

**ROADS AND AMENITY SERVICES – CREATING A CULTURE OF CUSTOMER  
CARE**

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**1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

- 1.1 Roads and Amenity Services has seen its overall staffing establishment reduce from some 618 in 2009/10 to 502 in 2016/17, while implementing a number of transformational changes through the council's budget driven service re-designs. At the same time customer expectations and subsequent demand has increased from some 7871 telephone contacts in 2009/10 to some 24,426 in 2016/17; with online contacts increasing from some 8,466 when information began being recorded in this way in 2013/14 to some 27,768 in 2016/17.
- 1.2 A project was initiated in the spring of 2017 by the Head of Roads and Amenity Services (RAS) to address the issue of demand being greater than capacity and to find solutions which would make the best use of existing frameworks, automation and systems, as well as streamlining processes, to provide an effective overall customer service solution.
- 1.3 Significant work has been ongoing across the Roads and Amenity and the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to find optimal solutions for the high volume/high impact categories of customer contact.
- 1.4 This report updates members with the progress to date and gives an update on completed and future changes which will have an impact on customers, being delivered jointly across both services.

**1.5 RECOMMENDATION**

- 1.5.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

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**2.0 INTRODUCTION**

- 2.1 This report updates members on the overall aims of, and progress with, the operational project to improve customer service within Roads and Amenity Services, making best use of reducing resources to match increasing demand, balanced against current service standards.

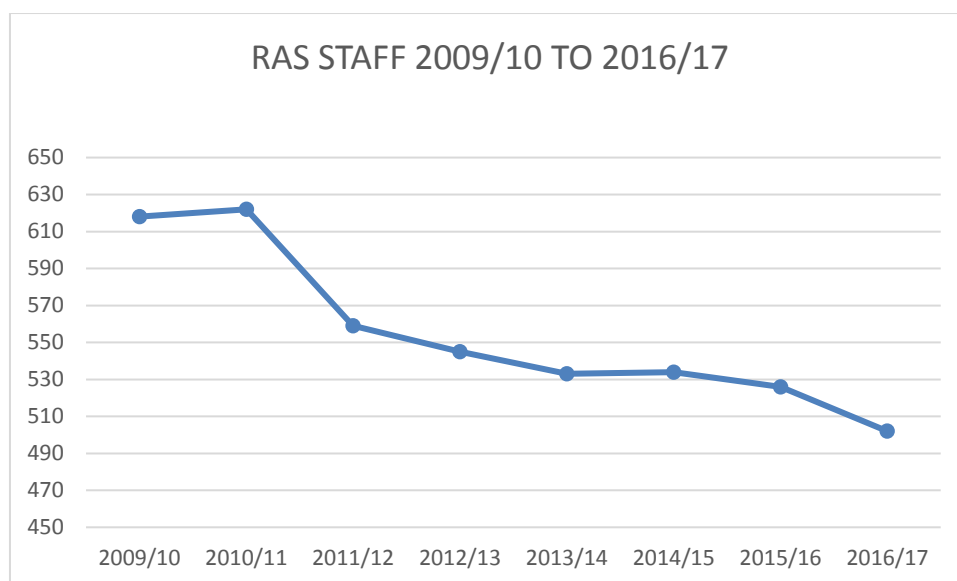
**3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Members are asked to note the content of this report.

**4.0 DETAIL****4.1 Background**

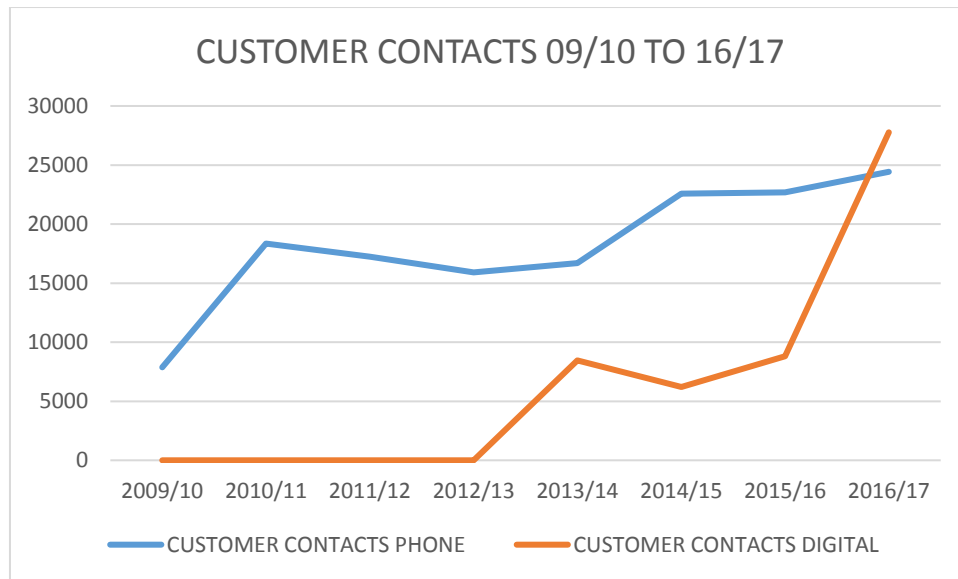
- 4.1.1 Roads and Amenity Services (RAS) has seen its overall staffing establishment reduce from some 618 employees in 2009/10 to 502 in 2016/17, while implementing a number of transformational changes through various budget restructures. The detail on staffing is as follows:

2009/10		618
2010/11		622
2011/12		559
2012/13		545
2013/14		533
2014/15		534
2015/16		526
2016/17		502



4.1.2 At the same time customer expectations and subsequent demand has increased from some 7871 telephone contacts in 2009/10 to some 24,426 in 2016/17. With the council opening up a number of digital platforms, giving customers greater opportunity to engage with the council, Roads and Amenity have seen their online contacts increase from some 8,466 when information began being recorded in this way in 2013/14 to some 27,768 in 2016/17. The detail is as follows:

	CUSTOMER CONTACTS PHONE		CUSTOMER CONTACTS DIGITAL
2009/10	7871		0
2010/11	18340		0
2011/12	17251		0
2012/13	15906		0
2013/14	16692		8466
2014/15	22584		6219
2015/16	22695		8798
2016/17	24426		27768



4.1.3 As policy decisions have been implemented, leading to major operational savings, such as the streetscene review and the move to three-weekly general waste collections, customer contact has increased as one would expect, given that change is such that it generates contact.

4.1.4 As service standards, reaction times and resilience has declined because of the overall resource position customer expectations have remained the same.

## 4.2 Project initiation

4.2.1 A project was initiated in the spring of 2017 by the Head of Roads and Amenity Services to address the emerging issues of demand being greater than capacity, and to find solutions which would make best use of overall frameworks and systems, as well as streamlining business processes, to provide an effective overall customer service solution, ensure customers receive a professional service from the council.

## 4.3 Overall aim and key principles

4.3.1 The overall aim is to ensure customers are as informed as possible about the capacity of the service, and are pro-actively informed of emerging issues and changes which can affect service delivery from time to time. This will reduce the requirement for customers to go out of their way to contact the council.

4.3.2 The following key principles were agreed through the Roads and Amenity Project Board:

- i) That the customer experience should be positive and underpinned by the concept of 'getting it right first time';
- ii) That a customer enquiry should only reach operational/technical staff when there is a requirement for technical input/specialist knowledge to answer the enquiry/fulfil the request; and

iii) That the optimal solutions should be identified and subsequently resourced accordingly

#### **4.4 Development**

- 4.4.1 A working group brought together a cross section frontline service colleagues to consider the current business processes in relation to customer service. This group produced an initial discussion paper for consideration by colleagues at the customer contact centre, who perform the vital mediated contact function for all council services through a variety of channels and provide digital services which allow customers to receive information, request services, and keep track of progress on a self-service basis.
- 4.4.2 Due to the sheer range of frontline services provided by RAS, and the volume and complexity of enquiries it is simply not feasible to make changes to the processes which currently exist for all types of enquiry at one time. The Customer Service Centre took forward a detailed exercise to analyse the data on customer contacts, balanced with where we were in the calendar year, producing a matrix to identify and prioritise the areas where changes would have the highest impact.
- 4.4.3 This exercise highlighted four priority areas – on the basis of total contacts, effort and priority – for process improvements to be taken forward as a first phase, covering:
- a) domestic bins/bin collections (general);
  - b) road faults and winter maintenance;
  - c) recycling; and
  - d) commercial waste and bulky uplifts
- 4.4.4 Some 140 actions have emerged from the development stage for Phase One. These actions are being implemented, in line with the key principles identified at 4.3.2. This work is approximately 60% complete, with a view to completion of Phase One by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2018. Some highlights in terms of impact are outlined in the following section, 4.6

#### **4.5 Context**

- 4.5.1 To set the context, it should be noted that, for example, over the course of 2017 there were some 4,000 total contacts in relation to road faults, but this must be balanced against actual frontline works/jobs, some 30,000, so a contact rate against delivery of less than 15%. On missed bins, over the course of last calendar year the council will have collected some 2million bins, versus customer contacts of some 6,000 – contact rate against delivery of 0.3%.
- 4.5.2 The headline figures for total contacts to Scottish roads authorities, from the SCOTS Road Asset Management Project, were some 90,000 (data from 25 councils), with 77.4% closed off within target times (data 17 councils). Argyll and Bute compares favourably to the national average, with 85% of enquiries closed off in target timescales. The council currently sits second in this category in the

family group of rural roads authorities in national customer service measurements. While this is encouraging, it is accepted that this overall area lacks research nationally, and the methodology could be developed further. The improvements planned through this project can feed into a wider national conversation about best practice.

- 4.5.3 There is not a similar national benchmark/national agency for the other elements of the council's Roads and Amenity service – amenity, waste, fleet, design etc.

## 4.6 Highlights to date

Outline	Impact
Proactive information on disruptions to planned service delivery is being provided more broadly and to a better quality	<p>The number of contacts reduced in the previous three months (Nov to Jan) by some 45% compared to the same quarter the previous year. Significant operational efficiency</p> <p>This significant reduction in contacts will not be solely down to the marked improvements in proactive notifications but will also be as a result of the changes to three-weekly general waste collections bedding in and residents becoming used to those changes</p>
Improvements to online winter maintenance information and publishing of daily winter actions plans	<p>This is difficult to measure as contact is more balanced against the severity of the winter, however, these improvements are beneficial in terms of general good customer service, providing information to keep Argyll and Bute moving.</p> <p>In fact, service requests for winter maintenance have increased, with approximately three times as many as last calendar year. Work is ongoing to analyse this data, but it should be noted that, with winter, we are at the stage where we are making people aware. There are two further stages where we create understanding and ultimately change behaviours.</p>
Weather station cameras available on website providing regular images of live road conditions.	Second most popular page on the website after the homepage.
Clearer routes for reporting trunk road faults	Reduction in trunk road fault reporting to ABC roads inspectors. Operational efficiency

Change to the process of ordering food waste bin liners (Helensburgh and Lomond)	Customer contacts have reduced from c. 400 per month to less than 50 per month. Significant operational efficiency
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#### 4.7 **Headline planned improvements**

<b>Outline</b>	<b>Expected impact</b>
Improvements to the missed bin reporting process to focus on planned fulfilment	More contacts resolved first time
Use of technology which will allow notifications to customers via email and SMS	Reduction in overall contacts
Integration between the road works management system and the customer service system	Customers will proactively receive information on their service request, reducing the need for subsequent contact
Property specific database for planned service delivery	Will allow customers to create reminders so they do not miss a bin collection and subsequently contact the council
Use of customer service system for management of assisted collection	More contacts resolved first time; removal of duplication
Improvements to information on special uplifts and binding terms and conditions for customers	Reduction in follow-up contacts; reduction in incomplete requests; operational efficiency; reduce reassessment; reduce complaints
Use of customer service system for management of commercial waste	More contacts resolved first time; removal of duplication; single database to make proactive notifications easier, reducing overall contact

## 5.0 **CONCLUSION**

- 5.1 Significant work is ongoing to improve the customer experience in relation to services provided by Roads and Amenity Services, on the basis of using systems effectively and streamlining processes as far as possible. This work has already had some impact in terms of reduction in overall contacts and the anticipated future benefits are thoughts to be considerable in allowing the service to match reducing resources to increasing demand.

## 6.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 Policy – consistent with the council’s customer service policy and procedures
- 6.2 Financial – changes will have to be reviewed to assess the financial saving to the council
- 6.3 Legal – none known
- 6.4 HR – none known
- 6.5 Equalities – none known
- 6.6 Risk – none known
- 6.7 Customer Service – positive implications

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**Policy Lead for Roads and Amenity Services, Councillor Roddy McCuish**

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