

BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT OF: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR CORE SERVICES

TITLE: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE (OSC) TASK AND FINISH GROUP (TFG) REPORT ON CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE OF BMBC

REPORT TO:	CABINET
Date of Meeting	14th June 2023
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Core Services
Key Decision	No
Public or Private	Public

Purpose of report

To report to Cabinet the findings of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee (OSC) from the investigations undertaken on its behalf by the Customer Experience Task & Finish Group (TFG).

Council Plan priority

Enabling Barnsley

Recommendations

That Cabinet considers and endorses the responses, conclusions, and recommendations set out in the report, following the Task and Finish Group's report on Customer Experience in Barnsley.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 As part of its work programme the OSC agreed to undertake a TFG investigation into 'what it's like to be a customer of Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC)'. This included focusing on BMBC's Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2024, its subsequent action plans and key performance indicators (KPIs) to determine whether the Council offers a high quality, customer driven service to all sections of the community, including those who are 'hard to reach'.
- 1.2 The Customer Experience Strategy outlines the way the Council will seek to support its customers in accessing the many services that it offers. There is an increasing emphasis on transacting digitally, driven by both resource availability as well as customer expectations. Success is defined as communities knowing how to contact the Council and access services, through which they will have an

excellent experience, thus limiting avoidable contact and enabling the Council to concentrate scarce resources where they are needed most.

- 1.3 The TFG sought to better understand the various aspects to this work; to hear the views from a number of different key representatives; and consider what recommendations could be made for improvements. As a result of the investigation, the group have highlighted a number of recommendations in support of further improvement, the rationale for which is outlined in section 6 of this report.
- 1.4 The members of the TFG who undertook this investigation are as follows:
Cllrs Peter Fielding (TFG Lead Member), Sue Bellamy, Dickie Denton, Jeff Ennis, Jake Lodge, Pauline McCarthy and Kath Mitchell.

2. TFG Recommendations and Responses

Review the membership of the Customer Experience & Digital Board to better reflect front-line service contact.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The Customer Experience and Digital Barnsley Board is under review at this time with a view to incorporating the customer in service design. The board will more thoroughly consider the customer journey and incorporate services outside of the contact centre space.

Develop corporate timescales for responses to all customer contact.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The corporate contact centre has already developed Service Level Agreements detailing expected response times to contact across various media. There is an aspiration to develop this into all areas of contact which the Transformation programme will support via reviews in all services.

Improve guidance provided on calls to give customers better information regarding service request resolutions.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

Work has been undertaken with services to progress this and where possible guidance / timescales are provided to customers. The work being undertaken with services through the council's Microsoft programme seeks to improve this by giving definitive windows for services to be provided. Guidance available to contact centre advisors will be reviewed.

Develop systems which provide automated updates to customers regarding their service request and its completion.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

A major element of improvement work identified to be carried out through the

Microsoft programme relates to providing automated updates to customers regarding tracking their requests through to completion. This concept will be applied where appropriate across all customer service requests.

Undertake geographical analysis of compliment and complaint data.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The Customer Resolution Team will work with IT and Business Intelligence on looking at systems as part of the council's Microsoft programme which can support geographical data capture, analysis and the production of dashboards.

Enhance performance information provided to services on their compliments and complaints.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The Customer Contact and Customer Resolution Teams will work together with services to ascertain what additional information would be useful and how the council's Microsoft programme can help capture and display this information. The Customer Contact service will look to ascertain how playbacks of certain calls could assist this process.

Make providing customer feedback more accessible on the Council's website.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The council's digital team will review how the opportunity to give feedback is presented on the council's website and seek to make it more accessible. Particular attention will be given to encouraging compliments as well as providing information on making complaints.

Members and officers to be ambassadors of local library services.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

Awareness of local library services will continue to be raised and as currently members and officers will continue to advocate them.

Area Teams officers to receive library staff training.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

Area teams officers will continue to receive customer service training as part of delivery of their roles.

Remind employees of customers with additional needs and increase the use of 'Easy Read' documents.

Service Response: This recommendation is supported

The council's website is constantly scanned for accessibility and the use of Easy Read documents is increasing. The Customer Experience strategy, being reviewed in 2023/24, will look to strengthen how we enable employees to assist customers with additional needs, including use of technology where possible to alert employees.

3. IMPLICATIONS OF THE DECISION

3.1 Financial and Risk

There are no specific financial implications or risks associated with the report, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the financial and risk implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding. Consultations have taken place with representatives of the Director of Finance (S151 Officer).

3.2 Legal

There are no specific legal implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the legal implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding. Consultations have taken place with the Service Director for Law & Governance.

3.3 Equality

The TFG is keen to ensure that all Council operations and activities are considerate of the needs of all its communities. The TFG acknowledge the importance of people with additional needs being supported to both access Council services as well as give feedback on their experiences. Recommendations in respect of this are supported.

3.4 Sustainability

As this report does not require a decision, the sustainability decision-making wheel has not been included.

3.5 Employee

There are no specific employee implications, although in responding to the recommendations in the report, the employee implications of these would need to be fully assessed by the appropriate services responding.

3.6 Communications

As highlighted in the findings and recommendations of the investigation, effective communication is critical to ensuring a positive customer experience. The TFG frequently found that avoidable contact is being received due to customers not being updated on the progress of their service request; therefore, a number of the recommendations in this report reflect this. The TFG are also keen to better promote services and would in particular welcome expansion of communications activities in relation to services available in local libraries.

4. CONSULTATION

4.1 Consultations have taken place with: Customer Experience TFG members, OSC members, the Council's Cabinet members, Council officers from the Core Services, and Public Health & Communities Directorates, Equality Forum Officers and Members, and the Council's Senior Management Team.

5. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

5.1 No alternative options have been considered in the writing of this report.

6. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Overview and Scrutiny is a statutory function in local government to enable Councillors to provide 'critical friend' challenge of local services and make recommendations to drive improvements.

6.2 The recommendations in this report are made as a result of the OSC's Customer Experience TFG undertaking a detailed investigation into how the Council interacts with its customers and how effective this is. The TFG were reassured by the amount of work being done in this area.

7. GLOSSARY

ALMO	Arms-Length Management Organisation
BMBC	Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council
HR	Human Resources
OSC	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TFG	Task and Finish Group

8. LIST OF APPENDICES

There are no appendices for this report.

9. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Barnsley Council Customer Experience Strategy 2021-2024
<https://www.barnsley.gov.uk/media/19929/customer-experience-strategy-2021-2024-final.pdf>

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email governance@barnsley.gov.uk so that appropriate arrangements can be made.

10. REPORT SIGN OFF

Financial consultation & sign off	Senior Financial Services officer consulted and date <i>Avanda Mitchell – 23/05/2023</i>
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Legal consultation & sign off	Legal Services officer consulted and date <i>Sukdave Ghuman – 23/05/2023</i>
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Post: Service Director, Customer Information & Digital Services

Date: 31 May 2023