

CUSTOMER SERVICES TRANSITIONAL FUNDING

To: **General Purposes Committee**

Meeting Date: **2 February 2016**

From: **Director, Customer Services and Transformation**

Electoral division(s): **All**

Forward Plan ref: **Not applicable** *Key decision:* **No**

Purpose: **The General Purposes Committee is asked to consider the use of transitional funding to underpin the current operation of the Contact Centre.**

Recommendation: **The General Purposes Committee is recommended to:**

- a) Support the use of transitional funding of £382,309 to underpin the current operation of the Contact Centre, whilst a business case for the transformation of the Contact Centre is developed as part of a wider review of our Customer Strategy.**

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1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Cambridgeshire Direct Contact Centre, the Council's response to the e-government strategy, was launched in 2003 to manage increasing customer expectations around responsiveness by providing a clear route for all council enquiries and to deliver modern accessible services. The aim of the Contact Centre was to deliver a Customer First approach, offering individuals a seamless service from enquiry through to resolution of that enquiry through the use of technology.
- 1.2 When it was launched the Contact Centre delivered seven County Council services, alongside dealing with general enquiries. The Contact Centre now provides the 'front door' to 23 specific council services across a variety of channels. The Customer Services team that manages the Contact Centre also manages the three corporate reception sites across Cambridgeshire at; Shire Hall, Awdry House and Scott House.
- 1.3 It is recognised that effective resolution of customer enquiries, the first time someone gets in touch with the Council, remains critical to providing a good customer experience. It is also critical in ensuring the Council is as efficient and effective as it can be in delivering services to its customers.
- 1.4 The Council's new Operating Model identified this 'First Point of Contact' as one of the enablers that will drive transformation across the Council. This is why we will be looking again at how we design and deliver what we do in the Contact Centre with a view to how we achieve the outcomes we want for our residents. We will do this alongside looking at how we support our customers to self-serve through digital channels and how we support our customers through our developing work around Community Hubs.
- 1.5 Over the coming weeks a business case will be put together on an 'Invest to Transform' basis to bring forward the re-design of the Contact Centre as part of the Council's wider work in supporting its customers to receive the information or support they require the first time they contact us.

1.6 Current issues

- Whilst this work is taking place it is important to acknowledge the current position within the Contact Centre. Since its opening the volume of work delivered by this service has increased by 29 per cent from 248,265 contacts in 2011/12 to 320,401 contacts in 2014/15 (222,142 calls, 87,837 non phone contacts and 10,422 face to face contacts).
- 1.7 In the last two years multi-channel contacts have increased by over 70,000 and the service has taken on the staffing of the corporate reception sites. This additional work has been absorbed within existing resources/funding. Alongside this increased workload the Contact Centre has continued to contribute towards the savings targets within the Customer Service and Transformation Directorate.
 - 1.8 This combination of diminishing resource and increased workload has inevitably had an impact on the performance within the Contact Centre. For example the industry standard of only having a 5% call abandonment rate has had to be re-set to a 15% call abandonment rate. Within this our support for

children's and adults' social care is always prioritised which can mean the abandonment rate for more general enquiries is far greater than 15%.

- 1.9 The work we are doing in Customer Services with our colleagues in Adults Services, as part of the Transforming Lives programme, is looking at a deeper and more developed role for the Customer Service Advisors (CSAs). It is recognised that this strengthened role for our CSAs cannot be delivered from a service that is already under-resourced.
- 1.10 Alongside this pressure on resources Customer Services staff recognise there are inefficiencies within the way the contact centre operates which also need to be addressed. For example, within the current model for support for Adult Services there is a significant proportion of avoidable contact where customers and CSAs are chasing progress on an existing enquiry. Such inefficiencies can only be addressed with the co-operation of services across the Council. This will be done as part of the transformation of how we work together across the Council to resolve enquiries at the first point of contact.

2.0 REQUEST FOR TRANSITIONAL FUNDING

- 2.1 Whilst the business case for the transformation of the Contact Centre is being developed some transitional funding is required to underpin the current operation of the Contact Centre.
- 2.2 This transitional funding has been calculated on the current staffing, levels of contact and performance using information from July – December 2015. It takes into account telephony and non-telephony contact and identifies the number of CSAs that would be required to meet our current telephony and non-telephony performance standards.
- 2.3 ***Summary of staffing levels to manage all incoming contacts***

| Type of Contact | CSA Staffing – FTE |
|--|---------------------------|
| Telephony contact requirement to meet performance at 85% (15% call abandonment rate) | 25.03 |
| Non telephone contact requirement to meet turnaround performance targets (note, a high proportion of children's social care contact is via fax to email from other professionals there are different standards for urgent/non urgent contact and information requests) | 18.59 |
| Total CSA requirement | 43.62 |
| | |
| Total CSA availability- current | 32.22 |
| | |
| Total Shortfall on CSAs | 11.4 |

- 2.4 If it is accepted that the CSA resource increases to levels as stated in the table above, this will require an additional Team Manager taking the 4 existing Team Manager posts to 5 FTE.
- 2.5 There is one FTE role within the existing establishment, a Service Improvement Manager that has been held as a vacancy to allow time for a review of support requirements following the implementation of the new Customer Relationship Management system in 2015. This post is vital to the

development work that needs to be carried out in the Contact Centre. There is already a considerable amount of development work underway even prior to the launch of this more fundamental review of the Contact Centre to assist the wider transformation of the council. Some resource has been held within the Contact Centre budget towards this role.

- 2.6 In addition to help with embedding and maintaining performance we recommend that the Contact Centre recruit a Learning and Development / Quality Assurance Co-ordinator. This is usually a core Contact Centre role, the previous role of this type was removed to contribute towards Directorate savings in 2012.

2.7 ***Summary of Transitional Funding requirements***

| Role | Costs (including on costs) |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| Customer Service Advisors 11.4FTE | £273,903 |
| Team Manager, Service Improvement Manager, Learning and Development Co-ordinator | £133,846 |
| Existing budget held for Service Improvement Manager | Minus £25,440 |
| Total Requirement | £382,309 |

3.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 3.1 The Committee is asked to support the recommendation for this transitional funding of £382,309 to be approved.
- 3.2 One of the outcomes of the transformation work will be clear understanding of the future resource requirement for the Contact Centre so that it can meet the needs of the organisation and its customers.

4.0 **ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES**

4.1 **Developing the local economy for the benefit of all**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4.2 **Helping people live healthy and independent lives**

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4.3 **Supporting and protecting vulnerable people**

The Contact Centre specifically plays a role in the first point of contact with those that may be vulnerable and in need of support, as well as the opportunity for such people to be identified through a general enquiry. The Contact Centre specifically delivers the 'front door' for Adult and Children's Social Care contacts, the Blue Badge Parking Service and the Family and Childcare Information Service.

5.0 SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Resource Implications

The General Purposes Committee is being asked to consider the use of extra, transitional resource to address the issues and risks currently identified within a Contact Centre that is operating significantly below capacity.

5.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category

5.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

There are no significant implications within this category.

5.6 Public Health Implications

The Contact Centre does provide specific a service to Public Health on an as required basis in conjunction with short term campaigns and projects. Presently, the contact centre is handling all contacts received for the Winter Warmth Campaign.

| Source Documents | Location |
|-------------------------|---|
| e-government strategy | https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/government-digital-strategy |