



Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Thursday, 16 October 2025

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

Customer Service Update - Quarter 1 (2025/26)

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 Quarter 1 during 2025/26.

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Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?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 9 July 2025. The report focused on the customer interactions for 2024/25.
- 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 Quarter 1 2025/26.

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 Q1 2024/25 and comparison to Q1 2025/26.

Table 1 – Telephone calls and face to face contact:

	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Virtual operator	N/A	29,481
IVR	N/A	12,055
Total	N/A	41,536
	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Customer Service calls	35,515	33,706
Switchboard calls	4,040	3,418
Other team calls	16,174	13,588
Total Calls	55,729	50,712
Grantham walk-in	1,242	1,225
Bourne walk-in	138	98
Bourne Library	6,982	7,107
Total Walk-in	8,362	8,430
Grantham appointment	79	248
Bourne appointment	48	97
Total Appointments	127	345
Total Interactions	61,866	59,487

2.5. In comparison to 2024/25, the number of appointments in Grantham have increased by 169 (from 79 to 248). This is as a result of the relocation of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) in October 2024. The CSC provides a friendly, open and spacious environment for customer appointments which are available from 9am to 1pm, taking place across five service desks and a dedicated secure interview room. Appointments are available for all enquiries across all service areas.

Table 2 – Digital Channels – Emails and Website:

	Q1 2024/25	Q1 2025/26
Emails	5,513	4,336
Website (unique browser)	382,833	509,164
Total	388,346	513,530

2.6. In comparison to Q1 2024/25, email contact has reduced slightly but website contact has increased significantly by 126,331. This is as a result of the improved website interactions, increased online form and Council Tax portal.

2.7. There have been a total of 9,411 Council Tax portal interactions during Q1. In total since the portal officially launched in June 2024, there have been 85,638 interactions with 6,943 households registered on the portal, with 6,924 of those registered for e-billing (99.73%).

2.8. The Customer Service and Council Tax Teams continue to promote the portal and this is the most efficient way to contact the Council Tax team, with customers receiving updated Council Tax bills within 24 to 48 hours from point of contact.

2.9. 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 3 below.

Table 3 – Interaction comparisons:

	Q1 2024/25		Q1 2025/26	
	Volume	% of total contact (452,564)	Volume	% of total contact (573,017)
Telephone calls (table 1)	55,729	12.31%	50,712	8.85%
Face to face – walk in (table 1)	8,362	1.85%	8,430	1.47%
Face-to-face – appts (table 1)	127	0.03%	345	0.06%
Digital (table 2)	388,346	85.81%	513,530	89.62%
Total Contact	452,564		573,017	

Call answering – 1 April 2025 to 30 June 2025

2.10. During Q1 2025/26, 83% of calls were answered, with 17% of calls being 'abandoned' to other service channels. This is an improvement from Q1 2024/25, where these figures were 76% and 24% respectively.

2.11. An 'abandoned' call suggests the customer is terminating the call before being routed to an officer. Officers are unable to show a clear correlation between calls being abandoned and the increase in e-channel areas (digital contact has increased from 85.81% to 89.62%), however, analysis continues to show 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.

- 2.12. Call handling statistics are produced and issued by the Performance and Change Improvement Lead on a monthly basis to the Council's Corporate Management Team and service areas. The information includes number of calls offered, answered, abandoned and average speed of answer.
- 2.13. Performance clinics with service areas are continuing on a monthly basis which enable both the Customer Service Team and service area to analyse call handling performance and for the service area to advise of changes in service activity and any upcoming activities which may impact on the number or nature of customer interactions.
- 2.14. 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". All feedback continues to be reviewed and actioned appropriately.

Website – feedback and improvements

- 2.15. 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.
- 2.16. A report is produced each month by the Performance and Customer Improvement Lead. For the purpose of this report, the information provided is from October 2023 to August 2025.
- 2.17. During this period, there have been a total of 1,849 individual 'was this page useful' interactions and this is broken down as follows:

	Was this page useful				
	Yes	No	Total	% Yes	% No
Total interactions	577	1,272	1,849	31%	69%

- 2.18. Customers are also able to provide comments regarding their feedback and can leave their contact details which enables officers to provide a response as to the actions taken. Of the 1,272 respondents which advised the page was not useful, 1,045 provided comments.
- 2.19. All comments are reviewed and actions taken where required. Of the 1,045 comments received, 67 (6%) resulted in actions being taken. The common areas for feedback and reasons for changes not being taken are:
 - Customer did not provide enough details for action to be taken

- Information requested is already on the website
- Customer had a service enquiry, not a comment on the page

2.20. Officers will provide a detailed update to this Committee for Q2 2025/26. The update will detail the above information, along with the individual actions undertaken where changes have been made.

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.