

CABINET

29 JANUARY 2021

REFERENCE REPORT FROM THE RESOURCES AND SERVICES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

A.2 SCRUTINY OF THE TRANSFORMATION OF DIGITAL CUSTOMER SERVICES

(Report prepared by Keith Durran and Ian Ford)

BACKGROUND

At the meeting of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee held on 3 December 2020 (Minute 108 refers) the Committee was provided with an overview of the Council's Transformation of Digital Customer Services.

The Committee heard that the Customer Service provision at Tendring District Council had undergone significant change in the last two years. Over the past 18 months the Council had seen telephone calls into the Customer Service centre rise dramatically. Firstly in the summer of 2019, with the roll-out of 70,000 wheelie bins and the associated changes in the recycling service and then more latterly with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic. Undoubtedly the option for many residents to use the My Tendring self-serve portal had been of great benefit to them.

Members heard that within the next few months the Council would complete the roll-out of self-service processes relating to Council Tax, Benefits and Taxi Licensing. Along with Recycling, those were considered as having the biggest impact for residents. When those services had gone live the Council would commence a media campaign so that it could channel shift more people away from the customer service centre and towards the self-serve portal, thus looking to reduce the need for human resources.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS AND COMMENTS TO CABINET

During the consideration of this report the Committee made the following:-

RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET:

- the development time frames and future services to be made available on *My Tendring* be shared periodically with Councillors, together with volume of customer services calls and email contact information, including call numbers, durations of call waiting and abandoned calls, with appropriate bench marking information from other organisations.
- the prospect of creating a seamless link between *My Tendring* and my permit for parking permits is actively explored.
- council tax billing and other services be asked to deliver those services in a way that avoids overloading the customer services team incoming call capacity, e.g. by spreading the dispatch of council tax bills.

- the development of the leisure app be urgently addressed.
- the Council look at joining the Institute of Customer Service.
- the progress of the transformation agenda and how the Council has responded to the COVID19 pandemic in its ability to work from home be noted and applauded.

PORTFOLIO HOLDER'S COMMENTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET

Portfolio Holder Comments

"I would like to thank the Committee for their comments, and my responses are:

- 1. This information is being collated for Management Team and will be made available for Councillors on a quarterly basis starting beginning April. We currently have no benchmarking practices in place but this is part of the Customer Services action plan for this year and will be added as soon as possible.*
- 2. A link to the MiPermit process on the My Tendring portal has now been added on.*
- 3. The despatch of council tax bills is very closely controlled by legislation so we do not have much leeway here. We will however do our utmost to protect the customer services team during annual billing and have created a working group to look at this. It is anticipated that having My Tendring self-service council tax balances available will also alleviate this problem along with helpful information (frequently asked questions etc) easily accessible on our website etc.*
- 4. We are very aware of the need to address this, but of a number of staff have been affected by Covid, and works has been prioritised to progress the Transformation project. I will be very happy to give the Committee an update on the progress of the App at its next meeting. I can advise that some of the improvements have already been written and are 'in test'.*
- 5. The ICS has been contacted and a preliminary conversation has taken place with them regarding the benefits of joining. Customer Services does not have a budget for professional memberships, therefore a business case will need to be drafted and approved by Management Team. An alternative of another professional body to this, such as Customer Service Excellence is also being looked at, that would also provide benchmarking and accreditation.*
- 6. I thank the Committee for the kind comment with regards to the Transformation works; I was delighted that the Planning Committee approved the revised proposals for the new Committee Room, which is the missing piece of the jigsaw puzzle, but the ability to have enabled so many members of staff, and members of the Council alike in working from home, is largely down to the substantial investment in IT we embarked on back in 2013, and the excellent efforts of the IT team in rolling out the Digital Transformation work, and supporting all of us in doing so during these incredible times."*

Recommendation to Cabinet

That the comments and recommendations of the Resources and Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee be noted and the comments of the Housing Portfolio Holder, in response thereto, be endorsed.