

## Overview and Scrutiny Commission

**Date: 20 March 2019**

Wards: All

**Subject: Access to services through the council's website – the conclusion of the customer contact contract**

Lead officer: Sophie Ellis, Assistant Director of Business Improvement

Lead member: Cllr Allison, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance

Contact officer: Sophie Ellis, Assistant Director of Business Improvement

### **Recommendations:**

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1. That the Commission comments on the conclusion of the Customer Contact contract.
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## **1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1. This report updates the Commission on the conclusion of the Customer Contact contract. The Commission last took a report from the programme in February 2018.

## **2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1. The Customer Contact programme was instigated to deliver the technology and re-designed processes to support the council's Customer Contact Strategy, aimed at meeting the changing needs of our customers for access to services and, in particular, for services accessed via the internet. This strategy focuses on two key outcomes: firstly, to improve service users' experience of accessing council services, and secondly to reduce the cost of those services by encouraging people to self-serve, and by responding to customer enquiries the first time that they are raised. This will reduce unnecessary effort for residents, and 'avoidable' work for staff.
- 2.2. In March 2015 the council awarded a contract to General Dynamics IT Ltd (henceforth GDIT) to deliver this technology and support the associated changes in business process design. The contract commenced on 23 April 2015. It completed on 17 December 2018 when both parties mutually agreed to part ways.
- 2.3. Since September 2015 there have been delays in the delivery of elements of the programme.
- 2.4. Direct savings targets have deliberately not been attached to the programme itself because the improvements provided will be translated into efficiencies by all services across the council. On this basis the programme underpins a number of savings captured in the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

### **3 PROGRESS**

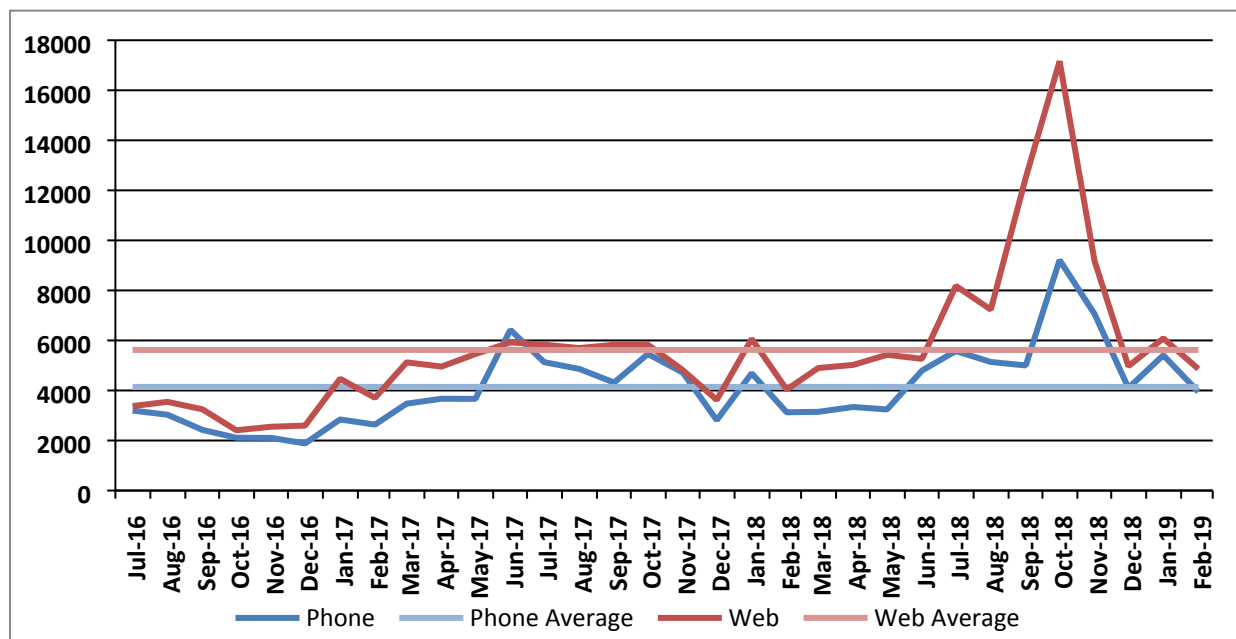
- 3.1. The council deployed mechanisms within the contract to alert GDIT to their concerns over the delays and secure a resolution.
- 3.2. Commercial negotiations followed, which were concluded in December 2018 when both parties mutually agreed to part ways.
- 3.3. The details of the negotiations are commercially confidential; further details are provided in Confidential Appendix A. The Commission may want to receive a verbal update, in closed session, at this meeting.
- 3.4. The specification of requirements for delivery of the programme included a number of outcomes in relation to automation of customer contact; approximately 50% of these have been delivered.
- 3.5. The council also specified specific transactions that were to be automated (made available to residents and service users on the council's website); approximately 62% of the council's requirements have been delivered.
- 3.6. Some of the key elements the programme has delivered include:
  - An IT system that contact centre staff use to record and deal with customer enquiries online, in person, and over the telephone.
  - A new transactional website, designed to ensure customers can easily access information and services on all devices, including mobile phones.
  - Back office integrations between the contact centre IT system (and front facing website) with four line-of-business systems to allow referral of requests and payments to be automated; this is important as it allows us to increase the number of calls where we can deal with enquiries at the first point of contact.
  - Streamlining of microsites (discrete portals or websites provided by different systems to facilitate access to services provided by different systems).
  - Redesigned processes and operating system for an on-line waste service, entirely driven from within the CRM system and available to customers on the website; this has included subsequent redesign of processes and further integrations with Veolia's IT systems responding to the new waste collection processes as part of the South London Waste Partnership initiative.
  - Redesigned and automated processes within Traffic and Highways.
  - Redesigned and automated processes within Parks and Greenspaces, including the provision for customers to book and pay for courses online.
  - Redesigned and automated processes within the Property function.
  - Redesigned and automated three processes related to Mayoral Charity Events to allow online bookings.
  - A new intranet platform for the council.

- 3.7. In December 2018 the system was transferred to new hosting and support arrangements. This is a temporary arrangement; the council is planning to introduce a new Microsoft Office suite of products (MS Office 365) in 2019/20 and these will provide the permanent hosting arrangements for the customer contact technology.
- 3.8. The Commission is asked to note that the progress of the programme has attracted significant interest under the Freedom of Information Act 2000. The extent to which the requested information can be provided by officers has been restricted by legal professional privilege and commercial confidentiality. Confidential Appendix A provides the Commission with the restricted information.

#### 4 UPTAKE

- 4.1. The take-up of online services has confirmed that there is high demand for online services by Merton residents.
- 4.2. The following table shows a comparison of web and telephone contact for transactions since rollout of the new functionality began in July 2016.

**Total Contact – Web/Phone comparison**



- 4.3. The data show that overall an average of 60% of contact is online. This has risen over the life of the programme, as has the volume of contact overall (as more online transactions have been introduced). Online contact as a proportion of contact overall reached 71% in September 2018. The peak in contact around October coincided with the launch of the new waste service, which saw an increase in queries, particularly over the phone.
- 4.4. The high level of uptake of the new automated processes offers reassurance that for many residents the design of the system is intuitive. Notwithstanding this, feedback from a number of residents and Members

confirms that there is room for further improvement – it was always the intention of the programme that feedback from users would be sought and improvements made to the automated processes on the basis of this, where agreed. As an example, the processes for reporting issues that are not related to a specific customer or property (e.g. fly tipping notifications) require amendment so that customers do not need to provide personal details if they prefer not to

- 4.5. Requests from commercial ‘apps’ such as Fix My Street and Love Clean Streets continue to be accepted and processed through the relevant service areas to ensure customers are not disadvantaged by these delays and can use the method of reporting that is most suitable to them.

## **5 NEXT STEPS**

- 5.1. A lessons learned review will be undertaken to ensure organisational learning from the programme.
- 5.2. A workstream has been established to ensure the systems that have been implemented through this programme are refined and improved and remain fit for purpose. This will adopt a more agile approach, to ensure it is able to respond to customer feedback, shifting priorities and the unpredictable challenges that are inherent with any technology development.
- 5.3. The list of further enhancements and improvements to the system includes:
- development that remains outstanding within the original specification of requirements (see items 3.4 and 3.5 above), such as the introduction of a ‘customer account’ to allow service users to view appropriate transactions, including progress updates, in a password-secured area;
  - refinement of processes that have already been automated, responding to customer feedback and/or changes to requirements, such as allowing for anonymous reporting of fly tips;
  - new requirements for automation that council services have identified through the recent target operating model refresh exercise.
- 5.4. Work is currently underway to recruit the skills and expertise to undertake this development work.
- 5.5. In parallel, officers are refreshing the Customer Contact Strategy and Customer Standards.

## **6 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED**

- 6.1. The governance arrangements for the programme have ensured that services across the organisation are fully engaged in the development of the approach in general, and in the design of automated business processes in particular.
- 6.2. Refreshed governance arrangements will be introduced to oversee the work programme referenced in item 5.3 above.

- 6.3. The new website has been designed to encourage feedback from users, Since its launch in July 2016 we have received over 6,256 pieces of feedback ranging from compliments, issues with the interactive web forms, comments on look and feel of the new design and other non-web related issues. This feedback has influenced the list of enhancements and improvements referred to in item 5.3 above.

## **7 TIMETABLE**

- 7.1. It is expected that the move to MS Office 365 will require a temporary freeze on changes to the system; this is standard IT practice. The timescale for this freeze has not yet been confirmed, however it is expected to take place in the latter part of 2019. Officers have therefore planned for a development window from March up until the change freeze (expected to be six months maximum) though this will be kept under review as the detailed plan for the introduction of MS Office 365 emerges. During this period high priority enhancements and improvements will be worked through – Appendix B provides an overview of these.
- 7.2. Development will commence as soon as the technical skills have been recruited (see item 5.4 above).

## **8 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1. The Customer Contact Programme was an element of the overarching transformation of the organisation as part of the Outstanding Council Programme. Funds were earmarked through allocated reserves to facilitate the programme. This planned one-off investment underpinned ongoing revenue savings that will benefit the council each year.
- 8.2. The programme was key to the achievement of planned savings through self-service and channel shift and the aspirations set out in a number of service target operating models (TOMs) are dependent on the technology the programme has introduced and will continue to underpin through the ongoing development set out within this report.
- 8.3. Appendix C provides the agreed savings that were associated with, or enabled by, the programme as set out in the report to Cabinet on 9 March 2015 and to the Commission on 10 March 2015. Of these savings, £1.698m have been achieved.
- 8.4. The initial programme budget of £2.8m was approved by Cabinet on 12th July 2012. An update on expenditure is provided in Confidential Appendix A.

## **9 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1. The South London Legal Partnership has worked closely with the programme team in the commercial negotiations referenced in item 3.2 above. The outcome and detail of the negotiation is commercially confidential; further information is provided in Confidential Appendix A.
- 9.2. The ongoing development set out within this report may involve some impact on the provision of some statutory services, e.g. regulatory services,

but this will be established and managed through the engagement of the relevant services and will depend on whether specific processes can feasibly be delivered through different channels and by different means.

## **10 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1. There are not expected to be any human rights issues from the programme. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is being updated at key points in the programme. Community and other key stakeholder groups will be engaged as part of the programme and any implications will be managed with the relevant officers in the Council.
- 10.2. Customers' expectations will be managed and mediated access made available to those vulnerable or with limited on-line capacity.

## **11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1. There are not expected to be any crime and disorder implications.

## **12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 12.1. All risks, assumptions, issues and dependencies are being actively managed as part of the programme. There are not expected to be any Health and Safety implications
- 12.2.

## **13 CONFIDENTIAL APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT**

**Appendix A** – (Confidential) Update on commercial negotiations

**Appendix B** – Overview of system enhancements/improvements planned

**Appendix C** – Agreed Savings Associated with Customer Contact/EDMS  
(Taken from Cabinet report 09/03/15)

## **14 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Customer Contact Strategy

Customer Contact Contract Award report to Cabinet 9 March 2015

**Appendix B – Overview of system enhancements/improvements planned**

**General**

- GDPR compliance
- Data cleansing
- Address data
- Email updates to customers
- Integration errors
- Resolution categories
- Report development
- Anonymous reporting option

**Waste**

- Bulky waste
- Garden waste
  - Online renewals
  - Fixes
- Assisted collection
- Bin not returned correctly
  - Online reporting
  - Fixes
- Gully cleansing
- Updating wording on eforms
- Clinical waste
- Report street incidents on map

**Traffic & Highways**

- Fix to vehicle crossover
- Fix to disabled bay application
- Map functionality

**Appendix C – Agreed Savings Associated with Customer Contact/EDMS (Taken from Cabinet report 09/03/15)**

Ref	Description of Saving	2014/15 £'000	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
<b>2013/17 Budget</b>					
CH04	Staffing restructure to deliver efficient processes, and building on planned shift of some customers to manage their own processes	148	0	100	
CS17	Reduction in paper invoices through scanning and deletion of scanning role		30		
CS35	Closure of cash office and resulting staff savings	30			
CS39	Implementation of Channel shift strategy and customer services review	30	30	30	
EN14	Mobile technology delivering efficiencies through reduced paperwork		100		
<b>2014/17 Budget</b>					
CS63	Reorganisation of systems development and support arrangements			88	74
<b>2015/18 Budget</b>					
CSD3	Rationalise IT support and delivery			86	
CSD5	Increased external bookings at Chaucer Centre			40	
CSD7	Restructure Post and Print Section			40	
CSD8	Restructure IT Service Delivery			40	
CSD13	Reduce Customer Access Points		15		
CSD14	Further automation to reduce need for Revenues Officer			30	
CSD36	Business Systems re-structure following rationalisation of IT systems Phase 1		10		
CSD39	Business Systems re-structure following rationalisation of IT systems Phase 2			50	
CSD41	Consolidation of Systems Support			20	
CSD43	Shared service for Fol and Information Governance			40	40
E&R 3	Improve on-line Booking functions				16



<b>Ref</b>	<b>Description of Saving</b>	<b>2014/15 £'000</b>	<b>2015/16 £'000</b>	<b>2016/17 £'000</b>	<b>2017/18 £'000</b>
E&R10	Back-office re-organisation			80	
E&r34	Alternative delivery model of Highways Inspection Team				30

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