

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES
28 January 2021

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICER: PAUL FLEMING
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People: A good quality of life for all our residents

Customer services

The Town Halls and Duke Street have reopened from 2nd December following the ending of the national lockdown. The buildings will operate on the same COVID secure basis as it did prior to the lockdown. A full complement of front of house staff will be in place, however, all public access telephones and PC's will be unavailable for customer use.

Additional resources from the contact centre have now been trained and deployed to assist the Benefits Assessment Officers in the administration of Test and Trace Support payments. Five members of staff will assist with the assessment process and customer liaison. The increase in resources will improve the turnaround times of applications, and provide resilience to the team as the Borough looks to introduce mass testing.

Registrars

The Registration Service has continued to operate all of its services during national lockdown and the tiered system. Whilst the service has performed extremely well over the preceding months, the winter period always puts additional pressure on the team. With continuing pressures due to COVID and an increased number of rescheduled weddings, we will be reviewing the service to ensure its ongoing resilience.

Resilience & Emergency Planning Service

The Council has been in response to the Covid-19 crisis since March 2020 and is working with its Lancashire, regional and national partners to effect an adequate response for its Community and employees; this is achieved through working with the Core Team and Work Stream Leads that support the Chief Executive and Directors.

Whilst BwD has been in this response mode, we have also responded to other emergencies including; flash floods, mill fires, Gas leaks in the town centre and individuals protesting on the roof of a town centre building.

We have completely reviewed the Corporate Business Continuity plan and departmental operational level plans along with the "functional emergency plans" to ensure their currency and validity, assisting Blackburn with Darwen Borough council to prepare for any additional incidents during the prolonged ongoing response to COVID.

We have worked with 5 out of the 7 School Improvement Groups to deliver a consistent training package and approach to Emergency Response. This also provides a structure for the schools to plan for emergencies. We have been asked to deliver this training package (and exercising programme) to the Academies, Free and Independent schools.

Quarter 2 report – Duty Officer Statistics

Info received	3
Warning total	180
Total:	183
Strategic Officer Activations	4
Duty Officer Activations	29

Digital Customer Portal (DCP)

A number of new forms have recently been added to our DCP platform. These now provide residents with the ability to undertake more services online, including referring safeguarding concerns or applying for school transport vouchers. The recent additions take the total of online services on the new portal to 46.

Since the introduction of our new platform in April we have seen the number of online forms completed increase significantly. Traditionally 30% of all forms received had been completed by the Councils Contact Centre, on behalf of residents who had telephoned with their enquiry. This proportion has reduced to 10%, showing that residents are more confident in using digital platforms and self-serving. Since its inception, the customer portal has received 69,000 service requests and now has over 27,000 registered users.

The DCP continues to support the COVID effort and in light of recent government announcements the team have produced a number of new online forms and advice to assist with isolation support and grants to businesses affected by the pandemic.

Work on waste services has now begun and the Digital team are working with the DCP supplier to co-design a user friendly online view for residents to report issues with, or book, council waste services.

Digital Integration of Health and Social Care

Work has now restarted around integrating NHS and Social Care records. The Councils Adult Social Care system was upgraded during December. It now holds 99% of all NHS numbers of residents receiving social care. Testing will commence in January 2021 to allow social care staff to view relevant NHS records. Work continues with the NHS pathfinder project to implement the infrastructure required to allow further sharing of information between health and social care, in relation to discharge from hospital to social care.

Support to Test and Trace

The Business Change team continue to contribute to the Council's COVID response, assisting with the Community Testing project; which has been developed to support the pilot delivery of the mass testing with Lateral Flow Antigen Testing Devices.

Business intelligence

The Digital Team have continued with COVID reporting as the pandemic progresses but have also started to investigate online forms that are being created by residents in the Digital Customer Portal. This will allow business users to report effectively on service requests and identify helpful insights into resident's needs, using business intelligence tools to map and visualise service request provision over time. A new council-wide business intelligence group has been created to promote the use of business intelligence across the organisation and this group now meets regularly to discuss corporate data and the wider implications of corporate business intelligence.

Support for remote working and digital transformation

The Digital team continues to support large swathes of the workforce who remain working from home. Microsoft continue to release enhancements to their software at a fast pace, and the team are working hard to translate these updates to staff and ensure we are achieving maximum benefit from the new tools.

Planning is underway to equip some Council meeting rooms with new video technology which will allow staff, partners and residents to meet in person whilst other participants join the meeting virtually. This will also transform what have traditionally been small meeting spaces into large, virtual conference rooms; increasing capacity and enabling participants to be 'in the room' from anywhere there is an internet connection.

The team have continued to blog about their work [here](#), working openly in accordance with our commitment to the Local Digital Declaration.