Part 1: Out of Hours Emergency Centre and Response

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
1	In order to help the OOH Contact Centre to locate incidents reported by customers, they could consider using the 'What 3 Words' app to allow locations to be pin-pointed to a 3m x 3m square. This is already used by Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service and is particularly useful in locating a problem that is not at a particular address point. This is considered to be a quick win.	Medium	JEPU	The OOH contact centre is now using What 3 Words where callers can give the information.	Accepted - Complete
2	When a customer calls the main Council number out of hours, there should be options that the customer can select so the call is transferred to the relevant OOH Service. This would mean that customers would not have to note down the number and redial.	High	JEPU and Contact Centre	This is being investigated and will be incorporated into the new phone system which is due to go live in Autumn 2023. Otherwise there would be a cost to the Council to change and then change again.	Accepted - In progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
3	A pop-up banner should automatically be generated on the Council's website via a timed script when the offices are closed. This would help customers looking for information about the OOH Contact Centre.	High	JEPU and Digital Team	In the past when the council has used a pop-up banner on its website customer sentiment has generally been negative This would detract from the journey given the relatively small number of customers who are looking to find the number for the OOH Contact Centre. It is possible to add a banner that does not "pop up" to the home page, which will only be displayed out of office hours. This would be less intrusive so therefore not as disruptive to the customer experience and meet accessibility legislation. This could increase demand on the OOH Contact Centre, especially from customers using the number to contact the council for non-emergencies out of hours so this should be monitored.	Accepted - In progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
4	Information about how to report emergency incidents out of hours should be disseminated via town / parish council websites, newsletters and noticeboards. Other opportunities should also be investigated, such as information on existing signage in public locations. This is considered a quick win.	Low	JEPU and Comms Team	This will tie in with the update to the website and the phone system changes as part of the communications relating to it. Many parishes display this already. Town and parish comms sit with the BCT team.	Accepted - In progress
5	Consider how social media could be used to disseminate information about emergency incidents to the public, e.g. with a feed to the Council's home page. This would help to inform residents that the OOH Service is aware of an incident, and to communicate related messages about diversion routes, and when the incident has been resolved. It is recognised that there would be an additional cost for this service.	Medium	JEPU and Comms Team	This is being considered however it will be reliant on a Comms Officer on call which is not the case at the moment and therefore a cost. It is used in this way when incidents happen. However, as the action notes this has a cost implication for the service and Comms are not resourced to allow for a formal out of hours service.	Being investigated
6	Consider formalising processes around Planning Enforcement arrangements (e.g. circulation of lists of officers who would be available over Bank Holiday weekends).	Medium	Development and Regulation	Officers do not work on bank holiday weekends at present. However, even if available during these times, urgent planning enforcement action to stop development requires permission through the Courts that are not open on bank holiday weekends.	Not to be progressed at this time

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
7	Take action to increase the number of Emergency Duty Officers to at least 10, and seek to maintain numbers at this level thereafter.	High	JEPU	Completed and will be on-going	Accepted - Complete
8	Consider giving the EDO number to Members, so they can get hold of the relevant person in the event of an emergency.	Medium	JEPU	The established process is to contact the OOH Contact Centre when an incident occurs. Each incident is assessed and only escalated to an EDO when a specific threshold is met. Providing the contact details of an EDO to members would circumvent the system and lead to inefficient and ineffective response.	Not to be progressed at this time
9	Ensure there is provision for customer satisfaction surveys and mystery shopping exercises for the Emergency Out of Hours Contact Centre. This would help ensure that quality standards are maintained and the service meets customer expectations.	Medium	JEPU	This is being considered with the OOH contact centre contractor and Legal as to the process.	Being investigated
10	Changes should be made to the Out of Hours Service Manual escalation process to ensure that customers receive a call-back from a senior officer in response to ongoing issues if they have not been resolved after a defined period of time.	High	JEPU	This is now being embedded	Accepted – In Progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
11	The option of having the Council's Contact Centre Manager managing the Emergency Out of Hours contract should be explored, since there are strong synergies between the two operations.	Medium	JEPU and Contact Centre	Noted – and will be considered further.	Being investigated

Part 2: Office Hours Customer Contacts

Contact Centre and Phone System

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
12	Consider cross-training more contact centre advisors so they can deal with a wider range of customer queries.	Medium	Contact Centre	They are all cross trained already. A matrix can be provided to demonstrate this.	Accepted - Complete
13	Replacement of the Council's phone system should be prioritised and the new system should include an automatic switchboard with IVR, to allow people to self-serve in terms of selecting the officers or services that they want to speak to.	Medium	ICT	Replacing the telephony system is now a live project with procurement about to start and an expectation that the system will be implemented by the end of this calendar year (2023). The specification of the new system does include the requirement for IVR (Interactive Voice Response). The precise level of implemented IVR integration will depend on the selected system and the wishes of the cross-service implementation team and governance group.	Accepted - In progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
14	The new phone system should allow callers to be alerted if an officer is not available to take the call and to be given the options to: leave a message, return to the switchboard, or to speak to another officer (with appropriate 'hunt groups' set up).	High (Programmed)	ICT	The capability to divert calls, and retain control – leave a message, and/or recover the call is again expected and requested functionality and within the requirement specification for the new telephony system. The capability for 'Hunt Groups' is also a requirement in the specification and will be much easier to manage than our current systems.	Accepted - In progress
15	Callers to the Contact Centre who are placed on hold should be provided with information about their place in the queue, or anticipated wait time until their call is answered to allow them to make an informed decision as to whether to remain on hold or call back.	High (Programmed)	ICT	The ability to advise customers of their place in a call queue and/or anticipated wait time is within the requirement specification for the new telephony system. Again, the precise implementation details will depend on the selected system and the wishes of the cross-service implementation team and governance group. However, we'd have to calculate the impact of this on the call abandonment KPI.	Being investigated
16	Mystery shopping and customer satisfaction surveys should be routinely undertaken to better understand how staff are performing, if scripts are being followed, and if the service is meeting customer expectations and standards set out in the new customer charter.	Medium	Contact Centre	The new telephony system will have more monitoring functionality. If external mystery shopping or surveys are requested, funding will have to be sought.	Being investigated

Website

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
17	Consider revising the layout of the website, so that navigation menus are available at all times (i.e. through use of a mega-menu), and to optimise displays on all devices, particularly mobile phones.	Medium	Digital Team	The website has undergone layout, styling and menu changes in the past six months to optimise the customer journey. This has in part contributed to a decrease of greater than 20% in customers expressing dissatisfaction with the website when compared with 2019. Building on this, the website will be optimised for wider screens and a "sticky menu" will be introduced to allow the options contained in it to be accessed at all times, negating the need to scroll to the top of the page to find them. The website meets accessibility guidance as well as government good practice standards.	Accepted - In progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
18	Consider how customer journeys via the Council's website can be optimised to shorten the number of interactions.	High	Digital Team	A full analysis of customer journeys was completed as part of a project to review and renew the council's website, part of which involved the Digital Service's team working with almost every team across the council to review the structure of the website, as well as its content. Based on this, usage analytics, and a card sorting exercise, a draft taxonomy was created and a public consultation was held: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/website-structure-review. Changes to the taxonomy of the website based on the outcome of the consultation were competed in September 2022, This has in part contributed to a decrease of greater than 20% in customers expressing dissatisfaction with the website when compared with 2019. We will be working with many other customer facing services throughout the coming year to ensure their pages are current and the customer journey is as efficient and effective as it can be.	Business as Usual

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
19	The Council should run workshops to see if the report a problem page can be made easier for customers to use.	Low	Digital Team and Environment	The current report a problem page will be retired in the next couple of months and the replacement will be easier to use. Customer feedback relating to the enquiry types already migrated across to the new system has been very positive.	Not to be progressed at this time

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
20	There should be further integration of third-party applications within the 'My Account' system to help eliminate the need for multiple logins. Ideally, all existing logins should be identified and programmed for inclusion where OpenID login functionality is supported.	Medium	Digital Team	All new public facing platforms should have this integration and we are currently exploring how we might achieve it with our most used existing platforms. For example discussion has taken place between the supplier of My Council Tax on how to integrate that login with My Account, and integration with the planning Public Access portal and Libraries' platform is being explored. Other public facing platforms such as Jobs Go Public and the West Berkshire Directory platforms are due to be replaced within the next 12 months, so there is little cost benefit to delivering an integrated login for these, however this functionality should be built into their replacement. This is being done through the Many Channels, One Service project. Pace of integration as well as accessibility of APIs is influenced by available resource and cost of integration.	Accepted - In progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
21	All new IT systems should be rigorously tested to ensure they are not released with bugs, with sign-off required by service leads.	High	ICT	Rigorous testing is of course a sensible, and necessary key phase of any new system implementation. ICT will always be keen to support this process and to assist services in developing test plans and with testing ourselves. However, no system is ever released without bugs – it's therefore important to ensure that key functions are working; and ICT will always assist in implementing patches, fixes, and updates. Service Leads do not 'sign off' as this requires technical knowledge. Testing is already undertaken and systems are not routinely rolled out without this having taken place.	Accepted (in part) – complete

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
22	Provide organisation charts on the Council's intranet to make it easier for Members to find the appropriate officer to handle their queries.	High	Digital Team	There is already an interactive organisation chart as part of the council's People Finder on its intranet: https://intranet/peoplefinder. This is dependent on the data provided by HR, and the Digital Services team is working with these teams to improve it, and therefore the People Finder. In addition there is a new overview of the Senior Management Team and link to the Senior Management Structure here: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/council-structure	Accepted – complete
23	Provide more Member training on how to use Council systems including ModernGov and discuss with Members how they can be better used.	High (Programmed)	ICT and Democratic Services	Members will receive training on how to use ModernGov as part of the induction programme following the May 2023 elections. Members will be asked to use this to access meeting agendas and minutes instead of email.	Accepted – complete

Provision for Disabled Customers

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
24	The need for BSL interpretation of Council meetings should be reviewed once further government guidance has been issued in 2023.	Medium	Democratic Services and BCT Team	In anticipation of new Legislation there was a WBC officer meeting in April 2022 to consider potential implications. Published Guidance will need to be fully considered alongside an assessment of local need, best practice and the appropriateness of using BSL in certain circumstances. Recommendations on ways of working to support access would then need to be made and fully considered corporately to ensure compliance.	Accepted – in progress
25	Produce BSL videos about Council services and easy read versions of key documents to make them accessible to as wide a range of customers as possible.	Medium	Adult Social Care and All Services	ASC comment: There is not sufficient capacity within the Sensory Needs team to generate these resources on behalf of the wider council. They can be commercially sourced.	Not to be progressed at this time

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
26	Consider what further changes need to be made for engaging and supporting disabled customers once the current Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work stream has been completed.	Medium	BCT Team	An EDI Framework has been developed informed by extensive engagement opportunities to capture the lived experience of our communities. To ensure that the Framework was evidence based every effort was made to capture all voices to inform its development. The Framework will progress through the Executive Cycle to Executive during 2023. During this timeframe work be undertaken to share the EDI Framework as widely as possible with key stakeholders, both external and internal, so that all services have opportunity to consider how the Framework should shape ways of working and decision making. Dedicated resources to support the implementation of the Framework are extremely limited with a vacancy for one of the lead officer posts – this will hamper work such as the delivery of training, providing officer support and peer mentoring to embed the Framework. The current EDI work stream will ensure that the above actions are undertaken however work to fully embed the EDI Framework across the Council will be an enduring responsibility for all services.	Accepted – in progress

Customer Service Standards and Training

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
27	Review the remit of the Customer First Programme Board or its successor. Members felt this should be more strategic and high profile, and should drive customer service improvements across the Council, including digital transformation. This should have stronger reporting mechanisms than at present. Also, opportunities should be taken to make better use of relevant Members' expertise (e.g. through membership of Customer First Programme Board or its successor).	High	Executive Directors	A governance review is underway. Terms of Reference for new boards are currently being considered. In terms of member involvement, one of the clear recommendations of the CfGS review of our existing arrangements suggested that member involvement in operational matters can be too high. To use member expertise in the way suggested could fall into this territory and it is important to maintain delineation between strategic member advice and operational matters delegated to officers.	Accepted (in Part) – in progress
28	The new Customer Service Charter clearly sets out the standards that the Council will deliver. This should be clearly displayed on the website and in Council offices so customers know the standards that they can expect to receive. Training should be provided to ensure that all staff are aware of the Charter and how to best meet the needs of the customer. Performance against targets should be measured on an ongoing basis and reported corporately.	High	Customer Engagement and Transform-ation and HR	This is being factored into service planning and KPIs for 2023/24.	Accepted – in progress

Adult Social Care

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
29	Develop a comprehensive communications campaign to recruit and train more independent advocates in order to address the current shortfall and reduce delays for customers.	Medium	Adult Social Care and Comms Team	This work has not yet progressed significantly because there is a tender process underway to identify a new provider of advocacy services. This has been slightly delayed. The action will be progressed with the new incumbent once appointed.	Accepted – in progress
30	Investigate the business case for developing a High Street presence in central and eastern areas of the district to support ASC and other services.	Low	Adult Social Care	There are discussions underway relating to both the future provision in Central and relating to the Turnhams Green site. This will need to align with future plans both for corporate offices and for relevant Town plans. Health colleagues have also expressed some interest in an integrated/ co-located delivery model. The wider option of a high-street presence is being fed into those discussions but all of this is expected to take time.	Under investigation

Development and Regulation

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
31	Review how the Planning Service can work with the Environment Delivery Team to offer a more integrated service for customers who are looking to improve the environmental performance of their development (e.g. through solar panels, heat pumps, or insulation).	High	Development and Regulation / Environment	We will take this forward with the Environment Delivery Team as part of our Service Improvement Plan, noting that Biodiversity Net Gain becomes a specific requirement under the Environment Act in November 2023.	Accepted – in progress
32	Consider what additional guidance could be given to support applicants making simple applications.	Medium	Development and Regulation	We will take this forward as part of our Service Improvement Plan, focussing on the customer journey. The council recently received funding from DLUHC to implement PlanX, to provide a single point of access for planning enquiries to a council's website, allowing applicants to self-triage their project, checking whether their simple applications requires planning permission, and if so, identifying issues in advance of making an application. Implementation is forecast from December 2023.	Accepted – in progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
33	Investigate the use of apps to facilitate developers to engage with local communities, and consider how these could be integrated with the Council's website to provide updates on major developments in the area.	Low	Development and Regulation and Digital Team	We will take this forward as part of our Service Improvement Plan, focussing on how digital planning can improve the customer journey. This has already been done as part of the local plan. There is a need to be clear on the value that any approach would add vs our existing channels.	Under Investigation

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
34	Improve the Council's website to make it easier for customers to undertake routine tasks, such as purchasing maps or paying for planning applications.	Medium	Development and Regulation / Digital Team	We will take this forward as part of our Service Improvement Plan, noting that 96% of planning applications go through the planning portal where there is already an online payment facility. The planning portal also has the facility for creating a location plan and purchasing a site plan online. A full analysis of customer journeys was completed as part of a project to review and renew the council's website, part of which involved the Digital Service's team working with almost every team across the council to review the structure of the website, as well as its content. Included in this was paying for planning applications, which now has a dedicated website page: www.westberks.gov.uk/planningfees. This provides an alternative method to submit and pay for planning applications. Our user feedback doesn't suggest a high number of issues.	Complete

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
35	Provide additional information about 'important dates' on the Planning Portal (e.g. closing date for objections and the cut-off date for Member call-in).	Medium	Development and Regulation	We will take this forward as part of our Service Improvement Plan, noting that information on cut-off dates for Member call-in is published on the website alongside the weekly list.	Accepted – in progress
36	Amend the format of orange site notices to make them easier to read and to incorporate QR codes that link to the relevant application within the Planning Portal. (This would be a quick win.)	Medium	Development and Regulation	This is in progress as part of our Service Improvement Plan, focussing on the customer journey. There is a dependency on an IT system upgrade - the link doesn't work at present, but it will work when IDOX DMS is in place, anticipated from December 2023.	Accepted – in progress
37	Regularly promote the service where residents can register to be notified of planning applications in their area, and consider using e-newsletter to tell people about planning issues and planning applications.	Medium	Development and Regulation/ Digital Team/ Comms Team	We will take this forward as part of our Service Improvement Plan focussing on the customer journey, including working with the Digital Team to look at how we can use the My Account facility for notifications.	Under investigation

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
38	Consider the use of Planning Advisory Groups as a mechanism for engaging parish / town councils, local residents and other stakeholders on major developments.	Medium	Development and Regulation	We are reviewing stakeholder engagement as part of our Service Improvement Plan including how we can make best use of the Parish District Conference, member workshops, the Development Industry Forum and digital planning. Noting that 86% of T&PCs are already signed up to online consultee access.	Under investigation

Environment

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
39	All elected Members should be encouraged to regularly promote the 'report a problem' tool through local newsletters and magazines.	High	Members and Comms Team	Members to be emailed and encouraged to use the new facility.	Accepted – in progress
40	Consider revising the 'report a problem' page to incorporate icons and help buttons to reduce the number of clicks and to better guide customers through the reporting process.	High	Environment and Digital Team	The current report a problem page will be retired in the next couple of months and the replacement will be easier to use. Customer feedback relating to the enquiry types already migrated across to the new system has been very positive. The new page will have a more intuitive interface. More visual guidance has been produced as part of this, for example on the Report a Pothole page: https://www.westberks.gov.uk/reportapothole	Accepted – in progress

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
41	Consider how communications can be improved including: providing proactive network management information (e.g. through the website, monthly newsletter, social media, etc); website content; mystery shopping; seeking customer feedback; achieving a more consistent approach to customer service across the department; and managing longer duration enquiries.	Medium	Environment and Comms Team	Work is ongoing with the Comms Team. A comprehensive Comms and Engagement Strategy has been implemented and feedback suggests good levels of performance and satisfaction with the Comms Team is high. See report to OSMC in Jan 2022. However, there is always room for improvement the team is happy to make any necessary enhancements.	Accepted - complete

Ref	Proposal	Priority	Lead	Officer Comment	Status
42	Consider how engagement with local environmental groups can be improved, including via the Parish Climate Forum.	Medium	Environment	The Council has made use of the aDoddle platform to provide an area where local environmental groups can have a presence and connect with each other and the general public for information and event sharing, volunteering opportunities etc. Regular engagement also happens with a number of groups through the West Berkshire Natural Solutions Delivery Partnership (for example: North Wessex Downs AONB, BBOWT, ARK). The West Berkshire Parish Climate Forum has specifically been for Parish and Town Councils to meet together with WBC so that it can remain focused on areas most relevant to their functions but there is always the option for a local environmental group to come and present at one of these meetings or lead a relevant discussion. With the formation of the new Climate Change Service within the Environment Department there are likely to be discussions around other ways in which we can engage with local environmental groups and how we better promote awareness and use of the aDoddle mapping platform. The promotion of the Environment Newsletter happens on a regular basis.	Accepted - completed