



Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 9 July 2025

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Customer Service Update - Outturn 2024/25

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding customer interactions within the Customer Service team and high contact service areas for 2024/25.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Note the report and provide feedback on the information contained in the report.

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?

No

What are the relevant corporate priorities?

Connecting communities
Effective council

Which wards are impacted?

All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no significant legal or governance implication arising from this report.

Completed by: James Welbourn, Democratic Services Manager

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to Connecting Communities and being an Effective Council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Customer Service Team and high contact service areas strives to deliver these priorities.
- 2.2 A telephony and call handling report was presented to the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 12 March 2025. The report focused on the position regarding call handling.
- 2.3 The Customer Service Team handle customer interactions in various ways for 17 high contact service areas, as well as general public enquiries. This report provides an update regarding customer interactions for these service areas for 2024/25.

Customer Interaction type

- 2.4 Tables 1 and 2 show the different methods and number of customer interactions received into the Customer Service Team during 2023/24 and 2024/25

Table 1 – Telephone calls and face to face contact:

	2023/24	2024/25
Virtual operator	N/A	76,001
IVR	N/A	36,221
Total	N/A	112,222

	2023/24	2024/25
Customer Service calls	129,415	133,102
Switchboard calls	30,394	14,666
Other service calls	44,345	56,904
Total Calls	204,154	204,672
Grantham walk-in	4,540	4,361
Bourne walk-in	601	453
Bourne Library	26,528	29,927
Total Walk-in	31,669	37,741
Grantham appointment	384	683
Bourne appointment	203	225
Total Appointments	587	908
Total Interactions	236,410	352,543

In comparison to 2023/24, the number of appointments in Grantham have increased by 299 (from 384 to 683). This is likely to be as a result of the relocation of the Customer Service Centre in October 2024. Customer appointments are available and are supported by an improved space for these appointments to take place consisting of five service desks and a dedicated secure interview room.

Table 2 – Digital Channels – Emails and Website:

	2023/24	2024/25
Emails	25,302	19,074
Website (unique browser)	975,997	1,817,897
Total	1,001,299	1,836,971

Table 3 – Total contact:

	2023/24	2024/25
Total contact	1,237,709	2,189,514

- 2.5. In comparison to 2023/24, total contact has increased by 951,802 from 1,237,709 to 2,189,514. The largest proportion of this is website interactions as a result of the introduction of the new website, increased number of online forms and customer portals.
- 2.6. It is important for the Council to provide a variety of methods of contact for its customers. It is appreciated one contact method may not be suitable for all. Therefore, the method for customer contact provided by South Kesteven will continue to include all methods as shown in Table 4.

Table 4 – Interaction comparisons:

	2023/24		2024/25	
	Volume	% of total contact (1,237,709)	Volume	% of total contact (2,189,514)
Telephone calls (table 1)	204,154	16.50%	316,894	14.47%
Face to face – walk in (table 1)	31,669	2.56%	37,741	1.72%
Face-to-face – appts (table 1)	587	0.05%	908	0.04%
Digital (table 2)	1,001,299	80.90%	1,836,971	83.90%

Call answering – 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025

- 2.7. Previous reports presented have provided information regarding 'abandonment' of calls. Analysis during 2024/25 shows that there is minimal negative feedback received relating to calls being abandoned or not answered. Further analysis also shows the increase in e-channel contact via website, online forms and customer portals, which is a direct result of the promotion of our e-channel access and the numerous information messages for the customer whilst they are in the call queue, advising of other contact methods such as online, and the option to request a call back from the service area.
- 2.8. During 2024/25, 79% of calls were answered, with 21% of calls being re-routed to other service channels. During 2023/24, these figures were 81% and 19% respectively.
- 2.9. This suggests customers are terminating the call before being routed to an officer and re-routing their enquiry to e-channel areas – which is evidenced in the increase in digital contact in table 2 and 3 above. As a result of this, calls which are not classed as 'answered' will be classed as 're-routed'.

- 2.10. Call handling statistics are produced and issued by the Performance and Change Improvement Lead on a regular basis to the Council's Corporate Management Team and service areas. The information includes number of calls offered, answered, re-routed and average speed of answer.
- 2.11. Performance clinics with service areas are continuing on a monthly basis which enable both the Customer Service Team and service area to be able to advise of changes in service activity and any upcoming changes which may impact on the number or nature of customer interactions.
- 2.12. Customer feedback via the Council's corporate feedback process is monitored, specifically where the customer has indicated an issue regarding the "ability to contact the Council". Between July 2024 and March 2025, 19 feedback requests were received, of these 11 were comments, and the remaining were service requests. None were reported as a complaint. All feedback was reviewed and actioned appropriately.

Website – feedback and improvements

- 2.13. Each page on the Council's website has a 'was this page useful' function. A customer can choose 'yes' or 'no' by clicking on the relevant 'happy or sad face' icon at the bottom of the page. In doing this, the customer is given the option to provide and submit their comments, along with their name and email address.
- 2.14. A report is produced each month by the Performance and Customer Improvement Lead. The period for this report is from the new website Go Live (October 2023) to 31 March 2025.
- 2.15. During this period, there have been a total of 1,082 individual feedback received. Officers meet regularly to review the feedback and agree actions to be taken; amendments to the website, liaison with service areas and feedback to the customer (where contact details have been provided).

Customer Experience Strategy - update

- 2.16. Public consultation of the Customer Experience Strategy consultation took place from 10 March 2025 and closed on 7 April 2025 and was open to a variety of stakeholders – those identified were:
 - Customers who contact the Council via the Customer Services Team
 - Other organisations that contact SKDC

- Those who do not contact the Council (via SKToday – circa 3,700 and the Youth Council)
- Local businesses
- Community and Voluntary Groups
- Staff working group

2.17. A total of 561 responses were received. This was made up of 540 public stakeholder responses and 21 Staff & Youth Council responses.

2.18. The purpose of the consultation was to:

- Consult with a variety of stakeholders on how they interact or would choose to interact with the Council;
- Inform a refresh of SKDC's Customer Experience Strategy;
- Ensure SKDC's processes are fit for the 21st Century; and
- To understand the technological advances that have taken place in customer interaction over the last 5 years

2.19. A Members' workshop has taken place on 26 June 2025 and the outcomes of the recent stakeholder consultation were presented and discussed. As a result, the Strategy, Customer Charter and Service Standards will be presented to Cabinet on 9 September 2025.

2.20. It is intended for an action plan to be presented to this committee every 6 months, with the initial presentation taking place at the next committee meeting on 16 October 2025.

3. Key Considerations

3.1. These are included throughout the report and members of the Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 The report is for information only.