

**Briefing Paper to the Communities Overview Scrutiny Commission**

Wards: All

11<sup>th</sup> December 2025**Customer Services Update****Briefing Paper of the of Corporate Director for Legal Services and Partnerships**1. Purpose of the Paper and Summary

1.1 To update Members on the key issues within Customer Services.

2. Background

2.1 Customer Services are working to a set of priorities in order to maintain and improve residents experience to access services. The four key priorities for 2025/26 are below

- To reduce call wait times - by retaining calls answered to 25,000 per month by an advisor and working to a 10% abandoned rate.
- To develop a digital inclusion strategy including agreed actions across the Council and VCSE organisations.
- To increase third sector partnership working, to deliver advice in the community.
- To protect income for bereavement and registration services.

3. Issues for Consideration

3.1 A significant amount of work has been undertaken to improve the self-service experience via the councils website. The service monitors data regularly to understand residents' usage and the user experience. Customer activity data shows the metrics below, and **Appendix 1** also illustrates the impact increase in self-service has affected a reduction in call volumes;

- 124k self-service customer accounts as of Nov 2025
- 46% cases raised via self-service in Oct 2025, up from 39% in Oct 2024

- 7% drop in inbound call volumes for 12-month period (Jul 2024 – Jun 2025) over previous year
- 32% drop in average wait time for 12-month period (Nov 2024 – Oct 2025) over previous year
- Continued average of 23k calls answered per month across Nov 2024 – Oct 2025

3.2 The focus of the team is to reduce call volumes further to 20,000 calls answered by an advisor each month, by encouraging those that can and are able to use the internet, to access services through an online customer account. It is clear from our customer insight data that there are a number of residents in the city that are not connected to the internet for a number of reasons.

**Appendix 2** illustrates the profile of our residents in terms of online service usage, compared to the profile of those residents that interact with us through other channels, regularly.

3.3 In order to reduce calls further, and support our residents to get online, there is a need to develop a coordinated approach with other partners in the city such as the voluntary sector, health services and broadband suppliers in the form of a Digital Inclusion Strategy. This will provide a set of collective actions to how we improve resident connectivity in the future.

3.4 A Digital Inclusion Strategy has been developed with partners and includes the need for a product/system to be able to pull together all the resources in the city that supports residents to get online. There is a wide range of resources to support online skills, access to a device, or to have broadband connectivity. Having a product or tool to make this visible to residents depending on where they live, and information how to access this is an important part of the strategy. **Appendix 2** also shows a similar tool that is currently live for East Riding residents. Customer Services have created a dedicated Digital Inclusion Officer to develop something similar for Hull residents, and to drive the strategy forward.

3.5 Advice services in the community provides a local provision for those residents who are not able to use the internet to access services. In the past 12 months the use of several community places to hold 'Here to Help' customer service surgeries, have increased to 15 places in the city. **Appendix 3** provides more information about the community advice hubs. The customer service delivery model is changing due to the need to reach and be visible to those residents in communities that need help with the cost of living, particularly to provide advice on food, fuel and finance issues.

3.6 The number of people coming forward for advice is increasing the more time the staff are present. The numbers attending currently are small but local residents and the voluntary sector organisations fully appreciate the value of the hubs. The advisor may only see 5 or 10 people face to face at a 2-hour drop-in however, those will likely be people who would not otherwise receive the help they need, and it's critically important to have in-person help available for those residents who cannot get online or into the city centre.

3.7 Customer Services have updated the Cost of Living information on the website for this winter. It can be found at [www.hull.gov.uk/financial-legal-general-advice/cost-living](http://www.hull.gov.uk/financial-legal-general-advice/cost-living) This brings together all of the help and support in the city available, with regards to food, fuel and finance support. This will be sent to all voluntary sector organisations that we know, who support local residents.

3.8 Voluntary Sector partners through 'Sector Connect' and Customer Services are introducing a new case management system to voluntary sector organisations and groups. As well as the benefits to the organisation, this will provide visibility to collectively understand in more detail the need for support in local communities. The sector are also developing improvements to referral processes across the network.

3.9 Customer Services are again delivering the Money Matters scheme as part of Household Support Fund 7. This approach ensures prevention is an intrinsic part of our offer by working with and upskilling communities. We have partnered with 23 VCS organisations in communities across the city. We provided them with a form of '*advice first aid*' training from Citizens Advice, giving them the skills to offer cost of living related advice this winter, such as;

- Budgeting and managing money
- Dealing with debt
- Reducing energy costs
- Feeding a household on a limited budget

The VCS organisation will proactively identify vulnerable residents to receive Money Matters advice and will then refer them to our Welfare Rights Service for a one-off HSF grant in the form of a £100. **Appendix 3** shows the data we are collecting with regards to the residents coming forward for support.

3.10 Customer Services are developing an Advice Services Dashboard, bringing together data from both the advice we deliver and the advice we commission. Once ready this data will deepen our understanding of the emerging needs of communities around food, fuel and finance. **Appendix 4** shows the dashboard in its current development. We anticipate it will inform service delivery, providing the data we need to target preventative work within communities. This work compliments the Upshot project with the voluntary sector, which aims to understand the contribution VCS organizations make to the key deliverables of the Community Plan and build their capacity for organisations in monitoring, evaluating and demonstrating the impact of their services.

#### 4. Next steps

4.1 That's Members note the report and provide any further comments.

### **Corporate Director for Legal Services and Partnerships**

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Officer Interests: None

Background Documents: - Appendix 1 – Customer Services Activity Data