

Report to: Scrutiny Committee

Date: 6 February 2023

Subject: Customer Contact Overview

Report of: Tim Whelan, Director of Service Delivery

Cabinet member: Councillor Colin Swansborough, Cabinet member for climate change, place services and special projects

Ward(s): All

Purpose of the report: To provide members with an overview of the work of the customer contact team

Decision type: N/a

Recommendation: Scrutiny is recommended to:

1) Note the report

Contact: Linda Farley, Head of Customer First
Tel: 07939579644 or email: linda.farley@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk

1. Background

- 1.1 The Customer First Resolution Contact Centre is made up of 1 Operational Manager reporting to the Head of Customer First, 4 Team Leaders, 5 Senior Customer First Resolution Advisors and 42 Customer First Resolution Advisors.
- 1.2 The role of the team is to be the first point of contact and triage for all council services via telephone, mailroom, email, social media, webchat, online process, and face to face contact.
- 1.3 During the last few years the team have never experienced being fully staffed. With on average 10 vacancies consistently.
- 1.4 On average it takes 8 months to train a new Customer First Resolution Advisor
- 1.5 Calls to the Customer First Resolution Contact Centre are complex and often require a great deal of unpicking. Currently the impact of the cost of living crisis and previously the Covid 19 pandemic have created more complex and sensitive enquiries for resolution. This report aims to outline the challenges faced by the team.

2. Data

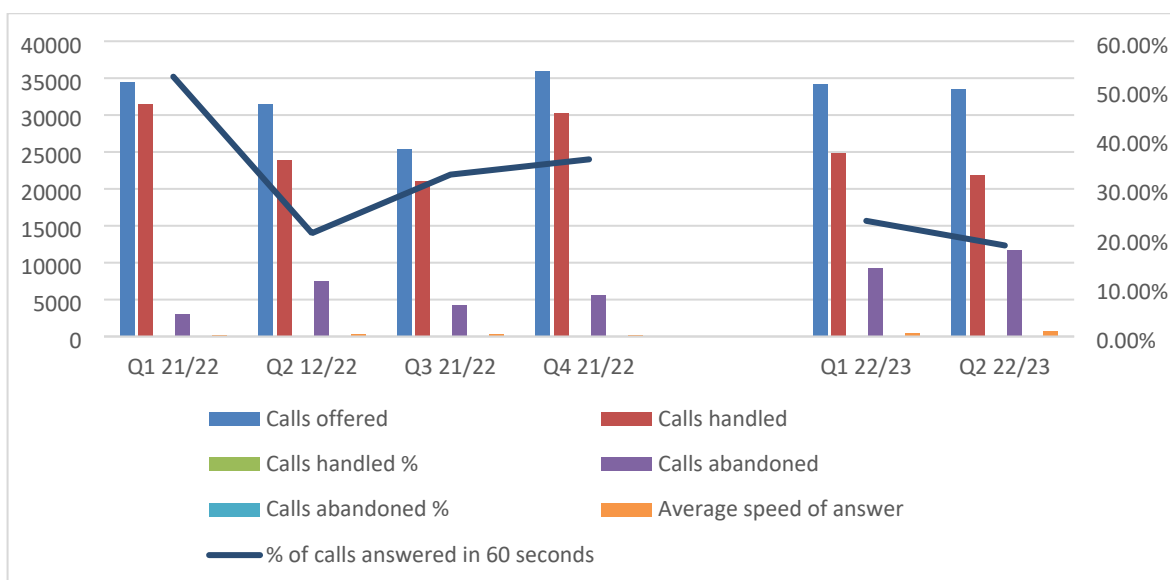
2.1 This table outlines the volume of enquiries received to the team for the first 6 months of 2022/2023

Month 2022	Emails	Contact us	Webchat	Phone	Face to face	Total
April	6382	404	298	19,318	1257	27,659
May	7597	463	514	22,915	1622	33,111
June	6980	420	450	19,821	1549	29,220
July	6777	423	299	19,899	1278	28,676
August	7122	416	514	20,186	1536	29,774
September	6522	508	331	19,100	1516	27,977
Totals	41,380	2634	2406	121,239	8758	176,417

2.2 The below table breaks down the phone performance for Eastbourne for 2022/2023 only with a comparison against 2021/2022

Eastbourne	Q1 21/22	Q2 12/22	Q3 21/22	Q4 21/22		Q1 22/23	Q2 22/23
Calls offered	34545	31438	25351	35915		34167	33569
Calls handled	31492	23930	21055	30302		24829	21858
Calls handled %	91.20	76.10	83.10	84.40		72.70	65.10
Calls abandoned	3053	7508	4296	5613		9338	11711
Calls abandoned %	8.80	23.90	16.90	15.60		27.30	34.90
Average speed of answer	139	379	284	255		477	686
% of calls answered in 60 seconds	52.80	21	32.90	36		23.50	18.50

2.3 The data provided in 2.2 can also be viewed in a graph format below



2.4 The graph demonstrates a similar path to call volumes and that the % of calls answered within 60 seconds dips in Q1 and Q2.

2.5 As requested by Scrutiny committee the types of enquiries received and handled by the Customer First Resolution Team is outlined below :

Q2 2022/2023 data*	
Service area/nature of enquiry	Volume
Council Tax	11586
Waste & Recycling	4855
Housing Options and Homelessness	2154
Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme	1444
Homes First Tenant Query	1301
Miscellaneous Unscripted or Non Council	1194
Send a form or document request	888
Rent & Leasehold	712
Housing register application	676
Neighbourhood First request	657
Electoral Services	644
Other services in Eastbourne/Lewes (non council)	588
Parks, Garden & Trees	445
Planning	441
Business Rates	345
Anti social behaviour (ASB), noise and nuisance report	303
Licensing (General)	272
Energy Rebate Scheme	266
Parking	250
Taxi Licensing	232
Pest Control	186
Fly tipping	145
Street & Beach cleansing report	125

Death notification	106
Private Sector Housing	71
Food Hygiene Enquiry	59
Dog & Cat Issue/attack	57
Compliment the council	54
HMO licensing advice	43
Environmental health/Safety advice/report	35
Mutual exchange and & Right To Buy	35
Building Control	27
Abandoned and nuisance vehicles	20
Sales Call	18
Cemeteries and crematorium enquiries	12
Events	12
MyAccount Registration	12
Land charges, local authority and personal search queries	11
Complaint enquiries	10
Website support	6
Am I allowed to	5
Allotment enquiries	2
Democratic Services	1
*please note total volume will not equal total calls received as not all calls end with an enquiry being logged on the system. For Q2 3264 calls were received and did not require a log due to the nature of the call (not for us or chasing a request)	30,305

2.6 For the top 5 enquiries in Q2 2022/2023 the types of questions being asked by customers are:

Service area/nature of enquiry	Volume	Type of question (not exhaustive)
Council Tax	11586	Query after receiving summons Query bill Request for payment plan Query instalments Request exemption or discount Change of address
Waste & Recycling	4855	Missed bin Assisted collection Clinical waste Bulky waste Garden waste service Query collection day
Housing Options and Homelessness	2154	Raise a request for help with housing Homeless and need housing Chase case officer for update Deposit and loan scheme Request emergency or temporary accommodation

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction Scheme	1444	Chase status of claim Make new claim Request DHP Change in circumstances
HomesFirst Tenant Query	1301	Speak to housing officer Help with moving

2.7 Customer First Resolution Team Advisors are targeted with the following performance targets:

- 6 online processes a day
- 6 email a day
- Average handling time of 5 mins (calls are lasting approx. 8 minutes on average at the moment)
- No more than 25% of time on make busy

2.8 In April 2022 a study was undertaken to assess the numbers of staff required to just keep up with demand from customers. The study used the performance of 3 average performers accepting that some staff perform better than average and some worse than average. The average performances were:

- Average performer 1 - 448 calls handled, 859 outbound calls, 44% of time spent on make busy
- Average performer 2 – 329 calls handled, 338 outbound calls, 39% of time spent on make busy
- Average performer 3 – 470 calls handled, 803 outbound calls, 55% of time spent on make busy

2.9 It was therefore found based on the calls received for one month you would need 30 Advisors for phones alone to handle the same calls as the average performer 2 (above) Therefore everyday to handle all demand from customers we need:

- 10 advisors for emails
- 30 advisors for calls
- 7 advisors for “other” (1 reception, 4 mailroom and 1 webchat/social media)
- 47 Advisors overall consistently

The above would be the requirement for 100% of the time the team is operational and open to customers (between 08:30am and 5pm) and for them to be 100% focussed on the activity they are doing without interruption. This number is impacted by things such as annual leave, sickness, team meetings, 121s and training where the team are taken away from dealing with customers. We would therefore require over and above this number to account for absences (permitted and non permitted)

We already operate a policy to restrict annual leave (a maximum of 5 off at anyone time) due to predicted peaks in demand around public holidays and times where higher demand is predicted. We furthermore do not allow annual leave to be taken during the month of March whilst we carry out end of year activity and annual council tax billing.