

**Service Area Plan for Financial Year 2023/24**

Business Unit: Customer, Digital and Collection Services

Corporate Head of Service: Linda Norman

Version: 1.2 FINAL DRAFT

**Approvals**

Approved by CLT: 21/12/22

Approved by Service Cttee: Date

**Service Area Narrative and Mission Statement**

From April 2022, Customer Services lost seven staff within three months which had a major impact in service delivery. An action plan was developed to fast track recruitment and staff training as well incentivise those staff who remained in post. Work has continued with the website and customer relationship management system to enable customers to self serve and reduce the need to contact the Council via more traditional methods such as telephone, letter, face to face and email. Staff retention has been an issue across all areas within the division with vacancies carried across Revenues, Benefits, Parking, Infrastructure & Operations as well as the Transformation Team.

Revenues and Benefits have faced legislative challenges with the cost of living crisis and having to administer various grants from the Government in a relatively short period of time. Not only are the Team preparing for the new Business Rates Revaluation from April 2023, the Energy Rebate scheme was administered to approximately 21k people in a matter of months whilst the Benefits Team are dealing with the third tranche of the Household Support Fund in addition to reviewing the Council Tax Support Scheme for 23/24 year.

The Homes For Ukrainian Team are responsible for the administration of the Government Homes For Ukraine initiative. The Team comprise of two resettlement co-ordinators and one translator. The team are responsible for supporting both host and refugees families, working with government agencies, voluntary sector and Surrey CC to ensure refugees are supported and assist them with integration into the community. Welfare checks are carried out every three months to minimise breakdowns in relationships and the need to re-match with other hosts. The scheme has recently been extended for another 12 months to reduce the risk of homelessness albeit with a reduced budget per refugee which will bring challenges around how much support the team can offer with regards to housing costs.

Surrey CC have announced that they will not be renewing the Agency Agreement for On-Street Parking Enforcement beyond 1 April 2023 which has had a serious impact on Parking Services resources, finances, customer complaints and IT systems.

Both teams within Digital Services have been carrying vacancies whilst delivering 'The Getting Fit for the Future' Transformation Programme. Several back office systems will need replacing over the next four years and cyber security is becoming a high priority across the organisation with a need to protect personal data and ensure systems are safe and secure. A hardware refresh is planned to support the Hybrid Working Project where over 300 staff will move to secure access through laptops and enable hot-desking by standardising kit across the Council.

The new Corporate Business Plan will focus on five themes of which the Organisational Development Theme will be the main focus of the division with the four strands; People; Process; Technology and Green will provide a clear framework which will provide effective governance across the division. Investing in both staff and technology, legacy systems will be replaced with modern technology that will support new and better ways of working.

**Business Unit:****Customer, Digital and Collection Services**

CHoS	Linda Norman
Service Area 1:	Customer Services
Service Area 2:	Digital Services
Service Area 3:	Post and Document Management Services
Service Area 4:	Housing Benefits
Service Area 5:	Revenues
Service Area 6:	Parking Services
Service Area 7:	Homes 4 Ukraine

Service Organisational Structure <https://www.runnymede.gov.uk/working-us/leadership-team>

Budget Book Information [Budget information 2022-23](#)

Description of Service (1) Customer Services

**Main Purpose:** The aim of the service is to provide our customers with the information they require at first point of contact as much as possible, in a way that meets their needs and desires yet still being affordable to the Council. The Customer Services team is trained in a multi-disciplinary way to answer simple queries on a wide range of services whether the customer visits in person, contacts us by telephone or e-mail. This will deliver a cost-effective modern service which meets customer and corporate needs through the development and use of appropriate technologies whilst maintaining customer care and statutory responsibilities.

This service is split into two distinct areas:

Statutory Team which works on Council Tax and Housing- related matters:

- Moves
- Discounts
- DD
- Refunds
- Payment arrangements
- Housing tenancy management
- Housing Maintenance
- Work schedules, orders, administration
- Garage rentals
- Rent payments; arrears; statements

Community Team which works on Environmental and Leisure-related matters:

- Environmental protection (fly tipping, abandoned vehicles, stray dogs, graffiti, noise, anti-social behaviour)
- Registration of public health licenses (dog breeding, tattoos, piercing, acupuncture, food safety)
- Parking – processing PCN's, DVLA access, appeals
- Parking permits and waivers
- Green waste • Food waste
- Street cleansing • Rubbish & Recycling
- Halls & Day centres
- Leisure and sports bookings • Events in parks

The team deal with general high-volume enquiries including:

- Telephony • Reception • Payments • Council Tax • Housing maintenance
- Tenancy management • Green waste

Key Functions and relevant Statistics from Previous Year/ projections for next FY:

Amount of correspondence received in relation to Customer Services in 19/20 59,331

Number of telephone calls taken in Customer Services in 19/20 132,011

Description of Service (2)

Digital Services

**Main Purpose:** The Digital Services team are responsible for all aspects of the ICT service i.e. network, infrastructure, security, applications, hardware, software and support. No aspect of the ICT service is outsourced to a third-party provider.

The core objectives for the team are:

- To keep the network, all applications and systems operational at all times to support the delivery of services

- To maintain the network, applications, systems, security, hardware and software to the highest level
- To lead and advise the organisation in the choice, procurement and implementation of new applications, systems, software and hardware
- To provide the staff and councillors with the necessary training and advice to use the equipment and systems
- To keep up to date with the latest technologies and inform the Council how innovation can improve service delivery
- To maintain a working relationship with all other Surrey Districts, Boroughs, the County, third sector, suppliers and business partners
- To provide a means of ensuring that problems and issues are resolved as quickly as possible.
- To secure the network, data and information against external threats
- To ensure that applications and systems are fit for purpose and are operating both efficiently and effectively
- To manage the Council website

The team have responsibility for:

Cyber security audit

Penetration test and PSN compliance

Microsoft home office for staff

Member device and support

Regular software upgrades of back office systems

Obtain and maintain PCI DSS compliance

Obtain and maintain PSN certificate and compliance

Disaster Recovery and Business Continuity testing

Maintain Digital services contract register & system asset database

Update Business Continuity Plan

Key Functions and relevant Statistics from Previous Year: Service Desk stats Jan 2021 to Dec 2021 5994 compared to 5445 for Jan 2022 to Dec 22

#### Description of Service (3)

#### Post and Document Management Services

Main Purpose: This team has been moved back into Digital Services and is managed by the Digital Services Transformation Manager. This section deals with all incoming post to the Council and sorts the correspondence at a basic level for other services areas. It provides scanning and indexing facility as required by departments with a large part of their work back-scanning documents into Information@Work (I@W) once services have processed the paper copy. For some areas, the work is scanned directly into the I@W once the correspondence has been categorised and referenced. Staff have a working knowledge of the Verification Framework Code of Practice for handling Housing Benefit documents.

Key Functions and relevant Statistics from Previous Year: Outgoing mail for Jan 21 to Dec 21 224,986 compared to 170,428 for Jan 22 to Dec 22. Incoming mail from April 22 to Dec 22 is 14,892. Previous years not available.

#### Description of Service (4)

#### Housing Benefits

Main Purpose: The Housing Benefits team deal with all aspects of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support administration:

- Appeals
- Hardship and Welfare advice
- Discretionary Housing Payments
- Overpayment
- Verification of documents
- Government partnership working
  - Real Time Indicators (RTI)
  - Automated Transfer Local Authority System (ATLAS)
  - Customer Information System (CIS)
- Assessment of
  - Housing Benefit
  - Council Tax Support
- Local Housing Allowance
  - Registered Social Landlords
  - Council Tenants
  - Short term temporary accommodation
  - Private tenures

Key Functions and relevant Statistics from Previous Year:  
 Amount of correspondence received in relation to Housing Benefits in 19/20 28,889  
 Number of telephone calls taken in Housing Benefits in 19/20 10,761

Description of Service (5)                      Revenues

Main Purpose:  
 The Revenues section deal with the more complicated aspects of Council Tax administration:

- Business Rates
- Valuation office schedules
- Completion Notices
- Building works
- Appeals
- Exemptions
- Complaints
- Freedom of Information requests
- Sole or main residence appeals
- Court attendance
- Enforcement agents
- Attachment to Earnings/Benefits/allowances
- Charging orders
- Insolvency
- Tracing absconders

Key Functions and relevant Statistics from Previous Year (19/20):  
 Council Tax collection rates - 98.4%  
 Business Rates collection rates - 99.2%  
 Recovery notices for Council Tax - 14,440  
 Recovery notices for Business Rates -772  
 Number of DD payers for Council Tax -25,501  
 Number of DD payers for Business Rates - 961  
 Amount of correspondence received in relation to Council Tax - 10,931 (Back Office) - 12,892 (Customer Services)  
 Amount of correspondence received in relation to Business Rates - 2,723  
 Number of telephone calls taken in Council Tax - 1,238

Description of Service (6)                      Parking Services

Main Purpose:  
 The Parking Team deal with the administration, collection and enforcement of Penalty Charge Notices (PCN) for both On-street and Off-Street Parking. The Team are responsible for ensuring road safety and free flow of traffic across sthe Borough and for ensuring customers who use Council owned car parks pay for the service provided. In August, the team also took over the management of Runnymede Pleasure Ground car park and the Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) system installed at that location.  
 In 2020/21, the team issued 7557 PCN and answered 3275 calls. The Team deal with all aspects from informal challenge to Tribunal Hearings. The Civil Enforcement Officers patrol 37 hours a week across 7 days from 7.00 in the morning to 9.00pm at night on a rota to ensure service delivery

Description of Service (7)                      Homes 4 Ukraine

Main Purpose:  
 The Homes For Ukrainian Team are responsible for the administration of the Government Homes For Ukraine initiative. The budget is approximately £426k which will go towards adminstering the scheme including thank you payments to hosts and support with Housing costs as required. The Team comprise of two resettlement co-ordinators and one translator. The team are responsible for:

- supporting 106 refugees and 70 host families
- updating the Home Office portal,
- working with North West Surrey Volunteers and other stakeholders to ensure the refugees are supported and assist them with integration into the community.
- carrying out mandatory checks required by the government to ensure that sponsors are suitably vetted
- undertake welfare visits at 3,6,9 and 12 month intervals.

**Service Area Plan for Year 2023/24**

Business Unit: Customer, Digital and Collection Services

Colour Key:

Corporate Business Plan/ Strategy Action
Type of Initiative = Legislation/ Regulatory requirement
Type of Initiative = Service/ efficiency improvement
Type of Initiative = Income generation
Type of Initiative = Staff/ Resources requirement



ID	Type of initiative	Service Area	Description of initiative	Outcomes/ Deliverables	Priority	Service Area Lead Team/ Individual(s)	Additional resources required from outside department	Additional growth required? Y/N plus indicative costs ££	Anticipated start date	Anticipated completion date
00047	CBP Strategy Action	Digital Services	Ongoing from 2022/23: Procure and implement a new HR and Payroll solution to underpin the transformation of the HR and Payroll services.	New efficient and effective combined system to manage both employee records and payroll information	Should - the initiative should be done	Stephen Bowen	Finance and HR	Growth Officer resource	Nov-21	Jun-24
00046	CBP Strategy Action	Digital Services	Provide corporate training on cyber security and how to protect the information staff handle.	Protects the organisation from cyber attacks	Must - the initiative has to be done	Adam Hecquet		Growth - £15K	Apr-22	Mar-26
00055	CBP Strategy Action	Digital Services	Member device refresh to be reviewed every four years to enable members to conduct their civic duties in a modern and efficient way	Enables Members to conduct civic duties in a modern and efficient way and go paperless to meet the green agenda	Must - the initiative has to be done	Linda Norman		Capital hardware budget in place, already provisioned	Apr-23	Mar-24
00059	CBP Strategy Action	Digital Services	Rollout of hardware refresh replacing legacy IT hardware with new laptops, docking stations and monitors to standardise workstations across the Council	Enables Officers to work effectively and efficiently wherever their location, will facilitate hot-desking in future	Should - the initiative should be done	Linda Norman		Capital hardware budget in place, already provisioned	Nov-22	Mar-23
00040	Service/ efficiency improvement	Digital Services	Build on our WCAG 2.1 accessibility success by working on our PDF/document improvement plan to remove all documents with accessibility issues by the end of 2022.	Supporting people with disabilities to use our website	Should - the initiative should be done	Stephen Bowen		None	Ongoing from 22/23	Ongoing
00043	CBP Strategy Action	Parking Services	Implement our online parking portal to digitise the parking service and increase our online offer within One Account.	Improves customer experience of those that want to pay or challenge PCNs in a secure system	Should - the initiative should be done	Linda Norman		Budget in place	Sep-23	Sep-25
00060	CBP Strategy Action	Digital Services	Implement hybrid meeting equipment within meeting rooms across the Civic Centre to enable hybrid working across the Council	Enable attendees to have an improved meeting experience when joining meetings virtually as well as in person.	Should - the initiative should be done	Stephen Bowen		Budget in place	Apr-23	Mar-24
CCDS 999	Service/ efficiency improvement	Digital Services	Ongoing from 2022/23: NEC Housing Phase 2 implementation	Efficient and effective Housing system including online access to rent accounts and repairs	Must - the initiative has to be done	Stephen Bowen	Housing, NEC consultancy	None	Ongoing from 22/23	Jul-23
00048	Service/ efficiency improvement	Digital Services	Procure and implement a new financial management system to provide the tools to transform our finance service area.	Efficient and effective Finance system to enable smarter ways of working	Must - the initiative has to be done	Stephen Bowen	Finance	Growth - already in MTFS via digital transformation programme. Officer resource	Oct-23	Dec-25
CC038	Legislative/ Regulatory Change	Parking Services	Review all car parks to establish the potential to install EV Charging Point facilities and ANPR car parking management	ANPR will enable self-enforcing car-parks and secure revenue streams for parking	Must - the initiative has to be done		Climate Change, Parking Services, Surrey County Council, other funding streams	Growth - ANPR £500K (based on 2020/21 business case), EVC -£500K (guesstimate)	Jul-22	Mar-24

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ID	Type of initiative	Service Area	Description of initiative	Outcomes/ Deliverables	Priority	Service Area Lead Team/ Individual(s)	Additional resources required from outside department	Additional growth required? Y/N plus indicative costs ££	Anticipated start date	Anticipated completion date
CDCS 002	Legislative/ Regulatory Change	Revenues	Business rates revaluation	Comply with legislation	Must - the initiative has to be done			£8K	Feb-23	Apr-23
CDCS 003	Legislative/ Regulatory Change	Revenues	CTS scheme	Comply with legislation	Must - the initiative has to be done			£8K	Feb-23	Apr-23
CDCS004	Service/ efficiency improvement	Benefits	Welfare reform software (for cost of living/ corporate debt team activity)	To support vulnerable residents with their payments to Council services and to ensure priority debt is addressed and deptmetgns are not all chasing for the same disposal income	Must - the initiative has to be done			£20K	Apr-23	Mar-24
CDCS 005	Legislative/ Regulatory Change	Revenues	Support grants from Govt - implementation (Revs/Bens/)	Comply with legislation	Must - the initiative has to be done			£5K (may be nil if new burden funding is available and agreed)	Apr-23	Mar-24
CDCS 008	Service/ efficiency improvement	Digital Services	Waste & recycling software improvements	To improve efficiency of waste collections and allow real time access for customers to report missed bins. Will enable optimisation of waste collection rounds	Should - the initiative should be done		DSO	£50K capital plus additional revenue to account for extra modules to encompass route mapping and optimisation	Apr-23	Mar-24
CDCS 009	Legislative/ Regulatory Change	Digital Services	Business Continuity and Disaster recovery	To reduce risk of outages and system failures that may disrupt service delivery	Must - the initiative has to be done			£60K (funded from cyber security grant DLUHC)	Jan-23	Jun-23