Communities & Housing Services Committee

3rd September 2020

Agenda Item No.

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| Customer and Online Services Performance Report |
| Report by: Diarmuid Cotter, Head of Customer and Online Services, Communities |
| Wards Affected: All |

Purpose

To present the performance scorecard for the Customer and Online Services for 2019/20

Recommendations

Members are asked to consider and review:

1. the Customer and Online Services performance information presented at appendix 1; and
2. Note the arrangements set out in section 1 to fulfil the Council’s obligation to comply with Audit Scotland’s 2018 SPI Direction.
3. Information regarding the Directorate’s workforce profile.
4. Annual Workforce Report data for Customer and Online Services

Resource Implications

None

Legal & Risk Implications

None

Impact Assessment

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

Consultation

## None required1.0 Background

* 1. Audit Scotland published the Statutory Performance Direction in December 2018. 2019/20 is the first year to which that direction applies. The Council is required to report a range of information setting out:

1. 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.
2. Its progress against the desired outcomes agreed with its partners and communities.
3. 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
4. Its assessment of how it is performing aginst its duty of Best Value, and how it plans to improve against this assessment

* 1. The first requirement, to report the Council’s performance in improving local public services (including with partners) will be satisfied by the series of reports (of which this is one) that will be presented to the Council covering the whole of the Council’s performance for 2019/20.
  2. The other requirements of the Statutory Performance Direction will be satisfied by a combination of

1. Update reports to the Fife Partnership regarding progress against the Plan for Fife, with reports also going to Policy and Co-ordination Committee.
2. public performance reporting, assurance statements and governance arrangements.
3. Reviewing the External Audit Annual Report for it’s view on our Best Value performance and any action plans thereafter.
4. Carry out a Best Value Self Assessment using the updated Audit Scotland Guidance in conjunction with the Council’s Corporate Governance Statements.

1.4. Taken together, these reports will cover the whole of the Local Government Benchmarking Framework, plus selected service performance indicators that give a balanced picture of Council performance.

1.5 This report deals primarily with the performance of the Customer and Online Services, however it also includes several indicators that are included in the F&CS performance report due to operational and professional reporting lines.

1.6 The appendix to this report is presented in the form of a balanced scorecard covering the areas of Customer, People, Responsiveness and Cost results. This is consistent with the format used for the 2018/19 Public Performance Report and mirrors the approach used for internal management reporting throughout the year.

1.7 It should be noted that this report presents the performance of the service pre-COVID 19 and a more up-to-date position was recently presented to Fife Council and P&C Committee.

1. **Conclusions**

2.1 This report is the first in a series covering the whole of the Council’s performance against key indicators, including the Local Government Benchmarking framework.

2.2 The overall performance of the Customer and Online Services is positive; areas for improvement focus are identified in appendix 1

**List of Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Customer and Online Services Performance Report 2019/20

Appendix 2 – Workforce Profile

Appendix 3 – Annual Workforce Data

#### Report Contact

Jacqui Prokes

Corporate Development Lead Officer

Communities Directorate

[Jacqui.prokes@fife.gov.uk](mailto:Jacqui.prokes@fife.gov.uk)



Customer & Online Services

Performance Report 2019/20

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| This report provides a strategic overview of performance against key indicators. We’ve worked hard to maintain and improve performance.  In September as part of our approach to consolidate the many resources and teams who are handling external customer contact and online information, Revenues and Customer Service Improvement came together to form the new Customer & Online Services.  This is reflected in this report.  This new operation is not just an integration of initial customer contact but where applicable the integration of information and advice management, assessment and work scheduling.  The focus will be to continue to move to digital solutions which will also be helped by this new approach.  In 19/20   * We launched our new website fife.gov.uk * Set up a new service to improve our approach to customers in a changing environment | We continue to face significant challenges, particularly given the pandemic that has disrupted 20/21. However, we will   * Increase the numbers of services available online and improve the information available on fife.gov.uk. * Continue to monitor our performance particularly in under pressure areas such as the Contact Centre and the Information Management team. * Review the role of our face to face operation as it adapts to the new situation * Finalise the integration of the new service. |

Customer (Complaints)

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| **Performance** | **Progress** |
|  | The total number of stage 1 and stage 2 complaints has increased from 232 in 2018/19 to 251 in 2019/20. The increase was due to Revenue becoming part of the Service. With this part of the Service removed complaints have decreased on last year following improvements to call answering within the Contact Centre.  The Service continues to perform above target in terms of dealing with complaints within timescale.  It is anticipated that work involved to introduce the newly refreshed complaint procedure (for April 2021) will provide a renewed impetus for the Service to consider improvements within the drivers of satisfaction associated with complaints handling, including responsiveness. |
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Customer (Online Services)

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| **Performance** | **Progress** |
|  | The numbers of Facebook fans and Twitter followers have risen to their highest levels to date. This is partly due to the increased usage in March 2020 with the international coronavirus pandemic but also with the continued growth of social media as a key method of communication. |
|  | In October 2019 the council’s new website was launched introducing a less complicated structure and easier online journey for the customer.  This also included the introduction of the new MyAccount and new online services.    During this time 3 new online services were made available to the public: Community Alarms, Bulk Uplift and Missed Bulk Uplift which accounts for 2927 online transactions through our new system, 2258 by signed-in users which means they are trackable.    The number of online transactions has steadily increased this year, even though we streamlined general contacts online and implemented ‘web chat’ throughout the site.   We should see a further increase in online transactions over the next year as new services are added.    In this time the old FifeDirect account was still available to customers so these figures are the combination of this and the new MyAccount. |

Customer (Welfare Fund)

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| **Performance** | **Progress** |
|  | The average processing time for Crisis Grants continues to adhere to the Scottish Governments timescale of next working day for a decision. Crisis Grants provide crucial support to vulnerable people in a disaster or emergency situation.  In 2017/18, the number of Crisis Grant applications received was 13,091. This figure increased significantly in 2018/19 to 19,549 with a further increase in 2019/20 to 27,606. This is primarily due to the impacts of Welfare Reform.  The increase in Crisis Grants has had an adverse effect on the time taken to process Community Care Grants.  In addition, the number of Community Care Grants received has also seen a small increase from 3658 in 2017/18 to 4259 in 2018/19 and in 2019/20 3939 applications were received, this has continued to stretch service resources |

Customer (Customer Service Centres)

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| **Performance** | **Progress** |
|  | There was a marked reduction in visitors to Customer Service Centres.  In 18/19 there were 38,109 appointments and 297,925 general transactions.  In 19/20 this reduced to 35,504 appointments and 259,731 general transactions  Therefore, appointments down 7% year-on-year with general transactions  down 13% year-on-year. |
|  | Our accuracy of input continues to remain high, exceeding the National Records Scotland target of 96% for multi-disciplined offices. |
|  | A link to a short online survey is emailed automatically to customers 4 weeks after their case is logged.  The automated distribution of this short customer survey to large numbers of customers is generating a high level of response. By linking up to Lagan, feedback is based on real transactions.  Services are making real improvements in service delivery. Work with Roads and Network Management for example, has seen an improvement in the quality of responses.  Overall satisfaction has dropped slightly for Fife Council but has increased on 19/20 for COS and remains consistently high at 84%. |

People

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| **Performance** | **Progress** |
|  | As a service we continue to work with our staffing cohort to manage attendance and we have seen a gradual improvement in 19/20. |
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Responsiveness (Contact Centre)

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| **Performance** | **Progress** |
|  | The Centre workforce is deployed where the need is greatest. This means ensuring there is weekend and nightshift cover, answering all Community Alarm calls, making sure the Social Work group is resourced and bolstering the Scottish Welfare Fund team. This is a balancing act, but it is crucial that more vulnerable customers get the service they need.  The contact centre work closely with the webteam to ensure customers can access good quality online information as we continue to encourage customers to conduct their business with the council digitally, focusing a telephone presence where customer need it the most  During 2019/20 we have introduced webchat into the general team (environment, transportation, registration) within the Contact Centre and this is proving to be a popular and efficient channel. Webchat will continue to be rolled out to more teams during 2020/21. 7000+ webchats have been dealt with since it launched.  Strong performance on the 'out of hours' line continues. This provides support to a number of key services.  The Repairs Centre remains a success as the team now also do scheduling of tradesmen and this is giving customers a better overall service. However, the answer rate still remains a challenge. Quarter 4 of 19/20 had an answer rate of 88% so much of the improvements that were put in place were beginning to work.  The Social Work line continues to perform well. It is also worth noting that 30% of enquiries for this team come via e-mail. Call answering this year to date is 87.8% (it functioned throughout lockdown). |  |

Responsiveness (Information Requests)

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| **Performance** | | **Progress** |
|  | Each type of requests remains high and Subject Access Requests (SAR) continue to rise. Performance has improved slightly on last year for all regimes. However, the expectation from the regulating bodies is 95% performance, therefore further work is required to be carried out to improve timescales.    All types of requests can be complex, and requests can contain multiple questions requiring information from multiple services.  SAR requests remain the most time consuming and excessive information continues to be held by services, which requires cleansing prior to work beginning on reviewing the information to be provided.    An outcome of the review of the service which was carried out provided the Information Request & Management Team with 2 additional Information Assistants.  Their main duties are to provide support to the Information Specialists and manage other types of DPA requests and the less complex Freedom of Information (FOI) and Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests. | |

Responsiveness (Revenues)

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| **Performance** | | **Progress** |
|  | The average time to process new claims is reducing and this is because of the increased use of automation and the reduction in Housing Benefit workload due to the introduction of Universal Credit.  As a result, resources have been reallocated to new tasks including rent recovery and assisting Universal Credit claimants as well as some staff taking voluntary redundancy. | |
|  | The Council Tax collected over the year has fallen slightly and this is partly due to the impact of Universal Credit. The Revenue Service recognises the challenges and has put in place measures to maintain and improve the collection rate such as:   * Direct Debit and online take up campaign, * Corporate approach to debt collection * Streamline process for applying for direct payments   Working with CARF to support those having difficulty paying their Council Tax. | |
|  | Council Tax collection over a 3-year period remains stable regardless of the current difficult economic climate. The team continually promote payment by direct debit and this impacts favourably on the 3 year collection rate. | |

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| **CUSTOMER AND ONLINE SERVICES - NEW ADDITIONAL POSTS CREATED IN 2019/2020 FINANCIAL YEAR (1 APRIL 2019 - 31 MARCH 2020)** | | | | | | |
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|  | **No. of Employees (FTE)** | **No. of Employees (FTE)** | | **No. of Employees (FTE)** | **Difference in FTE  2019 to 2020** | **Notes** |
| **Service** | *(April 2018)* | *(April 2019)* | *(April 2020)* | |  |  |
| Exec Director | 1.00 | 1.00 | 1.00 | | 0.00 |  |
| Customer & Online Services | 291.27 | 279.51 | 441.48 | | 161.97 | 1 |
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| **Notes** |  |  |  | |  |  |
| 1. Revenues moved from Finance to Customer Service Improvement to form the new Customer & Online Service. | | | | | | |

ANNUAL WORKFORCE DATA