Finance, Planning & Economic Development Policy and Scrutiny Committee

Date:	4 May 2023
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Report It Review Update
Report of:	Sarah Williams *Head of Customer Experience and Digital*
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Finance and Council Reform
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	
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1.   Executive Summary

1.1   This report sets out to inform the Policy and Scrutiny Committee of the progress made in the Report It Discovery and outlines next steps.

1.2   The Report It service aims to resolve street and estate-based issues in Westminster for residents, businesses, and visitors. This work is delivered under the Fairer Westminster Strategy commitment to the review and improvement of this crucial service. Significant discovery work has been undertaken to explore current and potential users needs in terms of 'reporting', 'tracking' and 'resolving' issues and a plan is now in place to re-design and deliver this transformation.

1.3   This discovery identified three highest issue volume services enabled by Report It: waste, highways and antisocial behaviour (noise). These areas will be the focus for the initial improvements representing over 80% of the reporting volumes.

1.4   A multi-method approach was used to uncover all pain points and needs across the reporting experience using surveys, one on one interviews and workshops to engage with stakeholders who use the service regularly. Over 550 people across all external and internal user groups were engaged during this period representing a significant discovery exercise.

1.5   The findings have been recently played back to residents, businesses, partners and officers with a commitment to update stakeholders via a new web page going live in April, detailing opportunities for them to be involved in the solutions development. The web page is not live; however a mock up can be found at the end of this document in Appendix B.

1.6   The discovery demonstrated a clear need to transform this service to improve the lives of residents and defined the problems users are facing when using the current Report It service. A roadmap (at 6.6) has been created to address these problems and transform the service.

1.7   A multi-disciplinary Product Team has been assembled under the new Digital and Innovation service to deliver these changes at pace. The team will work in an agile manner delivering new functionality when it is available rather than releasing improvements all at once, maximising on immediate benefits for users. This team will focus on the defined problems and test back with users regularly, putting them at the heart of the design of the future service.

1.8   This team will re-design and deliver a new Report It service which empowers those who live, work in and visit Westminster to manage their reporting needs with ease. In line with the discovery finding, 'most users would prefer to report via the Westminster Council website', the team will be taking a digital first approach to transform this service for users; whilst making sure regardless of channel chosen to Report It, they feel confident their report will be managed and met with an exceptional service.

2.   Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

1. The discovery was extensive and was intended to demonstrate best practice in the research space for Westminster, please share your thoughts following your review of the survey data (attached). Does the committee agree this meets the expectations set out in the Fairer Westminster strategy around consultation and engagement?

2. Are there any areas that haven't been captured by this research that the committee feels should be a priority in the re-design of Report It?

3. When reviewing the roadmap and next steps, does the committee agree it meets the expectations set by and to be delivered for Westminster?

3. Background

3.1 The 'Report It' service provides a means for street based issues to be reported in Westminster for residents, businesses and visitors. Examples of these issues include fly tipping, graffiti, animal fouling, highways issues, and street noise. It does not currently cover estate based issues which are managed through Housing.

3.2 Under the Fairer Westminster Strategy, the Council committed to reviewing and improving this service. This discovery was undertaken to explore current and potential user needs in terms of 'reporting', 'tracking' and 'resolving' issues. This discovery was not limited to online reporting, but also covered other reporting methods including contact centre, email and in person.

3.3 The majority of UK local authorities use Fix My Street to assist residents to report these issues, others use a forms solution usually enabled by mapping functionality. There are currently no other strong competitors on the market with a mature end to end product in this space.

The service currently viewed as 'Report It' on the Westminster site is a mix of these solutions to accommodate different types of reports, with street based issues using Fix My Street and other issues (like noise) reported through a forms solution. This disparate approach to reporting issues along with lack of integration and consistency in service delivery has resulted in a confusing experience for customers leading to complaints about:

- Inconsistent or no updates on reports
- Reports being closed down with no contact or follow up and at times no resolution
- Lack of clarity on the appropriate resolver of the report (for example when it is a TFL road/asset)
- Resolving times unclear for each report type leading to follow up queries usually resulting in unnecessary emails or calls into the contact centre
- Longer term issues not managed or communicated in a manner that is satisfactory to the resident
- Issues the council cannot deal with not communicated clearly
- Issues with the reporting (Fix My Street) interface, e.g. the mapping pin accuracy has been raised a significant number of times
- Reporters are often unable to find the right category for their issue
- Inability to report estate based issues

3.4 The resolution of issues in the City is a key priority for residents, and as such it is imperative that any re-design considers all perspectives and ensures fair access to this service. The council has dealt with numerous complaints about the Report It service that are often escalated to senior leaders and Cabinet Members. While there have been complaints and feedback about the effectiveness of the report it tool, there has never before been an in depth discovery to fully understand the root causes that lead to this level of dissatisfaction and escalation. Therefore, a full discovery was undertaken to truly understand the core of these issues to ensure a future design both identifies and resolves, while supporting a reporting service fit for a modern city.

3.5 A multi-disciplinary team was set up to undertake the research, working with an external partner from October 22 to January 23 to develop a deeper understanding of the service experience. The scope of work was significant to ensure the needs of all existing (or potential) users of this service were captured to support the design of future improvements.

3.6   A new way of working for Digital and Innovation was rolled out in 2022 to refocus the delivery and design of technology in the council to be user centric and data focused. This comprehensive discovery is the first step in this approach to deliver council services that really solve the problems Westminster residents, businesses and visitors face. By ensuring the problem is understood first, the value communities receive from Council services is maximised and costly tactical solutions that only solve symptoms of the problem are avoided.

3.7   This approach puts communities at the heart of the design and delivery of council services as set out in the Fairer Westminster Strategy, delivering on the manifesto commitment to review and improve this service, a key priority for Digital and Innovation.

4.   **Discovery**

4.1   This discovery is the largest discovery undertaken to date within Digital & Innovation, reflecting the scale of the Report It service and the number of residents who rely on it to resolve issues in their neighbourhood. It is essential that the design and delivery of the future service is centred around these users. The work will seek to solve both the problems found in the current solution and enhance the experience of Westminster Council services in the future by unlocking the power of new technologies such as automation and AI.

4.2   A multi-method approach was taken to reflect research best practice, details of the engagement events undertaken as part of the discovery are outlined in the table at **4.6**.

4.3   To guarantee any previous work was built on rather than replicated, a desk research exercise was undertaken to collate any previous work that may impact or inform the work on Report it and reviewed.

4.4   During the desk research competitor analysis was undertaken with similar services from both the public and private sector explored to understand best practice and inspire the route forward. Examples include Give Blood, Amazon and Cheshire West and Chester council. These services demonstrated intuitive User experience, Innovation (e.g. using QR codes on bins) and transparent and clear updates. Findings showed a significant number of Local Authorities use Fix My Street and many of the issues Westminster residents face are replicated nationally.

4.5   Communication and engagement with stakeholders are at the core of the new ways of working and how this discovery has been approached. To this end a number of engagement activities were undertaken during the discovery to bring stakeholders along for the journey and give an opportunity for them to shape the future of the service, detailed below:

4.6   Discovery Engagement Events

Engagement Event	Audience	Purpose
Report it Discovery Kick Off 4 October 23	Relevant WCC Service Representatives	To kick off the Discovery and gather initial thoughts and previous documentation.
Report It – Members Discovery Workshop 10 October 23	Westminster Ward & Cabinet Members	To introduce the purpose of the discovery and scope gathering feedback directly from Members.
External & Internal Survey (410 Responses) November 22 – January 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To understand the scale and priority of the issues using the service and engage with stakeholders. **Detailed analysis of the results can be found in Appendix A.**
Interviews (79) December 22-February 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To understand the scale and priority of the issues using the service and engage with stakeholders. This included contextual interviews to help the Report It Team to understand how the service fits into the everyday experience of people who live, work and do business in Westminster.
Report It Co-Creation Workshop (2) 10 & 11 Jan 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To work with stakeholders to design the solution following the interviews and surveys – co-creating ideas around an ideal service with those closest to the problem.
Report It Playback Session (2) 6 & 7 March 23	Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Partners and Internal Officers	To playback the findings of the discovery with stakeholders as well as the key issues found to validate the research and engage with stakeholders.
Deep Dive on Feedback with Services 29 March 23	Internal Services	To playback the findings of the discovery with officers in detail as well as the key issues found to validate the research and begin working towards a solution.

4.7   A number of quick wins were identified as part of the discovery as well as changes for the future Report It service, these will be delivered in an agile manner and are reflected in the roadmap at 6.6. This approach releases value to users as it's available and does not rely on full build before changes are made, delivering new content and functionality that can be experienced in the short term as well as the long term.

5.   Key Findings

5.1   Of those who engaged with the external survey about their experience of Report It (410 individuals) only 30% were satisfied with the current service.

Of this question, the majority of those who answered the survey who identified themselves as 60+ were either unsatisfied or did not answer this question with only 14% satisfied with the service. This is the group *least satisfied* with the Report it service.

The discovery showed when dissatisfied this often led to users expressing their unmet needs in different ways such as approaching Councillors, posting comments on social media and contacting officers directly. This led to additional workload for the Councillors, the contact centre and officers.

Q5. How satisfied are you with your experience(s) of the Report It service?

Satisfied ● Unsatisfied ● Neither/ No Answer

122 (30.2%)
216 (53.5%)
66 (16.3%)
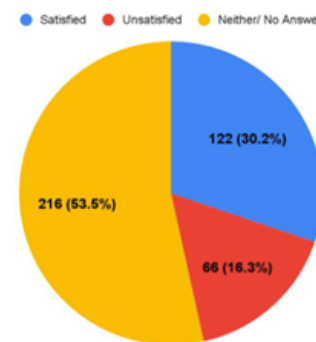
Summary of Survey Report (Full report in Appendix A)

- A high proportion of users received a response to their issue but felt it had not been solved
- When asked how they would like to Report It in the future, the majority of users wanted to report via the Westminster City Council website (which will be the focus for this work)
- The priority features users would value are:
  ➢ A timeframe for resolution
  ➢ Ability to track report progress
- 49% of 18-34 year olds who responded knew where to find the service but had never used it
- Only 14% of 60+ year olds who responded were satisfied with their report it experience

5.2   The most significant issues with the current service found during the discovery were:

- The user did not receive an update (and had no visibility of the status of their report)
- The map is hard to use and did not render well to a mobile device
- The user did not receive a reply with the outcome of their report
- The user could not find their issue to be able to submit a report
- Many users experienced their issue 'closed' by the council but not resolved, leading to dissatisfaction with the service
- Inefficiencies in the system results in a significant volume of email enquiries into the contact centre, with limited information provided to enable the team to effectively handle the enquiry

- When escalating an existing report to a Contact Centre Advisor there was limited or no information on the history of the report or action taken for the contact centre team to be able to resolve the enquiry which often leads to duplicate reports and additional workload
- The current solution does not allow fast and easy reporting of issues due to:
  - The reporter required to undertake a significant number of steps to get to the correct reporting form
  - Accuracy issues with the location pin on the map
  - Technical language used in the forms or categories causing confusion (e.g. 'Flytipping', 'Dockless Bikes'), often resulting in issues being reported to the wrong place

5.3   Listed below are elements of the service that had high levels of satisfaction and should be maintained and enhanced in the future reporting experience:

- Ability to remain anonymous
- The swiftness of which some issues (particularly waste and cleansing) are resolved
- The service received from specific officers, and the care undertaken to resolve issues
- A copy of your report sent to you for follow up purposes along with a reference number
- Ability to receive a report on existing issues logged in your postcode area

5.4   The highest volume service areas that receive reports are: Waste, Highways and ASB (Noise). These reporting groups make up over 80% of total reports received and are a clear focus for the initial work on this service.

5.5   Four themes emerged from the discovery work with the key findings within each theme listed below:

Content
- The current method of a customer selecting what they are reporting is confusing and overly onerous on the User. Technical or confusing language is used such as 'Fly tipping' and 'Dockless Bikes' leading to reports often reported to the wrong team or a customer feeling frustrated and choosing to resolve their issue through the contact centre.
- It is currently unclear what the council can and cannot resolve. This lack of clarity results in a user taking the time to complete a report to discover later that the council is unable to manage the issue. This leads to frustration both from a user and an officer perspective and handover to a partner which may not be completed, or the council may have lack of visibility on.
- There is a lack of consistency in the language used across the solution. This can lead to increased difficulties in navigating a report especially for those with accessibility needs or another primary language.

Technology
- The current level of integration with systems used by officers is not sufficient and doesn't support a seamless experience and feedback on reports. This absence of feedback on progress and resolution can result in frustration, unnecessary calls and emails to the Council and a reluctance to use the online service in the future.
- The current interface does not support a quick and easy way to report – it was often described as 'clunky' or 'difficult to use' due to the mapping tools and inability to pre-populate contact details from an account.
- There are significant technology advancements that may enhance the service the council is not currently using including: AI, Smart Automation, Enhanced Search

functionality. There is an expectation from users that these advancements be utilised in a future solution.

- The use of different technologies and tactical solutions has resulted in an inconsistent experience for users which does not reflect best practice to support accessibility or a great user experience.

Data

- There is no current public visibility of how the council uses its data proactively to solve long standing issues. There is therefore a perception that the council is not using the data in a strategic manner resulting in a lack of confidence from residents when reporting.
- The current level of data maturity does not support a 'single view' for users' interactions with the council. A view of all reports made by an individual will both enable a resident to manage their reports and allow a personalised view of interactions across departments to enhance the experience and come to swifter resolutions.
- Not all current forms prompt the reporter to supply the correct data for the report to be progressed resulting in frustration for the reporter when an officer follows up to collect this.

Organisational

- The use of different approaches to resolving issues in each service has resulted in an inconsistent experience for users which reflects the levels of satisfaction with the current service.
- There is an expectation that the standard of service be comparable across all reporting channels, due to standard not currently defined the experience is disparate and inconsistent.
- Relationships and referral routes to partners are not mature enough, resulting in teams often unable to chase updates for matters referred. This can lead to a perception that the council is exceeding expected timeframes and impact negatively on the reputation of the Council and Report It service.
- The approach to delivery of services is often not prioritised effectively leading to the council managing high priority and low priority issues in the same manner, impacting negatively on the effectiveness of the service and perception.

5.9 The table below summarises the priority focus areas for improvement following Discovery.
Reporters: Residents, Businesses, Visitors, Ward/Cabinet Members, Council Officers (to refer to other council areas)
Resolvers: Council Officers, Partners (including Met Police, BIDs, Charities..)

Underlying Focus Areas	Issues for Reporters	Issues for Resolvers
Content	Technical or confusing language used (Dockless Bikes, Cycle Hangers, Fly tipping) leading to difficulty finding how to report and reports often sent to the wrong service.	Unnecessary workload from having to send reports internally to the right department due to miscategorising. Complaints due to SLAs exceeded as report sent to wrong department.
	Information around what the Council do or do not deal with (for specific services like noise) is not clear. This can lead to an expectation a report is going to be dealt with and disappointment and frustration if it cannot be.	Unnecessary workload from invalid reports, direct contact and social media.
	The route to finding where to report an issue is too complex and time consuming which leads to frustration and using other routes such as calls or emails to report their issue.	Additional effort to manage calls and emails. Reporting forms do not gather enough information to effectively classify, prioritise and resolve issues.
Technology & Data	Current status updates are not satisfactory for users and anonymous users are currently unable to receive any updates. This results in unnecessary calls received to chase issues, some of which cannot be resolved effectively if a customer has not given contact information in their original report (GDPR).	Additional effort to manage calls and emails.
	There is a perception the Council are not using data effectively to prioritise certain hot spots or take preventative action.	Numerous systems and a lack of unified data are a constraint to achieving a single view of the problem (including linking related issues) and data driven prevention.
	The experience across different reporting journeys lacks consistency and means the solution isn't fully accessible and it is evident to the customer multiple solutions are in use.	Numerous systems and a lack of unified data make it difficult to achieve a single view of the issue and the customer and to delivering a seamless experience across channels.
	Users do not have a single view of their reports or ability to link reports, resulting in an experience that is not optimal.	
Organisational	The experience for reporters is inconsistent. Some experiences are excellent with the service and resolvers (Council Officers) whilst some are very poor. Without organisational standards for this the experience will remain disappointing for some.	The lack of standards and consistency in approach to service delivery impacts on the council and Report It reputation as a whole and can be frustrating for council employees – especially those who provide a consistently excellent experience.

6.0   Next Steps

6.1   Playback of this research was completed in March to stakeholders and the team will continue to engage with these users frequently to playback progress and test prototypes and ideas. These events will be published on the dedicated webpage to ensure transparency in approach and allow broader engagement.

6.2   As part of the new operating model for Digital & Innovation, a new Report It Product Team (user centred and multi-disciplinary) has been established to design and develop the new solution. The team are delivering to a product roadmap (6.6) and have a specific problem and user driven focus to solve the problems faced now and in the future. Report It will be an exemplar service, defining and demonstrating the way digital solutions are designed and delivered in Westminster in the future.

6.3   Quick Wins
Since the team was established in January, the current reporting map graphics have been improved utilising an improvement available through Fix My Street, this improvement has been met with positive feedback with location of assets much clearer for reporters.

6.4   The team will work at pace in an agile manner delivering new functionality when it is available, rather than releasing improvements all at once. The focus of delivery is in the following areas:

Content
- Improved categorisation – Find the right place to report the issue first time
- Accessible content – Clear, simple and easy to understand
- Simple forms – Adhering to GDS standard to support quick and easy reporting

Technology
- Updates – Progress and status are clear to the reporter
- New Technology – Innovating to deliver an exceptional experience
- End to end integration – Supporting seamless experience

Data
- Intelligence driven – Using data to drive insights and resolve long-term issues
- Ability to link and view multiple reports – to drive results and enhance the experience

Organisational
- Setting the standard – Consistently excellent experience
- Prioritisation – Value of services is maximised

Quick wins identified in the discovery will be deployed when available to deliver value in the short term as well as the long term.

6.5   This team will re-design and deliver a new Report It service which empowers those who live, work in and visit Westminster to manage their reporting needs with ease. In line with the discovery finding, 'most users would prefer to report via the Westminster Council website', the team will be taking a digital first approach to transform this service for users; whilst making sure regardless of channel chosen to Report It, they feel confident their report will be managed and are met with an exceptional service. The steps to this transformation are articulated in the roadmap below.

6.6   Draft Improvements Roadmap

This is an indication of the work to be undertaken over the next period to deliver value in the short, medium, and long term. This roadmap is evolving as user priorities are further defined, influenced and driven by what our Reporters and Resolvers want and need from this service. The prototype refers to an online service via the Westminster City Council website, an app may be explored in the future, but findings showed this is not the primary way most users want to access the service.
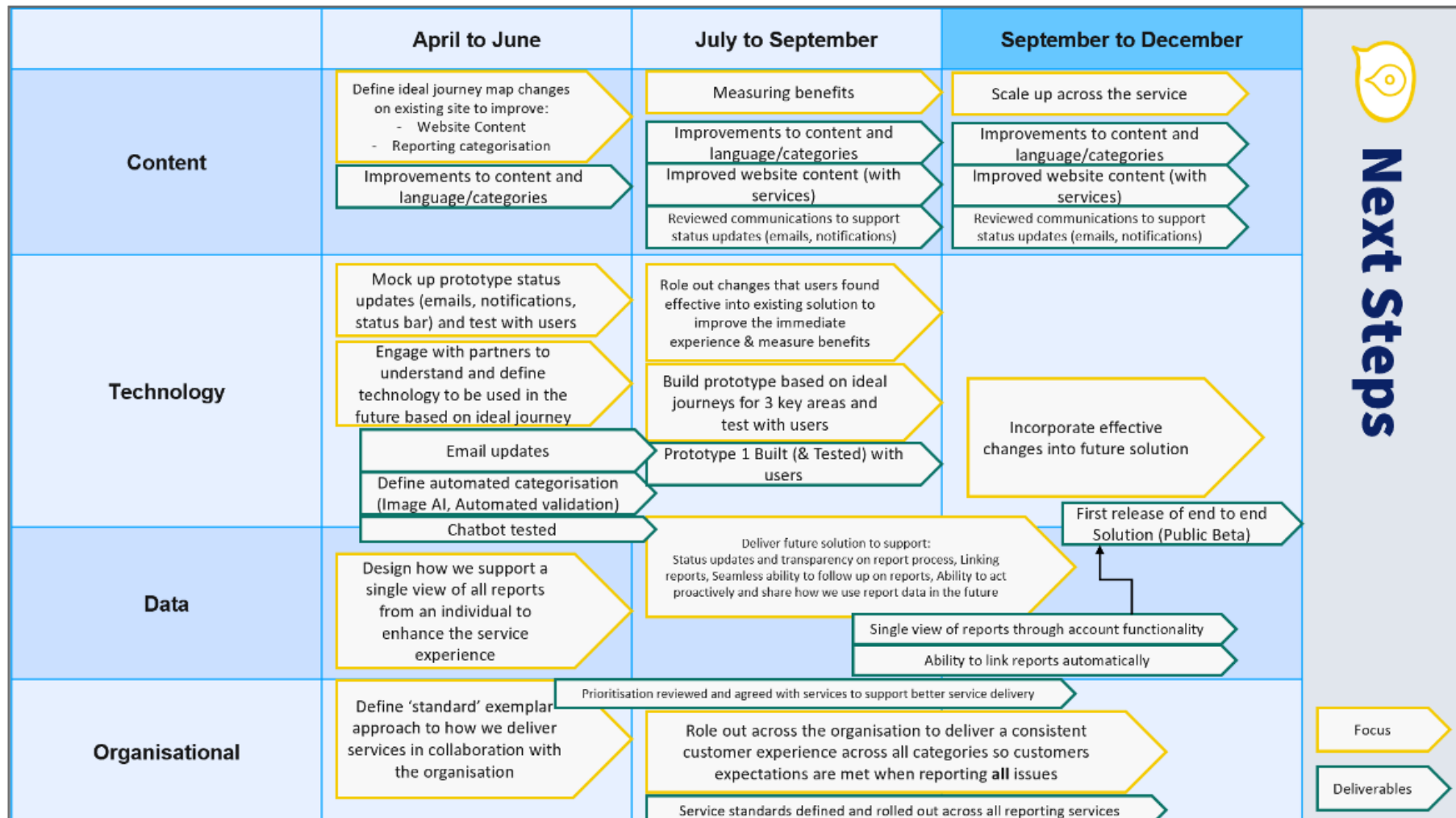
If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Rebecca Gordon
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APPENDICES:

Appendix A - Survey Summary

Appendix B - Webpage Mock up (DRAFT)