REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES
1 October 2020

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD **PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING**
CHIEF OFFICER: PAUL FLEMING

People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Customer services

The Contact Centre has continued to be busy throughout the summer period, a time when we are usually quiet and allows staff to take their annual leave entitlement. Overall, we have seen a 70% increase in contact, across all channels, to date this year, compared to the same period in 2019. In particular, we have seen an increase in demand for online Chat Services – in 2019, we handled 5,000 chats, this has increased to 12,000 chats up to the end of August 2020. We have also seen increased volumes in the majority of our high demand services.

Resilience & Emergency Planning Service

The Council has been in response and transition to the Covid-19 crisis since March 2020 and is working with its Lancashire and regional partners to deliver an effective response for its Community and employees; this is achieved through working with the Core Team that supports the Chief Executive and Directors.

Whilst BwD has been in this response mode we have also responded to other incidents including flash floods and mill fires.

We have also completely reviewed the Corporate Business Continuity plan to ensure its validity, which will assist Blackburn with Darwen Borough council to prepare for a second wave of Covid19.

We will be working with schools later in this new academic year in resilience planning through the 7 School Improvement Groups.

Quarter 1 report – Duty Officer Statistics

Info received	19
Warning total	152
Total:	171
Strategic Officer Activations	2
Duty Officer Activations	26

Digital Customer Portal (DCP)

Newly designed online forms continue to be delivered through the DCP platform. Recent additions include Applications for a Traffic Improvement and Application for Free School Meals. The work on these digital forms also included a redesign of associated web pages. This is the holistic approach that the team are taking when designing new digital services to ensure that services are easy to find and use to enhance the customer experience. Since its inception in April, the customer portal has received 45,000 service requests and has over 20,000 registered users.

As part of our aim to include customers in the redesign of services, we have asked our Customer Panel, of which over 920 are now signed up to, to provide their feedback on waste services, COVID related services that where designed through the DCP and what citizens think of the COVID web pages. This insight will be used to further develop services and starts the formation of long-term relationships with citizens in service design.

The DCP team continues to support the COVID effort and recently designed the 'Financial Support for those Self-Isolating' digital form. In light of recent government announcements, the team will be undertaking more iterative work on this form and a similar one to support grants to businesses affected by the pandemic.

Waste services will be the next major piece of work that this project will take on and the team are currently finalising the review on the most suitable solution

Digital Integration of Health and Social Care

Work has now restarted around digital support for discharge from hospital to Social Care and around digitally integrating NHS and Social Care records. The project has been fully rescoped by NHS Digital, exploring how additional information, valuable to the discharge process, is shared in real time. Further work to integrate Council and NHS systems is due to start in November

Support to Test and Trace

The digital team have continued to provide support to the Council's Covid response. The Business Change team have helped develop the full end to end process for the local test and trace arrangements, alongside the establishment of the Community Testing service. BwD were the second in the country, after Leicester, to pilot local contact tracing and have since assisted more than a dozen authorities in setting up their own contact tracing services. The team showcased the new service nationally on a Local Government Association webinar to an audience of 280 people.

Business intelligence

The Digital Team have continued to work across the organisation to improve Business Intelligence with recent focus being on iterative improvements to the evolving need of COVID data through our dashboard reporting. This enables senior officers access to critical COVID data on a 24/7 basis.

Support for remote working and digital transformation

With large groups of staff still required to work from home the team have continued to test new tools to support remote working. Different software has been tested to help improve connection speeds and these have successfully alleviated the majority of issues staff faced with the sudden transition to home working in the Spring.

The Digital Team have continued rolling out the Microsoft Teams product to all areas of the Council. Due to the pandemic Microsoft are releasing regular enhancements, which the team are working through and then actively pushing to the business. The use of the Teams product is increasing and currently the Council undertakes an average of 400 online meetings per day using this software.

The team have continued to blog about their work here, working openly in accordance with our commitment to the Local Digital Declaration, which the Council signed up to in February 2019.