

Annual Report of the Cabinet Member for Customers and Communities

Cabinet Member(s): Cllr David Fothergill, Cabinet Member for Corporate Affairs

Division and Local Member(s): All

Lead Officer: Simon Clifford – Director

Author: Jan Stafford – Strategic Manager

Contact Details: (01823) 355010

1. Summary

- 1.1** Corporate Affairs has had a successful year and has been particularly proud of its staff with Joshua Pimm an apprentice in the Business Intelligence Team winning the national public sector ‘Apprentice of the Year’ award. In the 2017 staff awards the service were nominated for 7 with success in customer focus and creativity and innovation.

In terms of leading innovation this year the Business Intelligence team, together with Children’s Social Care, have undertaken a project with the Behavioural Insights Team (Cabinet Office / Nesta) to use advanced data science and machine learning techniques to help identify CSC cases that are likely to re-refer. The algorithms developed have delivered an accuracy of 95% and the learning is now being translated into a new tool to assist Social Workers.

- 1.2** Building stronger communities is a continued focus for this service and this year I was delighted to take a decision to establish the Somerset Fund which will provide a sustainable form of funding to small Voluntary Community and Social Enterprise organisations.

- 1.3** Other notable successes include the Adult Social Care Advisors in the Contact Centre resolving 60% of all calls at the first point of contact and for some individual advisors performance has been as high as 80%. In terms of customer satisfaction and managing the demand going into the Adult Social Care this has been a significant achievement and fantastic piece of transformation.

2. Key achievements

2.1 Contact Centre

This is the first full year of the contact centre being under SCC control after transitioning from Southwest One in December 2016. The Service has successfully maintained high performance against the existing performance indicators including customer satisfaction with 89% of customers rating the overall service as good or very good.

The Children's Team in the contact centre was the first to be scrutinised as part of the recent Ofsted Inspection. Inspectors were complimentary about the service commenting that it was "outstanding". The contact centre is also the first point of contact for Safeguarding and Social Care and recently extended the services offered this year to include Early Help referrals.

Our Customer Service Advisors in Adults continue to work hard with Social Care colleagues as part of their Community Connect transformation. Our Advisors are now having longer conversations which are outcome based rather than just trying to deal with the call quickly. I am proud to say that the team have successfully resolved, at first point of contact, an average of 60% of calls in a month; On some days this has been as high as 75% and for some individual advisors 80%. Signposting people to community options instead of transferring to an Adults Social Worker supports people to live successfully, safely and independently in their own communities for as long as possible and significantly helps manage demand. The impact of this work is better outcomes for residents and significant savings potential for the service.

Around 90% of customers surveyed consistently rate our Adults customer service as good or very good which is impressive as this is alongside the contact centre also taking on additional services including Learning Disabilities and Mental Health as well as providing screening for safeguarding calls.

We also provide the 'front door' telephony and email for the rest of the Council such as roads, transport, libraries and general enquiries. Not only did the team do brilliantly in the 'snow' by extending opening hours at short notice but also taking on new services including Parking Services and Blue Badge.

Other important changes that the contact centre has seen in 17/18 has been the decoupling the service with Taunton Deane Borough Council; rationalising the service into one place at Wellington House to reduce costs and create a great working environment for our staff and successfully piloting a new Web-chat tool.

2.2 Stronger Communities

The Stronger Communities Team is responsible for shaping the Council's approach to building stronger communities and promoting opportunities for individuals / communities to do things for themselves:

Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE)

Since being established in April 2015, the VCSE Strategic Forum continues to go from strength to strength. 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.

There are many hidden successes within our Council, and this team is one of them. Following our first successful VCSE Leaders Conference focusing on collaboration in March 2017, we held a second conference on social action which was over-subscribed. In March 2018 we launch the Somerset VCSE website (www.somersetvcse.org.uk) to further improve communication with the sector.

To coincide with National Trustee's Week we held, in November 2017, a Trustee Gathering for the first time, with attendees rating the event as good (27%) or excellent (73%).

These two achievements have improved relationships with a key sector, enhanced our reputation and helped deliver better outcomes for our residents and communities and I am immensely grateful for the hard work the team delivers.

Further to the State of the Sector report (February 2017) we have provided grant funding to Spark (£25k) and Engage (£10k) to strengthen VCSE infrastructure support to voluntary organisations in Somerset. In particular, with regards to enabling the voice of the sector to be strengthened, to developing place-based approaches to encourage social action and to assist voluntary and community sector organisations in becoming more financially sustainable. Spark in February 2017 organised a Funding Den in Burnham-on-Sea which saw over £75k awarded to 15 local community groups. Alongside this a non-key decision was taken by the Leader of the Council in November 2017 to explore the establishment of a Somerset Fund to further lever funding into Somerset. Early discussions with businesses are proving positive and the intention is to launch the Fund in 2018/19.

Interest in the Somerset Social Enterprise Loans Fund continues to grow with a further four loan applications approved in 2017/18 to Grassroots Power and We Hear You, taking the number of loans awarded to six with further organisations in the pipeline. The Somerset Community Foundation have been able to broaden its social enterprise offer to now include a blended package of loans and grants as a result of securing Access Growth Funding with two recent applications from Monks Yard Trust and The Dairy House

being successful. Interest in social enterprise is further improving as a result of being part of a joint European Regional Development Funding initiative (Enhance) with Devon County Council.

Volunteering

The County Council has over 2,000 volunteers supporting service delivery. Work has been progressing with services to develop the Council's Volunteer Framework and to grow and explore new volunteer opportunities, alongside promoting opportunities for staff to volunteer. Further information about volunteering is available via www.somerset.gov.uk/volunteering

2.3 Business Intelligence/Customer Insight:

Ofsted were very positive about the quality and timeliness of performance reporting. The inspection report states: *"A bespoke business data framework informs a clear and comprehensive suite of performance reporting documents, which leads to a good understanding of what is happening for children"*.

Joshua Pimm is an apprentice in our Business Intelligence Team and won the national public sector PPMA/Manpower 'Apprentice of the Year' award.

The whole of the children's BI team were finalists in the annual SCC staff awards for their innovation in supporting Children's Social Care data analysis.

The Business Intelligence team, together with Children's Social Care, has undertaken a project with the Behavioural Insights Team (Cabinet Office / Nesta) to use advanced data science and machine learning techniques to help identify CSC cases that are likely to re-refer. The algorithms developed have delivered an accuracy of 95% and the learning is now being translated into a new tool to assist Social Workers.

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. The Somerset Intelligence website has again been a highly valued source of information and hosts the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment. This wealth of information was also praised by Ofsted: *Leaders and managers have a good understanding of their local communities and needs. The regularly updated JSNA identifies children's needs and is of sufficient range and detail to inform the current three-year children's and young people's plan 2016–19.*

The teams continue to ensure 100% compliance with statutory data returns to DoH, DfE and Ofsted and produce a large number of performance reports for the Council's own performance management.

This year has seen the launch of a new web-mapping GIS tool. This enables many layers of data to be easily displayed and analysed on maps.

Consultations

This year we have contributed to 51 consultations and external surveys with over 7,200 individuals engaged. We have also assisted with three internal staff surveys to the entire workforce. Some of the key consultation/engagement work carried out over the last year includes:

- Family Support Service and Children's Centre Consultation;
- Somerset Libraries Services Consultation 2018
- Sheltered Housing Support Consultation
- Drugs and Alcohol Partnership Service Consultation
- Pharmaceutical Needs Assessment
- Healthy Eating and Physical Activity Support in Somerset.

2.4 Customer Experience

The Customer Experience has seen some changes in both role and personnel during the year. The team now incorporates Freedom of Information requests along with Customer Feedback [complaints, compliments and comments]. What remains unchanged is our commitment to ensuring that customer's experience of dealing with the council is a positive one. Feedback received from customers during 2017/18 was up 6.5% on the previous year. This is in part due to better recording using the iCasework system, which has been upgraded and developed during the year to provide enhanced functionality.

Learning from complaints remains a key focus for the team and we have been working in partnership with other authorities in the South West region and with the Local Government Ombudsman to establish effective mechanisms for this.

The number of FOI requests received by the council in 2018/18 is up by 11.4% on the previous year. Whilst resolution in the target timescale remains lower than desired, it was (despite the increase in cases and reduction in staff) up by 1%.

Work has started on our annual complaints reports which are due for publication in late summer and provide a useful insight and summary of performance in 2017/18 – I recommend you have a read when they come out.

2.5 Equalities & Diversity

SCC's focus on the equalities and diversity [E&D] agenda over the last year remains high with the completion of 67 Impact Assessments used to shape and inform the Council's decision making. Broader engagement and promotional activity with Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Groups has benefitted from an additional years partnership funding through the County and District Councils and Police. Promotional videos and materials used to support community cohesion activities are just a few of the rewards that this project has enabled. The project also provided an evidence base to support BME to bid for funding to support their work. A bid for further funding to extend this successful project is being made to the EDF Community Fund. The plan for delivering the Council's Equality Objectives is progressing well and a commitment recently given by the Public Sector Chief Executives meeting to explore a refreshed set for Somerset as a whole, tackling some areas of commonality and valuing our differences, is very positive. This is an important step for joint working, sharing ideas and resources across the partnership. A rolling programme of E&D training has also commenced and the evaluation to date has been excellent.

2.6 Communications

The Communications Team has continued to see its work shift to a more digital footing, putting greater emphasis on its social media presence and content in line with the public's changing preferences for receiving information.

Over the year the corporate Facebook page has seen its likes increase by nearly 60 per cent and Twitter by 15 per cent, thanks to concerted efforts to create more engaging and dynamic content. It has also been a valuable tool in work to recruit foster carers and adopter and in support of the recruitment team's efforts to fill key posts, notably in social care.

Fostering and adoption recruitment remains a mainstay of the communications team activity, receiving considerable attention and resource as one of the key corporate priorities. Success continues despite the extremely challenging nationwide picture. Information event attendance has increased by 33 per cent in the last year. Adoption enquiries have risen and approvals increased by 39 per cent, with the help of a highly effective 'National Adoption Week' campaign and ongoing inventive social media and digital advertising. We have also dramatically improved the matching of children with SEND to adopters impressing Ofsted inspectors and contributing to the 'Good' rating for the adoption service.

A number of campaigns and initiatives have been undertaken in support of Public Health priorities, including a successful social media initiative to recruit breast-feeding champions, with more than 25 recruited and trained. Considerable effort also went into work to increase the uptake flu vaccinations amongst frontline social care staff, while a successful domestic abuse campaign run in partnership with the Police and Barnardo's saw calls

to the helpline and visits to the advice webpage increase significantly.

Working with our traditional printing and broadcast media, we have kept residents informed about council services, changes and decisions. Since the beginning of April, more than 300 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 transformation programmes such as improvements in Children's Services and the Community Connect/Promoting Independence in adult services. It has also overseen and lead various cross-agency work, for example around Serious Cases Reviews.

2.7 Digital

Our focus has been on supporting Children's improvement, we are especially proud of our ongoing work to replace the SEND Local Offer. We are co-producing this website with, parents, carers and young people. Our testing with them is showing considerable improvement over our current offer.

We have supported corporate developments producing websites and documents to support devolution, the peer review. The new county vision and business plan sites are under development. We have supported the implementation of webchat and other productivity tools in the contact centre.

We have continued to reduce the authority's external spend on web services investing £20K to save £50K. We have designed and developed several new websites inhouse that have been well received and well used some of the more notable sites are: Public Health, the Somerset Waste Partnership, DAS jobs and social care recruitment.

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.