

19 January 2023

Agenda Item No. 13

Customer and Online Services Performance Report

Report by: Diarmuid Cotter, Head of Customer & Online Services

Wards Affected: All

Purpose

To present performance scorecard for Customer & Online Services for 2021/22 and first two quarters of 22/23.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to consider and review:

1. Note the arrangements set out in **Section 1.0** to fulfil the Council's obligation to comply with Audit Scotland's 2021 SPI Direction.
2. The Customer & Online Services performance information in **Section 2.0**, including current challenges/priorities and risks. A high-level overview of KPIs is attached in Appendix 1 – covering 4 lenses: Local Government Benchmarking Framework (LGBF), Plan for Fife (P4F), Customer, Resources and Service Operations.

Resource Implications

None

Legal & Risk Implications

There are legal requirements highlighted within this report, linked to a risk of regulatory intervention if the Council does not adhere to the standards and expectations set by Audit Scotland.

Impact Assessment

An EqIA is not required because the report does not propose a change or revision to existing policies and practices.

Consultation

None required

1.0 Background

- 1.1 Audit Scotland published an update on Statutory Performance Direction in December 2021. The Council is required to report a range of information setting out:
- i. Its performance in improving local public services, provided by both (i) the council itself and (ii) by the council in conjunction with its partners and communities
 - ii. Its progress against the desired outcomes agreed with its partners and communities
 - iii. Its performance in comparison (i) over time and (ii) with other similar bodies including information drawn down from LGBF in particular and from other benchmarking activities
 - iv. Its assessment of how it is performing against its duty of Best Value, and how it plans to improve against this assessment.

Below is a Link to the Direction Statutory Performance Indicators published in December 2021: - [SPI Direction - December 2021 \(revised\)](#)

2.0 Performance Reporting

- 1.1 Appendix 1 to this report is presented in the form of a balanced scorecard covering the areas of LGBF/P4F, Customer, Resources and Service Operations. A current snapshot of Service Challenges is included along with a section on Risks.
- 1.2 Customer & Online Services has staffing of 409fte and an operating budget of £12m. It consists of eight main areas
- Contact Centre
 - Customer Service Centres (including Registration)
 - Scottish Welfare Fund
 - Revenues (Assessment)
 - Revenues (Collection)
 - Online Services
 - Information Team (Fols etc)
 - Customer Escalations Team (complaints etc.)
- 1.3 While some of the work in the service is self-contained there are numerous interdependencies across services particularly, Building Services, Housing Environment, Transportation and Health & Social Care. Management of these relationships is vital to the success of the service.

List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – Customer & Online Services Scorecard

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CUSTOMER & ONLINE SERVICES

Current Challenges & Priorities

- The re-alignment of structures to ensure there is a focus on financial wellbeing and that resources are deployed effectively across the service.
- Working through new models for face to face activity in Customer Service Centres focussing on support to vulnerable people.
- Continuing to develop fife.gov.uk with improved information and more transactional and automated activity online.
- Ensuring the Scottish Welfare Fund adheres to timescales after the turbulence of the pandemic.
- Maintaining collection levels of Council Tax and Rent. These have been maintained in recent years but the cost of living crisis will put extra pressure on people and families.
- Re-focussing Contact Centre resource to continue to improve contact answering levels across all areas.
- Staff Resourcing remains a challenge particularly ensuring there is sufficient resource in all areas of the service.

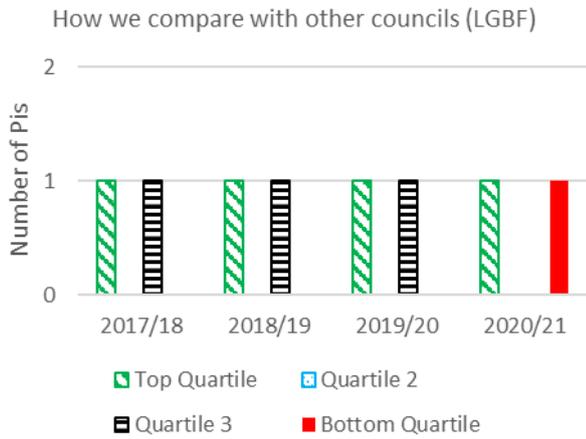
RISKS/EMERGING RISKS

COS monitors Service Risks. The risks covered by the service, other than wider Council risks, are based on the ability to deliver two key services

- Welfare Fund payments
- Council Tax collection

Both are managed and within parameters. However, as the cost of living crisis bites there may be a slight increase in risk to Council Tax collection.

KEY OUTCOMES (LGBF/P4F)



- Customer & Online Services has two metrics that have LGBF comparisons.
- Cost per dwelling is consistently in the top quartile.
- Council Tax income received dipped slightly during the pandemic in 20/21 but has recovered again in 21/22 (no LGBF comparators for this as yet).
- It is expected that LGBF indicators will be added for the Welfare Fund and Discretionary Housing Payment (DHP) this year.

LGBF

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Income from council tax received by year end (%) Fife (LGBF)	95.70%	95.30%	93.60%	95.30%
Cost of collecting Council Tax per dwelling (£) Fife (LGBF)	£3.43	£2.15	£1.68	£1.53

CUSTOMER

- Fife.gov.uk is the main contact method with over 5.8m sessions and 12.8m page views in 21/22, likely to be 5.2m and 14.2 in 22/23. Fife.gov.uk has 223 forms available for online transactions with over 170,000 submitted in 21/22 and 92,847 in first 2 quarters of 22/23.
- For the Contact Centre the overall contact answering figures have seen an improvement over Q1&2 of 22/23 as contact centre experiences a period of stability and adapts to the benefits of new workstyles. The Centre had a really difficult time due to the demand on resources in 2021 but as we exit the recovery period it will benefit from this stability. Total contacts for the 21/22 was 886,326 and will be something similar in 22/23.

- Complaints total in 21/22 was 324 and year to date in 22/23 is 126. Responsiveness remains at a good level.

PI Short Name	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23
Number of fife.gov.uk sessions	4.8m	4.7m	6.1m	5.8m	1.5m	1.1m
Number of Online Transactions (forms)	168,739	172,965	135,427	175,506	49,781	43,066
Number of Online Accounts	147,000	160,661	81,245	142,025	-	162,701
% of Contacts Answered – Contact Centre (Overall)	73.27%	81.96%	86.93%	86.43%	90.27%	87.23%
Number of Transactions by Customer Service Centres	356,710	312,877	83,192	145,068	42,213	45,147
Customer and Online Services Stage 1 Complaints closed in timescale (5 w days)	97%	94%	92%	93%	96%	95%
Customer & Online Services Stage 2 Complaints closed in timescale (20 w days)	100%	94%	100%	100%	100%	80%
% agreeing that the council is good at listening to local people's views before it takes decisions (Scottish Household Survey)	45.80%	53.90%	48%	N/A	N/A	N/A
% agreeing that the council is good at letting people know about the kinds of services it provides (Scottish Household Survey)	63.50%	64.80%	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

RESOURCES

- FTE Working days lost target has not been met since 2017/18. Currently, the average is 16.06 in Q2 a slight improvement on 21/22 but there remains a focus on how to improve the situation and how to better manage absence. The target is 13 as we aim to get back to 18/19 figures.
- The cost for the delivery of the Non Domestic Rates (NDR) service decreased significantly in 2021-22 to £3.92 per property compared with £14.19 in 2020-21. The overall reduction of £10.27 per property has two main factors, an increase in income from the 10% statutory penalties which increased from £179,540 to £384,189: and the overall pay cost reduced from £312,146 in 2020-21 to £233,481 in 2021-22 which reflects reductions in resources deployed.
- The costs of raising an invoice decreased. In 2020-21 the cost was £6.71 per invoice raised compared with £4.73 in 2021-22. The decrease is due to two main reasons. A 20.2% increase in the number of invoices issued compared to last year (50,556 to 60,765) and similar to NDR there was a reduction in overall costs from £0.388 million to £0.287 million. However as per our Payment Strategy the trend for invoices is down as 77,687 were issued in 2019-20.

PI Short Name	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23
Customer & Online Services – Average WDL per FTE	13.1	13.02	N/A	17.06	17.39	16.06
Customer & Online Services – Long Term WDL per FTE	8.67	7.52	N/A	13.79	13.25	11.27
COS Workforce who are Female (%)	78.40%	80.70%	79.70%	73.60%	N/A	N/A
COS Workforce who are Full-time (%)	63.90%	67.60%	68%	64.70%	N/A	N/A
COS Workforce who are Permanent Employees (%)	90.30%	88%	88.90%	88.80%	N/A	N/A
COS Number of Voluntary Redundancies (FTEs)	1	13	15	0	N/A	N/A
COS Employees aged 24 and under (%)	3.20%	2.90%	2.60%	4.70%	N/A	N/A
COS Employees aged 29 and under (%)	11.30%	7.60%	7%	10.80%	N/A	N/A
COS Employees aged 55 and over (%)	26.80%	23.70%	24%	31.20%	N/A	N/A
COS Number of WYI Bids	0	0	0	0	N/A	N/A
COS Number of WYI Programme new starts	0	0	1	0	N/A	N/A
Cost of collecting Non Domestic Rate per chargeable property (£)	£10.32	£11.35	£14.19	£3.92	annual	annual
Cost of collecting sundry debtors per debtor account issued (£)	£2.69	£2.91	£6.71	£4.73	annual	annual

- The table below provides information on Customer & Online Services workforce data by Budgeted (FTE) for the current year and the last 3 years.

Budgeted (FTE) April 2019	Budgeted (FTE) April 2020	Budgeted (FTE) April 2021	Budgeted (FTE) April 2022	Difference in FTE 2021-2022
279.51	441.48	400.81	409.40	8.59

SERVICE OPERATIONS

- As a service all our operations are customer facing, this section goes into more detail than the higher level figures in the Customer section above. It should be noted we also share some metrics with services such as Housing and Finance.
- The Contact Centre figures are divided into their main areas of speciality. Out of hours has remained steady and there is an improvement in the Repairs Centre. The Contact Centre 'general team' despite a dip in Q2 is also recovering to pre pandemic levels. This team take 25% of the overall contact centre totals and deal with environmental services and transportation calls, the more fluid areas of the business.
- The greatest pressure recently has been on the Revenues areas as when lines reopened during the pandemic there was an increase in calls to 'collections' as people called to make arrangements for rent and/or council tax as they had less income. Currently cost of living crisis mitigation and grants like Cost of Living Allowance, Social Security Scotland bridging payments along with school meal and clothing changes has led to an increase in calls from customers with enquiries.
- The Welfare Fund was under severe pressure during the pandemic as it also had to deal with Self-Isolation Support Grants with over 11,000 applications processed as well as the continued increased demand on the Fund itself. There were significant backlogs at one point with Community Care Grant processing days peaking at over 40 days. Processing times are now back within timescale. However, applications are likely to be over 35,000 again in 22/23 and pressure on administration of the fund will increase.
- The % of Council Tax recovery remains strong (95.3%) while the processing indicators have improved since the dip during the pandemic with new Council Tax Reduction (CTR) processing claims days reducing from 31 days to 22 days and Council Tax Reduction changes reducing from 11.1 days to 7.8 days.
- 98% of Rent was collected in the reporting year and is above the target of 95%. This is lower than the previous two years and continues to be monitored. Q2 in 22/23 is strong but this included a rent free fortnight. The cost of living crisis will continue to put pressure on tenants. Reporting on rent is shared with the Housing Service.
- The Information Management (SAR, FOI etc.) are Council wide figures and not just COS even though the team have oversight of the whole process. The overall report went to Standards, Audit and Risk Committee on 31st October 2022. The team work closely with services to help responsiveness.
- For Complaints these are also Council wide figures. The team also have oversight of the whole process. The overall report went to Standards, Audit and Risk Committee on 31st October 2022. The team are currently helping services to put in place effective processes to improve responsiveness. As a service Customer & Online Services responsiveness remains good.

Indicator	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	Q1 2022/23	Q2 2022/23
% of Contacts Answered – Revenues	93.6%	92.7%	88.7%	84.3%	79.7%	76.7%
% of Contacts Answered – Collections	92.9%	95.3%	92.1%	88.7%	83.5%	83.5%
% of Contacts Answered – Out of Hours (includes Community Alarms)	92.2%	93.4%	92.5%	96.7%	98.6%	98.2%
% of Contacts Answered – General	63.9%	84.9%	88.5%	81.8%	88.3%	78.2%
% of Contacts Answered – Repairs	77.75%	73.34%	80.83%	76.3%	81.2%	79.3%
% of Contacts Answered – Social Work	83.16%	76.99%	86.32%	89.0%	91.7%	90.5%
Number of Twitter Followers	48,278	50,886	53,150	53,900	54,490	54,914
Number of Facebook Fans	37,833	42,527	52,441	53,613	54,435	55,551
Registration input accuracy % (calendar year)	98%	98%	98%	TBA	annual	annual
Number of welfare fund applications made	23808	31545	35260	33856	8660	8908
Average processing time – Crisis Grants (days)	1	2	1	3	2	2
Average processing time – Community Care Grants (days)	21	24.9	21.2	37.3	5	4.7
In year collection of Non Domestic Rates (%)	98.40%	98.20%	98.70%	98.2%	N/A	N/A
Rent collected as % of total due in the reporting year	97.94%	99.96%	99.48%	98.05%	94.95%	101.53%
Average Time to process new HB/CTR claims (in days)	18.9	14.2	20.4	37.7	18.6	21.4
3 Year Collection of Council Tax	N/A	95.30%	94.30%	95.30%	34.71%*	59.82*
Average Time to process notification of changes (days)	3.8	2.8	3.5	5.6	4.1	6.5
Average Time to Process New CTR Claims (days)	18.8	18.1	23.8	31	18.9	22.7
Average Time to Process CTR Changes (days)	6.5	4.5	9.1	11.1	4.1	7.8
% FOI requests completed on time	80.85%	84.94%	88.30%	88.55%	79.94%	80.83%
% of EIR requests completed on time	79.65%	89.49%	93.55%	89.64%	86.09%	92.16%
% of SAR requests complete on time	77.39%	80.42%	86.81%	84.47%	82.50%	72.78%
Overall Council Stage 1 Complaints closed in timescale (5 w days)	88%	84%	80%	89%	86%	84%
Overall Council Stage 2 Complaints closed in timescale (20 w days)	81%	83%	83%	76%	73%	80%

