

Delegated Cabinet Member Key Decision Report

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| Decision Maker and Portfolio area: | Cllr Abdul Jabbar MBE, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance and Green |
| Date of Decision: | Thursday 19 November 2020 |
| Subject: | Customer Support Centre – Technology Investment |
| Report Author: | Dominic Whelan, Chief Operating Officer, Unity Partnership and Fran Lautman, Customer Development Manager, Oldham Council |
| Ward (s): | None |

Reason for the decision: To approve the request for £0.390m of capital monies to deliver the underpinning technology to improve our customer service offer as part of the Customer Support Centre Project. This scheme can be financed by utilising existing provisions from the overall approved ICT Strategic Roadmap within the current 2020/21 – 2024/5 capital programme.

Summary: The paper outlines the scope and benefits of the Customer Support Centre Project. The scope of this first phase of work is limited to services provided by Unity Partnership on behalf of Oldham Council.

What are the alternative option(s) to be considered? Please give the reason(s) for recommendation(s): Option 1 - Do nothing and work around the current technologies restricting the ability to transform services, the customer experience and limit the delivery of sustainable savings.

Option 2 – Approve this scheme to move into delivery.

Recommendation(s): The preferred option is Option 2.

1. Background

- 1.1 The current operating landscape provides several challenges and opportunities for Team Oldham to improve the customer journey and experience for people who use support and services, whilst at the same time improving our effectiveness, efficiency, and reducing the cost of delivering our customer service offer. By reshaping our customer offer in a way that is focussed on understanding the needs of residents and is sustainable and in alignment with key strategies and roadmaps including ICT, Digital, and Reform, it should provide the basis to release savings across a range of service areas.
- 1.2 To this end, a budget saving proposal has been developed as part of the savings options being put forward for 2021/22. The saving option proposes to bring together services provided on behalf of the Council by Unity Partnership including the Access Oldham and Contact Centre teams and a number of access channels to form a new service, the Customer Support Centre. Subject to the outcome of the public and staff consultation that will take place on all budget savings options, the associated restructuring changes will take place. For ease, this paper provides an overview of both the people and technology elements of the Customer Support Centre project. This paper specifically focuses on the technology changes that are required to underpin our customer offer moving forward and that can be implemented in parallel to the public consultation on the savings proposal.
- 1.3 The Customer Support Centre project proposes to bring together the Access Oldham and Contact Centre teams and a number of access channels to form a new service, the Customer Support Centre. The Customer Support Centre project will modernise the technology used to support residents and businesses effectively to deliver the service. This will ensure that we better understand demand and needs and can offer a more joined up and person focussed support offer.
- 1.4 By making the people and technology changes, the foundations will be created for a 'one front door' approach for residents and businesses to interact with the Council. Subject to the outcome of public and staff consultation, it is proposed that residents will start by calling the Customer Support Centre where a triage process will be developed to determine the most effective support available which may involve several different services. If this involves a need for a face-to-face appointment, a bookable appointment will be offered either for a virtual online face to face meeting or at one of several locations across Oldham utilising existing buildings.
- 1.5 We believe that in delivering this project, it will make it easier for residents and businesses to get the support they need at the right time and closer to home. Over time, additional services will be added to the Customer Support Centre as the 'one front door' to create economies of scale and consistent response quality and response times.
- 1.6 Rather than residents travelling into the centre of Oldham to queue and wait for an appointment at Access Oldham to find out information, answer queries or receive support and advice for areas such as Housing, Benefits or Council Tax, the Customer Support Centre project aims to provide services and support at a more localised level.

- 1.7 Subject to public and staff consultation, the project will also involve a service restructure to deliver this new approach. There is a possibility that the need for some roles will reduce particularly as residents move to self-service. By bringing services together, we will also deliver more efficient processes and a reduction in duplication. A reduction in the amount of staff may be required to deliver the overall service savings. Access Oldham will therefore no longer be required, and services will cease to operate from this location. Access Oldham temporarily closed in late March 2020 due to the national lockdown. Since this time, residents have continued to receive support and services via the existing telephony and email service – the Contact Centre and via the Housing services telephony offering. Assisted Digital support will continue to be available via the Oldham Library Service. We know that this is an important service for residents in making sure that access to online services and support is available.
- 1.8 This new approach should deliver a more efficient and effective customer service offer that reduces duplication and is more cost-effective to deliver. We also aim to improve our customer insight and intelligence to continually refine and improve the effectiveness and efficiency of our offer.
- 1.9 The Customer Support Centre project brings together the main customer service access channels and supporting functions to work together in a joined-up service model and offer to continually improve the customer experience. The project will also further develop the Oldham Digital Platform to enable the Customer Support Centre to work effectively and efficiently.
- 1.10 By creating the underpinning people and technology foundations in this first phase, initial cashable savings of circa £165k will be delivered in 2021/22 and 2022/23. However, this foundational work also creates the potential to enable more significant savings in future years from 2021/22 and beyond. In future phases, customer journeys, access channels, and areas of duplication will be reviewed and rationalised resulting in an improved customer experience and savings for Team Oldham.

2. High Level Summary of Challenges and Opportunities

- 2.1 The following table summarises the challenges of the current Customer Contact Model and presents the opportunities that will be delivered as part of the Customer Support Centre Project subject to public and staff consultation. In developing the 'as is' position, we have undertaken customer journey mapping to understand how residents use multiple services, access multiple front doors and access channels to engage with the council. We have used examples of resident feedback alongside the customer journey to ensure that we understand how our offer can be improved.

| No | Theme | Challenge/ As Is Position | Opportunity – to be delivered by the project |
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| 1 | Unity Partnership's current Customer Service Model is no longer fit for purpose in meeting the needs of people who use support and services. | The current model can be improved by better understanding people's needs and reducing the disparate front doors that includes many access channels and functions operating with limited alignment. | The Customer Support Centre project will bring the main access channels and teams together by 31 March 2021 for the first time into a single model and integrated service offer. Over time, the Customer Support Centre will become the front door for Team Oldham services (apart from some Community, Health and Social Care services) creating a more consistent, joined up, and effective service offer for residents. This will be underpinned and enabled by the investment in the Oldham Digital platform. |
| | | There is duplication and inefficiency across some service areas for example financial support. This results in residents contacting multiple services when they are urgent need and root causes are not supported creating failure demand and avoidable cost. | The Customer Support Centre project will capture the scope of current services. Where there is duplication, we will reshape financial support services as part of the Customer Support Centre function. We will provide a more person focused, strength-based and targeted support offer than works together with and improves outcomes for residents. |
| | | Customer Services staff and processing staff are interwoven across several teams within Unity Partnership. | By consolidating Teams, an initial 5 FTE of savings will be made by creating new structures that reduce duplication. In parallel (outside of scope of this project), a project will be enacted to shape the new Revenues and Benefits Transactional Services structure subject to consultation. It is anticipated that there will be a separation of customer services teams and processing teams (Revenues and Benefits Transactional Services structure) to ensure clear accountabilities, effectiveness and efficiency. |
| | | The main access channels sit across several teams within the Council and Unity | Opportunities to consolidate teams will be maximised to bring the main access channels |

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| | | Partnership. This results in access channels being unaligned and opportunities missed to apply learning and insight and drive service improvement. Customer Service Staff don't have access to the relevant systems to understand how a resident has moved across different access channels for the same enquiry or request meaning that residents must often repeat their story. | together within the Customer Support Centre Function. We will move to more of a 'single view' of the customer across access channels and apply learning and insight to continually improve the customer journey and experience. |
| | | Residents only have one place to go to speak to a Customer Service Officer or Benefits Advisor in person. This takes up travel time and people must queue to see an advisor. | We will better triage support via the Customer Support Centre telephony support. For complex queries, financial support and advice will be available by bookable appointment available at locations across Oldham from an integrated financial support team as part of the Customer Support Centre offer. Access Oldham will close and existing assets utilised to deliver this support. |
| 2 | There are several opportunities to deliver savings by reducing/moving access channels and encouraging self-service. | Some transactional queries (previously handled by face to face or via the phone) have shifted to self-service. However, the current Contact Centre includes several services whereby self-service functionality is available, but access channels haven't yet been rationalised meaning demand comes through Access Oldham or the Contact Centre creating avoidable cost. | Assess and deliver together with services the opportunities to move specific services to transactional self-service supported by the assisted digital offer at various locations. |
| 3 | The Contact Centre does not have the underpinning technology to deliver an efficient and | Investment and rationalisation of technology is required to provide an efficient and effective service. There has been minimal investment in the Contact Centre since its inception in 2008. | Deliver the core components needed as part of the Oldham Digital Platform to deliver an effective, efficient, and intelligent service that drives continual service improvement for residents and businesses. Deliver fewer, |

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| effective service. | <p>Core technological components of an effective and efficient Contact Centre such as call recording and call quality monitoring are not in place which limits the ability of the service to operate effectively and to improve the customer experience.</p> <p>There have been 10 service outages on the current platform in the last 3 years with a total of 850 lost minutes.</p> <p>Contact Centre Operatives use built up knowledge to handle calls across the many systems and technologies in place. The breadth of this creates inefficiency and fragmented data.</p> | <p>better, and integrated technology assets including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call Recording, Call Quality Monitoring and Customer Satisfaction Monitoring. • An integrated, omni-channel offer and development of Microsoft Dynamics integration capability including removal of the Telephony Platform via integration with Dynamics as part of the Unified Communications roadmap. • Subscribing to [Public] Cloud services [Cloud First] with inbuilt resilience and natively designed for remote working. • Removing duplication, leveraging value from fewer, better technologies. |
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3. High Level Scope: Phase One

- 3.1 The delivery approach is split into phases. Whilst the Customer Support Centre project creates an enabler for future benefits, this paper describes only the scope of the first initial phase associated with this investment.
- 3.2 The first phase will transform the existing service offer to create the building blocks to move towards ‘one front-door’ Customer Support Centre by 31 March 2021. The intent it to have the people structures in place for this date in addition to the face-to-face and virtual support offer across various locations resulting in the permanent closure of Access Oldham. Access Oldham temporarily closed in March 2020 due to Coronavirus restrictions and support is currently available via the Contact Centre telephony and email offer. The Housing Options service are also delivering services via telephony and email we are working together with the Housing Options service around integration with the Customer Support Centre. The first phase also seeks to create a separation between existing transactional revenues and benefits processing activity and customer focused support activity. It will also include the development of the Oldham Digital Platform, building upon the existing work already completed using Microsoft Dynamics to provide a technology-based data platform as part of the Team Oldham Covid response for the Helpline and Place Hubs. Furthermore, it will focus on a single approach to digital design and delivery that will work alongside services from 1 April 2021 onwards to become more effective and efficient in their customer journey and experience through service redesign and digital enablement utilising the Oldham Digital Platform.

- 3.3 The second phase will build on the people and technology foundations from the first phase alongside the single approach to digital design and delivery. It will be centred on redesigning customer journeys and service processes in alignment with the emerging customer service model. This will entail re-utilising the Oldham Digital Platform where it adds value and will predominantly use Agile delivery methods. The sequencing of in scope customer journeys and services will require analysis and debate at a future date together with the Transformation and Reform Team and with wider engagement across services.
- 3.4 A high-level project milestone plan has been shaped. On assignment of a Business Change Lead, a more detailed project plan will be developed and owned and implemented by the Customer and Digital board. Initial risks, issues, and dependencies have also been captured. A risk log is included with *Appendix B*.

4. Benefits for Residents and Team Oldham

- 4.1 This scheme offers a range of benefits both to residents and financial and non-financial benefits for Team Oldham.
- 4.2 Residents will no longer need to travel to a central point to access face-to-face support. As described in this paper, the function will re-shaped and aligned across several 'as is' services and face to face support will be available via bookable appointments across a number of locations based on local needs. Residents won't be required to repeat their stories to as many services as the Customer Support Centre utilises effective triage and the customer experience will become more consistent across access channels as the Customer Support Centre becomes the front door for Team Oldham (with the exception of some Community Health and Social Care services).
- 4.3 By focussing on the customer experience, the Customer Support project delivers initial savings by removal of FTE cost estimated at an initial 5 FTE reduction for 31 March 2021 and a further 2 FTE in 2022/23. The project creates the people, process and technical foundations to appropriately equip the Customer Support Centre and to then drive savings through customer journey and service redesign and rationalisation from 1 April 2021 onwards in future phases. It has the potential to improve our operational effectiveness and efficiency by creating the appropriate underpinning technology via the Oldham Digital Platform and therefore an improved customer experience and council reputation. Additionally, it will enable growth for additional services for Team Oldham and other opportunities via this single front door. Furthermore, the potential to keep records up to date and unlock insights across channels to better manage demand will also be enabled.
- 4.4 The response to Coronavirus continues to disrupt all elements of life; in order create a predictable baseline, this benefits case does not account for increases, changes or removal of services required as result of Coronavirus.
- 4.5 A more detailed overview of the key benefits is included in in the table below. On assignment of a Business Change Lead, a benefits realisation plan including a detailed baseline will be developed and owned and implemented by the Customer and Digital board.

| Description | Measure | Volumetric | Timings |
|---|--|---|---|
| Phase 1 Benefits to be delivered in readiness for 1 April 2021: | | | |
| <p>Deliver an improved Customer Experience by creating the building blocks for the 'single front door' for Team Oldham (apart from some Community, Health and Social Care services), bringing access channels together and delivering more targeted and integrated support. Residents won't have to repeat their story as frequently.</p> | <p>Customer Support Centre Structure and Service in place.</p> <p>Reduction in repeat contact.</p> | <p>To be baselined and established.</p> | <p>In place for 31 March 2021.</p> |
| <p>Residents will no longer need to travel to a single location for face to face support. Triage will be in place to support needs and face to face appointments (some virtual) will be in place and delivered more locally.</p> | <p>Residents can access support locally.</p> | <p>-</p> | <p>In place for 31 March 2021.</p> |
| <p>Enables Digital Strategy.</p> | <p>Key enablers for Digital Services Theme will be delivered.</p> | <p>-</p> | <p>In place for 31 March 2021.</p> |
| <p>Cost saving via removal of FTEs in current Unity Partnership structures.</p> | <p>Financial.</p> | <p>£165k by 2023 (£120 delivered for 2021 /22).</p> | <p>Full structure in place for 31 March 2021. Full year savings accounted for in 2021/22.</p> |
| <p>Improved Customer Satisfaction tracking.</p> | <p>Creation of a dashboard that can demonstrate in customer service statics and help inform continual service improvement.</p> | <p>-</p> | <p>In place for 31 March 2021.</p> |
| <p>Improved Service Availability</p> | <p>Technology uptime during business hours.</p> | <p>to 99.99% from 99.79% (current average).</p> | <p>In place for 31 March 2021.</p> |

| Phase 2 Benefits: | | | |
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| Costs savings through redesigning the end-to-end customer journey and service processes (this is enabled by this project and capacity and savings would be service savings). | Financial. | £TBC following analysis and prioritisation. | 2021/22 and 2022/23. |
| Create capacity for additional services. | Reduction in current phone demand. Increase in new demand fulfilled using self-serve wherever possible. | Reduction in current email and phone contact by 20%. Provides capacity to generate new income or reduce costs and maintain customer satisfaction. | Measured between 2021/22 and 2022/23. |

5. Financial Implications

Capital Implications

- 5.1 The proposed capital expenditure of £390k, is anticipated to be phased as below, 2020/21, 2021/22, TOTAL
£340,000, £50,000, £390,000
- 5.2 The project will be charged to the People and Place - IT capital programme.
- 5.3 Provision exists with the overall approved IT Strategic Roadmap within the existing 2020/21 – 2024/25 capital programme to support this scheme.

(Jit Kara, Senior Accountant / Lee Walsh, Finance Manager)

Revenue Implications

- 5.4 As outlined in the benefits table, it is anticipated that the Customer Support Centre project will deliver budgetary savings of £120,000 in 2021/22 increasing to £165,000 by 2022/23.
- 5.5 The saving will be delivered by a reduction in 5 FTE's based on an average salary of £24,000 per annum. The staffing reduction would be in Unity Partnership Limited (UPL) and the saving to the Council will be from a reduction in the core fee paid to UPL for Customer Services. The 2020/21 budget for the Customer Services core fee is £1,209,700. However, it should also be noted that as part of the restructuring

of Customer Services, the scope will review what sits Council side and this may also identify further savings opportunities.

- 5.6 It is assumed any exit costs in relation to this proposal will be met from within UPL.

(Nicola Harrop, Finance Manager)

6. Procurement Implications

- 6.1 The Commercial Procurement Unit supports the recommendation in the investment in Microsoft Dynamics Software. Oldham Council and Microsoft have an existing Contract in place dated 1st July 2018, procured via Crown Commercial Services Digital Transformation Agreement. This Contract allows for additional licences to be procured at any time during the Contract period. The Licence costs are fixed in line with the CCS Framework Agreement.

(Senga Henstock, ICT Senior Buyer)

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal comments.

(Colin Brittain, Assistant Borough Solicitor)

8. Human Resources Implications

- 8.1 The whole Customer Services Strategy is a critical part of the Transformation Programme and will have major implications for how we work. There will be a mixture of opportunities and challenges for staff as we work through new and different ways of working and whilst improvements to processes will be welcomed as a way of removing bureaucracy and inefficiencies, there will be some colleagues who will both welcome new ways of working as well as others who will struggle as we seek to remove the most expensive communication channels (largely face to face contact). The programme will need to be underpinned by a robust engagement strategy as well as a development programme to underpin the cultural shift that will be required. The HR/OD Service will provide advice support and guidance both in designing and delivering this activity.

- 8.2 Depending on the scale of the programme, there is a possibility that the need for some roles will reduce particularly as residents move to self-service. Any reductions in staff numbers will be kept under review in order to protect jobs and identify new opportunities wherever possible.

(Julia Veall, Director of Workforce and Organisational Design)

9. Property Implications

- 9.1 This proposal has a synergy with the Council's Working Differently and Accommodation Strategies which are property related workstreams.

(Peter Wood, Head of Strategic Assets and Facilities Management)

10. Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment

10.1 Stage 1 of the Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment has been undertaken and is included in *Appendix A*.

11. Risks:

11.1 A risk log is going to be maintained and the initial version is included within Appendix B to this report. This will be subject to regular revision throughout the project as the risks are managed. As the Council moves towards a more integrated Team Oldham approach including on Customer Services the data risks of different organisations working together as individual data controllers will need to be managed.

(Mark Stenson, Head of Corporate Governance)

12. Co-operative agenda

12.1 The Customer Support Centre project is being delivered as an enabler project as part of the co-operative agenda. The project aims to deliver co-operative services that are easy to use and are convenient to access.

13. Appendices

Appendix A – Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment



Appendix A -
Equality_Impact_Ass

Appendix B – Risk Log



Appendix B - CSC
Risk Log.xlsm

Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council's Constitution?

Yes

Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council's budget?

Yes

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council? No

Reason why this Is a Key Decision



to result in the local authority incurring expenditure or the making of savings which are, significant (over £250k) having regard to the local authority's budget for the service or function to which the decision relates.

The Key Decision made as a result of this report will be published within **48 hours** and cannot be actioned until **five working days** have elapsed from the publication date of the decision, i.e. before 24 November 2020, unless exempt from call-in.

This item has been included on the Forward Plan under reference FG-26-20.

List of Background Papers under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

There are no background papers for this report

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| Report Author Sign-off: | |
| Dominic Whelan, Chief Operating Officer, Unity Partnership |  |
| Fran Lautman, Customer Development Manager, Oldham Council |  |
| Date: | Thursday 19 November 2020 |

Please list any appendices: -

| Appendix number or letter | Description |
|----------------------------------|--|
| A | Equality and Diversity Impact Assessment |
| B | Risk Log |

Signed: *Hlockwood.*

Helen Lockwood, Deputy Chief Executive – People and Place

Date: 19 November 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Abdul Jabbar', written in a cursive style.

Signed:
Cllr Abdul Jabbar – Deputy Leader/Cabinet Member for Finance & Green

Date: 19 November 2020