

LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN	WARDS: All
REPORT TITLE Improving the citizen experience	
REPORT OF Director of Customer Services	
FOR SUBMISSION TO Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee	DATE 21 February 2023
STRATEGIC CONTEXT We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. The plan sets out a number of key challenges and missions to make it easier for everyone to stay healthy and to access food, education, good housing, and well-paid work: ensuring no-one gets left behind. In the Way We Work, the Council explores how the way we use our resources as a council, the people we employ and the decisions we make will all shape Camden – now and in the future and identifies opportunities to use technology, data and our creativity to imagine better ways to meeting residents’ needs and delivering better outcomes. The council has set itself ambitions to develop and act on stronger relationships with citizens, and to create the conditions that allow services to deliver the best possible outcomes in a challenging environment. Meanwhile, we know citizens want their needs to be heard, acknowledged, and answered. Central to achieving these ambitions, as well as our missions and challenges, is improving citizens' experience of approaching Camden for information or support.	
SUMMARY OF REPORT This report sets out the Council’s ambitious agenda for change and improvement in how residents and other citizens can easily and effectively get the information, support and services they need, ensuring that no-one is left behind and our approach recognises individual strengths and needs. As such the agenda for change is a cross-council objective and a new project started in late 2022 to fundamentally review the Council’s approach to citizen interaction. This report provides an update on this project alongside providing data and insight into the experiences of the Customer Services and Registration Service, the Council’s highest volume ‘front door’. Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information No document(s) have been used in the preparation of this report:	

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RECOMMENDATIONS

For the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee to note the contents of the report and contribute their experiences as part of the citizen interaction review project.

Signed: 

Director of Customer Services

Date: 09 February 2023

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1. In We Make Camden and the accompanying The Way We Work, the Council has set out an ambitious agenda for change to deliver better outcomes for citizens through a number of missions, challenges and a set of five ambitions. Central to all was a commitment to make Camden a better borough – a place where everyone has a chance to succeed and where nobody gets left behind.
- 1.2. How the way we use our resources as a council, the people we employ and the decisions we make will all shape Camden – now and in the future and it calls on all services to identify opportunities to use technology, data and our creativity to imagine better ways to meet residents' needs, build stronger relationships with citizens and to create the conditions to deliver better outcomes. Meanwhile, we know citizens want their needs to be heard, acknowledged, and answered. Central to achieving these ambitions is improving citizens' experience of approaching Camden for information or support.
- 1.3. In the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy and budget proposals for 2023/24, it recognises the potential opportunities to transform how residents and other service users interact with the Council. In particular, there is a need to invest in improving the accessibility of Council services by making the most of our front doors and our contact channels, including our use of digital and data and designing our services and our Council to be accessible, equitable and effective for our residents. This includes improving the online experience as well as other channels such as telephony, email, face-to-face and advice that will support increased efficiency and effectiveness alongside contributing to the delivery of better outcomes.
- 1.4. This report provides an update on the Customer and Registration Service (the Council's highest volume 'front door') and its performance, challenges and improvement journey. It also sets out the Council's ambitious agenda for change and improvement in how residents and other citizens can easily and effectively get the information, support and services they need, ensuring that no-one is left behind and our approach recognises individual strengths and needs.
- 1.5. As such the agenda for change is a cross-council objective and a new project started in late 2022 to fundamentally review the Council's approach to citizen interaction. This project looks to complement and add value to a range of activity that is taking place including housing transformation, children's and adults early help, neighbourhoods, digital inclusion and the redesign of the Council's website and other technology projects.
- 1.6. This report does not cover housing repairs as this sits outside of the Customer and Registration Services' remit although the citizen interaction discovery set out in section 3 includes repairs. Nor does it cover in detail the ongoing digital programme covering improvements to the Council's web and other online channels as the Resources and Corporate Performance Scrutiny Committee is receiving a separate update on digital services.

2. CUSTOMER AND REGISTRATION SERVICES

- 2.1 Contact Camden is the largest front door into council services, with 80 FTE being responsible for handling almost 1 million contacts in 2022. This included just under 600,000 telephone calls, 78% of which were resolved within the contact centre without handover to services. The remaining contacts are made up predominantly of emails (circa 150,000 across different services and inboxes), online form submissions, a small element of social media, some outgoing calls and face to face contacts. Contact Camden manages the first point of contact for 28 separate council services ranging from pest control to highways and from social care to rent enquiries. The only high-volume service that sits outside of Contact Camden is Housing Repairs which is managed within property services.
- 2.2 The Contact Centre operates from 0800 until 1800 Monday to Friday, with the Emergency Telephone Service (ETS) operating between 1800 and 0800 on weekdays and 24hours on weekends and bank holidays, dealing with emergencies ranging from urgent repairs, noise nuisance, homelessness, social care, dangerous structures and emergency planning incidents.
- 2.3 Contact is broadly split into two areas – transactional contact ('I would like to book / pay / report') and relational contact ('I have multiple or complex needs and have or am likely to have ongoing an active relationship with Camden'). Due to the range and complexity of services covered, Contact Camden is currently configured into 6 service families, each with a different skill set, which allows us to tailor the response by service need. For example, the Council Tax team resolve 78% of calls at the first point of contact, completing most processes during the call. For other services such as highways, the team provide a more limited service, providing a conduit for information for the back-office teams. The other service families are:
- housing (that covers housing needs, benefits and landlord services),
 - supporting citizens (covering adult and children's social care, libraries, registrations, sports/leisure, community transport, trees and open spaces),
 - parking and business (covering all parking, planning, highways, building control, street naming, community safety and trading standards),
 - welfare support (covering cost of living, covid helpline, homelessness, debt and general welfare)
 - Emergency telephony service (working out of hours to deal with all emergency calls including repairs, gas emergencies, homelessness, social care safeguarding emergency planning incidents, noise/anti-social behaviour, dangerous structures/trees etc)

Demand and Performance

- 2.4 Mapping performance in the Contact Centre is challenging as different services have different needs and therefore 'good' performance varies. As a result, high level measures give an indication of performance, but more detailed breakdowns give a more accurate picture for each service. It isn't possible to make direct comparisons between services, for example Council

Tax calls are amongst the longest but have the highest resolution rate, whereas Supporting Citizens calls are answered quickest, but more are passed on to the service for resolution.

2.5 As can be seen by the data below, Housing, Council Tax and Parking are the top 3 reasons for contacting the Council. Across all queues, our average time to answer sits at 06:13 with a wide variation across different service areas. This is at the positive end of the average local government bracket within the most recent Local Authority Customer Service Group benchmarking survey (81% of surveyed authorities reported average wait times of 5-10 minutes or 10-15 minutes). The service uses data to forecast peaks and troughs in demand and, where possible, allocates resources accordingly. However, previous savings rounds coupled with increasing need and complexity including new responsibilities such as covid and cost of living awards have reduced capacity in the service. Nevertheless, there is opportunity to use our resources more flexibly as technology, skill sets and relationships with services continue to develop.

Service Family	Calls Received	Average Time To Answer	Average Call Length	First Contact Resolution	Overall Resolution	Customer Satisfaction Rates	Failure Demand
Welfare Support	37819	02:48	04:54	68%	77%	N/A	13%
Supporting Citizens	72767	01:48	03:19	53%	83%	80%	31%
Council Tax	79135	16:05	05:48	78%	90%	87%	13%
Housing	151483	08:33	07:33	43%	72%	69%	43%
Parking and Business	85283	10:40	03:49	56%	75%	76%	15%
Emergency Telephone Service	65058	02:48	02:56	40%	52%	62%	21%
Contact Camden	566533	06:13	04:03	56%	78%	75%	25%

2.6 First Contact Resolution (FCR) measures the number of contacts which are resolved completely during the initial contact, so excludes situations where calls are transferred out of the contact centre to the relevant service areas to resolve, and where the customer is making a follow up call on a previously reported matter. In general, higher rates of FCR are a positive indicator as this shows the most streamlined customer journey, however for complex issues a lower FCR can be an indicator that the right follow up activity has been instigated. Overall Resolution levels also include contact which may have been following up on an issue, but whereby the Customer Service Officer was able to bring the issue to a successful conclusion during the call. For example, this could be where someone has been asked to call back with additional information which allows the query to be resolved.

2.7 Service failure (or failure demand) captures the level of demand being received which could have been avoided. This is normally where an issue has been reported but the customer has not been updated so rings for an update. Often this is because of poor or no communication, or poorly managed expectations. Contact Camden receives a significant number of calls from residents who have tried online first but either could not find what they needed or encountered a problem. This emphasises the importance of the work

underway to improve the online and digital offer to residents as if successful, this frees up resources in Contact Camden to support those who cannot go online or need additional help with complex issues whilst simultaneously providing a better experience to those residents whose first choice was online.

2.8 Contact Camden monitors the quality of its services in a variety of ways.

- Customer Satisfaction rates are provided from post call text surveys. These responses are qualitative as well as quantitative and will include feedback based on the whole customer journey rather than just the interaction with Contact Camden. This gives us excellent quantitative and qualitative insight and combines satisfaction scores with free text responses. Understandably, people are more inclined to complete a survey where they have had a negative interaction, however scores are reassuringly high with 75% leaving a positive score. Interestingly satisfaction is highest in council tax despite having the highest waiting times but highest levels of FCR. This indicates people are less concerned about waiting time and more concerned about resolution.
- Quality Assurance – We have developed a robust quality assurance framework with managers monitoring contacts for every member of staff each month. These are scored and moderated to ensure consistency across the services. Our target is to achieve an overall quality score of 85%, and we finished 2022 achieving 89%.
- Compliments and Complaints – Overall, Contact Camden receives a very low volume of complaints, with just 11 being received in 2021/22 (down from 26 in 2020/21). Of these 2 were upheld. The learning from all of these sources is fed into our learning and development plans and where necessary, individual performance improvement plans.
- All feedback is reviewed by the senior leadership team and is discussed with individual members of staff are part of their ongoing professional development.

Challenges and resolutions

2.9 Contact Camden faces a number of challenges which impact on its ability to provide the best service to the public.

2.9.1 Despite receiving nearly a million contacts each year, Contact Camden does not currently have a **customer relationship management (CRM)** system to log the details of people contacting us. This means we don't have data on who is contacting us, and this limits the officer's ability to understand people's needs and previous experiences, causing frustration for both residents and staff.

2.9.2 For the last year, the service has been working on a new CRM system that will transform the service's ability to understand and meet residents' needs. The new CRM is now in Pilot stage, being used by staff in the Parking and Business team. This will go live for all staff in Contact Camden in March. In its minimum viable product (MVP) form, the system will allow staff in the contact centre to see a customer's contact history, any accessibility needs they may have and to log transactions. This means for the first time staff will be able to see information across disciplines which might allow them to better support a

customer. For example, where someone has called to say they are unable to pay their rent, the member of staff will be able to see they called the previous week about being unable to pay their council tax. They can use this information to identify people at risk of crisis and to ensure early intervention.

- 2.9.3 The **telephony platform** is old and unable to support new channels such as webchat, WhatsApp and social media. The Service receives over 150,000 emails a year but does not have a system to manage the casework.
- 2.9.4 The new omni-channel platform is scheduled for delivery in Q2/Q3 of 2023/24. This will give Contact Camden a robust system which allows for the effective use of multiple contact methods. This means we can offer consistency across multiple channels whilst unlocking the efficiency of greater electronic communications. This, combined with the CRM, will allow the service to truly personalise customer journeys and fundamentally change how it engages with the public. Crucially, this technology will make accessing Contact Camden more accessible for those who are less able to rely on telephone contact.
- 2.9.5 Following feedback from users, we went live with the **new IVR (Interactive Voice Response menu system)** during the summer 2022. This was a coproduced piece of work with resident feedback being sought via both Age UK Camden and Synergy Camden to ensure services are as accessible as possible. Using this feedback, the menu has been reconfigured to significantly reduce the length of the opening messages, ensuring citizens can get to the services they need more quickly. This has reduced the time it takes to listen to the first set of messages from 1.35 minutes to 5 seconds and as an example, navigating to the benefits section is now 30 seconds (was 2 minutes), 100% of Age UK testers thought the new system was better or significantly better and the number of calls coming through to the switchboard has reduced by 500 a month, suggesting more people are finding the option they need. The service now has controls in place to ensure all IVR changes are monitored for their impact on the overall customer journey and has launched a new facility so callers know what position they are in the queue, a key request coming from the user research. To see a short interview about how we worked with Age UK click here <https://twitter.com/i/status/1577668142284914692>
- 2.9.6 Residents tell us the quality of public information about council services is inconsistent and in some cases poor or their online journey breaks down. This drives people to contact us who would otherwise have self-served and takes resource away from those that need to speak to someone. A number of projects are underway led by the Council's Digital Services team to improve the website content, search and functionality and this is expected to support the medium term financial strategy as well as provide a better experience.
- 2.9.7 Since the pandemic we have seen an increase in complexity of need from citizens. This may mean they require multiple different services, have additional needs such as mental ill-health or simply require a deeper level of questioning and understanding to meet their need. This lengthens calls and requires staff to work differently and have a wider knowledge of services. This is an area that is being explored through the citizen interaction discovery detailed below.

2.9.8 Failure demand refers to contact which could have been avoided and is often caused by issues previously reported not being resolved, poor or no communications, chasing actions or being unable to complete actions online. Key to reducing failure demand is the join-up and relationships between contact Camden and services that are often responsible for resolution. To support this Contact Camden has rolled out Citizen Experience Agreements (CEA's) with every service it covers. These agreements clarify mutual responsibilities and have helped us to drive improvements based on staff and customer experience. These agreements are living documents, reviewed regularly at a senior level.

Using insight and data

2.10 Despite the lack of a CRM, the Contact Centre collates a huge amount of insight into customer need, with staff gathering rich data at the point of call and using post call surveys to capture experience. This data is combined with other useful sources of information (Complaints, compliments, web analytics) by the performance team on a regular basis and shared with services, in the Voice of the Customer (VoC) programme. Contact Camden then meet with the service to analyse the information and agree improvements and activity as a result. This programme has proved to be incredibly successful so far, with the team having been named as finalists for the 'Best Use of Data' Award in the Institute of Customer Service national awards in March 2023. An information video about the VoC work can be viewed here <https://youtu.be/SO2JxKSO6UA>.

Supporting our workforce

2.11 Ensuring officers have access to up-to-date information is critical for a good experience and outcome. A new online knowledge hub is due to go live by end of March 2023 and will provide staff with a single source of information on council processes and policies to support them to handle calls more effectively. This will improve efficiency and quality standards, allowing staff to span more disciplines as they will have sufficient information to handle calls on subjects they are less familiar with.

2.12 Alongside improving the technology picture we are also working to engage and develop staff differently. This involves three key workstreams;

- Learning and Development Strategy and cross-training – Contact Camden continues to invest in staff development and has developed a comprehensive offer including focused learning sessions for service specific knowledge, call control and soft skills, IT skills and personal development skills. The performance coaching team work with staff on a group and one to one basis to improve performance in targeted areas based on analysis of performance and customer feedback. To improve the ability to allocate staff to where demand is greatest, Contact Camden has undergone a programme of cross-training to upskill staff on a number of different services. This has been successful in reducing wait times on some service queues and will be further enhanced with the launch of the knowledge hub.
- Staff Engagement – to be successful, it's critical that frontline staff have a clear understanding of their role and purpose, feel they have contributed to

the service's vision and can share ideas for improvement and learning. A comprehensive programme of staff engagement has taken place including a series of away day sessions to explore and agree our purpose and vision statement, workshops around managing abusive or difficult calls and wellbeing and a strong communication plan involving regular video blogs and staff briefings. Pulse surveys of staff have shown notable improvements in a number of areas in the last 6 months with a 25% increase in positive sentiment about senior management transparency and communication (now at 92%), a 24% increase in staff feeling they has a say in decisions affecting them (now at 97%), and a 23% increase in staff feeling that there was a shared vision of success (now at 93%).

- Staff Wellbeing – Contact Camden has an experienced workforce but the nature of contact centre work and the level of demand being handled can lead to stress. The service has been running a programme of activity with all staff over the last 6 months that has included holding a series of wellbeing workshops, promoting the council wellbeing resources and delivering training on suicide prevention. We have trained a cohort of mental health first aiders within Customer and Registration services meaning staff can access peer support at any time. This has increased take-up of the council's well-being offers including counselling etc. The recent pulse survey shows a positive improvement with 100% of staff saying that they could access support for mental, emotional and physical wellbeing (up 19% from the previous survey) and 95% of staff reporting that they were able to manage work related stress (Up 22% on the previous survey). Absence levels are also being monitoring to track impact.

Welfare Support & Tackling Poverty

- 2.13 Since its inception, Contact Camden has played a critical role in emergencies, being able to shift resources and set up teams at short notice to deal with demands. This was critical in the Chalcots evacuation and most recently in response to the Covid pandemic. As part of the Covid response a dedicated team was set up in Contact Camden to reach out to vulnerable residents and to deal with queries and concerns coming into the council ranging from food to vaccines.
- 2.14 Contact Camden continues to play a key role in supporting citizens who are experiencing hardship and to support the council's response to some of the fast paced and emerging challenges resulting from international, national and local events. The covid support team moved into dedicated welfare support and tackling poverty teams who work closely together to good quality advice and support, including providing outreach support in communities. The teams have shown an effectiveness in rapid reconfiguration and prioritisation to tackle other challenges such as supporting the Homes for Ukraine programme, the national energy rebate programme, administering the cost-of-living awards funding and administering family meal vouchers.
- 2.15 The welfare support team plays a dual role between managing approximately 20,000 visitors to the public counter at 5 Pancras Square and managing almost 40,000 calls a year to a welfare support line. The team are skilled in providing advice and signposting, as well as helping customers navigate multiple council services. The team help customers who may be otherwise

excluded (either for accessibility or digitally excluded) to access services either by providing guided self-service or completing tasks on behalf of citizens.

- 2.16 Demand for face-to-face services remains low in comparison to pre-pandemic levels, with the team's time repurposed to manage an increasing demand via telephone. The team is currently working with officers from libraries and facilities to look at how the public area at 5 Pancras Square can be reconfigured to provide a more useful space for its users. This includes exploring how the space can better support those who are digitally excluded and contributing to wider reviews looking at neighbourhood working, adults early help and debt support.
- 2.17 The Tackling Poverty team offers utilises trained benefits advisors, debt advisors and skilled Customer Service Officers to work with customers requiring a more significant level of support. Often these are people who would otherwise 'fall through the gaps' between specialist service provision. This is done working closely with the Camden Advice Network, helping manage more complex needs most effectively. In addition, the team administer the cost-of-living awards for residents, processing and assessing applications and arranging for funds to be given to those in need. As part of this the team carry out outreach advice with the cost-of-living bus, with advisors travelling to different locations across the borough where the impact of the cost-of-living crisis is felt most acutely. A focus on early intervention and prevention ensures that wherever possible interventions are sustainable.
- 2.18 This year so far, the team has successfully awarded £1,154,244 in cost-of-living awards and almost £4,000,000 in Household Support Fund payments. Whilst performance has been excellent with most awards being made within a few days of referral and over 50 organisations acting as referral partners, demand for cost-of-living support is growing week on week, putting pressure on the existing resources. The team has scaled up by taking on additional temporary resource to meet these challenges, but a longer-term model is being explored.

Registration Service

- 2.19 The Registration Service is part of the wider Customer and Registration Service and is a statutory service that ensures the correct legal process is followed to register a birth, still birth, death or marriage within the borough alongside providing citizenship ceremonies and providing support to residents making their EU settled status application.
- 2.20 Due to the number of hospitals in the borough, Camden is a busy registration service, registering 8000 births, 2500 deaths and 2400 notices of marriage / civil partnership in the last financial year. The Service is sensitive to the needs of different faith communities, providing an extended service for urgent death registrations and works closely with local faith leaders and the coroner.
- 2.21 In addition, the service has supported 2,300 people with their British citizenship through 30 public ceremonies and 390 private ceremonies.

2.22 The service has seen significant change over the last five years with the move to temporary accommodation at BMA House / the Crowndale Centre splitting the team and reducing demand for civil ceremonies. There have been some notable changes in legislation which have also impacted the service, including a change making it harder for EU citizens to give notice of marriage / civil partnership which caused us spikes in demand leading to a 41% increase in ceremonies and anticipate further demand spikes over the next year, with new legislation amending the age of consent from 16 to 18 years of age. The medical examiner scheme is due to become statutory in April 23, meaning that community deaths will now be reviewed by the medical examiner. This is positive as will lead to greater accuracy and more scrutiny around the cause of death, however, is likely to cause some delay in registration as the process beds in.

2.23 Against this backdrop, the service is performing well. The table below shows performance. The first set of indicators are often outside of the service's control and reflect the national picture with delays in death registrations being caused by delays with the medical examiner, coroners, and customer behaviour as the service cannot insist people come in to register a birth or death. However the service can control the availability of appointments and as the figures show the service is exceeding the targets for wait times for appointment across all areas.

	Key Performance Indicator	Target	How Did We Do	Target Achieved
1.	Events registered within the statutory timeframe (including declarations)			
	a) % of births registered within 42 days	98%	97%	No
	b) % of still-births registered within 42 days	98%	100%	YES
	c) % of deaths registered within 5 days	90%	55%	NO
2.	i) Average waiting times for registration and notice taking appointment			
	a) Birth registration/declaration 5 working days	95%	96%	YES
	b) Still birth registration/declaration 2 working days	95%	100%	YES
	c) Death registration - 2 working days	95%	100%	YES
	d) Marriage/civil partnership notice 10 working days	95%	100%	YES
3.	Certificate applications - % of applications dealt with within 20 working days of receipt	95%	90%	NO
4.	Total number of formal complaints received – actual and as a % of all registrations	0.5%	0%	YES

- 2.24 In terms of revenue, the service generated £1,314,000 in income during 21/22 financial year. We estimate this income to be £1,050,000 for the current financial year due the uncertainty over the reopening of the Town Hall. The weddings market is a commercial and competitive market in London and the service is seeing the reopening of the Town Hall are an exciting opportunity.
- 2.25 As a wedding venue, the aesthetic of the Town Hall is unrivalled within London, with a blend of modern and heritage styles which have a broad appeal to the competitive wedding market. The ability to join two smaller rooms to provide a venue able to seat up to 120 guests gives Camden one of the largest Registration office venues in the city. The service has begun the recruitment of a business development manager who will be focused on marketing the venue and services, finding opportunities to collaborate with Camden businesses and developing new products and services which will appeal to customers.

3. CITIZEN INTERACTION DISCOVERY

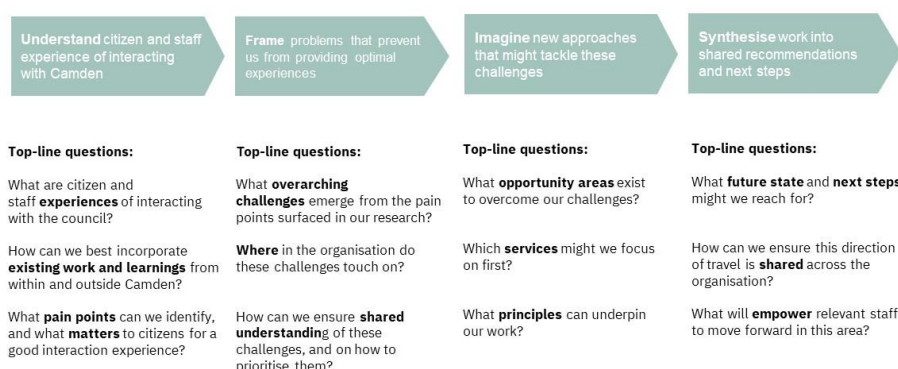
- 3.1 In The Way We Work, the council sets itself ambitions to develop and act on stronger relationships with citizens, and to create the conditions that allow services to deliver the best possible outcomes in a challenging environment. Meanwhile, we know citizens want their needs to be heard, acknowledged, and answered. Central to achieving these ambitions, as well as the wider missions and challenges set out in We Make Camden, is improving citizens' experience of approaching Camden for information or support.
- 3.2 Tackling this means considering both the way we interact externally with citizens, and how we foster an environment internally where services can best respond to their needs. These issues become more pressing as we navigate a challenging fiscal environment and respond to shifts in the nature and scale of demand amid the cost-of-living crisis. Our relationships with citizens will change - the question is how we seize the chance to shape and guide that change.
- 3.3 With this in mind, we have embarked on a design-led discovery process examining how to improve the experience of people who approach the council for information or support. This represents a unique opportunity to reconsider the way we operate as a council and bring services together to develop a shared view on the way forward. It will provide a chance to consider a range of issues - from how different information channels guide people through council services, to the way staff can be empowered to efficiently respond to requests whilst ensuring we offer a clear and kind service to all.
- 3.4 This type of approach involves drawing on lived experience of residents and staff, as well as analysing more conventional sources of data and evidence, to identify where Camden might trial improvements to its services and policies before implementation. Design-led approaches now have broad takeup across central and local government. In Camden the Strategy and Design team within corporate services brings some specialist skills in order to take on projects of this nature. A wider design community comprising the Strategy and Design, Organisational Design, and Digital Products and Services teams is a community of practice collaborating on this type of work. As a community we

are investing in capability building within the organisation to ensure these are skills that people in the organisation can make use of.

- 3.5 A range of activity is taking place across the Council that impacts on citizen experience and some are set out below. Therefore, this project seeks to add value and bring together common threads to ensure a coherent and joined up vision for the future, rather than duplicate actions already happening.
- Voice of the customer and other research into customer experience undertaken within Customer Services
 - Digital projects including development of contact centre tools, data analytics and website redesign
 - Cross-cutting council priorities including cost of living work, equalities, and digital inclusion/accessibility.
 - Transformation work within housing teams
 - The "what matters" approach, early help review and other relevant practice within Adult Social Care
 - Previous work in children's early help including Camden Family Changemakers
 - Development of neighbourhood approaches, and other thinking on how to best serve our communities
 - Under-used datasets such as members' interaction with residents

3.6 Following initial scoping through October, this work began in full in November 2022, building on existing work completed within Customer Services. It is currently planned to run until April 2023. The project will include hearing from Camden residents and others who need to approach the council; as well as frontline staff from different services.

Citizen interaction discovery



- 3.7 So far, the project team, with members drawn from Strategy and Design, Organisational Design, and Customer services, has:
- Engaged with directors, heads of service, and other senior staff from across Camden's directorates; and identified and read a range of pre-existing research and data gathered across the council and learning from other organisations in public, third, and private sectors

- Synthesised insights from this initial review into a set of hypotheses. These hypotheses summarise key assumptions already known to the council about the problems that prevent us providing the best citizen experience, and the possible solutions.
- These have been shared with the organisation at an early stage through 1-2-1 discussions with senior stakeholders including the Cabinet Member responsible for customer services and show and ask sessions attended by over 50 people.
- Prioritised these assumptions to identify those that have the potential to make the most impact for citizens and the council most quickly.
- Begun planning research activities, including engagement with citizens and frontline staff, which will test those assumptions and generate new evidence for the council to guide its work in this area.

3.8 Over the next few months, the team will be completing the discovery through:

- Delivering on the planned programme of research, which is likely to mix interviews, more practical activities such as workshops, and analysis of Camden's own data and insights. We plan to engage with councillors as key participants in this research to capture their stories and experiences.
- A series of interviews and discussions with residents, advice partners, councillors, frontline staff and other stakeholders will be taking place in February and March.
- Developing a set of insights about our problems and how we might solve them, which can guide discussion across the organisations.
- Facilitating a structured conversation across council services, drawing on the evidence surfaced in the discovery, to establish a shared view of the principles that can guide our work in this area going forward, and some of the areas of work where we might best take action.
- Developing and supporting the delivery of an ongoing programme of work that can move the outputs of this discovery from ideas to action, delivering real change for residents.

3.9 The team's hypotheses are based on the insight gathered to date and set out a series of assumptions about the current citizen experience when they interact with the Council and are being used to inform the testing and research with citizens phase. They should not be read as conclusive findings to drive immediate action but are helping us to prioritise areas of focus and inform decision making about how to turn the discovery findings into action. They include issues such as:

- how easy it is to get the information, advice and service needed,
- how confident residents feel that something will be done or that their voice has been heard,
- transparency about roles and expectations,
- the choice of channel and how that differs according to task and need,
- the online experience for those that want to self-serve and the offer for those people or situations where human contact is the best solution,
- how we work with partners to improve how people navigate the different services,

- supporting those with complex issues or accessibility requirements,
- better insight and data to improve our understanding and
- ensuring staff have the tools, information and working environment to collaborate and put delivering a better outcome for people at the heart of what they do.

3.10 The research phase will focus on four key areas to explore in greater detail as set out below as well as identify any cross-cutting themes such as developing a shared view of what makes a good experience and how we measure it.

- a) The issue of how information about services or advice is made available to citizens that builds trust and confidence, is clear, up-to-date and intelligible and whether service interactions with citizens deliver on their expectations. It may be that improving clarity, transparency and consistency of information via all channels (digital and otherwise) will help to set expectations, and then ensuring services act in ways that meet those expectations, will lead to residents feeling better able to resolve issues themselves and increasing trust and confidence in resolution, leading to less need to chase actions or updates.
- b) Examining how easy or difficult it is for citizens to navigate the entry points to the council and find the services they need. This would include the question of whether staff and elected members also have the information and tools they need to direct citizens to the right services. If the council and its partners ensured it always routed citizens to the right support however they approach us, we might ensure their issues are resolved more efficiently, reduce friction for staff and elected members, and help citizens to feel heard and supported.
- c) The question of how to provide the right range of channels for accessing council information or support, that meet the needs of our citizens and the tasks they are trying to do. Simply opening more channels without a clear understanding of citizen need can lead to more confusion, frustration and cost if they don't lead to resolution. Recognising that for most transactional issues, an excellent online journey is the preferred solution for many citizens but even those digitally able may still want to talk to a person about some issues. Whilst for others that are digitally excluded or trying to resolve more complex issues, or those with accessibility requirements, being able to talk to a person is important. Understanding these needs and choice of channels will help us to understand how to deliver an excellent experience across a range of channels and citizens are directed to the right one for their needs.
- d) Exploring the processes, tools and information staff may need to provide a more relational level of service to citizens with more complex needs, allowing them to creatively solve a range of problems for the citizen and respond in a more person-centred way. Delivering this might improve the council's ability to identify and resolve tangential issues during contact, so they are resolved more efficiently and do not escalate and could ensure vulnerable citizens feel better supported.

3.11 The outcome of the citizen interaction discovery will be a set of clear design principles that will guide how the council will structure its channels going

forward and a priority list of next steps. As such it will influence all service design, including helping to shape the future programme of digital development through improving our understanding of what residents want and need, what constitutes a great experience, how we measure if we are meeting these expectations and how we can bring together digital, data and customer service design together into a joined-up programme of work.

4. NEXT STEPS

- 4.1 The Council is currently preparing to undertake research with residents and this engagement will continue into March 2023. Councillors are being invited to participate in this research so that their experience both as residents and advocates for constituents can feed into the learning. The outcomes of the discovery exercise are due to be synthesised in April 2023 and shared in May.
- 4.2 This year is expected to be a significant year for improving citizen experience of interacting with the Council. As set out above, a new customer relationship management system and omni-channel platform are due to go live in Contact Camden in 2023 that has the potential to transform the experience for both residents and staff. Staff training and development will continue alongside continuing to improve the quality of service delivered.
- 4.3 Work continues on the development of the website and online offer with a fundamental review of content and content governance, a redesign and a review into the future of the Camden Account and online transactions. The first section of the new approach to content design has gone live with a test version of the Council Tax pages at www.beta.camden.gov.uk/council-tax

5. LEGAL COMMENTS OF THE BOROUGH SOLICITOR

- 5.1. The Borough Solicitor has been consulted and has no comments to add to this report.

6. FINANCE COMMENTS OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

- 6.1. The Director of Finance has been consulted on this report and has no additional comments.

7. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. There are no proposals with environmental implications made in this report.

REPORT ENDS