

Communities and Customer Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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Title:	Cabinet Member Update
Report of:	Councillor Paul Swaddle, Cabinet Member for Customer Services and Digital
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Customer Services and Digital
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
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1. Cabinet Member Priorities

- 1.1 As mentioned in my previous report to this Committee, this new portfolio was established in January 2019 to oversee the Council's customer services and digital transformation programmes. The portfolio also includes responsibility for the Council's information and technology services, and broadband connectivity, working in partnership with the Gig Economy and Broadband Champion. Deputy Cabinet Member, Councillor Emily Payne, has been tasked with the important remit of reviewing our approach to call centres. I am pleased to see that the Committee will look at call centres as part of its workplan for the year.
- 1.2 In continuing to deliver the Leader's vision for a City for All, I want to provide the best customer experience for our residents, making it as easy as possible to access local services. As a Council we will take responsibility for dealing with problems in full the first time and working with people and families to prevent more complex issues developing.

1.3 My goal for the Customer Services and Digital portfolio is for the Council to be the leader in local Government for customer satisfaction and ease of engagement. As part of this vision, I strive to make digital the customers' channel of choice through automating back office integration and workflows as well as working to drive down costs for the Council.

1.4 My key priorities are:

- Improving the customer experience with a new approach to customer services handling;
- The establishment of a **Customer and Digital Standards Board** – to provide member and officer oversight of significant Council initiatives which will impact customer experience, which includes a high-level overview of wider Council customer and digital projects;
- **Short-term improvements to the Council's website (www.westminster.gov.uk)** – to redesign the look of the website to give it a modern, more engaging look, as well as making some improvements to usability and accessibility with a view for a complete overhaul; and
- **Developing an application (app) strategy** - to improve the customer experience and the Council's digital offer.

1.5 To this end, this report provides an overview of the progress against my priorities since my last update to the Committee in March.

2. **Customer and Digital Standards Board**

2.1 As the Committee will know, I established this board to provide oversight of the Council's digital initiatives and governance to ensure all our digital services adhere to high level standards, in line with wider industry and government guidelines.

2.2 I am pleased to report that the board has made a good start. We have already reviewed several projects in their early infancy and advised on some more advanced projects to ensure they are executed to the high quality our customers expect. There is now a full pipeline of digital initiatives for the board to consider and the board is meeting on a fortnightly basis to manage this.

2.3 I look forward to keeping the Committee updated on the board's progress as it becomes more established.

3. **Improving Customer Experience**

3.1 The Council has completed a number of digital projects which intend to improve the customer experience with a new approach to customer services handling. I have provided highlights below:

Customer Contact Centre

- 3.2 Dynamics 365 interface has now been implemented to the Agilisys customer contact centre to replace the previous Lagan system. It went live in April for the out of hours service. The solution was successfully deployed and Lagan has now been decommissioned. We have been monitoring the new system closely to ensure it is well bedded in.

FamilyStory Pilot

- 3.3 FamilyStory is a web tool to trial new ways of working for social workers to record meeting notes and visits which allows visit notes to be shared with families.
- 3.4 The solution went live successfully in April and is in its infancy. The team is currently adding more social workers to increase users.
- 3.5 The next stage is for pilot users to meet to feedback and improve use of the system. The pilot itself will end at the end of June 2019.

Noise SMS

- 3.6 The Council's noise SMS text service successfully went live in May. This solution provides customers with the ability to update noise complaints via SMS text messaging, and it is expected will reduce the number of visits required to cases.
- 3.7 The service also enables a speedier customer response and ability for officers to attend, and more effectively investigate, the most serious and complex cases.
- 3.8 Initial figures for the first 10 days show that the total number of cases that were closed automatically without officer intervention was 45%. We consider these figures to be an indicator of what might be possible on a long-term basis, and we are closely monitoring the system.

Report It replacement

- 3.9 The Council is replacing the Westminster City Council website's current Report It forms with FixMyStreet.
- 3.10 With feedback being received on the website's Report It solution, a procurement process identified mySociety's FixMyStreet as a proven capability to replace this existing solution and provide an improved user experience, including a mobile app.
- 3.11 We are taking the opportunity to replace the existing MyWCC registration process with a new solution which will allow login via social media accounts and over time provide the ability to introduce tiered levels of authentication based on user need. An initial basic proof of concept is being developed and prepared for base testing against FixMyStreet in the Summer.

- 3.12 The project team are also working with the services to review existing forms to identify where these can be streamlined to make it easier for a customer to report an issue without compromising the service's need to fulfil any request.
- 3.13 FixMyStreet will be deployed in phases over the Summer, incorporating a wider set of report types that is currently available via MyWCC. A soft launch of the first phase is expected in late Summer.

4. Westminster City Council's Website

- 4.1 Following user feedback in 2018, we are refreshing the Council website to make interim improvements ahead of a planned major website overhaul.
- 4.2 This site redesign project is well underway. On Thursday 13 June, we released phase one of our website refresh. This included an updated homepage, a refresh of the site header and footer, and improvements to accessing key services (e.g. Report It, Apply and Pay, Licensing and Planning). At the time of this report, there had been no reported issues, but we are continuing to monitor the situation.
- 4.3 Later releases are being mapped-out for the incremental go-live of improved search function, news and campaigns pages and key services areas. A number of user journey efficiencies and accessibility improvements are also planned.
- 4.4 This project offers us the opportunity to significantly improve the user experience and modernise the website in the short term. It takes an ambitious yet pragmatic approach, achieving high impact while balancing the need to be sensitive to resource expenditure while we prepare for the future site overhaul.
- 4.5 Longer-term plans to overhaul the website are at scoping phase. We are ambitious in our vision to make sure we have a modern, fit-for-purpose website that knows the user 'like a friend'.