

TRAFFORD COUNCIL

Report to: Scrutiny Committee
Date: 03/06/2024
Report for: Update and Information
Report of: Cllr Joanne Harding, Executive Member for Finance, Change & Governance
Report author: Simon Davis, Head of Customer Services, Libraries and Culture

Report Title

Access to Council Services

Summary

This report contains the Executive's response to the Chair of Overview and Scrutiny's report to Executive in December 2023. Which includes an overview of how the recommendations will be addressed and how this links with other ongoing work.

Recommendation(s)

Scrutiny is asked to –

1. Note the contents of this report
2. Note the improvement plan for updating the Council Website
3. Note the communication to all colleagues regarding contact details being updated.

1. Background

- 1.1 Scrutiny reported to the Executive in December 2023 with recommendations to improve access to Council services, the full report can be found online - ([Public Pack](#))[Agenda Document for Executive, 11/12/2023 18:30 \(trafford.gov.uk\)](#)
- 1.2 The recommendations within the report are –
 - a) That the Council should ensure that no phone number is visible on the website or given out by Customer Services unless a clear guarantee of service relating to that number has been agreed with that department. This guarantee should include that the facility to leave a message if the call is not answered should exist, and that every message left will be responded to within NN hours. If this service level is not possible for a department, their number should not be made available to the public.
 - b) That all Departments do a sweep of their website to ensure pages are up to date with accurate contact information to reduce the residents' need to contact the Council via phone or email and that clear time scales for responses are in place.
 - c) That all Departments within the Council regularly check staff phone numbers posted on the internet are correct. Furthermore, ensure that the

- numbers are active, consistently staffed and/or have voicemail inboxes that are checked on a regular basis.
- d) That all public phone numbers for contacting services by the public have an out of office message, which provides a team inbox email where contact can be made.
 - e) That a Council-wide policy be developed that outlines the expectation for teams to be contactable by residents, other Council Services and that this policy includes time scales to manage customer contacts.
 - f) To identify where existing and new technology can be utilised to make access to services easier for residents. For example, online forms parking permits application.

2 Executive Response

- 2.1 Access to Council services by residents is an important aspect of effective service delivery, currently the ways for residents to contact the council vary depending on the service area required and the contact method.
- 2.2 Digital self-service via the website is provided in 3 main ways -
 - 1. CRM system used for Environmental Services, Pest Control, Blue Car Badge and Feedback. The CRM system enables various processes to be completed end-to-end digitally, e.g. reporting a missed bin or pot hole, applying for Blue Car Badge or booking an appointment with Pest Control.
 - 2. Service specific online system/portal, e.g. Council Tax, Planning, Libraries and Housing Options. These systems allow residents to access information and manage their accounts with the specific service. The specific functionality will vary between services.
 - 3. Webforms are widely used across the website to enable residents to supply information and/or make enquiries. The majority of webforms will deliver the information/enquiry to the relevant team via email.
- 2.3 The Access Trafford Contact Centre provides customer service via the phone for Council Tax, Benefits, Planning, Pest Control, Tree Unit, Libraries, Blue Car Badges and Adult Social Care (including finance). For all these service areas there are agreed processes to enable enquiries to be dealt with or referred to the back office via the appropriate system. Additionally, the Access Trafford Contact Centre also answers the calls to the Council's general number (912 2000), the service provided for these calls is limited to providing information from the website and/or transferring to relevant team during normal working hours.
- 2.4 The AMEY Contact Centre provides customer service via the phone for the Environmental Services delivered by AMEY, including Parks, Highways and Waste Management.
- 2.5 Both Contact Centres monitor performance and are able to report on this.
- 2.6 All other teams and services handle phone enquiries directly and have limited reporting capabilities.
- 2.7 Email service – The vast majority of public emails will be sent directly to team mailboxes or individuals and therefore managed within services. The Access Trafford Contact Centre manages the general Council email address (access.trafford@trafford.gov.uk), the service provided by email is mainly signposting to the website or forwarding to the relevant team and advising the resident.

3. Ongoing work and plans

- 3.1 During 2024/25 there are several workstreams taking place that will contribute to meeting these recommendations.

- 3.2 Corporate Plan – Programme of work underway to introduce a new Corporate Plan, included within the programme is a workstream to review the content of the website. All Directorates are included in the review to ensure that all website content is reviewed and updated. The review is due to be completed by October 2024.
- 3.3 Right Care Right Person (RCRP) and Neighbourhood working – These work programmes are reviewing the online information and contact details available via our website and other council information services to enable partner agencies to more accurately direct and refer residents to relevant Council services.
- 3.4 Implementing a new Content Management System (CMS) – The CMS is used to manage web content and a project to introduce a new CMS (Drupal) is currently being led by IT and Digital. The new CMS will bring improved tools for managing and reviewing web content. The new CMS is due to be fully implemented by during 2025.
- 3.5 Unified comms project which is in the process of replacing current telephony platforms including the contact centre solution, replacing with modern technology to streamline and improve accessibility via phone.
- 3.6 Digital Strategy refresh – This is underway, however will still have a digital first approach and the ambition of Trafford being a digital borough. For residents contacting the Council the aspiration is that the vast majority will self-service, either independently or with support from friends and family.
- 3.7 Digital Inclusion – There is an ongoing and expanding focus on Digital Inclusion with the aim of ensuring that every resident can get online. The 2 main focuses for Digital Inclusion are skills and access and there is a partnership approach to delivery. Within the Council this is led by the Digital Inclusion Officer in the Inclusive Economy and Communities team with significant collaboration with Libraries and IT & Digital. Digital Inclusion will also be a key element of the Digital Strategy.
- 3.8 Customer Vision – Plan to start work on this during 2024 and it will be closely aligned with the Digital Strategy ensuring a digital first approach where appropriate.
- 3.9 Customer Vision will aim to set out corporate expectations and minimum requirements to ensure accessibility for residents using all platforms, which aims to address points d and e in part one of this report.
- 3.10 Using available data from customer surveys and feedback to help shape and improve accessibility and processes.

4. Recommendations

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