



Financial Performance and Contracts Committee

9 October 2018

Title	Improving Customer Services – website satisfaction
Report of	Commercial Director
Wards	All
Status	Public
Urgent	No
Key	No
Enclosures	None
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Summary

This report provides an update on customer services performance with additional detail provided on web satisfaction as requested by the Committee at its previous meeting on 2 July 2018. It highlights areas of concern, what is being done to improve performance and the wider upcoming digital improvements enabled by the Customer Transformation Programme. Within the current financial climate this report also provides further detail on savings enabled by this programme.

Officer's Recommendations

1. That the Committee notes the actions being taken by officers to improve web satisfaction performance and the broader digital improvements that will enable savings for the authority.

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Website satisfaction has declined over the last three quarters (October 2017 to June 2018). This has been due to:
- Technical glitches following the launch of 'My Account' in October 2017, including problems with re-setting passwords and logging in
 - Searchability of the site, out of date content and confusion with the content on the website
 - The accuracy of online bin collection day information
 - Forms timing out and other stability issues with the site.
- 1.2 To address these factors and improve performance, several changes have been made and further work is in process:
- An upgrade of 'My Account' in early September 2018 resolved some areas causing dissatisfaction (more detail is provided in paragraph 1.12)
 - A new website will be launched before Christmas, with a complete refresh of content. This will improve navigation and the searchability of the site and is being tested with residents before launch
 - Issues around the accuracy of bin collection day information will be fully resolved when new round information is launched in the autumn of 2018
 - The site will be hosted on new servers before Christmas and all forms will be moved to new software to improve stability and resilience of the site.
- 1.3 More residents are visiting the site (up 25% since 2016), webforms are being used more to contact the council (up 14%) and less people are phoning; total inbound calls have dropped by 11% over the last two years and there has been a drop in face-to-face visits (24%). Over 72,000 people have signed up for the councils 'My Account', accessing services such as Parking, Council Tax, Libraries and Waste services. Channel shift is beginning in Barnet and making the new site easier to use and greater digital automation should drive this further. This should reduce costs to the council and save residents time through the provision of more convenient and efficient ways of interacting with the council. Recognition that some residents will not find this more convenient is considered in 1.4 below.
- 1.4 Safeguards are in place to ensure residents are not left behind by these digital changes and the council will support those that cannot interact digitally. A comprehensive programme of activity is being designed to implement the Digital Inclusion Strategy to reduce the proportion of residents who are digitally excluded and ensure those that are digitally excluded still have effective and cost efficient ways of accessing council services. Further details on progress of this, is outlined in section 1.16 to 1.18 of this report.
- 1.5 This report provides more detail on the drivers of public dissatisfaction in the website over this period and what is being done to ensure the future website works better for

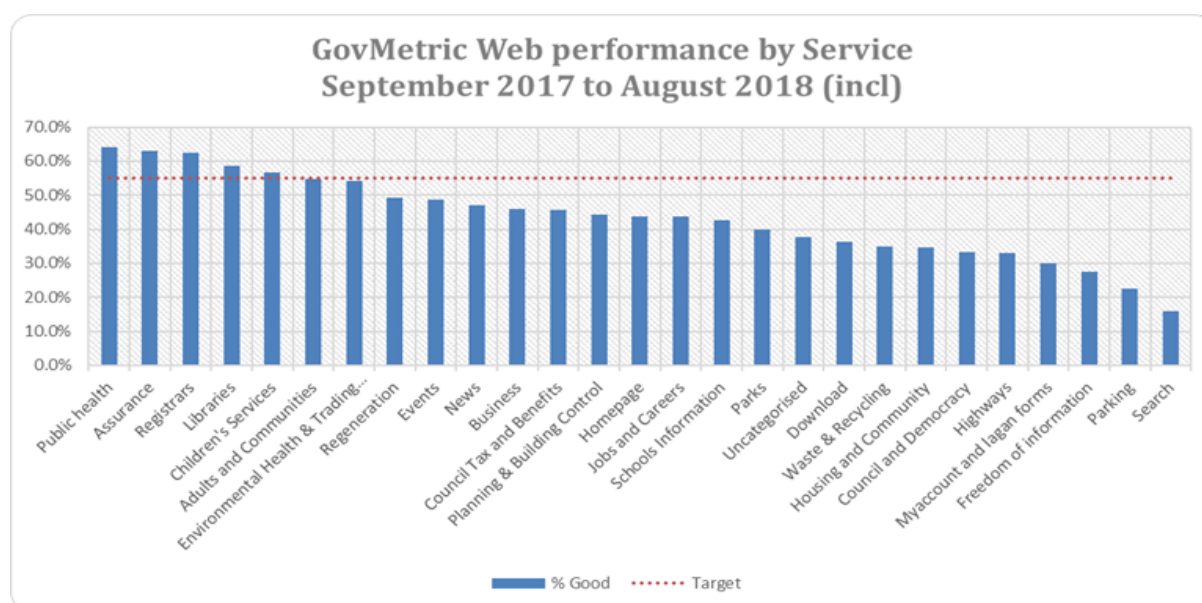
residents and is co-designed with them. It also provides a wider update on customer services and performance against a range of indicators.

UPDATE ON PROGRESS

- 1.6 The percentage of customers who have rated the website as 'good' has missed the target of 55% for three consecutive quarters (October 2017 to June 2018).

Description	Q3 17/18 (Oct-Dec 17) Result	Q4 17/18 (Jan-Mar 18) Result	Q1 18/19 (Apr-Jun 18) Result
Customer Satisfaction (% customers who rate website as good - GovMetric)	43%	39%	32%
Target Customer Satisfaction	55%	55%	55%
Web sessions	732,147	819,306	845,180

- 1.7 The key drivers for public dissatisfaction with the website are outlined in paragraph 1.1. A tool called Govmetric is used to measure satisfaction, which provides more detail of the areas of the site that are rated poorly, shown in the graph below. This tool was updated at the beginning of the year to improve the quality of the feedback data to inform future service improvements and web changes. The more detailed data is helping to focus on the areas causing frustration for residents and enable the prioritisation of resources to ensure they are fixed.



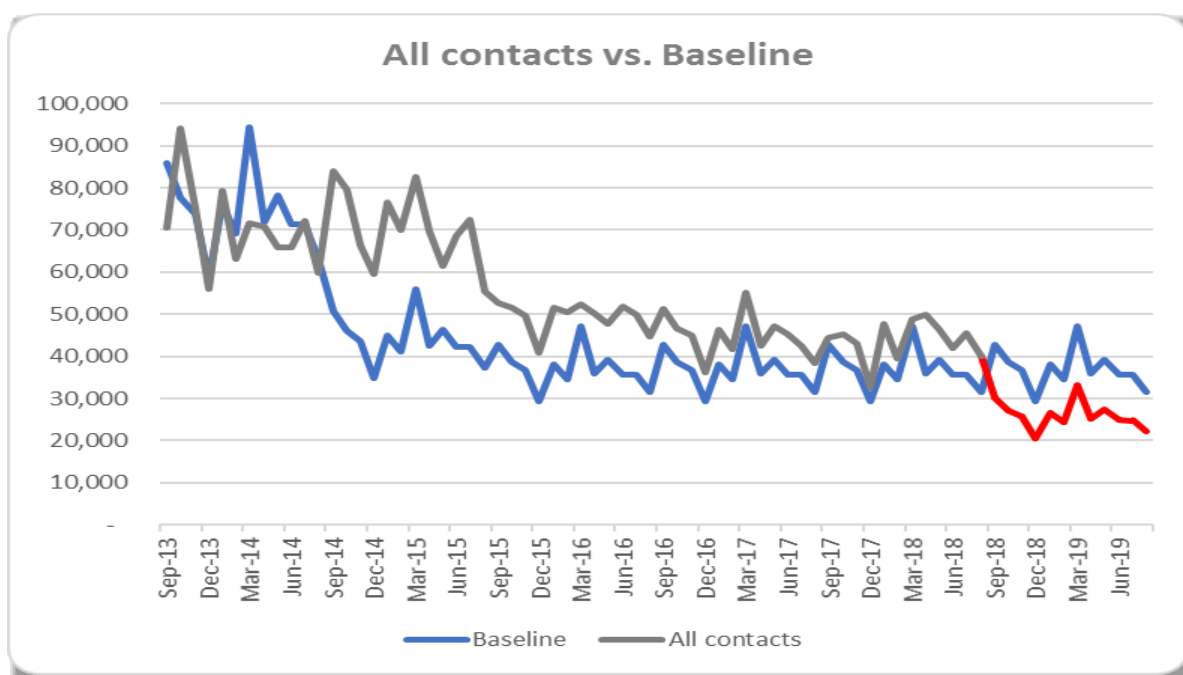
- 1.8 The Customer Transformation Programme was agreed at Policy and Resources Committee in October 2016 to implement the recommendations of the Customer Access Strategy and began implementation in 2017. The delivery of the 'My Account' digital platform on the website in October 2017 was the first major milestone for this programme and set up the infrastructure to deliver further customer improvements and financial benefits for the council. The key outcomes for this programme are outlined below.

- To deliver the vision that by 2020 access to services will be simplified and primarily 'digital by choice'; the majority of customer interaction with the council will be via digital means

- To adapt to how residents want to access services, making it possible to access council services online 24/7
- To encourage all customers who can to 'self-serve', at a time that suits them; whilst retaining access to highly trained teams for those residents that need extra support
- To reduce customer frustrations; ensure a quicker, smoother and more successful process; and make cost savings
- To invest in digital skills and improve digital access for residents.

1.9 These changes should deliver significant financial benefit for the council and a recent review of scope has prioritised deliverables to return maximum financial benefit as well as delivering customer improvements. This phase of the programme aims to enable cost reductions of c£579k, within the existing customer services element of the Customer Support Group (CSG) contract. Other financial benefits will be enabled by automating online booking processes for venues and events in libraries, increasing revenue opportunity and reducing administration time in services re-keying information to back office systems. This should enable c£117k of further financial benefits. The investment made in building a new digital technical architecture should provide a solid foundation to further enhance the service in the future.

1.10 The graph below represents the anticipated decrease in contact volumes to the CSG contact centre in Coventry as more residents are enabled to interact with the council online. This is anticipated to save c£337k against the current contract costs (the red line is the forecasted decrease).



1.11 A recent update to the council's 'My Account' improved the log in and password re-set process, removing unnecessary steps and fixing an issue that stopped some residents re-setting their password automatically. There was a fix made to the Council Tax payment form that was driving over 19% of the dissatisfaction ratings and more billing information was added. Some residents were experiencing problems when reporting street issues, such as littering, and these problems were fixed and simplified e-forms were added to report noise and environmental health issues. In November 2018, further improvements will be made to bin collection day

information and issues preventing some residents finding their address details in their 'My Account' to report a missed bin collection will be resolved.

1.12 A more detailed list of improvements is outlined below.

- The new website should be more relevant to residents and easier for the council to maintain. 81% of pages on the website will be re-written for the launch of the new site; and unnecessary content will be deleted. The current 1,309 pages will be reduced to c800, which will make the site easier to navigate and search
- There are 131 e-forms on the site, which often generate negative feedback. A new forms package will improve the usability of forms and by logging into the 'My Account' they will be pre-populated with resident's details making it quicker and simpler to request a service or update the council if circumstances change. 41 unnecessary forms will be deleted and the rest re-designed to make them easier to understand, reflecting resident feedback. These forms will also start to be integrated to internal systems, which should speed up response times
- Proactive notifications for residents will be launched in the New Year to automatically track requests and residents will start to be provided with status updates via their digital accounts, removing the need to phone the council to chase up progress
- There will be a fully automated online booking facility enabling residents to book appointments 24/7 for registering births, arranging weddings and booking sports facilities and library venue rooms
- The 'My Account' part of the website will be developed to deliver proactive, personalised content based on customer preferences that have been set up
- Webchat facilities will be introduced so customers can have queries dealt with online rather than having to phone
- The ability for residents to upload documentation for the council's attention, attached to a relevant case, will be introduced. This should eliminate the need to visit council premises or post evidence
- Customers will also be able to see issues other residents have reported to save time reporting them and they will be able to request updates via SMS/email
- Integration of 'My Account' to council systems such as Parking, Council Tax and Libraries will mean information can be held in one place, which will reduce the need to repeat information to different departments.

1.13 A new approach has been adopted to ensure these changes deliver for and are influenced by residents and a 'co-design' approach had been adopted to iteratively develop these digital improvements.

1.14 Resident research workshops have been held to validate and gain insight around how residents engage with the council and what causes frustration. The focus is to iteratively shape and drive improvements using this research, ensuring resident feedback is actioned upon. Residents are also helping test the new website to ensure it is easier to use, understand, and navigate for all.

1.15 A total of 4,921 residents have been contacted via surveys and c120 invited to workshops, with over 50 attending. 86 residents have also helped test the improvements both online and in person. There will be further testing sessions as this phase of the programme is completed up to February 2019.

1.16 The council is however aware digital is not for all, albeit this is an increasingly smaller proportion of the population. It is important safeguards are in place to ensure nobody

is left behind by the digital changes and the council supports those that need additional help. A comprehensive programme of activity is being designed to implement the council's Digital Inclusion Strategy to reduce the proportion of residents who are digitally excluded and ensure that those that are digitally excluded still have effective, cost efficient ways of accessing council services. An integral element of the Customer Transformation Programme is ensuring that residents with complex and sensitive needs can access services from the council and partners.

- 1.17 Office of National Statistics (ONS) data shows the “percentage of households with internet access” is rising (90% in London and 94% in Great Britain, 2017) and an increase in adults accessing the internet “on the go” using smartphone, portable computer and other handheld devices (from 61% in 2013 to 78% in 2017). Residents’ feedback has highlighted lack of skills, equipment or access costs being too high (telephone/broadband subscription) as barriers to engaging online.
- 1.18 To address these, the council has put in place the following initiatives and continues to engage with residents to understand where to prioritise resources in a meaningful way.
- Various IT training / support initiatives that aim to upskill residents who wish to learn basic IT skills
 - Initiatives that provide free Wi-Fi and free (limited) use of computers for those who may have limited access otherwise (e.g. libraries, town centres, sheltered housing)
 - Customer Advocacy Service (CAS) for customers who are unable to use the internet and need additional help to access council services
 - Review and refresh web pages to ensure accessibility needs are met.
- 1.19 Website satisfaction is one of 15 Customer Service indicators (see table below) monitored as part of the CSG contract. Customer satisfaction with phone, email and face-to-face have continued to meet targets; whilst the other indicators have, in the main, met or exceeded targets over the same period. The last two years have seen a positive performance trend across the service; and the face-to-face service has featured in the top 10 performing councils in a GovMetric national league table (reaching first place in Q3 2017/18).

Description	2018/19 Target	Q3 17/18 (Oct-Dec 17) Result	Q4 17/18 (Jan-Mar 18) Result	Q1 18/19 (Apr-Jun 18) Result
Customer Satisfaction (% customers who rate phone calls, emails & face-to-face service as good –GovMetric)	89%	90%	91%	90%
Customer Satisfaction (Resolution Satisfaction – % customers satisfied following case closure (Survey Monkey)	65%	68%	67%	72%
Customer Satisfaction (% customers who rate website as good –GovMetric)	55%	43%	39%	32%
Customer Services closing cases on time (SLA performance)	94%	95%	98%	98%
Customer Services closing cases on time (CAS SLA performance)	98%	100%	100%	100%

Description	2018/19 Target	Q3 17/18 (Oct-Dec 17) Result	Q4 17/18 (Jan-Mar 18) Result	Q1 18/19 (Apr-Jun 18) Result
% cases/transactions completed via self-service channels (CHANNEL SHIFT)	77%	New measure	New measure	77%
Emails and web forms forwarded within 1 day (First Contact emails and web forms (1 day))	98%	91%	99%	99%
Emails and web forms responded to within 5 days	95%	99%	99%	98%
Member enquiries responded to within 5 days	98%	100%	100%	100%
Face-to-face - Average Initial wait time - face-to-face non appointment wait time (average wait time in minutes)	5	4.60	3.70	4.75
Number of stage 2 complaints upheld (formerly stage 3)	1	New measure	New measure	0.50
Complaints responded to within SLA	90%	95%	100%	100%
Customer Advocacy - CAS escalations	1.5	No activity	6	No activity
% cases that have no avoidable contact (Right First Time)	79%	85%	83%	80%
% calls answered in 120 seconds	80%	New measure	New measure	79%

2 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The report provides an overview of performance for customer services with additional scrutiny provided on website satisfaction which has decreased significantly and provides details on action plans in place to address this. The Committee is asked to review the performance.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 None.

4 POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 The council will continue to ensure the improvements highlighted in this report are delivered and enable the customer and financial benefits indicated.
- 4.2 The pace of change in digital developments will require a continual focus to ensure the council's website continues to improve, meets resident's expectations and has the flexibility to enable the overall ambition and priorities of the council. A focus on co-designing changes with residents and businesses to ensure the website works for them in the future will continue to be a key priority and focus.

5 IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 Barnet's vision in the Corporate Plan is to have redesigned local services that are integrated, intuitive and efficient, making life simpler for residents and customers. The Customer Transformation Programme enables this priority and is enabling contribution to the council's Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS).
- 5.1.2 Customer satisfaction in the website is a corporate indicator and the Financial Performance and Contracts Committee's role in scrutinising the performance of this supports the objectives of achieving value for money and quality services.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

- 5.2.1 The improvements and financial benefits outlined in this report will enable savings contributing to wider MTFS delivery for the council.

5.3 Social Value

- 5.3.1 The Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 requires people who commission public services to think about how they can also secure wider social, economic and environmental benefits. Before commencing a procurement process, commissioners should think about whether the services they are going to buy, or the way they are going to buy them, could secure these benefits for their area or stakeholders. The council's contract management framework oversees that contracts deliver the expected services to the expected quality for the agreed cost. Requirements for a contractor to deliver activities in line with Social Value will be monitored through this contract management process.
- 5.3.2 Improvements outlined in this report will ensure that more information and services are available online so that customers can access them at a time of their choosing, and that barriers preventing customers accessing online channels are addressed through a Digital Inclusion Strategy.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

- 5.4.1 The council's Constitution, Article 7 Committees, Forums, Working Groups and Partnerships, sets out the functions of the Financial Performance and Contracts Committee as being Responsible for the oversight and scrutiny of:
- The overall financial performance of the council
 - The performance of services other than those which are the responsibility of the: Adults & Safeguarding Committee; Assets, Regeneration & Growth Committee; Children, Education & Safeguarding Committee; Community Leadership & Libraries Committee; Environment Committee; or Housing Committee
 - The council's major strategic contracts including (but not limited to):
 - Analysis of performance
 - Contract variations

- Undertaking deep dives to review specific issues
- Monitoring the trading position and financial stability of external providers
- Making recommendations to the Policy & Resources Committee and/or theme committees on issues arising from the scrutiny of external providers
- At the request of the Policy and Resources Committee and/or theme committees consider matters relating to contract or supplier performance and other issues and making recommendations to the referring committee
- To consider any decisions of the West London Economic Prosperity Board which have been called in, in accordance with this Article.

5.4.2 The content of this report is in line with these Constitutional responsibilities.

5.5 Risk Management

5.5.1 The council's Risk Management Framework is used to identify and respond to risks across all the council's services and is used in delivery of the customer Transformation Programme. An external audit on the Customer Transformation Programme recently closed and a Substantial Assurance rating was given in this regard.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The Equality Act 2010 requires organisations exercising public functions to demonstrate that due regard has been paid to equalities in:

- Elimination of unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act 2010.
- Advancement of equality of opportunity between people from different groups.
- Fostering of good relations between people from different groups.

5.6.2 The Equality Act 2010 identifies the following protected characteristics: age; disability; gender reassignment; marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity; race; religion or belief; sex and sexual orientation.

5.6.3 In order to assist in meeting the duty the council will:

- Try to understand the diversity of our customers to improve our services.
- Consider the impact of our decisions on different groups to ensure they are fair.
- Mainstream equalities into business and financial planning and integrating equalities into everything we do.
- Learn more about Barnet's diverse communities by engaging with them.

5.6.4 This is also what we expect of our partners.

5.6.5 The delivery of the improvements outlined and enabled by the Customer Transformation Programme have been considered in an Equalities Impact Assessment and the Digital Inclusion Strategy implementation plan, as outlined in this report, monitors the council's duty in this regard. There are potential equalities impacts and these are being monitored and addressed within the project as outlined in paragraphs 1.16 to 1.18 above.

5.7 Corporate Parenting

5.7.1 In line with Children and Social Work Act 2017, the council has a duty to consider

Corporate Parenting Principles in decision-making across the council. There are no implications for Corporate Parenting in relation to this report.

5.8 Consultation and Engagement

- 5.8.1 Obtaining customer feedback is part of the contract management process to inform service delivery, service development and service improvement. Engagement undertaken has been outlined in this report.

5.9 Insight

- 5.9.1 The report identifies the approach to ensuring customer insight, data and feedback from residents has been used and is prioritising the delivery plan in regard to the improvements as developed as part of the new website

6 BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 Policy and Resources Committee, 28th June 2016

- [Appendix 1 – The Draft Customer Access Strategy](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s32726/Appendix%201%20The%20Draft%20Customer%20Access%20Strategy.pdf)
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s32726/Appendix%201%20The%20Draft%20Customer%20Access%20Strategy.pdf>

6.2 Policy and Resources Committee, 5th October 2016

- [Customer Transformation Programme Report](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34904/Customer%20Transformation%20Programme.pdf)
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34904/Customer%20Transformation%20Programme.pdf>
- [Appendix B Digital Inclusion strategy](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34906/Appendix%20B%20Digital%20Inclusion%20Strategy.pdf)
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34906/Appendix%20B%20Digital%20Inclusion%20Strategy.pdf>
- [Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment](https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34907/Appendix%20C%20-%20EIA.pdf)
<https://barnet.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s34907/Appendix%20C%20-%20EIA.pdf>