

	<h2>Performance and Contract Management Committee</h2> <h3>31 May 2016</h3>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Title</b></p>	<p><b>Web Improvement Update</b></p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Report of</b></p>	<p>Director of Strategy, Communications &amp; Customer Services</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Wards</b></p>	<p>All</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Status</b></p>	<p>Public</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Urgent</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Key</b></p>	<p>No</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Enclosures</b></p>	<p>Appendix A - GovMetric top 10 councils for website satisfaction in March &amp; April 2016 Appendix B – Top 60 tasks that have been reviewed and improved</p>
<p style="text-align: right;"><b>Officer Contact Details</b></p>	<p>Kari Manovitch, Head of Customer Strategy &amp; Programmes, <a href="mailto:kari.manovitch@barnet.gov.uk">kari.manovitch@barnet.gov.uk</a> Katherine Lyon, Head of Customer Services &amp; Transformation, Capita Local Government, <a href="mailto:katherine.lyon@capita.co.uk">katherine.lyon@capita.co.uk</a> Chris Melia, Customer Experience Manager, Capita Local Government, <a href="mailto:Christopher.Melia@capita.co.uk">Christopher.Melia@capita.co.uk</a></p>

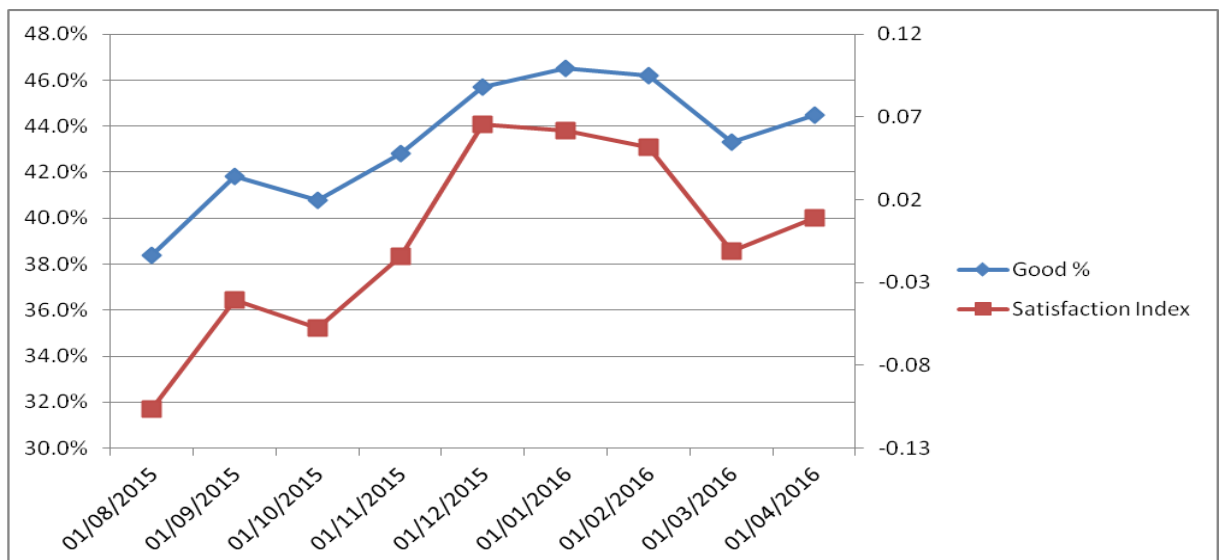
<h3>Summary</h3>
<p>It is a priority for the Council to have a website that attracts customers and provides a good customer experience. The Council monitors its success in a number of ways, including through the satisfaction ratings that customers submit when using the site. The website improvement work over the last 8 months has resulted in the satisfaction ratings rising from 42% in Q1 2015/16, to 45% in the final quarter. However the Council has a target to improve satisfaction by a further 9 % points in the current financial year, with our vision to be a sector leader over the medium-term. To do this will require a number of further improvements to be made, which are identified in the report.</p>

## **Recommendation**

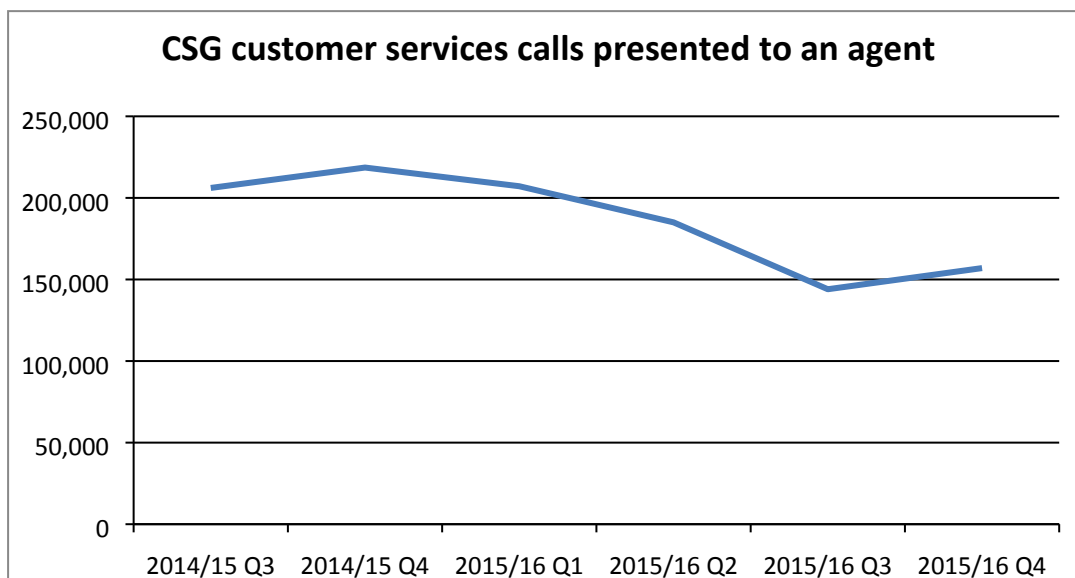
**1. That the committee note the progress being made and endorse the plans for further improvement.**

### **1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED**

- 1.1 The Council's vision for customer access is that by 2020 it will be simplified and primarily 'digital by default', offering efficient resolution and services joined up across the Council, partner agencies and the community sector. Digital by default means that the digital services are so good that the majority of customers prefer to use them, as is the case with online shopping and banking. Of course not all Council services will be delivered digitally – for some services personal contact is essential, and for some customers, digital access will not be possible. But there is scope for a far greater proportion of customer transactions to be completed online than is currently the case. The Council's draft Customer Access Strategy, approved by Policy & Resources Committee, sets out how the Council intends to improve and achieve this vision.
- 1.2 The Strategy will ultimately require significant cross-council transformation work and IT investment, but there is still much the Council can do to improve the website ahead of this. An outline business case for the Strategy will be taken to Policy & Resources Committee in October 2016.
- 1.3 The Council monitors the success of the website through a range of measures, and customer satisfaction ratings are central. In the first three quarters of 2015/16, website satisfaction remained below expectation. This led to the establishment of strengthened monitoring, a cross-Council action group, an action plan, and reporting the progress on the plan to this committee.
- 1.4 Implementing this action plan has had positive results. The proportion of customers rating the website as good exceeded 46% in January and February 2016, from a baseline of 38% in August 2015. The average for quarter 4 was 45%, compared with 42% in quarter 1.
- 1.5 The chart below shows the improvement that has taken place. The blue line relates to the left axis, which is how the Council reports the satisfaction scores; the proportion of scores that are good. The red line relates to the right axis, which shows Barnet's score according to GovMetric's indexing methodology, which is used to rank all subscribing councils. on this measure, 1 is the highest score, -1 is the lowest score, and Barnet's highest score was nearly 0.07 in December 2015.



- 1.6 The picture on website activity is more mixed. The trend since Q2 for website visits has been upwards, but website visits in Q4 were not as high as in Q1 at the start of the year, or Q4 the previous year.
- 1.7 In terms of webform submissions, there was a 13% increase between Q3 and Q4, with 13,612 forms submitted in Q4. The volumes in Q4 were also at least 13% higher than during the same quarter last year, which is very encouraging. The highest webform volumes were actually recorded in the first two quarters of the year, suggesting the impact of seasonal differences.
- 1.8 My Account registrations have risen steadily; by the end of April 2016 there were 22,903 accounts, representing around 16% of households, after 14 months of the service being live. This reflects a range of promotion methods being deployed, including posters, leaflets, and promotion by customer services staff. The target for 2016 is to get to 20% households with My Accounts, and to achieve 50% households by 2020. There are other councils in London such as Southwark and Barking and Dagenham that have achieved 50% households with a My Account after around 3 years of operation.
- 1.9 Largely as a consequence of the expansion of recorded messages on the CSG customer services phone lines in August 2015, the volumes of phone calls presented to customer services agents has fallen, meaning that customers are having their queries answered without calling back to speak to an agent. This in turn has allowed CSG customer services to reduce the number of staff in the contact centre, as committed to in the contract.



- 1.10 However, the Council knows that to realise its vision, we need to see higher levels of web usage, and this will only be achieved if satisfaction levels rise, as a result of further improvements to the website. The current Corporate Plan has established ambitious targets to achieve 54% of good ratings by the end of 2016/17, and to be amongst the top 10 councils for customer satisfaction of its website by 2020.
- 1.11 The setting of these satisfaction targets was informed by the benchmarking data obtained from GovMetric, the measurement tool that Barnet uses, along with around 70 other councils. GovMetric data put Barnet's ratings in the bottom quartile of quartile of this group, and identified that top performing councils were achieving 55%-60% good ratings. The current top 10 local authority sites achieve customer satisfaction index value approximately 10% higher than Barnet's current scoring. See Appendix A for the top 10 performing councils in March and April 2016.

## **WORK COMPLETED TO DATE**

- 1.12 In 2015 the customer experience manager established a new group of managers to focus on improving website content, with representatives from all delivery units. This group meets every 6 weeks and is responsible for implementing an action plan, and reporting progress on this to the Council's delivery board and to this Committee.
- 1.13 Customer services run a monthly report to identify the top 10 issues attracting negative customer ratings and addressing these specifically, such as broken or incorrect links.
- 1.14 The Council's web manager was joined by one additional temporary web manager, providing greater capacity for improvement work and supporting the web group and the network of officers across the Council who edit and update webpages.

- 1.15 A list of the top 60 tasks were identified using the volume of visits and the importance of the pages from a safeguarding perspective – see Appendix B. The pages associated with these tasks were systematically reviewed and improved, in collaboration between the web management team and the service experts, using best practice web design and content principles. This has included simplifying words and sentences, improving keywords to make the content more discoverable, removing inaccurate and out of date content, and removing duplication.
- 1.16 The web managers have also refreshed the training provided to web editors, including through provision of more personal, one to one support.
- 1.17 Every week senior managers receive a customer performance bulletin, and this contains web ratings and customer feedback, in order for improvements to take place.
- 1.18 Officer responses to customer feedback comments are published on the Council's website on a monthly basis.

## **PRIORITIES AND ACTIONS FOR FUTURE IMPROVEMENT**

- 1.19 In order to improve customer ratings still further, the Council has reviewed the negative feedback received over the past quarter. Whilst 45% satisfaction is an improvement, in Q4 42% ratings received were negative, and 13% were average.
- 1.20 This has led to the following future improvements being identified:

- **Improving My Account, and the most-used webforms:** Customer satisfaction ratings for My Account were below the overall website satisfaction at 37% in Q4, and this needs to be a focus for improvements. Issues reported include difficulties with authentication of their Council Tax details due to needing to know their exact name used on the Council Tax bill, missing postcodes for waste services, difficulties with navigation, and over-complex forms.

It is vital that My Account and the most-used webforms provide an excellent, uncomplicated experience for customers. The table below shows the highest volume webforms over the 6 months to April 2016. This is to some extent seasonally driven; Council Tax activity is highest in April.

1	Council Tax - Council Tax Payment	3,293
2	Council Tax moving in	2,710
3	Report a Problem	2,491
4	Council Tax moving out	2,132
5	Request/report new damaged and additional bins	1,909
6	Report Non Collection (bins)	1,807
7	Council Tax general enquiry	1,536
8	Application for in year school admission	1,385

9	Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub referral form	971
10	Housing Benefit forms	815

Customer services will review feedback about My Account and these forms to create a clear set of improvement actions **by the end of June 2016**. There is also an upgrade of the Civica system in 2016, used for Council Tax and Housing Benefits, which will include improved online capability for these services.

- **Technical support and maintenance:** When technical issues arise with the website, they are not resolved as quickly as they should be. There is a list of technical improvements that have been identified, but as yet no clear timeline for implementing them. Therefore the arrangements for technical support and maintenance of the website are in the process of being clarified and strengthened, **which will conclude in July 2016**.
- **Proactive website management and maintenance:** The Council currently has no tool in place to proactively alert it to web faults, which means that faults are discovered first by either customers or non-technical staff. There are tools available that do proactively and comprehensively monitor the performance of a website, enabling more rapid resolution of glitches, which CSG will evaluate. **This will conclude in June 2016**.
- **Involving customers:** Successful online services are designed with customers in mind throughout. Sites need to continually improve, to adapt to customer behaviours and preferences. The Council needs to strengthen opportunities for obtaining customer experience feedback and is looking at various options for doing this. **This will conclude in July 2016**.
- **Broader benchmarking:** The Council currently relies on GovMetric tool, which is used by around 70 other councils, to measure the quality of the website and understand what a realistic level of customer satisfaction is. However, customer feedback provided via GovMetric is not always about the website but rather, about the Council. Customers sometimes use the survey to vent their frustration about Council's decision or a service experience. Therefore the Council is looking at additional ways of measuring the site. These include:
  - Neteasy - where pages are rated on a 5 star system
  - SOCITM (Society of IT Managers for local government) benchmarking – this uses independent reviewers of pages based on a criteria for access, readability, ease of use, content accuracy, and end-to-end digital.

Additionally, customer services will more closely review the councils that receive the highest GovMetric ratings to understand the extent to which the prominence/availability of the survey across the site is helping to boost their scores, thus making them less reliable comparators; see Appendix A. **These actions will conclude in July 2016**.

- CSG Customer Services commissioned a peer review of the Council's website by the online service expert team in West Sussex Council in April

2016, which reviewed content, navigation, search, and accessibility, in detail. These findings are now being reviewed, with priority actions identified and assigned to officers. **This process of action planning and prioritising will conclude in June 2016.**

- **Improving content:** All Delivery Units will be asked to agree targets for improving the ratings of the content that they are responsible for. Targets will be agreed **by the end of June 2016** and will be monitored quarterly. Within this, a list of 20 areas that receive the most online complaints will be the focus of attention.
- **Staff capacity:** CSG have just recruited a dedicated Customer Experience Analyst to lead customer service's activity in understanding and improving the website, and working with the Council's web managers, web editors and members of the web group. The Council also needs to evaluate how best it can maintain website content according to best practice principles, so that writing and maintaining good content becomes the norm, rather than something that happens periodically as part of a project. Only by delivering a consistently good customer experience will customers be persuaded to go to the website, stay on the website, and use it again in future. **This will conclude in August 2016.**
- **Implementing the Customer Access Strategy:** The Strategy approved by Policy & Resources Committee was subject to public consultation, and the results of this consultation will be reported to Policy & Resources Committee with a final version of the Strategy. A business case for the investment required to implement this Strategy will be brought to Policy & Resources Committee in October 2016. This will set out the IT infrastructure required to ensure that customers received the sort of intuitive and efficient experience when dealing with Council services as they have become accustomed to when dealing with online retailers.

1.21 In addition to the above set of actions, the broader improvement plans for the IT service, and the management of systems and IT projects, will have a positive impact on the customer web experience. Problems experienced in relation to the new Parking system, and the Libraries system, detrimentally impacted on customer experience in quarter 4, both online and offline.

## **2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

2.1 To allow scrutiny of the information provided and to allow discussion and feedback from the Committee on the position reported.

## **3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED**

3.1 The alternative option is not to focus on the website. However this is inconsistent with the Council's Customer Access Strategy, and would

undermine the benefits to customers and taxpayers to be achieved through greater digital service delivery.

#### **4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION**

4.1 The web improvement work is ongoing and will continue throughout 2016/17.

#### **5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION**

##### **5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance**

5.2 Improving customer services, and delivering flexible and intuitive web-based services is a corporate priority established in the Corporate Plan.

5.3 Delivering this improvement plan will enable the council to achieve the following Corporate Plan targets:

- 9% increase in satisfaction with the council's website by the end of 2016/17
- Top 10% for England in satisfaction with the council's website by the end of 2019/20

##### **5.4 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)**

5.5 This improvement plan is being delivered in partnership with Capita, Costs to the council will be contained within existing budgets in Commissioning and also transformation reserve for implementing the customer access strategy There will be no additional financial impact on the council as a result of the improvements identified in the report

5.6 Increasing digital transactions and self-service is critical to delivering efficiency savings.

##### **5.7 Social Value**

5.7.1 A comprehensive, accessible, easy-to-use website will benefit the residents and businesses of Barnet, who be able to quickly and easily find the information and conduct the transactions they need to, at times convenient to them.

##### **5.8 Legal and Constitutional References**

5.8.1 The [Council's Constitution, in Part 15 Annex A, Responsibility for Functions, states](#) the functions of the Performance and Contract Management Committee include (amongst other responsibilities):

- a) Overall responsibility for quarterly budget monitoring, including monitoring trading position and financial strategy of Council Delivery Units.
- b) Monitoring of Performance against targets by Delivery Units and Support Groups including Customer Support Group; Re: the Barnet Group (Including Barnet Homes and Your Choice Barnet); HB Public Law; NSL



(Parking Contractor); Adults and Communities; Family Services; Education and Skills; Street Scene; Public Health; Commissioning Group; and Assurance.

- c) Receive and Scrutinise contract variations and change requests in respect of external delivery units.
- d) To make recommendations to Policy and Resources and Theme Committees on relevant policy and commissioning implications arising from the scrutiny of performance of Delivery Units and External Providers.
- e) Specific responsibility for the following function within the Council:
  - a. Risk Management
  - b. Treasury Management Performance
- f) Note the Annual Report of the Barnet Group Ltd

## 5.9 Risk Management

5.9.1 The web improvements described are designed to mitigate the risk to the Council's reputation and to the achievement of the customer access vision and strategy, risks that arise from low customer satisfaction with the Council's website.

## 5.10 Equalities and Diversity

5.10.1 It is vital that web improvement work takes into account the diversity of customer requirements, such as differential accessibility needs, and maintains the AA accessibility rating. The action to increase website performance measurement, and customer involvement in particular will contribute to this.

## 5.11 Consultation and Engagement

5.11.1 Web improvement work is, and must continue to be informed by the customer feedback obtained. This report contains an action to develop new ways of obtaining richer customer feedback.

## 5.8 Insight

5.8.1 The Council's promotion of the website is informed by understanding how digitally able our customers are, and tailoring our approach accordingly. Some customers who are not digitally able will not be expected to use digital channels and will be given more personal support.

## APPENDIX A

### GovMetric top 10 councils for website satisfaction in March & April 2016

GovMetric does not have strict arrangements in place to ensure consistency in the way each council applies the satisfaction survey on its website, and perhaps as a consequence of this, there is considerable variation in the volumes of ratings that councils achieve. Barnet Council's website satisfaction survey is available on every single page of the website and is very prominent.

The survey typically gets over 2,000 individual feedback scores per month. Five other councils in the top 10 get a similar magnitude, but the others get less than 500 scores per month. Several of the top performing councils are more selective with respect to the pages that the survey is available on, to encourage feedback about certain pages and not others.

GovMetric scores provide an index to benchmark. Index scores are calculated by assigning a value to the three ratings (good = 1, average = 0, poor = -1), adding together all the ratings, and producing an average by dividing by the number of ratings.

Barnet scores have ranged in the last year from -0.18 to 0.02.

Web					Apr-2016
Position	Council	Type	Population	Total Feedback Responses	Net Satisfaction
↑	The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Unitary	158649	1455	0.35
↑	South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	Unitary	148127	204	0.33
↔	States of Jersey	Unitary	99500	272	0.29
↓	Tewkesbury Borough Council	District	81943	237	0.28
↑	Hambleton District Council	District	85382	376	0.16
↑	Kent County Council	County	1463740	3227	0.15
↓	Hertfordshire County Council	County	1116062	1767	0.15
↑	Luton Borough Council	Unitary	203201	371	0.10
↑	Cambridge City Council	District	123867	428	0.09
↓	Elmbridge Borough Council	District	130875	125	0.07

Web					Mar-2016
Position	Council	Type	Population	Total Feedback Responses	Net Satisfaction
↑	Tewkesbury Borough Council	District	81943	352	0.50
↓	The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Unitary	158649	1747	0.41
↔	States of Jersey	Unitary	99500	276	0.33
↓	South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	Unitary	148127	231	0.32
↑	Hertfordshire County Council	County	1116062	1838	0.17
↑	Elmbridge Borough Council	District	130875	140	0.16
↑	Surrey County Council	County	1132390	1541	0.09
↑	Kent County Council	County	1463740	3209	0.09
↑	Staffordshire County Council	County	848489	2011	0.08
↑	East Northamptonshire District Council	District	86765	100	0.05

## APPENDIX B

### Top 60 tasks that have been reviewed and improved

The Barnet website attracts over 1.5 million visitors a year, who may have more than one 'web session'.

Web areas	Top customer tasks page	Sessions over last 12 months
<b>Planning</b> (4 pages)	View or comment plans	66,536
	Submit	5,837
	General information	43,774
<b>Parking</b> (8 pages)	Pay parking ticket	87,693
	General information	72,787
	Parking enforcement	19,646
	Permits	33,927
	Controlled zones	21,589
<b>Bins and waste</b> (4 pages)	Bin collection dates	38,485
	Find the Summers Lane RCC	12,915
	Bulky waste collection	11,655
	Find information on waste and recycling	24,012
<b>Council tax</b> (12 pages)	Pay Council Tax	68,498
	Pay Council Tax online	62,930
	Council Tax exemptions	10,068
	Work out Council Tax band	18,685
	Council Tax - moving in and out/change of address	11,521
<b>Contact MyAccount</b> (5 pages)	Contact the Council	19,399
	Login	1,837
	Sign-up or register	5,376
<b>Schools</b> (7 pages)	Primary school admissions	31,427
	School holiday and term breaks information	35,543
	Secondary school admissions	19,368
<b>Libraries</b> (5 pages)	Find out when libraries are open	42,966
	Renew library books	12,934
	Library ebooks and audio	4,222
<b>Jobs</b>	Find a job	19,483
<b>Pay online</b>	Pay online (for Council Tax, rent and parking notices)	8,261
<b>Report a problem</b>	Report a problem (potholes, etc)	18,233
<b>Housing benefit</b>	How to get housing benefit	10,280
<b>Building control</b>	General information about building control	7,847
<b>Children</b>	Children centre timetables	5,674
	Free childcare	5,135
<b>Voting</b>	Register to vote in Barnet	8,337
<b>Births, deaths, marriages and nationality</b>	Births, deaths, marriages and nationality information	9,924

<b>Web areas</b>	<b>Top customer tasks page</b>	<b>Sessions over last 12 months</b>
<b>information</b>		
<b>Licensing</b>	Premises licenses	1,664
<b>MASH form</b>	Professionals completing the MASH form without timing out	1,135
<b>Public Health</b>	Sexual health services	2,308
	Fitness for over 55 year olds	837
<b>Sports and recreation</b>	Parks	4,395
	Clubs and facilities hire	1,827
	Pitch hire	1,116
	Walks eg Dollis Park	2,154
	Outdoor gyms	1,010
<b>Adult social care</b>	Blue badges	9,434
	Freedom passes	3,943
<b>Regeneration</b>	Information about Brent Cross and Graham Park	4,786
<b>Housing</b>	Apply for Council housing	9,501
	Information for landlords	173