

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE	DATE 20 September 2021	ITEM NO 6
TITLE Review by the Corporate Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel – Customer Service Standards Review	WARD (S) All	
CHIEF OFFICER Deputy Director of Communities and Environment	CABINET MEMBER Finance and Resources	

1. **Decisions required**

2.

This report makes the following recommendations to the decision-maker:

- 1.1 To endorse the recommendations arising from the Review by the Corporate Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel (listed below at Section 5)
- 1.2 To agree that the Review report and its recommendations be submitted to the Chief Executive.

2. **Links to the Royal Greenwich high level objectives**

- 2.1 This report relates to the Council's agreed high level objectives as follows:
- A Strong Vibrant and Well-run Borough

3. **Introduction and Background**

- 3.1 The Corporate Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel agreed to a review of the Council's Customer Service Standards as part of its work programme on 13 June 2019. The Review arose from a request from a member of the public.
- 3.2 Two members of the public, Helen Jakeways and Rita Lovett, were co-opted on to the Review group.
- 3.3 The work of the Review was then delayed and disrupted by the Covid-19 pandemic and was taken to the meeting of the Corporate Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 15 July 2021.

4. **The Review**

- 4.1 The Review considered the Council's published Customer Service Standards, and looked at equivalents published on the websites of the other London local authorities.
- 4.2 An open session was held for customers. It was felt this was good practice and a recommendation is for the customers to be invited to meetings of the Panel which consider customer service reports.
- 4.3 Issues were considered and which areas they arose. Housing repairs was one particular area; this particular matter has been considered by the Housing and Anti-Poverty Scrutiny Panel.
- 4.4 There was a problem in that there was not appropriate data, but the issues of repeat calls and failure demand which initiated the Review are recognised to be occurring.
- 4.5 It was noted that the Head of Customer Services did not have corporate oversight of adherence to the published Customer Service Standards.
- 4.6 As the Review drew to a close the Digital Strategy was published. This Strategy addresses concerns relating to customer services. However, the IT elements are being put in place over a 4 year period and therefore it was felt efforts should be made now using what is currently available to address customer service problems. An element of the public are still going to be using telephones for some time to come to contact the Council irrespective of an increasingly more online service. Customer services affects every public facing aspect of the Council, and every Directorate to some degree or other; as such, each Directorate has a role to play in addressing matters and not solely the designated Customer Services section.

5. **Recommendations**

5.1 The recommendations arising from the Review were submitted to the meeting of the Corporate Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel on 18 March 2021, and they were agreed as follows.

R1 Customer Services to amend the current published Customer Service Standards with the following provisos

- That as they are corporate Standards the Chief Executive to authorise the Head of Customer Services to engage with each Directorate in the collection of such information as the Head of Customer Services deems necessary to monitor those Standards
- That the Standards be linked with the Complaints webpage, and if a customer feels the Standards have not been met that there be the facility to complain specifically about them, and that complaints made this way are reported to Scrutiny in the relevant report on customer services.

R2 Each Directorate to supply Customer Services with a statement on what they are doing now to reduce telephone calls, and to reduce 'repeat calls' (whether those 'repeat calls' are made by telephone or by email or by other means)

R3 Each Directorate to confirm to Customer Services that all public facing sections within their Directorate -

- are not using voice mail unless for a specified reason agreed by the Chief Executive
- use 'group hunt' on their telephone, or they have an arrangement for their calls to be dealt with by the Contact Centre
- use a generic email account (for example housing.repairs@royalgreenwich.gov.uk) and that all members of that section receive it

And for Customer Services to report back to Scrutiny in the relevant report on customer services, with a table listing each public facing section indicating those three points are in place, or if not the reason why.

- R4 For each job or transaction a customer makes they be given a timescale by the section as to when that job or transaction is to be completed.
- R5 That a job satisfaction survey be supplied to customers after jobs have been completed, and the results of such surveys be collated and reported to Scrutiny in the relevant report on customer services.
- R6 Customer Services and Members Services to undertake an analysis of those areas of Councillors' casework which generate the largest amounts of the casework, other than housing repairs where the cause is known, to consider if there is an underlying reason and if there is how that can be addressed by Customer Services.
- R7 Customer Services to consider the Suggestions made by the public (given in Appendix I of the Review report) to see if they are practical and implementable.
- R8 Customer Services to consider the lessons learnt from the pandemic, what effect did it have on customers, and were any good practices developed that might be continued going forward
- R9 Scrutiny to invite customers to those scrutiny meetings that take a report on customer services, to allow customers to give feedback and receive feedback on customer services.

6. **Options**

- 6.1 Option 1 - To not endorse the recommendations.
- 6.2 Option 2 - To endorse the recommendations and submit them to the Chief Executive.

7. **Preferred Option**

- 7.1 The preferred option is Option 2.

8. Reasons for Recommendations

- 8.1 This is a very in-depth Review to which a lot of work has been undertaken and nine recommendations have been carefully thought out as a result of the review. These recommendations would need to be submitted to the Chief Executive to enact.

9. Cross-Cutting Issues and Implications

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Legal including Human Rights Act	<p>The Overview & Scrutiny Procedures in Part 4 of the Constitution set out the terms of reference of Scrutiny Panels, including to review and monitor the services provided in relation to a specified service or subject area.</p> <p>The purpose of this report is for the Panel to consider the review of the Council's Customer Service Standards and agree the recommendations that will be submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Given that there is no formal decision, there are no legal implications arising from the report.</p>	John Scarborough, Director of Legal Services, 2 July 2021
Finance and other resources	There are no financial implications arising from this scrutiny report.	Damon Cook Director of Finance 28 June 2021
Equalities	The decisions recommended through this paper have a remote or low relevance to the substance of the Equality Act. There is no apparent equality impact on end users.	Nassir Ali, Scrutiny Manager
Climate change	This report makes no impact to the Greenwich Carbon Neutral Plan	Nassir Ali, Scrutiny Manager

	agreed by Cabinet on 18 November 2020.	
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10. **Report Appendices**

10.1 Review of Greenwich's Customer Services Standards – Review by the Corporate Finance and Performance Scrutiny Panel

11. **Background Papers**

11.1 Minutes of the Corporate Finance and Scrutiny Panel 13 June 2019.

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