

CORPORATE AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 17 MARCH 2022

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Summary

1. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel has requested an overview of customer experience, which is part of the Panel's work programme.
2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication and the Strategic Director for Commercial and Change have been invited to attend the meeting.

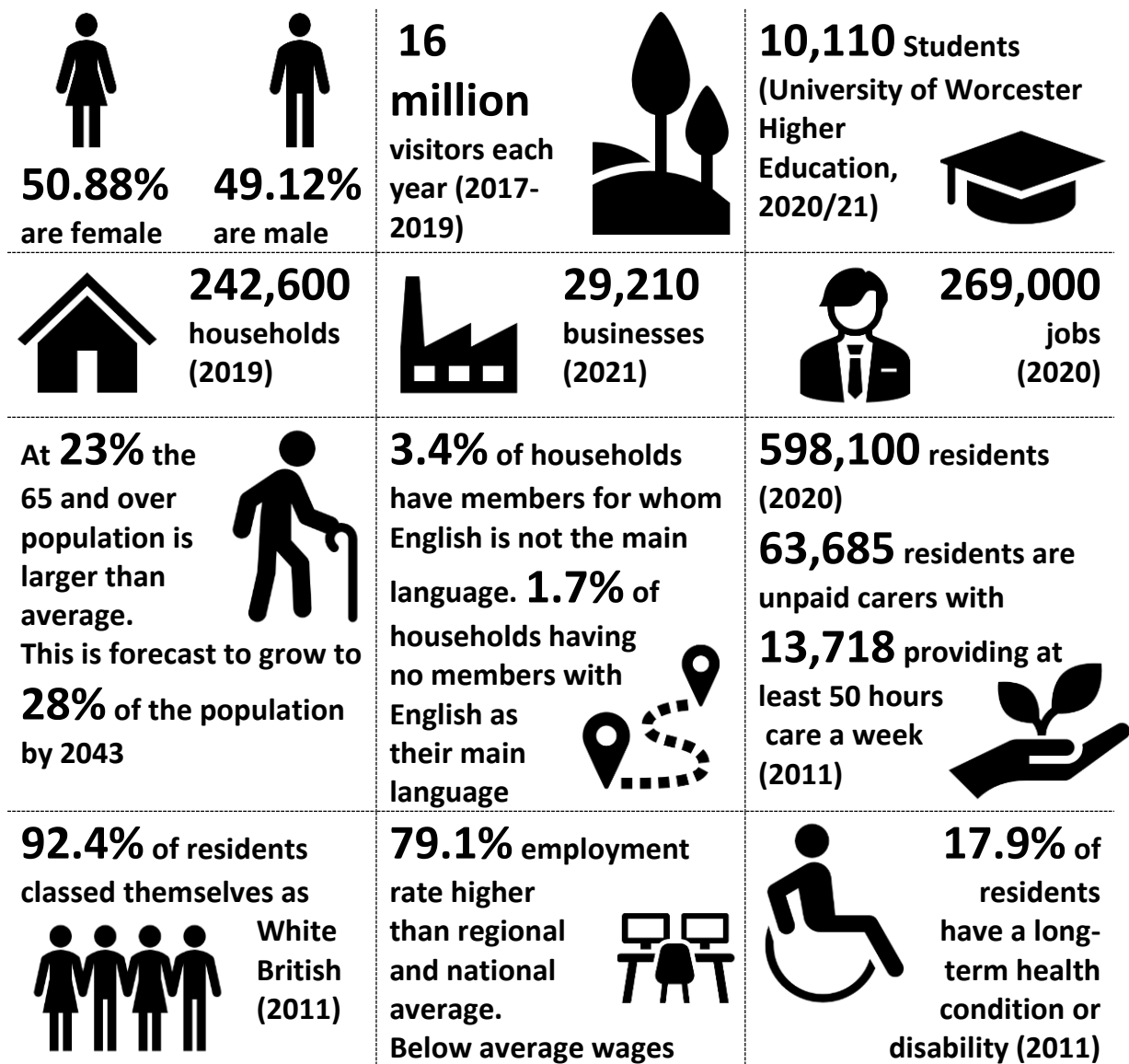
Background

3. Customer Experience refers not just to the services the Council provides but also how customers are treated when they are trying to access those services. As a public service provider, it is important that customers can trust the Council to design services which respond to their needs and the needs of the local area and that these are delivered in a way which provides value for their money.
4. Digital customer service is not just about technology, it's about having practices and processes which are simple and work. It is about having the appropriate technology which meets the needs of both internal and external users, supports business processes, and is secure, flexible and simple to use, and having the right organisational culture in place which supports and encourages staff to optimise the use of digital to meet the needs of customers.
5. Today's customers expect customer service that is high quality, available 24/7 and in the channel most convenient to them. In a world where the answer to nearly anything and the ability to buy nearly anything is just a click or tap away, customer patience is an extremely limited resource. Customer service demands have therefore evolved with a move away from phone to other digital (self-service) methods, with an expectation of personalisation, self-service and interconnected channels.
6. The Council has several service-based contact centres including: the Customer Services Contact Centre (the Council's main call centre), the Highways and Transport Control Centre, Family Front Door, Adult Social Care Access Centre, and Here2Help. Each centre operates on either the Corporate Contact Centre Telephony Platform (Netcall) or using Lync Response Groups. There are hand-offs between the contact centres based on complexity of the services.

7. These services provide a wide range and depth of provision, ranging from simple reporting through to complex assessments for provision and support for the most vulnerable residents and for some, voice-based services remain the best method of engagement for reasons of accessibility and digital capability.

8. Customers engage with the Council, in the main, through three key channels: voice channels, face to face (through public buildings and other physical points of presence including bus stops, street furniture and partner locations), and digitally (through mobile, web, chatbot/webchat and social media channels).

The Council's customers



Overview of Customer Touch Points

Customer Services Contact Centre

9. The Customer Services Contact Centre provides a first point of contact for Worcestershire residents' enquiries, offering a choice of channels - telephony, webchat, email, and online applications. The aim is to make things simple, clear, easy to use and accessible for residents whilst supporting them.

10. The Customer Services Contact Centre is open 9am - 5pm Monday to Friday. Most of the enquiries dealt with are under the umbrella of 'once and done' and 'right first time' where there is an 'end to end' process. The services provided come under the following categories: Simple Transaction, Registered Service, Facilitated Service, Advocacy Service, and Information Provision. Please see Appendix 1: Customer Services Contact Centre Statistics.

11. Calls dealt with include:

- General County enquiries
- Libraries
- Highways
- Here2Help / Covid-19
- Payment and Client Charges
- Care Contributions
- Demand Responsive Transport Service
- School admissions
- School transport
- Transport
- Registrations
- Concessionary travel
- Blue badge
- Gypsy services
- Streetlighting
- Switchboard
- Waste management

12. The team use a range of technology, including:

- i. Netcall Liberty Connect - The Netcall system provides the Telephony and Online Chat Contact Centre Platform. and includes the following features: automatic routing of calls, call backs, automated switchboard, staff status tagging, chatbot, webchat, telephony customer survey, quality management and call recording.
- ii. CSA Portal - An in-house development used for delivering Fulfilment Tasks.
- iii. Several back-office systems:

13. The team have a range of key performance indicators (KPIs) to measure team performance and individual agent performance and are also implementing the option for customers to complete a telephone survey on how the Council did after every phone call. This feature will be available from April 2022.

The Highways and Transport Control Centre

14. The Highways and Transport Control Centre receives telephone calls and emails from councillors and members of the public with enquiries and requests for service on all matters relating to the County's highways, pavements, bridges, flooding.

15. The current opening hours of the call centre are 9am – 5pm (Monday to Friday), and the team have plans to extend this to 7am – 7pm (Monday to Friday).

16. The Control Centre deals with an estimated 4000 enquiries each month, received through the online [Report It](#) system, emails or telephone.

17. As part of the Customer Experience Programme, the Economy and Infrastructure Directorate will undertake a review of the service.

Family Front Door

18. Worcestershire Children First (WCF), Family Front Door uses the Council's website to host its Children's services information and the Liquidlogic (social care system) portal. The portal allows partner agencies to refer directly to the Family Front Door and Early Help teams directly and securely. This provides the service with both a timely and a managed quality of information; but also provides partners with an electronic copy of what they have submitted for their own records and then they also receive an outcome decision electronically back. All communication is secure and controlled within this portal.

19. The Family Front Door team has a key performance indicator to make decisions on all new referrals to Children's Social Care within 24 hours of receiving the information; so it is critical to have a digital platform that communicates with the Liquidlogic system and reduces administration time and delays; allowing the front-line practitioners to get the information swiftly and efficiently and the for the next stage too happen.

20. The demand on the Children's social care service has significantly increased during Covid pandemic and has not changed. The number of referrals from April 21 – December 21 is 12,648 giving an average of 1,405 per month. The requests for service to the WCF Early Help Family Support Teams for the same period is 6,688 giving an average of 743 per month.

21. WCF use the Council's website and social media campaigns to monitor its communication to partners and customers and modifies its material depending on the monthly statistical data e.g., [Get Safe](#) and [Early Help Family Hub](#) webpages.

Adult Social Care Access Centre

22. The Adult Social Care Contact Centre receives and manages all contact from residents and professionals with enquiries and requests for adult social care support.

23. Leading the way with the corporate Customer Experience Programme has been a review and redesign of entry into and customer experience of adult social care customers, through the Here2Help service. The review and subsequent business case for change has seen the move of the Adults Social Care Access Centre under the Here2Help service and the new approach is due to go live in May.

24. This re-design will ensure:

- i. Demand into Adults Social care is managed with strengths-based conversations 0s and 1s (in the 3 Conversations Model¹) being undertaken at the front door.

¹ The 3 Conversations (3Cs) is a strengths-based approach to providing services that work collaboratively with people seeking support, including carers.

- ii. Residents and professionals can self-serve and access the service 24/7 through digital platforms.
- iii. Stronger links between residents and local voluntary and community offers that are available to help people be supported to remain living independently, at home, for as long as possible.

Here2Help

25. The Here2Help service was launched during 2020 when the Covid-19 pandemic impact commenced in March. The service continues to provide support to residents on a wide range of issues including access to food parcels and deployment of volunteers to help people with shopping, day to day tasks and social isolation.

26. The service has launched its on-line [Community Services Directory](#) which further supported residents and partners in accessing local support to help people live independently, at home for as long as possible.

27. The service is expanding with the move of all demand in relation to Adults Social Care now coming through the Here2Help team – with a move to a new way of working from May 2022.

Face to face through public buildings and other physical points of presence

28. Libraries are trusted community venues, delivering face to face services to meet a wide range of community needs. The library service offer is aligned to Council priorities and focuses on: improving reading and literacy; reducing isolation and improving health and wellbeing; supporting learning, skills development and job seeking; addressing digital exclusion, supporting business enterprise and economic growth and promoting cultural engagement.

29. Face to face services are delivered at 21 libraries, 2 volunteer run library links and a mobile library. Pre-pandemic library performance data recorded 2.61m visits to Worcestershire libraries in 2019/20. Library staff are trained to identify service need and provide signposting to information sources and specialist service provision. They support the digital first agenda, providing face to face support for residents needing help to access the Council's digital customer services and adding value by signposting them to a network of Library Digital Champions, Adult Learning opportunities and third-party providers. In 2019/20, 5325 customers received this support.

30. Co-locations with Council and community services including Registration, Job Centres, schools, customer service hubs and Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) have established Worcestershire libraries as community hubs, and they are a popular venue for hosting a wide range of community services from NHS clinics to social prescribing drop-ins and Housing Association Job Clubs.

31. Building on strong community partnerships and capitalising on a unique reach into local communities, libraries develop new face to face services tailored to local need including Dementia Cafes, Young People's Job Fairs and holiday clubs for disadvantaged children.

Website

32. www.worcestershire.gov.uk is the digital front door for the Council's customers. The current website was redeveloped in 2015 to provide a unified and accessible identity for the Council, with an intuitive and logical journey for the customer, on both an information sharing and a transactional basis.

33. Customers can access a wealth of information, advice and guidance. Customers can also report issues, request, renew, apply and pay for a wide range of services. They can also engage with the Council using the webchat facility.

34. The website is accessible ensuring that all customers, including people with disabilities, have a decent user experience and can easily access information. By implementing accessibility best practices, the usability of the site is improving for all users.

35. The website is responsive and can be viewed across all devices and browsers and on multiple platforms for the wider user.

36. The table below shows a high-level view of website statistics, illustrating a large increase in the number of customers visiting the site over the last 2 years. Previous average increase year on year has been approximately 10%. For the last two years the average increase has been approximately 40%, this is likely caused by the pandemic and the new content and services launched in response. Further website statistics are included in Appendix 2.

Year	Users - (number of new and returning customers)	% Increase users year on year	Sessions (number of times a customer interacts with the website)	% Increase sessions year on year	Page Views (number of pages viewed)	% Increase page views year on year
2019	1,412,732	9.51	2,875,557	1.97	20,054,271	6.65%
2020	1,929,574	36.58	3,829,276	33.17	24,190,538	20.63%
2021	2,757,610	42.91	5,022,330	31.16	28,151,029	16.37%

37. The Council is investing in a new website to provide the additional functionality required to deliver a modern, best-in-class, mobile first and personalised experience. The solution will form a key part of the Council's vision to deliver a streamlined digital customer experience akin to shopping online at Amazon or similar retailers, with the following key objectives:

- A fully digitally enabled Council that provides personalised content based on customer interactions.
- An exemplar of delivering an excellent digital customer experience with most of the customer contact via self-service channels
- An organisation that delivers a seamless experience for the customer.
- Designing services from a customer perspective.
- Promoting independence and wellbeing through use of digital services and technology – with a focus through the re-design of customer contact in relation to Adults Social Care identified as a priority.

Digital Services

38. The Council uses modern technologies to enable digital opportunity, improving how customers and communities are served, streamlining the delivery of services so they can be provided in the most efficient and cost-effective way possible. Over 50% of transactions with Council customers are now undertaken on-line with high levels of satisfaction, making services more accessible and often improving the speed and efficiency of service delivery.

39. The digital systems that the Council develop are wide-ranging in purpose, with internal apps to support the workforce and changed ways of working, apps to move existing services to digital delivery models, as well as apps for completely new services that have been provided by the Council in its response to Covid-19.

40. New digital systems are developed using a low code platform, the platform enables the development of mobile and web applications, chatbots, and reactive web apps for any device.

Customer Portal

41. Customer portals are highly useful for many organisations from banks to tour companies, universities, healthcare providers, and retail chains. This technology improves the customer experience, including:

- i. Collaboration: provide customers with personalised and specific information.
- ii. Accessibility: giving easy access to relevant information such as FAQs, troubleshooting tips, Council and service details.
- iii. Customised content: telling customers about relevant services.
- iv. Connected devices: making information available on a variety of devices.
- v. Builds customer loyalty: Enhance customer experiences by offering extra channels for communication.
- vi. Document management: Documents accessed via the customer portal.
- vii. Analytics: Greater oversight and visibility of customers.
- viii. Security: utilising authentication systems to ensure information is safe.

42. The Council does not have a customer portal, and whilst the online form capability is well developed, alongside several digital solutions, these are accessed in isolation from the customer perspective.

Chatbot and Webchat

43. A chatbot is a piece of software that conducts a conversation via auditory or textual methods. Such programs are often designed to convincingly simulate how a human would behave as a conversational partner. There have been substantial recent developments in chatbots and conversational interfaces is due to a massive technology push and chatbots are a potentially significant new route to customer engagement. Chatbots are also seen as a means of increasing efficiency in customer service, providing an automated supplement to human helpdesk personnel.

44. The "Worcestershire Web Assistant" Chatbot is provided as part of the Netcall Liberty Contact Centre platform which was implemented in January 2021. The chatbot features the ability to create flow-based chats (e.g., pre-defined questions and answers) and intelligent conversational chats (e.g., when will my bus pass expire?). If

the customer is not able to resolve their query via the automated chatbot then they can choose to start a real-time conversation with a Customer Services Adviser through the chatbot (often referred to as a webchat).

Social Media

45. Social media over the last few years has become a key channel to share information and stories and to engage with the Council's residents and communities. Recent UK wide statistics show that 96% of the population are internet users and 80% of the population are active social media users. The Council uses different channels to reach different audiences as it's a great way to engage and connect. Journalists are now also using social media to find stories for their channels.

46. Local residents and businesses continue to look to the County Council for information, advice and guidance. The Council's social media audiences have grown considerably over the last 18 months as the content has been relevant, informative and creative. Below are our followers as at Dec '21 by channel and the increase in these followers over the previous 18 months:

- Twitter: 42,078 followers (9% increase (+39.5k) vs previous 18 months)
- LinkedIn: 11,379 followers (16% increase (+11.2) vs previous 18 months)
- Facebook: 23,438 followers (25% increase (+ 20k) vs previous 18 months)
- Instagram: 4475 followers (48% increase (+4.41k) vs previous 18 months)

47. Last year the content shared on the Council's social media channels has been viewed 31.8 million times with videos produced to help tell the Council's story being viewed 430,000 times.

48. The Council is regularly looking at opportunities to reach specific audiences through social media including working with partners and through focused and targeted messaging. The Council has built a wide and diverse portfolio of channels to help get the right message, to the right audience at the right time on the right channel.

Community Engagement

49. Worcestershire Viewpoint Citizens' Panel is a resident panel for research and consultation. Any Worcestershire resident aged 18 or over can join the panel to have their say on local public services. Panel members complete an annual survey to track views on the local area and Council services and may be invited to take part in other research and consultation activities through the year.

[Worcestershire Viewpoint Citizens' Panel](#)

[Worcestershire Viewpoint - September 2021 Report](#)

50. In March 2021, Worcestershire residents were engaged with as part of the website redevelopment project through existing viewpoint volunteers, the website itself, as well as social media channels. 470 responses were received in the survey, the majority of those came 40+ age groups.

51. [SpeakEasy NOW](#) is a self-advocacy charity for people with learning disabilities, across Worcestershire. They run projects that help to ensure that health, social care

and local government services, meet the needs of people with learning disabilities. They also work with private organisations who want to give a better service to their customers with learning disabilities. The Council is undertaking a consultation exercise with the Speakeasy NOW volunteers to get their feedback on the Council's "Worcestershire Web Assistant" Chatbot to identify areas for improvement.

Comments, Compliments and Complaints

52. The Council has in place complaints procedures for Children's Social Care, Adult Social Care and Corporate (which includes all other Council services). In addition to these procedures, the Council is also subject to the complaints process of the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) service.

53. When a complaint is upheld (Council at fault) and the findings of a subsequent investigation is for a change to policy or service delivery, an action plan report and follow up is undertaken to identify any learning/action that needs to be carried out.

54. Fewer comments are received than complaints, but these can cover the wide range of services that the Council provide from major infrastructure projects, Covid-19 policies and advice and household recycling centres.

55. Compliments recorded come from members of the public, pleased with the service they have received. Compliments received in 2020-21 were more evenly divided between praise for individuals and services as a whole.

56. The 2020/21 Annual Reports for representations are available on the Council's website. The Annual Reports cover the period from 1 April 2020 to 31 March 2021 and provide information on the number and nature of all representations received and the outcomes. They also look at some of the issues raised by them and what changes have resulted. Finally, they give a flavour of some of the compliments received over the 12- month period. [Council-Wide Services Representations and Complaints Procedure Reports](#)

Looking Ahead

Re-imagined front doors / Customer Experience Programme

57. The Re-imagined front doors project was established in 2019 following the insourcing of the Customer Services Contact Centre from Civica (formally known as the Worcestershire Hub). The outcomes of the Re-imagined front door project led to the creation of the Customer Experience Programme and associated board which is chaired by Paul Robinson. The ambition of the programme is to transform the way in which customers access services and information, and improve the end-to-end customer journey, including enabling as much service delivery through self-service. The Council wants residents, communities, and visitors to feel empowered to find their own solutions, and to feel supported and connected.

58. As a result of this programme customers will not only have simple access across a choice of channels to access services, but there will also be a more consistent and improved way of how the Council meets customer needs with more requests being completed at the first point of contact. Having the most up to date information,

guidance and self-help tools available at customers fingertips will help them to be able to self-refer and self-support. The Council's values and outcomes are as follows:

Value	Outcomes
Value 1: Empower and enable people We will empower and enable people to make their own choices and find their own solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • better customer experience for all • customer supported by proactive, knowledgeable, empowered staff • consistent and improved standards of customer handling
Value 2: Connect people We will connect people with their communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more people helped and supported locally • work at a local level with partner organisations and districts to identify root cause issues • use of knowledge and information to deliver services effectively
Value 3: Support communities We will build and support resilient communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • right services, in the right place which meet the needs of residents at a local level • increased customer and staff satisfaction
Value 4: Easily accessible We will be easily accessible, transparent and inclusive offering a joined-up experience across all channels for all residents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • delivery of services that are easy to find, understand and navigate • services efficiently provided and delivered in a cost-effective way • simple access across a choice of channels • more transactions completed at first point of contact • end to end visibility of transaction status for both the service and the customer •

59. The key service improvement activities that have been identified for the contact centre services are:

- i. Consolidate all contact centres to use the Corporate Contact Centre Platform (Netcall) and a consistent use of the features available (e.g., call backs, Chatbot, Webchat, Quality Management). The Highways Control Centre is the last Contact Centre to migrate from a Lync Response Group to the Netcall platform.
- ii. Categorise Council services as once and done or right first time in baseline assessment
- iii. Service redesign the contact centres to consolidate once and done services for efficiency and improved customer experience

60. The first phase of the Customer Experience Programme has focused on Adult Social Care. The transformation of customer contact for Adults Social Care, is progressing well through the design phase, ahead of the new ways of working being launched in May. The delivery of this business case will show benefits for customers

and the business – through improving the customers’ experience and reducing demand and flow into Adults Social Care by introducing:

- i. Self-service solutions for e.g. financial assessments.
- ii. Re-skilling front door Here2Help advisors so they are able to effectively have strengths-based conversations with customers – reducing handoffs for customers, reducing demand into Adults Social Care and increasing capacity within social work teams.
- iii. Full web re-design – through the customers’ lens – ensuring advice and information is relevant, easy to find and accessible 24/7.

61. A significant body of evidence has been built up on service delivery and has been baselined using the 3 Conversations Model as the framework to understand how service users engage currently and will provide the points from which the success of the Customer Experience / Here2Help transformation journey will be measured:

- **Tier 0** - Self-service via Here2Help Website [Here2Help Coronavirus](#)
- **Tier 1** - Conversation 0s and 1s dealt with by Here2Help Front Door
- **Tier 2** - Conversation 1s completed by Social Work Team
- **Tier 3** - Conversation 2s completed with services purchased e.g. reablement, unplanned crisis services. All conversations with Safeguarding as an outcome
- **Tier 4** - Conversation 3s with long term care services purchased not including residential or nursing
- **Tier 5** - Conversation 3s with long term residential and nursing care services

62. A business case for change has been approved by the programme board, with Libraries and then Highways and Transport Control Centre as the next priorities within the roadmap.

Co-design and engagement

63. Capturing customers’ knowledge about usage and need is key to innovation and successful service redesign focussed on customers and their experiences. For the new Here2Help service to be a success, it is essential that all groups involved in the change are engaged with to gain their views of what Here2Help should look like in the future. This will build and sustain connected communities, lead to improved outcomes, ensure access and community empowerment. The following engagement has been undertaken:

- i. Workforce engagement: Hearing the views of the workforce through workshops, drop-in sessions and involvement in the design and testing of new approaches.
- ii. Resident focus group: A Worcestershire Resident Focus Group has been established, to share their ideas and views of the future Here2Help Service and Customer Experience Programme. [Here2Help – Resident Focus Group](#)
- iii. Partners and organisations: The Council’s partners have been invited to get involved in the changes and how this will affect them.

Purpose of the Meeting

64. The Corporate and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:
- consider the information provided in the report;
 - determine whether any further information or Scrutiny is required at this stage; and
 - agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Corporate Services and Communication.

Supporting Information

Appendix 1 – Customer Services Contact Centre Statistics

Appendix 2 – Website statistics

Appendix 3 – Presentation Slides

Contact Points

Emma James / Jo Weston, Overview and Scrutiny Officers

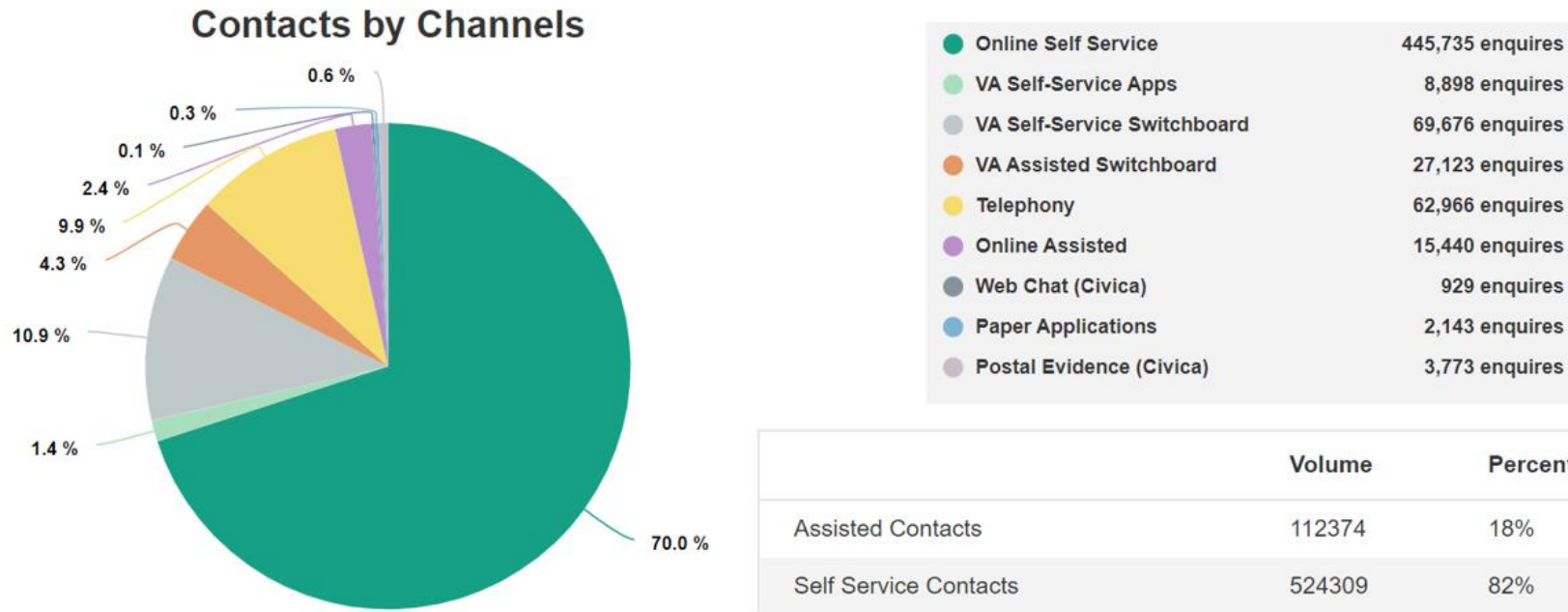
Tel: 01905 844965 / 844964, Email: scrutiny@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

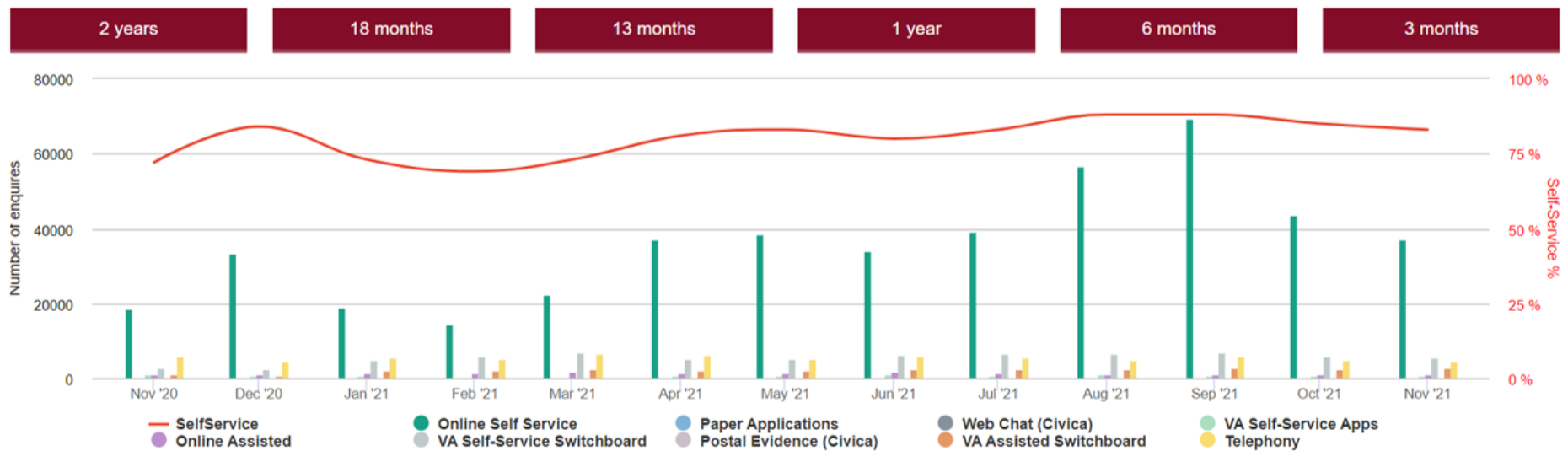
In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance) there are no background papers relating to the subject matter of this report.

Annual Volumes

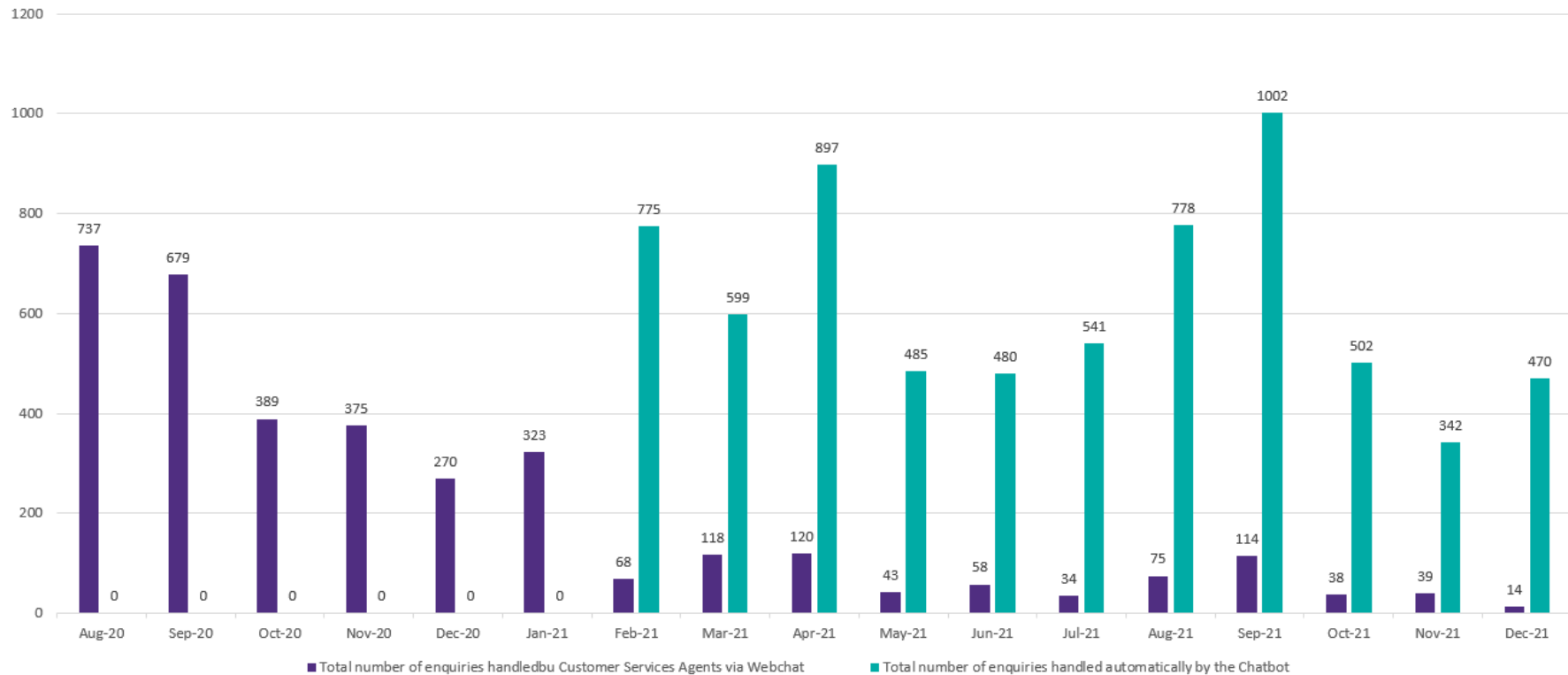
(1st Jan 21 – 31st Dec 21)



Self-Service Trend Analysis



Chatbot and webchat volumes



Appendix 2: Website Statistics

