

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities

Cabinet Member: Cllr John Osman – Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities

Division and Local Member: All

Lead Officer: Simon Clifford - Director

Author: Jan Stafford - Strategic Manager

Contact Details: jastafford@somerset.gov.uk on 01823 355010

1. Summary

- 1.1.** An important year for the services which has seen us move the contract centre and around 80 staff from the South West One contract into the Customers and Communities directorate. It was achieved seamlessly and is tribute to the hard work on all sides to achieve this.
- 1.2.** Other notable successes saw the opening of our first Library Hub in Glastonbury, our newly created Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise forum go from strength to strength and our roadshow events engaging more than 5000 residents throughout the year. Importantly the year has also seen the development and improvement of our business intelligence teams which has been recognised in various external inspections, most notably in support of our children's services.

2. Customers and Communities – the last 12 months

Customer access

This year we were delighted to open our first Customer Library Hub in Orchard Court, Glastonbury. This new space incorporating SCC, NHS, Mendip District Council and Citizen's Advice with an integrated Customer Service 'front desk' has been well received and praised by the local community. Not only does it save cash for reinvestment in frontline services it also makes it easier for our customers to access a range of services in one place designed around them and not the providing organisation. As part of the CASA programme now known as One Public Estate [OPE] we are now focussed on delivering two more in Williton and Shepton Mallet as well as supporting feasibility work for future OPE hubs in Yeovil, Bridgwater and Taunton.

Contact Centre

We were pleased to welcome back the Contact Centre from the South West One contract into the Customers and Communities Directorate in December 2016. Our planning and preparation allowed for a seamless transition and delivery of business as usual from day one.

The Contact Centre has worked together with the Adults Social Care as part of their 'Community Connect' project. This targets help and support at a community level and has required a change in approach within the contact centre in which call handlers take a key role in running an effective triage to gain a clear understanding on a caller's needs and circumstances This has .seen a step-change in the way we deal with callers, with average call times increasing to 25

minutes giving trained operatives the time and space they need to appropriately deal with callers at the first point of contact. By effectively sign-posting to other support and community options, operatives are able to reduce the number of people who are referred through to formal the Adults Social Care Services. Customer satisfaction in this area runs in excess of 90%, and is far more efficient and effective for our own staff. Other services which have been taken on by the Contact Centre this year include some areas of Mental Health services as well as working with services to incorporate Parking Services, Learning Disability, SEN and Getset for 2017/18.

Transforming the way the Contact Centre works and achieving efficiencies by shifting a number of the 440,000 annual contacts to an 'on-line' offer is the focus for the coming year.

Community Development

The Community Development Team is responsible for shaping the Council's approach to building stronger communities.

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE)

The VCSE Strategic Forum continues to go from strength to strength, with a State of the Sector Survey being undertaken for the first time and builds on the Vital Signs survey undertaken by the Somerset Community Foundation. The forum has helped improve communication and liaison between partners and the local authority; provided the basis for accountable representation of the VCSE sector to influence policy and commissioning; and helped the cascade of information from the public sector to the wider VCSE and vice versa. Membership of the forum continues to grow and now includes Chamber of Commerce to begin to provide an important link to businesses and also parish / town council representation. In March 2017 we held our first VCSE Leaders Conference focusing on collaboration and SCC have funded a new voluntary sector web platform to be formally launched to coincide with National Volunteers' Week (1-7 June 2017). This investment will assist the sector in leveraging in investment and winning funding bids.

Volunteering

The County Council has over 2,000 volunteers supporting service delivery. Through the Council's new Somerset Volunteer Service we are working with services to grow and explore new volunteer opportunities. In February 2017 we held a first Volunteer Workshop bringing together services to develop a more consistent and joined up approach. We continue to promote and celebrate volunteering in Somerset and are once again inviting nominations for the Somerset Star Volunteer Award.

Armed Forces Covenant

In 2016 over 60 delegates attend the first partnership conference with plans to run a similar event again in 2017 to coincide with Armed Forces Week. In 2016 we strengthened links with other south-west covenants which culminated in a south-west Covenant Fund bid and we are awaiting the outcome. Further information was reported through the annual report from the Cabinet member for Improvement.

Business Intelligence/Customer Insight:

The Somerset Intelligence Partnership continues to provide a strong forum for sharing information, insight and data across the public sector to the benefit of the Somerset community. Positive feedback on the monthly data and intelligence newsletter continues to demonstrate its worth to a range of audiences. The Somerset Intelligence website has again been a highly valued source of information, receiving well in excess of 80,000 page views during the year. The teams continue to ensure 100% compliance with statutory data returns to DoH, DfE and Ofsted and production of statutory documents such as the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment to inform the priorities of the Health and Wellbeing Board.

Significant improvements have been made in our ability to pull data together from disparate sources and IT systems into one place. Through the development of data warehouses and associated data dashboards, services such as Special Education Needs and Disabilities and the Virtual School for Children Looked After now have new report functionality which brings data from Education and Social Care services together.

Consultations

This year we have contributed to 66 consultations and external surveys with around 7,000 individuals engaged*. We have also assisted with three internal staff surveys to the entire workforce. *More detail of our Listening Learning changing consultation road-shows can be found within the Communications section. Some of the key consultation/engagement work carried out over the last year includes:

- Review of discretionary fares on local bus services;
- School Admission Arrangements
- Dulverton School - Change of age range
- Dunster Pavement Consultation
- People aged 5-18 who have experienced sexual abuse trauma
- Parents Childcare Entitlement consultation

This Autumn we saw the latest results from our public Tracker Survey. The headlines show:

- a small but steady improvement in the overall levels of satisfaction in the way the Council runs services;
- of those surveyed almost half believed that the council was making the right decisions in the current climate;
- more people have a positive view of the County Council;

Going forward the use of social media, online tools and the use of volunteers are currently being explored to gather customer views in the absence of the tracker. Supporting engagement and consultation of the newly emerged Sustainable Transformation Plan for Adult Social Care and Health is a priority this year.

Customer Experience

Listening to, and learning from, our customers remains our focus. The IT system called 'Icasework' was upgraded this year and is used throughout the authority to record complaints, compliments and information requests currently shows an improving picture from previous years. Stage 1 complaints increased from 790 in 2015/16 to 1014 in 2016/17. This is down to the new and robust measure to

record contacts through Icasework. With this continuing and significant rise it is worth noting that the number of complaints progressing to Stage 2 remains in single figures at 9 for the same period. This is an escalation rate of 0.9% improving from 1.1% in 2015/16. This suggests that the hard work put in by the Customer Experience Team and individual officers within services to mediate and resolve complaints at the earliest opportunity has paid off.

In 2014/15 there were 26 complaints sent to the Local Government Ombudsman for investigation with 17 being upheld. This year we anticipate a reduction to single figures.

For the first time ever we have been able to accurately gather 591 compliments and 114 comments for 16/17 which is welcome and provides positive service feedback. This is a significant increase on previous years. This wealth of customer insight provides valuable information to drive service improvement and commissioning.

Opportunities on our agenda for next year include exploring switching on the public view on Icasework enabling customers to self-serve and track progress for themselves as well as working with the Children Services to extend the use of Icasework in Schools.

Equalities & Diversity

SCC's focus on the equalities and diversity [E&D] agenda over the last year remain high with the completion of 72 Impact Assessments to shape and inform decision making and a number of promotional and engagement events such as the Holocaust Memorial.

The plan for delivering the Council's recently refreshed set of Equality Objectives in partnership with District Councils and other key stakeholders to ensure compliance with the Equalities Act is progressing well.. 80% of the Staff Equality Pledges to promote, embed and address E&D throughout the Council and wider Community have also been achieved.

Work with the Police on the Counties response to Hate Crime and those communities affected by it has seen success this year with funding for a programme of support being secured and delivered. Our focus on Community Cohesion continues working with race communities on integration and engagement with council services and District Councils on the potential impacts to community cohesion on the Hinkley Point power station.

Communications

This year has been notable in the way that the Communications Team's worked has moved notably further into digital provision along with other services. Importantly, this year saw the launch of the Travel Somerset website which uses a dedicated website and twitter presence to provide up to date traffic information on the county's roads to help manage traffic movements on the road network. Launched in August, in its first six months the site has averaged 34,000 visits per month and the Twitter account attracted 1,500 followers, both producing substantial positive feedback from the public. It has been particularly useful in providing information during significant events which impact on the network.

Developing the Council's social media offering is a growing priority, with a continuing shift of emphasis towards the authority's Facebook and Twitter accounts and video content in line with the changing picture of how residents are getting information. Since March 2016 the corporate Twitter account followers have increased by 1,500 and Facebook likes by more than 1,000. These channels play an increasingly important role in our work, speaking directly to the public and will be built on in the coming year.

Your Somerset - the Council's own newspaper continues to be a key tool for communicating with residents. As demonstrated by feedback from our public engagement (see below). Its content is tailored to reflect the authority's priorities and is a key tool for some of our campaigns – with demonstrable spikes in interest linked to prominent articles. Notable content this year has included a number of articles dedicated to raising awareness of Child Sexual Exploitation, the council's role in stimulating the small business economy and innovative work in social care. The newspaper is run efficiently and effectively and just about covers its costs through paid-for advertising.

Campaigns – we have had another strong year on our high-profile campaigns. Our fostering and adoption work has for the first targeted placements for older children and some of the more challenging fostering placement schemes. Despite this we have generated well in excess of 400 enquiries and contributed to nearly young people now living with loving foster carer or adoptive parents. A number of Public Health related campaigns have taken place during the year on issues such as autism, skin cancer prevention and domestic abuse. Efforts to increase in flu vaccination amongst frontline staff resulted in a more than 60 per cent increase in uptake.

Listening Learning Changing – the team again organised and delivered a large scale public engagement exercise, giving communities across the county the chance to feedback on the authority's priorities and budget challenges. This year we spoke to more than 6,000 residents through events in eleven towns across all five district areas, an online survey and survey in the Your Somerset newspaper. This brings the total engaged across four years to more than 19,000.

The media relations or press office function has continued, working with our traditional printing and broadcast media to keep residents informed about council services, changes and decisions. Since the beginning of April, approach more than 400 proactive press releases have been issued to media and posted on our online Newsroom and through social media accounts. Communications Team staff have also provided considerable support for key projects and programmes such as improvements in Children's Services, the My Staff Shop staff benefits scheme launched this year and the developing innovative ways of working in adult social care.

Digital

We have had a particular focus on supporting Adults and Children's transformation projects, delivering a new online tool to support the Adults Community Connect innovation work. We have developed and are currently implementing revisions to Somerset Choices to make it better meet the needs of customers. The Somerset Choices platform is now approaching the end of its contracted life. Much has changed in the four years since development started

and we are now working with services to develop solutions that better match the changing needs of the services and our customers.

We have had success in reducing the external spend on web development by undertaking as much as possible in house. We have invested £40K internally, that based on external quotes would have cost the authority between £80K-£100K Websites designed and developed include Travel Somerset, DAS Jobs, Somerset Prepared, Somerset Leaving Care Councils, these will be followed later in the year by new websites for Public Health and the Somerset Waste Partnership.

Over the past year website visitor numbers have remained steady, but the number of pages viewed has decreased, indicating people that people are finding it easier to locate the information they need. The number of customers submitting electronic forms has doubled, with the new highways online form now taking 25% of the total enquires after only a few months, meaning a significant reduction in calls and consequent savings in that area of operations. Work is underway to redevelop our websites to take advantage of the opportunities presented by the SW1 end of contract. Numerous and higher quality services will be made available online.

3. Background papers

- 3.1.
- <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/>
 - <http://www.somersetintelligence.org.uk/sinepost.html>
 - Customer Experience: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/have-your-say/complaints-comments-and-compliments/complaints-comments-compliments/>
 - Customer Access & Shared Assets: <http://change.somerset.gov.uk/home/dcs/casa/>
 - SCC Equalities & Diversity - <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/policies/equality/>
 - Partnership Equalities & Diversity <http://www.sedgemoor.gov.uk/workingwithpartners>
 - Community Development: www.somerset.gov.uk/communitydevelopment
 - Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Strategic Forum www.somerset.gov.uk/voluntarysector
 - Volunteering: www.somerset.gov.uk/volunteering
 - Community Right to Challenge: www.somerset.gov.uk/crtc
 - Council Buildings, including CAT and Assets of Community Value: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/information-and-statistics/financial-information/council-buildings/>
 - Local Choices and Community Resources: www.somerset.gov.uk/localchoices
 - Community Funding Sources: www.somerset.gov.uk/communityfunding
 - Somerset Armed Forces Community Covenant: <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/forcescovenant>

Note: For sight of individual background papers please contact the report author