customer Experience

Implementation and embedding of all Customer Standards at a corporate level

In 2024

Service Level Agreements

Front line Customer Service Training

Customer Satisfaction Measurement

Introduction of Service Level Customer Satisfaction baseline monitoring

User Experience Training

In 2024/5:

Customer Experience CX Maturity Model assessment



Omni Channel

Development of an approach to have a Single view of Customer across all channels

In 2024:

This will be progressed through assessment of the following means:

•Customer Account/Portal, Business case, design principles and implementation pathway

•Proof Of concept Webchat & Chat Bot Virtual agents internal

•Provision of Service Information – deflection

•Bulk Text Messaging

•Creation of a business case for Transactional Social Media integration to Dynamics

3.18 **New product ready for implementation – Bulk Text Messaging**
 A key infrastructure product within the Customer Hub has been to integrate the telephony system with the Corporate Dynamics CRM. As part of this, the ability to send text messages to customers was developed. This is available on a 1 to 1 basis for sending only, for example sending the link of an online form to a customer.

3.19 The functionality that supports this also supports the sending large volumes of text messages through the Notify Service via notify.gov.uk. Elected Members may have received text messages from this service, for example the Driver & Vehicle Agency send appointment reminders text message for MOT Services.

3.20	Elected Members currently receive text messages from the Emergency Coordination team that are sent on a bulk basis, to all Elected members and senior officers, for communication and updates regarding an emergency response or weather warnings etc.
3.21	The Customer Hub now has the capability to send bulk text messaging - to send service disruption or service change information directly to customers' mobile phones. This functionality adds to our existing communications channels, such as our website or social media.
3.22	The Customer Hub proposes to deploy this capability for communicating changes to bin collection schedules that will occur over Easter as part of the wider communications campaign. This process will be developed and fully agreed with the Director of City Services Resources and Fleet and the Director for External Affairs, Communications and Marketing and the Customer Hub prior to being implemented. This capability has also been reviewed with the Information Governance Unit to ensure compatibility and compliance with all Data Protection Legislation and Policies.
3.23	Elected Members will also receive an email briefing via democratic services ahead of the usual communications and text messaging being sent. All usual channels will be used for customer communications confirming the arrangements for Easter with the addition of the use of text messaging service.
	<u>Financial and Resource Implications</u>
3.24	None
	<u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u>
3.25	None
4.0	Appendices - Documents Attached
	None