CUSTOMER SUPPORT SERVICES - Service Annual Performance Review 2021/22

DELIVERING OUR OUTCOMES – Our case studies help illustrate the positive contribution the Service has made to our communities and provides examples of good service delivery.

Corporate Outcome – People Live Active, Healthier and Independent Lives

Business Outcome BO101: We Ensure Information and Support is Available for Everyone Choices

a). Success Measure: CSS101_01-Improve the accuracy rate for registration for our births, deaths and marriages by the council's Registration Service.

The National Records of Scotland independently audit all council registration services for accuracy of registration and look back on the previous full year, hence in 21/22 they examined the registrations for 20/21. Our target was to have to have no more than 2.1% error rate, but the actual audited rate was 3.5%. However it must be remembered that the target was set <u>before</u> the Covid pandemic struck. That pandemic resulted in massive operational changes for registrars; including the remote recording of Death Registrations, a torrent of new Covid related registration regulations to absorb and excess death workloads that put the service under tremendous strain; including at times the introduction of 7 day working and post lockdown surges in pent up wedding demand. Hence a total of only 80 errors across 2,315 registration events was regarded by the independent Examiner as an excellent performance. The Registrars speedily adopted both remote digital Death Registration service and virtual Citizenship Ceremonies (Brexit led to a spike in demand for them too). They also adapted the Tell Us Once death notification service for 1,124 customers, put in place a new appointment based face to face service for Birth Registrations, used the [Marriage Website](), social media and a digital Wedding Diary to inform and accommodate those seeking weddings and civil partnerships. In the most recent customer Satisfaction Survey in FQ3/4 of 2021/22 97% of 127 respondents were Very Satisfied with the registration service provided.

In addition many of the Registrars (who also staff our Customer Service Points) were also deployed to undertake the pro-active support calls to those customers required to self-isolate by Covid regulations. Between October 2020 and end of April 2022 6,128 self-isolating customers were contacted and offered domestic or financial support. Of these 2,925 submitted claims for the £500 Self Isolation Support Grant. A number were referred to Community Groups for domestic or transport assistance. In November and December 2021 the Customer Service Points/Registration resource also provided emergency assistance to NHS Highland to help them cope with customer contacts regarding the Vaccine Booster Programme. In a four week period they handled 2,738

enquiries for the Vaccination Hub and helped NHS Highland meet its target of having over 80% of over 18 year olds offered a vaccination by the end of December.

b). Success Measure: CSS101_02-Increase public use of corporate social media sites on three categories of information: council news, community success and general use.

Our success measure was to increase the percentage of corporate social media sites. During the period we responded to 700+ media enquiries, issued 220+ media releases, 50 weekly new round up subscription emails, 50+ staff Newsflash emails, posted up to three times a day across various social media channels. We increased our social media following to: Facebook = 17,000+; Twitter = 15,000+; Instagram = 7,000+; Linkedin = 3,600+

c). Success Measure: CSS101_03 Increase the percentage of telephony enquiries received by Customer Service Centre that are dealt with at first point of contact.

The Contact Centre agents handled over 152,000 enquiries from customers in 2021/22 and 112,000 were by telephone. The aim of the CSC is to resolve as many of these calls there and then either by fully providing the information or service requested, or by logging a request for service for action by the relevant council team. This allows operational staff to focus on service delivery without being distracted by constant phone calls. The target was to resolve 82% of phone enquires without transfer to the back offices, but it actually achieved 94.4%.
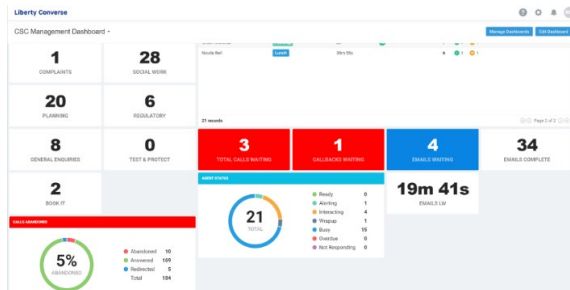
In addition to this the council's ongoing investment in 24/7 voice automated services continued to deliver excellent results, with 8919 customers making automated payments (worth £1.63m) and 41,605 uses of the automated directory. The Coronavirus Helpline was also used 1501 times in 2021/22. Contact Centre technology has been deployed to the HR Team and Scottish Welfare Fund Team to help them manage call demands effectively and in 2021/22 a new rolling program of call quality evaluation was introduced called Agent Evaluation so that qualitative as well as quantitative management was tracked and used for continual improvement. The whole CSC system was upgraded to the latest "Liberty Converse" version with greatly enhanced real time monitoring dashboards.

Corporate Outcome - Our Economy Is Diverse And Thriving

Business Outcome BO112: Argyll & Bute Is Promoted To Everyone.

a).#abplace2b campaign

Purpose - promote the lifestyle and career opportunities on offer, to attract new residents and skills.

How? - develop and encourage public/partner use of #abplace2b on social media, develop www.abplace2b.scot to showcase the area, jobs on offer, local businesses, lifestyle etc.

Progress - Partners and public are using #abplace2b. Our #abplace2b Instagram account is the most followed of all of Scotland's councils. Partner use of #abplace2b continues to grow.

Continued to increase use of #abplace2b as a budget-free way of promoting Argyll and Bute as a great place to live and work; this is based on promoting the great lifestyle the geography of Argyll and Bute allows for, and which sets the area apart from other locations. Members of the public and partner agencies are increasingly using it. This will be complemented and developed by www.abplace2b.scot, which we are updating for relaunch in 2022.

b). Community life - responsible staycation tourism

In response to community concerns as tourism opened up after Covid restrictions, we developed and promoted our 'Have a great time. Be a great visitor' message and campaign, bringing together information from different organisations. The campaign received a positive public response.

c). Connecting with Employees

Launched www.mycouncilworks.co.uk to connect the council and its employees more easily.
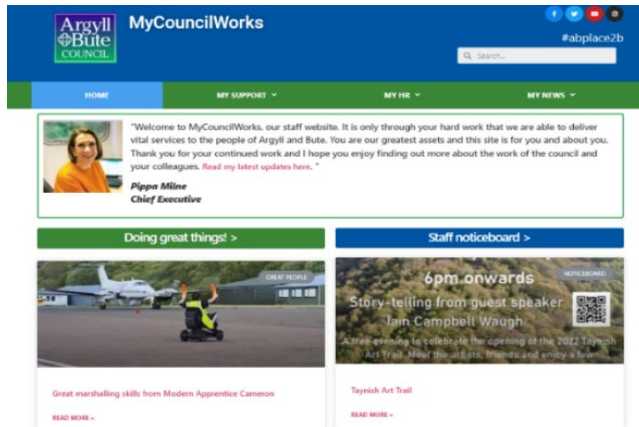
d). Connecting with our Communities - Health and wellbeing

We issued free weekly news email subscription: by adapting its content to include more Covid-health, and other topical non-council news, we supported our communities' wellbeing e.g. *"Thank you for such regular, clear newsletters. So comforting to know we in isolation are included in outside life!....and I trust it!"*

e). Great place to live and work – Promoting Argyll and Bute

f). Oban bid for city status

The Communications Team developed the strapline for the council's city status bid, and evidenced public backing for city status. Both elements formed key parts of the council's bid.

g). Rural Growth Deal

The Communications Team developed the story of the deal:

Connecting: our high value business sectors with national and international business markets; our local economic successes with national strategic priorities.

Attracting: additional skills, training and learning opportunities; new residents, visitors and businesses.

Growing: doing more of what works; making more of our natural and built resources.

h). A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment

A healthy workforce and a healthy working environment are essential to achieving higher levels of attendance and providing high quality services. The Wellbeing Team reviewed, updated and relaunched two key procedures, The Reducing Stress in the Workplace procedure and the Supporting Attendance procedure.

In order to ensure that employees and managers were fully aware of the changes and the support that is available to them in managing their health, wellbeing and attendance at work the following were delivered:

- Promotion via newsflash and Wellbeing Wednesday

- Availability of updated procedures and supporting documents on both The Hub and My Council Works
- A programme of drop in supporting attendance webinars for employees and line managers to attend to learn more about changes to the new procedure and ask questions.
- A programme of drop in webinars for line managers to learn about the updated reducing stress procedure and the importance of preventative action
- A reducing stress workshop delivered by EAP provider Health Assured
- A webinar guide for managers on accessing EAP support for themselves and those they manage
- Having a conversation about stress guidance document
- Reducing stress in the workplace eLearning currently awaiting launch
- Access to wellness action plans to support line managers and employees to discuss appropriate support for mental health conditions

Corporate Outcome - We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

Business Outcome BO113: Our Infrastructure Is Safe And Fit For The Future

a). Success Measure: CSS113_02-Deliver the ICT and Digital Strategy Action Plan

ICT and Digital Team - Our aims:
- Our networks and systems are secure, accessible and current
- ICT provides value, and enables and empowers both customers and staff to make tasks easier
- Our people have the knowledge and capabilities to use ICT effectively

We continue to network and engage with Scottish Local Government Digital Office, Society For Innovation Technology and Modernisation (SOCITM) and Scottish Government Digital Team to ensure that we achieve best practice, share our experience and expertise, maximise public sector joint working on ICT and digital and achieve the highest levels of value for money we can through active procurement and contract management.

b). With approximately 100 actions associated with the 2021-24 ICT and Digital Strategy Action Plan, the following are highlights but the majority of actions are progressing satisfactorily and to target:

- We have been accredited Public Services Network (PSN) and CE+ for 2022/23 as planned.
- We have implemented MS 365, migrating all 2000 corporate mailboxes to Exchange online and migrating all H: drive content to OneDrive.
- We have implemented MS Teams and established appropriate guidance and governance for both MS Teams and a selection of MS365 Apps.
- We continue to refresh our hardware assets and keep them up to date through the capital Asset Sustainability programme as planned.
- We have demonstrated engagement more widely with our customers through the completion of the 2021 Customer Service Questionnaire.
- We continue to improve the accessibility of our corporate network through the completion of upgrades of bandwidth capacity at both Kilmory and GWITC (Graham Whitefield IT Centre). All existing circuit speeds increased in bandwidth (doubled at Kilmory).
- We continue to increase the provision of services on a digital platform wherever possible. This is exemplified by the extension of the Parent Evening Booking System to additional schools and facilitate remote parent evening via video call. Parents/ carers can select and amend an appointment to suit their needs.
- We continue to support delivery of digital learning through the deployment of additional devices provided under the digital poverty initiative funded by the Scottish Government.
- An illustration of joining up our systems through more integration using available technologies is the implementation of live streaming from the council chambers for selected committee meetings with integration to Modern.Gov and MS teams.
- We have reviewed and continue to improve our disaster recovery and business continuity plans and technologies.
- We have worked with the Customer Engagement Team to achieve Customer Service Excellence accreditation.
- We directed the upgrade IKEN case management system to the latest version and have upgraded the technology platform for improved performance and compatibility.
- We have developed a replacement system to ensure the continued recording of pastoral notes records for Education following the withdrawal of the functionality in SEEMiS (education management information system).

c). Success Measure: CSS113_06-Maintain the average time to resolve ICT incidents

We have operated well within our service level targets with service levels at or above previous levels and our response times were as good as previous years.

Corporate Outcome – Getting It Right

Business Outcome BO115: We are Efficient and Cost Effective

a). Success Measure: CSS115_01-Increasing percentage of self service and automated contacts through the Customer Service Centre and Website.

The target was 62% however the percentage achieved was 73%, or 410,000 out of 563,000 customer interactions through the Contact Centre's various channels:

This maintained the significant shift to digital prompted by Covid lockdown the previous year and the ongoing provision of high quality online and automated services that customers prefer to use for 24/7 convenience. Despite there being a large reduction in coronavirus related enquiries and support requests compared to 2020/21, the value of efficiencies attributable to use of online services was maintained at £912k.

2021/22 ALL TOTALS	2021/22 TOTAL	2021/22 PERCENTAGE
MEDIATED TRANSACTIONS	152,272	27%
AUTOMATED INFORMATION	296,736	53%
AUTOMATED TRANSACTIONS	113,733	20%
AUTOMATED INFORMATION & TRANSACTIONS	410,469	73%
TOTAL	562,741	100%

Significant new online developments in 2021/22 included:

- The launch of the council's Alexa smart speaker service with its "when's my bin day?" service, which now has 1216 subscribers who used the service 7,257 times last year.
- Roll out of a number of new satellite websites including the Staycation Site, Invest in Argyll site, over a dozen new school sites recreated using Wordpress, Period Product access and sites for partners such as the Helensburgh Museum site.

- Implementation of a new marketing and notification system called Eloqua to refresh the Keep in the Loop service, which now has 10,489 subscribers and the addition of new Ferry disruption alerts to that service, which issued 17,000 alerts to subscribers over the winter.
- Implementation of a next generation web chat bot called Abbot to the council website.
- In addition, the online services retained an exemplary record for accessibility of content, which is crucial not only from an equality point of view, but also to ensure the website is as usable as possible for customers with a range of abilities. Hence in March 2022 we scored a 99% standard and ranked as 13th best in the UK out of over 400 council websites on the independent Silktide standard.

YEAR	CHANNEL SHIFT TRANSACTIONS	POTENTIAL SAVINGS
2017/18	261,399	£460,878
2018/19	267,018	£464,865
2019/20	390,234	£670,710
2020/21	440,165	£914,871
2021/22	417,590	£912,278

b). Scottish Local Government Living Wage Consolidation

Following delivery of an options appraisal for reconfiguration of the pay and grading model to accommodate the Scottish Local Government Living Wage (SLGLW), the agreed model was delivered. This included a review of the pay and grading structure to accommodate the SLGLW and modernisation of terms and conditions. A review, rationalisation and streamlining was carried out into allowances and expenses and a consultative ballot by the Joint Trade Unions on the proposed method of consolidating the (SLG) Living Wage into the council's Local Government Employee (LGE) pay scale as well as the proposed changes to the conditions of service document

Business Outcome BO117: We encourage creativity and innovation to ensure our workforce is fit for the future

a). Quality Conversations

Changes were made to the PRD (Performance Review & Development) process to put quality conversations at the heart of how we do our business. Our updated approach moved away from the prescribed PRD template and is focused on an ongoing dialogue that captures conversations between the line manager and their staff about objectives, behaviours, skills and development and career/development aspirations.

The change was communicated via newsflash and a guidance document was launched to help managers in finding an approach to these conversations that works for them and their team. A series of drop in webinars were delivered for employees to gain further insight into the new approach, ask questions and discuss with their peers.

This approach also encouraged managers to consider how quality conversations can support wider communication at team level on agreeing objectives and key activities and monitoring progress.

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES – These are the significant challenges faced by the Service during 2021/22. These challenges either created pressures on the Success Measures or impacted on delivery. Specific additional activity or mitigating actions were carried out to reduce the negative impact on service delivery.

Corporate Outcome - We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

Business Outcome BO113: Our infrastructure is safe and fit for the future

a). Cyber-attacks

2021/22 saw an unprecedented increase in the level of risk associated with cyber-attacks. The public sector has repeatedly experienced significant cyber-attacks which disrupted services and cost millions of pounds to remediate. This has been a global phenomenon, and with heightened geo-political tensions there is an increasing risk that an attack targeted at a specific sector or organisation will escape into the wider world and have serious worldwide consequences. The need for our ICT teams to be ever more vigilant and responsive has never been greater. Our ICT teams have responded admirably to each and every emerging threat but the additional day to day challenges inevitably impact their workload in order to maintain the very high levels of service being delivered.

b). **MicroSoft365**

The accelerated implementation of MS365 to enable Teams as part of the Pandemic response resulted in the need to reallocate team resource from other priorities. This enabled a fast and effective transition with minimum disruption to the business and the creation of a secure operational environment in the Cloud.

Corporate Outcome - Getting it right

Business Outcome BO115: We Are Efficient And Cost Effective

a). Recruitment

- Our Communication Team is a small team and has been reduced by as much as 40% for a prolonged period due to difficulties in recruiting to two different vacant posts. We redesigned the role and hours of one post, which is now filled; and we are in the process of redesigning the second post.

- Our HROD Team has experienced recruitment challenges in terms of being able to attract suitable candidates. Sickness absence in some areas of the team as well as increased demand due to Covid have led to issues in the team's ability to meet service delivery expectations in some areas such as learning and development, departmental support and Systems development. Some projects experienced delayed in implementation. Actions taken to address the situation include a review of job descriptions, improved wording of adverts and increased profile on social media as well as support for team members on sickness absence.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT - WE ASKED, YOU SAID, WE DID….The following are all the consultations and resulting actions that the Service has carried out during this period.

a). Positive Feedback

Whilst there has been no formal customer consultation from during this period, the Communication Team has received positive feedback from the campaigns we have run and communications that we have sent out.

b). Customer Satisfaction and Insight Surveys

The Customer Engagement Team operates a number of automated customer satisfaction and customer insight surveys that allow customers to provide input on the quality of customer service and elements that could be improved or enhanced. Surveys include:

- A pop up satisfaction/feedback survey on the website
- An automated quality survey put on acknowledgements after online forms have been completed
- A "what else would you like to see on the website" survey after website interactions
- An automated customer satisfaction survey offered to callers on certain lines in to the Customer Service Centre
- A quality of service survey offered to every person who registered a birth, death or marriage with our Registration Service
- A complaints handling procedure satisfaction survey.