

REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR DIGITAL AND CUSTOMER SERVICES

COUNCILLOR QUESIR MAHMOOD

PORTFOLIO CO-ORDINATING
CHIEF OFFICERS: PAUL FLEMING
Strategic Director of Resources (SIRO)
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COUNCIL: Delivered by a strong and resilient council;

Resilience and Emergency Planning

The Resilience & Emergency Planning Service (R&EP Service) has been enacted in response to the Covid-19 crisis since March 2020 in collaboration with its Lancashire, regional and national partners. This supports the Council and effects a valuable co-ordinated response for its Community and employees. This is achieved through working with the Council's Covid19 Core Team and Work Stream Leads that support the Chief Executive and Directors.

We have also reviewed the Councils' Departmental Business Continuity plans in order to support our response to Covid19 using the identified mitigations against pandemic impact on staffing levels.

We are working through the National risk Register requirements to identify risk likelihood and impact to refreshed national risks which affect Blackburn with Darwen. This then provides an ability to undertake a gap analysis for plans, training and processes, helping the council to prepare for incidents.

Whilst BwD has been in this response mode we have also responded to Storm Arwen and Electricity Power Outages, water leaks, flooding, and building fires with vulnerable residents.

We are refreshing the training package to deliver to school improvement groups, to complement the new SLA package from the Resilience Service.

Duty Officer Statistics – Quarter 3 2021/2022

Information received 115

Warning total 196

Total: 311

Strategic Officer Activations 1

Duty Officer Activations 11

Customer Services

The customer services teams have implemented a new online customer satisfaction module for the Council's online chat and email channels. This will enable the automation of follow up contact to be made with customers to obtain information and satisfaction ratings. It is hoped that this new module will be a useful tool to monitor services, collate feedback and drive service improvements.

Customer visits to Council receptions in Blackburn Town Hall, Darwen Town Hall and Duke Street grew in the last quarter to December 2021, peaking in November with on average 80 visitors per day. The main reasons for visits were taxi licence renewals, blue badges, benefits applications and Covid Isolation support payments

Digital Strategy

Strategy delivery is continuing to plan. Key infrastructure projects including Moving Infrastructure to the Cloud and Unified Communications are currently being specified for procurement.

IT Services

The IT team continues to support the Council's critical systems and infrastructure, including supporting the majority of the workforce to operate remotely. The team continues to improve the back end technical infrastructure to maintain integrity and security. A number of vacancies remain in the new IT structure, with the current demand for specialist technology skills in the wider market proving a challenge to recruitment.

Business Intelligence

The Business Intelligence team have implemented automated reporting from the Council's Digital Customer Portal and Netcall telephone systems. This is enabling services to monitor performance and customer demand in near real time. It will provide data which will enable Council teams to proactively support those residents who need it most. A commercial partner has been on-boarded to assist with developing a data strategy in 2022.

Information Governance and Security (inc GDPR)

No information assurance incidents have warranted referral to the ICO in the 1st half year 2021/22. We have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance (90%) with requests for information under the Freedom of Information Act for the 1st half year recording an overall compliance rate of 94.24% and with requests under Environmental Information Requests with a compliance rate of 98.08%. In addition we have achieved the minimum requirement for compliance with GDPR/Data Protection Act 2018 subject access requests (90%) in the 1st half year 2021/2022, with a compliance rate of 93.98%.

In 2021/22, 2 trusts (Incorporating 10 Lancashire schools) and 55 individual schools have bought back into the Schools IG SLA for 2021/22. A new out of borough school has also bought in to the service during this year.

PEOPLE: A good quality of life for all our residents;

Advice Services

Following the external consultancy work and internal review of Advice Services, it has been agreed that the re-procurement process will commence in the next few months. Whilst the specification will initially be similar to the existing one, it will be designed to be more flexible to changing priorities and challenges of the borough.

Registrars

The priority for the service over the next few months is to ensure the annual peak of death registrations is administered in accordance with key performance indicators and customer expectations. The ongoing pressures on the service and the available resources will be closely monitored over this critical period. Wedding ceremonies continue at lower levels due reduced seasonal demand. We also continue to register births but at lower levels currently, in part due to the local Blackburn Birthing centre being temporarily closed, with births being re-directed to Burnley Hospital. This has allowed us to prioritise resources to deal with the demand in death registrations.

Digital Customer Portal

The majority of customer facing forms have now been migrated from the legacy customer system to the Digital Customer Portal. We now have over 57,000 registered accounts since the system was implemented in March 2020. From April 2021 to December 2021 over 50,000 online forms have been completed. The team continue to support services with new forms for Covid-19 including grants for business and isolation. Plans are currently being reviewed for the second phase of work on the portal to start in April 2022.