

Delegated Decision Report

Decision below £250k



Subject:	Customer Experience Service Restructure
Decision maker: Senior Officer	Steve Hughes, Assistant Director Strategy and Performance
Decision maker: Cabinet Member	Cllr Peter Dean, Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities
Decision date:	5 February 2025
Report author:	Fran Lautman, Assistant Director of Customer Experience
Ward (s):	All

Reason for decision

The Customer Experience Service has been allocated a 20% revenue budget saving effective from 1 April 2025. This represents a saving required of £416,332.

This Delegated Decision Report outlines a new service structure subject to consultation to achieve the budget saving and the process and timings that will be followed to deliver this.

Recommendation(s)

To review and approve the proposed service structure subject to consultation - the new structure aims to minimize the impact on the quality and responsiveness of service delivered to residents as well as minimize the people impact and risk of redundancies within the customer experience team.

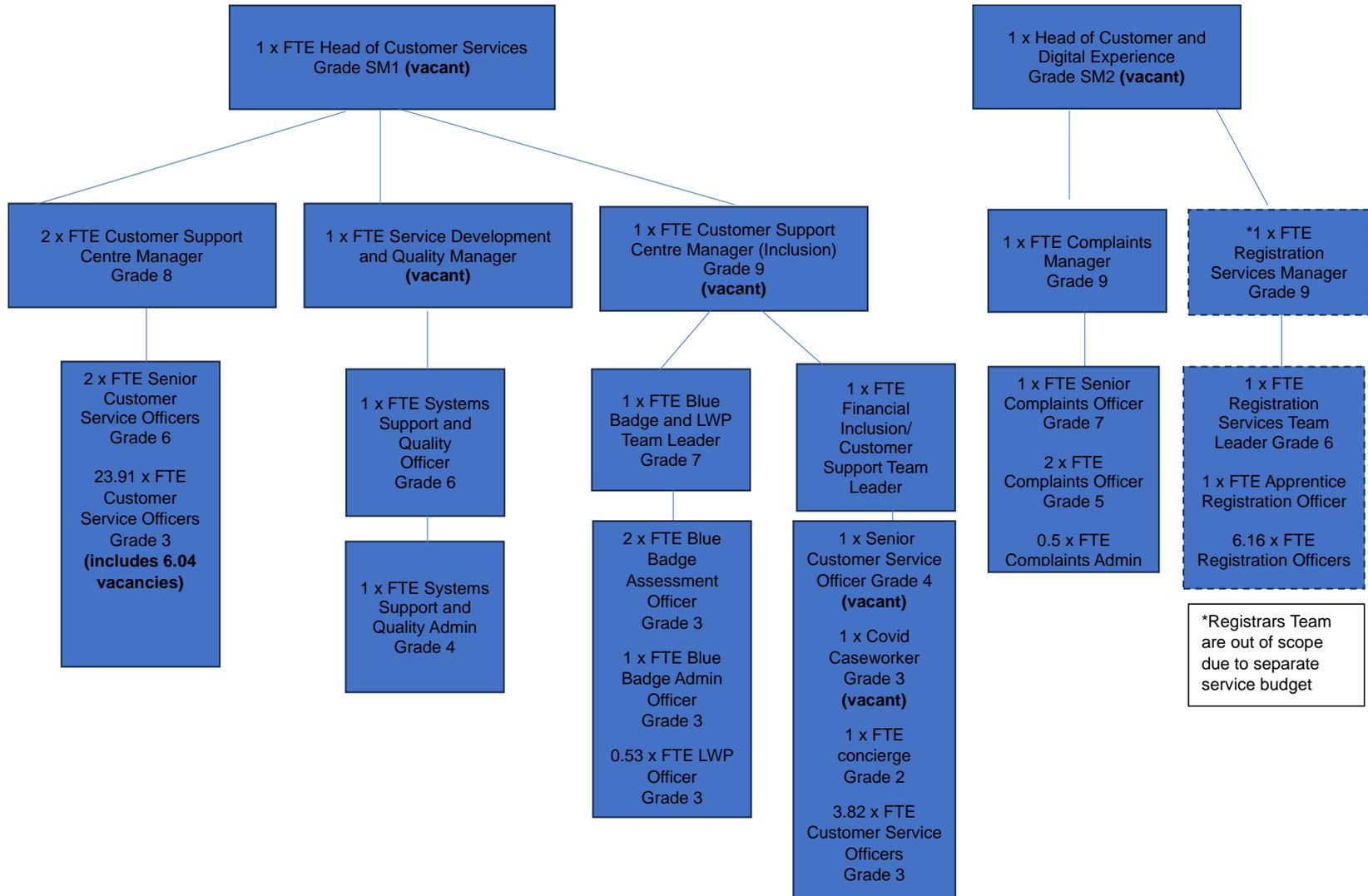
1. Background

- 1.1 To support the council's budget position for 2025-26, a 20% budget saving proposal of £416,332 has been allocated to the Customer Experience Service. The following teams are in scope:

Team	2024-25 Revenue Budget
Customer Services: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customer Support Centre (Contact Centre) • Customer Service Centre (at Spindles) • Blue Badge and LWP 	£1,782,000
Customer Development	£106,840
Complaints	£192,820
Total	£2,081,660
20% Saving	£416,332

- 1.2 Every service needs to identify where it can, opportunities to reduce costs and therefore protect the council's finances and services to Oldham residents.
- 1.3 In Quarter 2 of 2024/5, a review of Customer Experience services commenced in order to consider potential changes. This included reviewing performance levels, identifying improvements to self-serve for residents and the ongoing need for further digital change. This review provided opportunities to consider ways to improve the customer journey and experience for people who require support and use our services whilst at the same time improving our effectiveness, efficiency, and reducing the cost of delivering our customer service offer. Support from the council's digital programme is critical moving forward to ensure that the pace and scale of change to improve processes and the customer experience continues to help reduce demand into customer services by supporting residents who can and want to self-serve. By reshaping our customer offer in a way that is focussed on understanding the needs of residents and that is also sustainable and in alignment with key strategies it should provide the basis to release savings and establish a solid footing to deliver moving forwards.
- 1.4 The service has taken a prudent approach to vacancy management during 2024-25 in anticipation of savings for 2025-26. There are several vacant posts within the service which have all been reviewed with the aim of minimising the people impact and risk of redundancies in delivering the 20% budget saving.
- 1.5 There have been recent changes to team alignment including the Support and Inclusion team and Welfare Rights moving to the Finance service in Quarter 1 of 2024-25. A merge of sympathetic teams will contribute to budget savings whilst protecting service to our residents.

Current Structure



2. Alternative option(s) to be considered

2.1 Consultation documentation has been prepared. The proposed structure entails a reduction in FTE from 50.76 to 39.72, a reduction of 11.04 FTE delivering an annual full year saving of £400,680. The remaining £15,652 will be met from non-pay budgets and provide a total saving of £416,332. The following tables outline roles to be deleted and roles to be created subject to consultation.

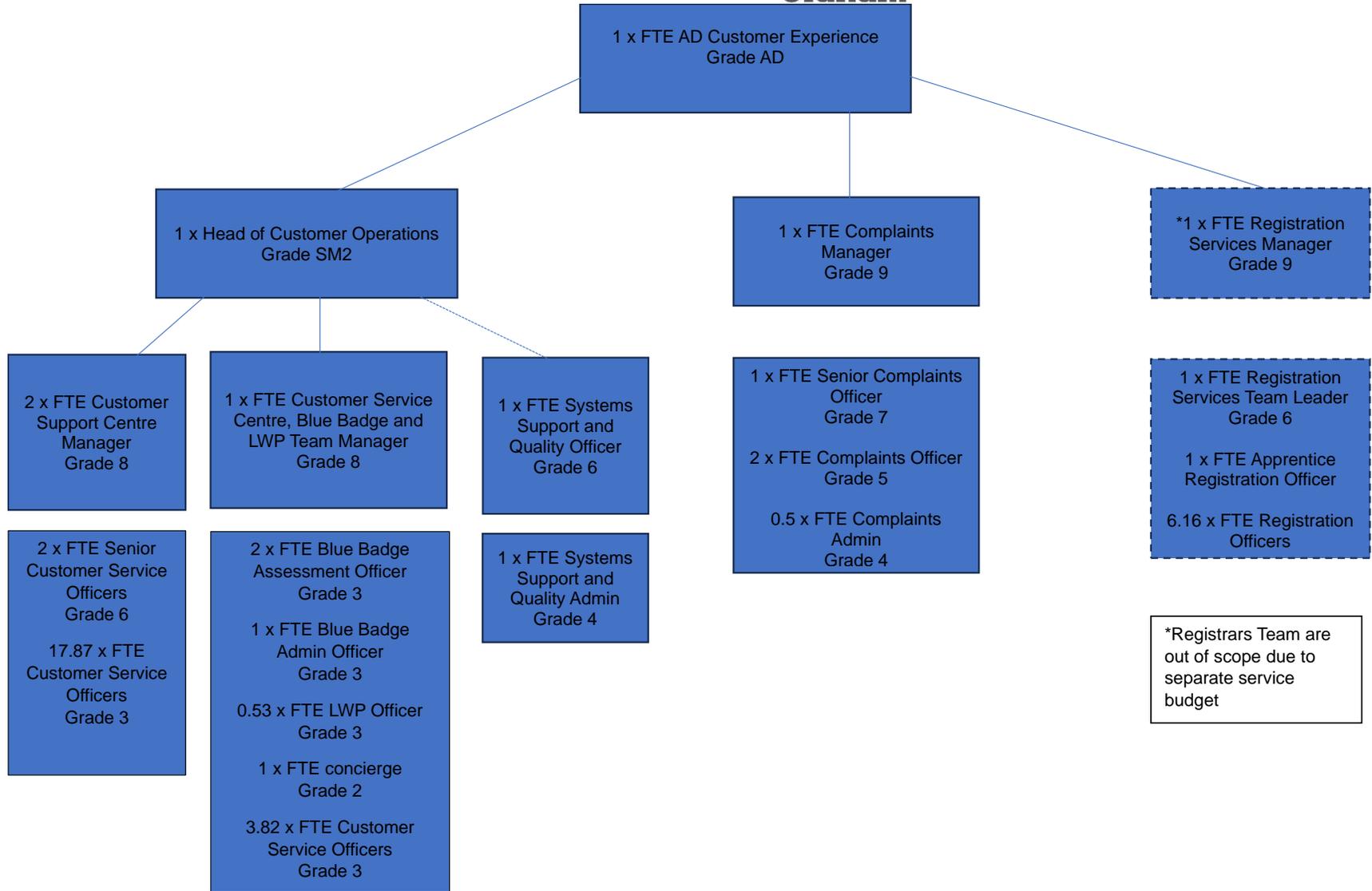
Deletion of the following roles:				
Role	FTE	Grade	2025/26 budget	Comments
Head of Customer Services	1	SM1	£94,810	Left the authority on 03.01.25 on voluntary redundancy
Head of Customer and Digital Experience	1	SM2	£81,440	Post is currently vacant. New role to be created – Head of Customer Operations
Customer Support Centre Manager (Inclusion)	1	9	£54,030	Post is currently vacant
Service Development and Quality Manager	1	8	£53,750	Post is currently vacant
Financial Inclusion/ Customer Support Team Leader	1	7	£48,330	Posts will be deleted and 1 x new Grade 8 role - Customer Support Centre, Blue Badge and LWP Team Manager.
Blue Badge and LWP Team Leader	1	7	£48,540	
Senior Customer Service Officer	1	4	£34,430	Post is currently vacant
Covid Caseworker	1	3	£30,470	Post is currently vacant
Customer Service Officers	6.04	3	£204,390	Posts are currently vacant
Total	14.04 FTE	-	£650,190	

Creation of the following roles:				
Role	FTE	Grade	2025/26 budget	Comments
Assistant Director of Customer Experience	1	AD	£110,540	Internal recruitment process held during November and post holder commenced on 09.12.24.
Head of Customer Operations	1	SM2	£78,270	
Customer Service Centre, Blue Badge and LWP Team Leader	1	8	£58,200	Ringfenced interview for the 2 roles to be deleted – Financial Inclusion/ Customer Support Team Leader and Blue Badge and LWP Team Leader.
System Support and Quality Officer	-	5-6	£2,500	Post regraded from grade 5 to 6.
Total	3	-	£249,510	

Proposed Structure



Oldham



*Registrars Team are out of scope due to separate service budget

3. Consultation

- 3.1 Consultation documentation has been prepared. Formal consultation will begin on 26 March 2025.
- 3.2 Job descriptions have been established and evaluated for the two new roles, Head of Customer Operations and Customer Service Centre, Blue Badge and LWP Team Leader. Job descriptions are included in the consultation documentation.

4. Risks

- 4.1 The focus on achieving the required savings has been on removing existing vacant posts and realigning management capacity to minimize the risk of impact on service delivery to residents as part of our commitment to work with a resident focus.
- 4.2 The new structure reduces the resiliency of the service particularly during peak demand (typically April during Council Tax main billing) and in case of any periods of sick leave or other types of leave of absence.
- 4.3 We will continue to work with the IT team with the aim of quickening the pace of service transformation by integrating online forms to reduce the need for residents to call. This will support the service to work towards achieving delivery of performance targets including 89% calls answered.

5. Implications

Financial	<p>The preferred option as detailed in the recommendations above, is to approve and implement a proposed restructure to the Customer Experience Team.</p> <p>The table below details the financial implications on the Council should the proposal be approved.</p>	
	£	
	Current Structure	1,947,420
	Proposed Structure	1,546,740
	Budget Saving	400,680
	<p>If approved, there is a potential risk of redundancy or staff redeployment. The cost of redundancy is based on the employees age and length of service and will be funded</p>	

	<p>corporately.</p> <p>A contribution of £400,680 will be made toward an agreed budget reduction target of £416,332, with the remaining £15,652 coming from within the Customer Experience non pay budgets.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Matt Kearns, Finance Manager</p>
<p>Legal</p>	<p>This is a restructuring exercise which is likely to result in dismissals by way of redundancy and therefore, as far as employment law is concerned, OMBC should follow its relevant processes and should ensure that there is no discrimination in the process. This is likely to reduce the risk of any claims arising out of that process (e.g. if any affected employee has a disability which may adversely affect their position in the selection process, reasonable adjustments are likely to be required).</p> <p>This process may be assisted by an Equality Impact Assessment, which I note is provided for in the below box.</p> <p>I have noted the proposed timetable (including the consultation requirements) which is set out in Appendix 5 of the Information and Consultation Document, which appears in order.</p> <p>Generally, I would recommend that OMBC takes such legal advice throughout the process as is necessary to lower the risk of successful claims for unfair dismissal (which would be brought under the Employment Rights Act 1996) and discrimination (which would be brought under the Equality Act 2010). Advice may also be required in relation to redundancy entitlements.</p> <p>I have no further observations on these proposals at this stage.</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Paul Davies, Employment Solicitor (Locum)</p>
<p>Equality impact including implications for Children and Young People</p>	<p>An equality impact assessment has been completed with detail included in <i>Appendix A</i>. The proposed changes are anticipated to have a natural impact due to several vacancies proposed to be removed from the structure not being filled for sometime – they have not had an negative impact on performance and particularly calls answered.</p>
<p>HR</p>	<p>The Assistant Director of Customer Experience has worked with the HR team in preparing for the restructure. The role holder has been in post since mid-December 2024 and is now able to commence the restructure to meet budget savings.</p> <p>Job descriptions for the new roles of Head of Customer Operations and Customer Service Centre, Blue Badge and LWP Manager have been prepared and evaluated. Consultation documentation has been drafted and meetings arranged with the</p>

	Trade Unions has been planned ahead of consultation with staff within the service. Rebecca Jones, HR Manager
--	---

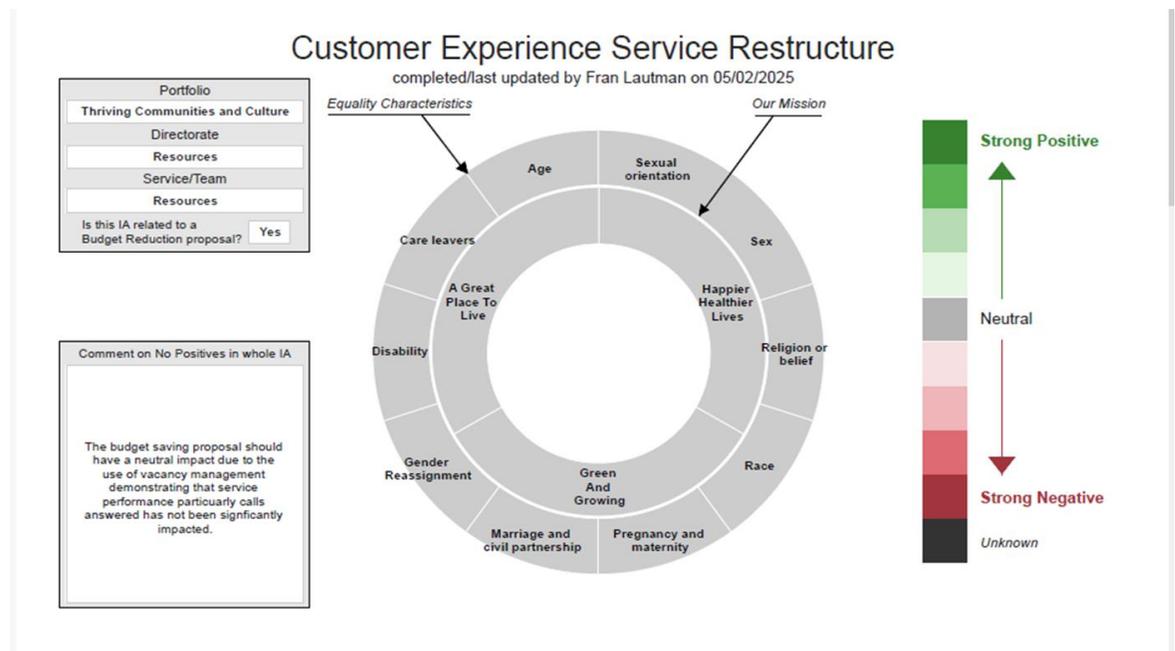
Has the relevant Legal Officer confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?	Yes
Has the relevant Finance Officer confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?	Yes
Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?	Yes

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

none

Appendices

Appendix A – Equality Impact Assessment



Report author sign-off	Fran Lautman
Role	Assistant Director of Customer Experience
Date of sign-off	5 February 2025

Approval	
Officer approval sign-off	Steve Hughes 
Role	Assistant Director Strategy and Performance
Date of sign-off	5 February 2025

Approval	
Member(s) approval sign-off	Cllr Peter Dean 
Role	Cabinet Member for Thriving Communities
Date of sign-off	13 February 2025