From:	David Cockburn, Corporate Director – Strategic and Corporate Services
	Policy and Resources Committee – 10th July 2014

Report: **Performance of Kent .gov website and Contact Point**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of Paper: SCS DMT; CMT;

Future Pathway of Paper: P&R Committee

Electoral Division: All

Summary: Following the P&R Cabinet Committee 23rd April, Members requested a report outlining issues contributing to the recent performance indicators for the Kent.gov. Web Site and Contact Point. This report will highlight the key issues impacting on the 'percentage of calls to the Contact centre answered in 20 seconds' and the perception of 'user satisfaction with the KCC website' and identify improvement activities.

Recommendation:

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to Note the proposed actions to improve current and future performance of both the web site and Contact Point.

Introduction

1.1   The report will set out the challenges and drivers that have influenced customer behaviour evidenced by current performance statistics for the web and the telephone service. The report will also discuss how customer service levels can be protected during service transformation and outline actions already being taken to improve performance now and into the future.

Digital Services

2.   Development 2012 to 2014

2.1   In 2013, Digital Services started a 2 year capital-funded programme to improve the usability of the website and support the Council's digital by design approach advocated through the customer service strategy.

2.2   Phase one focused on the design and build of the website based on a new technical platform that makes the most commonly requested information and services simpler and quicker to find and use, especially if using a mobile or tablet device to access the internet. The new website was launched in March 2014.

2.3   A good example of this approach is the new school admissions pages. We had feedback that parents struggled to find what they needed to be able to

apply for a primary school place for their child. This meant that there were a large number of late applications; the terminology used made it unnecessarily difficult for parents to understand, and this resulted in high volumes of contacts from parents received by Contact Point.

2.4   Throughout the project, Digital Services conducted regular user testing and used current customer feedback to inform how the website was being designed and built. The most popular 'top 20 tasks' that people come to the site to do were tested on both the old site and the new website, and the beta (trial) site was launched in January.

2.5   This is industry best practice and follows the approach to the launch of the single government domain for accessing and using all government digital services on GOV.uk.

2.6   When the new website was launched at the end of March, feedback was received from regular users of the site commenting about the change in style and content. Mostly, this was a reaction to the scale of change implemented and was to be expected.

2.7   **Appendix 1** shows how we have used GovMetric feedback to resolve problems highlighted by web site users. A new 'usability' exit survey and evaluation has been designed to ensure that improvements continue to respond to and match customer expectations ongoing.

2.8   Customer satisfaction of the KCC website is currently measured through GovMetric. Around 0.16% of visitors use this method to leave feedback, but provide helpful insight to improvements that can be easily made. An exit survey has been designed to more accurately measure customer satisfaction with the usability or outcome achieved during their web visit.

2.9   The second phase of the development of the website will include:-

- a more visually engaging look and feel to parts of the website
- new searchable database of activities for parents with children that have special needs (Local Offer)
- a new searchable directory of childcare providers
- improved information and guidance for adult social care
- improvements to the usability of key transactions, such as reporting problems to the council
- an online appointments booking system for public health
- new online forms software

Industry recognition – Kent.gov

2.10   Kent's approach to designing a customer-focused website has been singled out for praise by Gerry McGovern, founder and CEO of Customer Carewords (worldwide authority on increasing web satisfaction), Martin Greenwood, Programme Manager of SoCITM Insight and by DCLG.

Contact Point

3.0   Development 2012 to 2014

3.1   Contact Point is the primary public facing telephone channel for KCC. On average 74,000 contacts (calls/email) are handled each month. In May this year, Contact Point recorded 76,600 calls and volumes are increasing.

3.2   Since 2012, positive management action and process improvements have realised **£2m in saving** across the Customer Relationship budget line. For example, customers making a Blue Badge application now experience a quicker turn-round (5-10 days) and have the added convenience of an electronic payment option. **25% of all applications** (circa 7,500pa) are now **paid electronically**.

3.3   Critically, this and other management initiatives since 2012, were designed to deliver a both a **reduction in headcount of Advisors (30 fte)** and an increase in available resources during peak times of day. This was achieved through attrition and increased utilisation of staff.

3.4   Between June 2013 and November 2013 the monthly **reduction in call volumes was approximately 18%** in comparison to 12 months earlier.

3.5   As a result of our management actions, Contact Point performance dramatically improved from October 2012, when the **performance target** was achieved and then **sustained well above target level for 16 months** - end of January 2014.

3.6   The trend of increasing call volumes coupled with the extended time spent on calls outstripped the utilisation capacity at Contact Point through the period December to March 2014, with a peak in January of 77,000 contacts.

3.7   The table at **Appendix 2** presents the level of contacts for the top 20 services received at Contact Point between April/May 2014 and April/May 2013. It is clear to see that the call volumes show an increase of 3.4% but the significant concern is the increase in overall **time on calls** including wrap, which **has increased by 2549 hours.** At the present time indications are that June 2014 contact volumes will be about 14% higher than June 2013.

3.8   The compound effect of ongoing issues - local and domestic flooding, fallen trees and damage to roads - resulted in **higher call volumes of longer duration and complexity**. This led to a 10% reduction in performance between Dec/Jan alone.

KCC Contact Point
Calls Received & Call Duration
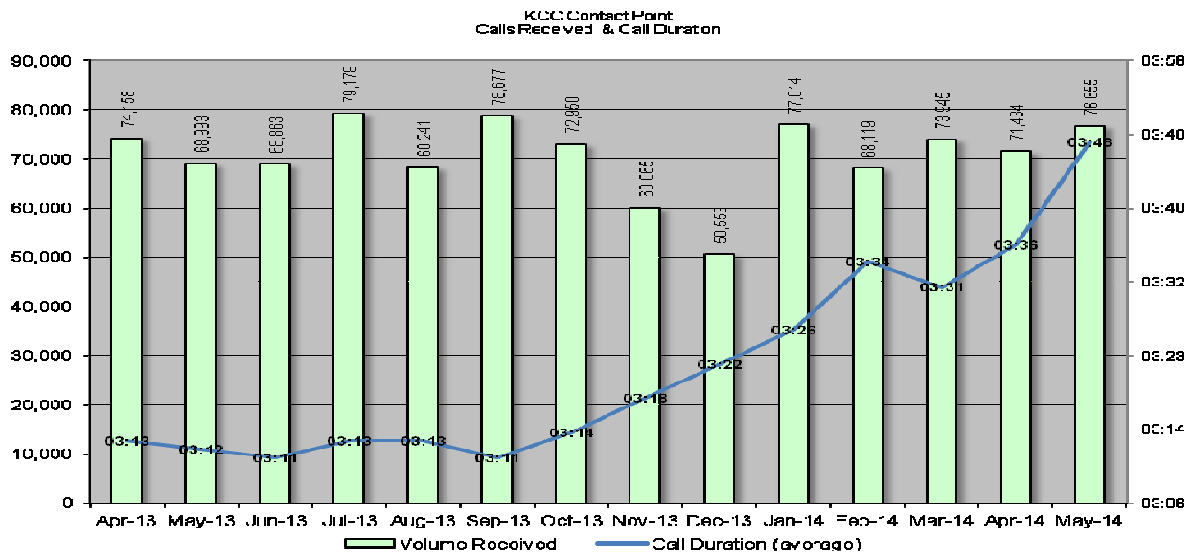
3.9 The average after-call work has also increased. Time is lost in transferring callers to officers and voicemail. If the client refuses this option, an e-mail is written to the officer asking them to return the call to the client. This after-call task can add 3 minutes on each occasion.

3.10 Contact Point target time to answer is now 40 seconds. The industry standard is gradually extending toward 60 seconds on the basis that a) customers will wait to be answered by a competent person who then resolves the enquiry at the first point of contact; b) answering the phone less quickly is an effective driver for channel shift toward web where the experience is customer centric and well designed.

Contact Point – Planned Improvements

3.11 Contact Point has a number of improvements planned to stabilise performance and improve customer experience including hardware replacement, process design improvements and efficiencies, closer alignment with transformation projects and resources.

a) **Telephony Hardware**

3.12 The telephony hardware is **overdue for replacement**, and has failed on a number of occasions. When the switch fails, calls can be lost, the call routing can fail and the engaged tone can be presented to callers. A business case and funding model for the replacement of the technical infrastructure for Contact Point and HQ was approved earlier this year and **procurement of CLOUD technology** is underway and contract award will follow in early July and will be supported by an aggressive implementation phase.

b) **Additional Resources**

3.13 Authority has been given to recruit **12 additional Advisors** which will increase Contact Point salary costs by £141,000. Improved technology and greater coherence with transformation and service design will reduce call

volumes which will enable the budget to be brought back into line during the year.

c) Service transformation

3.14 Transformation is at the heart of KCC's current agenda with a number of programmes being undertaken across all Directorates and change portfolios. The levels of change and the drive to achieve outcomes at pace leads to increased risk that **interdependencies** are not always fully understood and communicated.

    i)   A **Customer Service Policy** will set the objectives, standards and measures for direct and external providers and their supply chain. Managers and Commissioners will be supported through implementation by a framework of standards and management guidance.

    ii)   A fundamental principle of **digital by design appropriate to client needs** designed to ensure that the public appetite and expectation for self-service is met by positive and fulfilling digital access

    iii)   Contact Point continues to be vulnerable to unprecedented levels of customer contact whilst KCC conducts service reviews, transformation and change. There must be a robust alignment between customer service, communications and ICT in order to maximise KCC's full resource and capability, and to mitigate customer concerns

    iv)   A **proactive and integrated approach** to channel alignment will be developed to resolve ineffective customer service processes. The communications, digital, telephone and face to face teams will coalesce and act as customer advocates to ensure **end to end processes** are designed to support the customer and digital self service.

    v)   New directorate structures planning changes to service areas will be assessed for **any potential customer impact.** This must be considered from a whole organisation perspective.

    vi)   Single service or multiple service messages generate service user or public reaction (anticipated or otherwise). Effective and coherent channel management will ensure that KCC receives and responds to customer feedback, avoiding other services being directly compromised.

e) New technology

3.15 The implementation and use of new technology and business tools such as follow-me numbers and voice-mail (Unified Communication) will be **maximised to drive improvement in customer service** delivery.

3.16 However, poor use of voicemail can have a significant impact on both the customer experience and create pressure on Contact Point (refer to **Appendix 2** for call statistics).

3.17 Consideration is also being given to the introduction of a full CRM system. This will be **essential to deliver digital self-service and** is crucial to KCC to be effective as a commissioning authority of primary providers and subsequent supply-chains.

4. Conclusions

4.1 KCC has invested in the modernisation of the web site, and work to date has made the website simpler and quicker to use. The new design and customer focused approach has been acknowledged by government and peer organisations. Whilst the change has been significant, the website will continue to adapt in response to user needs and will meet public expectation for effective digital access to services.

4.2 The Contact Point has been reshaped, improved and effective in reducing its own operating budget and achieving sustained performance. The pace and scale of change across KCC is increasing customer contact and the complexity of calls. A more rigorous, planned approach is being adopted with immediate effect on all future change implementation.

4.3 To ensure both corporate directorates and service teams better understand customer dependencies and their impact, a review has been commissioned to define the 'end to end' customer experience. The findings of the review will be available by late autumn.

5. Recommendation(s)

> **The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to Note the proposed actions to improve current and future performance of both the web site and Contact Point.**

Contact Details

Report Authors

Jane Kendal
Telephone number 01622 694423
Email address

jane.kendal@kent.gov.uk

Tracey Gleeson
Telephone number 01622 604050
Email address:

tracey.gleeson@kent.gov.uk

Christopher Smith
Telephone number 01622 221650
Email address

Christopher.smith@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director
Barbara Cooper, Director Economic & Spatial Development
Growth, Environment & Transport
Telephone numbers 01622 221856
Email Address – barbara.cooper@kent.gov.uk

Appendix 1 – Digital: Web fixes driven by Customer feedback

- One off fixes such as adding keywords to the search engine, fixing broken links, adding missing information.
- Home page – next iterations of design take into account comments about the page looking incomplete or not legitimate
- Fixes to ensure pages display better in older browsers (this issue is almost entirely limited to staff)
- Implementation of 'super keywords' to give us greater control over internal search listings
- We redesigned the 'you can / can't get rid of' layout on tips pages as it was confusing members of the public. It's now a concertina rather than tabbed.
- Print CSS now works much better
- Restructured the direct payments content
- Restructured the social care professionals content
- New more attractive layout for Shared Lives hosts
- Created a more prominent link to library catalogue
- Country parks - changes to the structure of content to resolve drop in traffic - the stats have now returned to the levels they were at on the old site.
- Team building and venue hire - We have improved the team building and venue hire pages. Following the work we did, the country parks team received a booking for more than £2k.
- Accessibility - adding skip to content link, improving screen reader experience for certain elements
- Replies removed from embedded Twitter feed

	Call Type	Apr/May 2014	Apr/May 2013	Difference between 2014 and 2013	% difference	Average call/wrap time per call 2014	Average call/wrap time per call 2013	Total time calls 2014	Total time calls 2013
1	Adult Social services	19571	17353	2218	12.8%	0:07:37	0:04:01	2484:25:47	1161:41:13
2	Kent Highway Services	19213	17479	1734	9.9%	0:07:56	0:08:05	2540:23:08	2354:48:35
3	Golden Number	11426	22875	-11449	-50.1%	0:02:08	0:01:55	406:15:28	730:43:45
4	Children's Social Services	11217	2546	8671	340.6%	0:04:48	0:02:27	897:21:36	103:57:42
5	Education	10076	13520	-3444	-25.5%	0:04:16	0:03:45	716:30:56	845:00:00
6	Social Services Client Billing	9271	3510	5761	164.1%	0:02:27	0:02:20	378:33:57	136:30:00
7	Registrations	9135	11099	-1964	-17.7%	0:05:16	0:04:13	801:51:00	780:00:47
8	Libraries and Archives	8516	13864	-5348	-38.6%	0:01:52	0:01:42	264:56:32	392:48:48
9	Emergency OOH	8461	6846	1615	23.6%	0:06:23	0:07:42	900:09:23	878:34:12
10	Speed Awareness	7095	5075	2020	39.8%	0:06:09	0:05:31	727:14:15	466:37:05
11	Blue Badges	6439	6773	-334	-4.9%	0:05:15	0:08:12	563:24:45	925:38:36
12	Adult Education	5787	4690	1097	23.4%	0:05:08	0:04:17	495:06:36	334:48:50
13	KCC Campaign Lines	5362	0	5362		0:04:28		399:10:16	0:00:00
14	Waste & Recycling	3375	3744	-369	-9.9%	0:04:50	0:05:27	271:52:30	340:04:48
15	Concessionary Fares	2877	5327	-2450	-46.0%	0:06:11	0:05:13	296:29:27	463:09:11
16	KCC Property Services	2330	2410	-80	-3.3%	0:07:55	0:07:20	307:25:50	294:33:20
17	Social services Appropriate Adults	1861	841	1020	121.3%	0:20:05	0:13:23	622:55:05	187:35:23
18	Kent Freedom Pass	1837	2181	-344	-15.8%	0:02:27	0:02:09	75:00:39	78:09:09
19	CFIS	941	1191	-250	-21.0%	0:04:50	0:11:26	75:48:10	226:57:06
20	Pensions Campaign	889	500	389	77.8%	0:02:33	0:01:25	37:46:57	11:48:20
	Other Calls	2410	1327	1083	81.6%				
	Total Calls	**148089**	**143151**	**4938**	**3.4%**			**13262:42:17**	**10713:26:50**