

# North Lanarkshire Council

## Report

### Policy and Strategy Committee

approval noting

Ref KH/SP/LJ

Date 11/06/20

### Customer Service Hub and Web Development

**From** Head of Business Solutions and Head of Strategic Communication

**Email** [hassellk@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:hassellk@northlan.gov.uk)  
[penmans@northlan.gov.uk](mailto:penmans@northlan.gov.uk)

**Telephone** 07903 096121 (Katrina Hassell)  
07947 997750 (Stephen Penman)

#### Executive Summary

Creating a new website and Customer Service Hub are central to the council's Digital Transformation and our drive to make North Lanarkshire a leading digital authority. This report identifies the next steps in that journey. It outlines the council's vision that 'digital first' will become the default method for all customer enquiries, requests and applications and sets a roadmap and interim structure to make our vision a reality.

Increasing the volume of customer transactions through digital self-serve opportunities, alongside targeted and proactive communication feeds on matters known to generate high volume enquiries, will improve customer outcomes while simultaneously managing the flow of enquiries to the Customer Service Hub. Combining our digital first, self-serve and communications objectives within an overall Customer Service Hub approach, and locating this within Corporate Communications, provides a fully integrated solution that:

- Redirects and satisfies an increasing number of customer requests via self-serve options;
- Provides an established governance and operating environment for our new service delivery model;
- Enables the two-way flow of business intelligence and insight on service needs, demand analysis, customer perceptions and behaviours; and this in turn,
- Allows our communications activity to proactively anticipate customer demand and change behaviours.

Embarking on any journey requires careful preparation and a series of checks to ensure that everyone is clear about the final destination and the means of getting there. Our Customer Service Hub is no exception. It represents a radical shift in the way that the council engages with customers and service users – requiring new ways of working; increased use of technology; and empowering our front-office staff to resolve an ambitious 80% of all enquiries first time.

Governing principles, described in this report and previously considered by the Transformation and Digitisation Committee, underpin development of both the new website and Customer Service Hub. These principles also reflect our wider ambitions and The Plan for North Lanarkshire. The Covid-19 Recovery Plan and the continuing social distancing requirements reinforce the digital first business case and provide further impetus to change the way we deliver services.

Committee is requested to endorse these principles and approve the operating model and indicative establishment structure - embedding the Customer Service Hub within Corporate Communications.

## Recommendations

The Policy and Strategy Committee is requested to:

1. Approve the proposed changes to customer service delivery, across all service areas, that will be introduced via the Customer Service Hub approach;
2. Endorse the principle of 'Digital First' as the preferred delivery model for all customer transactions identified as being suitable and in-scope;
3. Approve that responsibility for the Customer Service Hub, incorporating increased website functionality, communications and providing a single contact point for all council service areas, will sit within Corporate Communications and authorise the Head of Service to progress these developments in line with the approved DigitalNL Transformation Programme and existing responsibilities contained in the Scheme of Delegation;
4. Approve the Customer Service Hub operating model and indicative establishment structure, recognising that there may be a requirement for further revisions in line with the Covid-19 Recovery Plan; and,
5. Note that the new website, incorporating enhanced functionality and increased self-serve capability in Waste Services is due to be launched in August this year.

---

## The Plan for North Lanarkshire

Priority All priorities

Ambition statement (18) Ensure our digital transformation is responsive to all people's needs and enable access to the services they need

## 1. Background

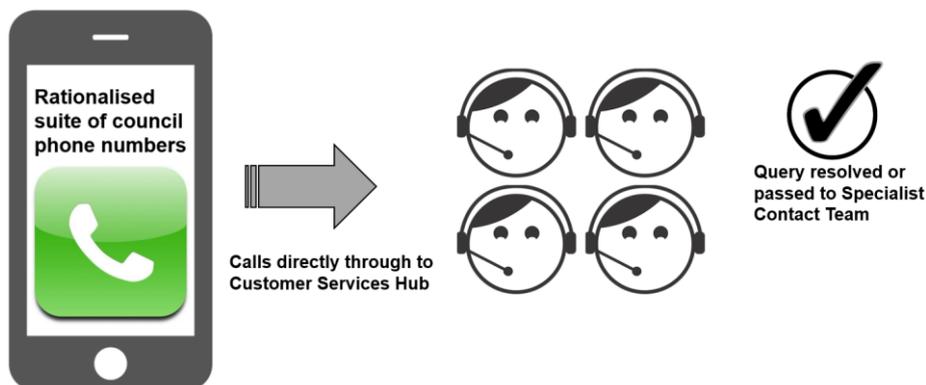
- 1.1 In March last year the Policy and Strategy Committee approved a five-year digital transformation and investment programme that will fundamentally transform existing service delivery and in so doing, improve how the council connects with communities and businesses, while also helping to address increasing demand pressures and significant financial challenges referenced within our long-term financial plan.
- 1.2 The twin-tracked transformation programmes, SmartNL and DigitalNL focus on stimulating economic growth through investment in digital infrastructure and establishing the council as a leading digital authority. In line with the Covid-19 Recovery Planning Group's business objectives, there is now an immediate requirement to sustain and stimulate economic recovery post outbreak and the potential contribution of digital solutions and developments in aiding that recovery should not be underestimated.
- 1.3 In approving DigitalNL, members recognised that significant changes were required to existing customer service delivery methods, IT services (including customer-facing infrastructure such as the website) and organisational culture for the council to make its digital ambitions a reality and deliver on The Plan for North Lanarkshire.
- 1.4 Detailed design work across council services in collaboration with our specialist business partners, PwC and Agilisys, produced a five year Work Programme. Individual work packages are identified and stood up on an iterative and planned basis. Development of the council's website and creation of a Customer Service Hub were included within the initial Year One Work Programme.
- 1.5 The Transformation and Digitisation Committee receives update reports on individual Work Packages as these reach critical phases of development, implementation and sign-off.

---

## 2. Report

### Customer Service Hub

- 2.1 At its recent meetings the Transformation and Digitisation Committee identified the development of the Customer Service Hub and associated business models for front and back office processes as early deliverables - pivotal to improving customer outcomes and achieving the cultural change and operating efficiencies referenced above. In developing the Customer Service Hub and recognising future business demands, scope exists for payments, appointment bookings, initial enquiries and service allocations to be handled through online, web chat and phone channels.



- 2.2 The Customer Service Hub will deal with all inbound and outbound communications, via the website, social media, targeted messaging and through enquiries via a rationalised suite of contact telephone numbers (with the ultimate aim of moving to a single number for the council). Telephone enquiries will be handled by skilled and competent Customer Service Hub representatives who are fully trained in customer care and possess high levels of Service understanding and expertise. It is envisaged that the majority of calls will be resolved at first point of enquiry with only the more complex cases, or those where face to face contact is required, transferred to Specialist Contact Teams within Services.
- 2.3 Customer Service Hub representatives will also respond directly to social media requests for service, resolving the request at first point of contact where possible. Future development of the new council website includes a chat function. While the chat bot will be able to signpost customers to self-help automatically, Customer Service Hub representatives will also be the first point of escalation where automated responses cannot resolve a customer request.
- 2.4 Although the Customer Service Hub will deal with telephone enquiries, it is not a Customer Contact Centre, nor indeed will it have a single, fixed location. Instead the Customer Service Hub represents a new approach to customer service delivery – one that can be delivered virtually by staff working across different services and in different locations, including home working.



- 2.5 Ultimately, the Customer Service Hub will handle enquiries for all service areas. In line with the approved DigitalNL Full Business Case (FBC) approved at Policy and Strategy Committee, individual Services and required staff support will be redeployed on a phased basis following completion of detailed examination (Service Sprint) to identify which elements of customer engagement and enquiry handling are suitable for delivery via the Customer Service Hub – either fully or partially.
- 2.6 In tandem, communication via the council website and social media will proactively push enquiries towards self-serve solutions thereby satisfying a significant, and increasing, volume of enquiries via digital channels. Strategic communications activity including consultations, campaigns and announcements will inform customer service activity in the Customer Service Hub and analysis of customer activity through the Hub will inform development of ongoing communications campaigns, producing a truly integrated approach to outbound and inbound communication and a single understanding of key priorities and messages.

2.7 Current scheduling will see Waste Services as the first service area to be stood-up, via the launch of the new website in August this year. The Website Release Plan currently identifies that future service areas will include: Schools and Learning; Council Tax; Planning and Building; and Housing. It should be noted, however, that these releases may change subject to re-prioritisation in accordance with the Covid-19 Recovery Planning Group's Business Objectives and Planning Assumptions.

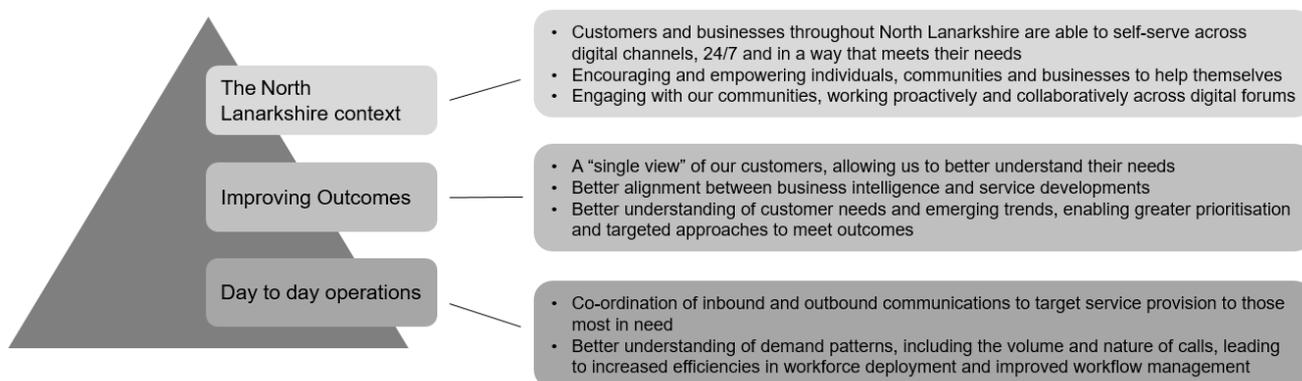
### Alignment with The Plan for North Lanarkshire

2.8 The Customer Service Hub and self-serve functionality via the council's website provide modern, front facing services and enable our customers to engage with the council at a time and in a way that is suitable to their needs and preferences. The creation of the Customer Service Hub is directly aligned to The Plan for North Lanarkshire, in particular enhancing participation, capacity and empowerment across our communities. More specific links, as demonstrated below, deliver on the shared ambitions and individual Programmes of Work.

	Ambition Statement	Programme(s) of Work
18	Ensure our digital transformation is responsive to all people's needs and enables access to the services they need.	<b>P003.1:</b> Transformation Programme incorporating: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• DigitalINL Strategy (PoW 68);</li> <li>• DigitalINL Communication &amp; Engagement Strategy (PoW 69); and</li> <li>• Digital Self-Serve (PoW 70).</li> </ul> <b>P007.1:</b> Communications Plan (Annual) <b>P083:</b> Customer Service Hub
19	Improve engagement with communities and develop their capacity to help themselves.	
23	Build a workforce for the future capable of delivering on our priorities and shared ambition.	
24	Review and design services around people, communities and shared resources.	

2.9 Information feeds between the Customer Service Hub and Business Intelligence (BI) Hub will allow the two-way flow of business intelligence with the BI Hub providing performance data and the Customer Service Hub relaying information on service need and customer demands to inform service prioritisation and improvement.

2.10 Using the Strategic Performance Framework model, it is possible to identify clear benefits at a North Lanarkshire level in addition to operating efficiencies, more effective targeting of resources and improving outcomes overall.



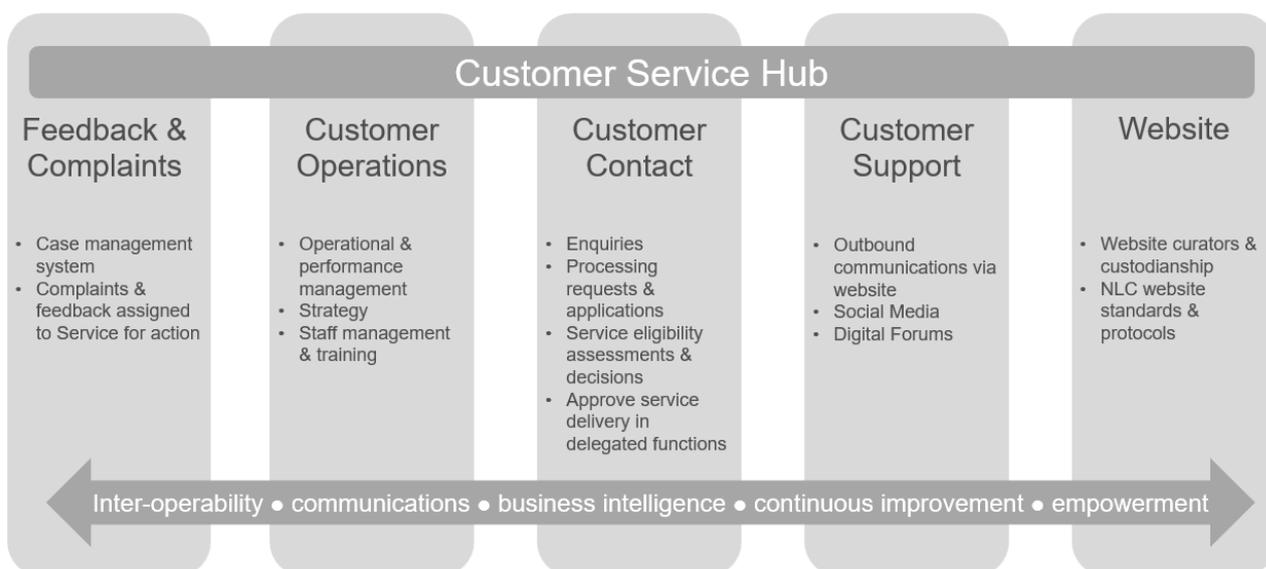
### Current Challenges

2.11 The development of the Customer Service Hub, delivered conjointly with an enhanced website and targeted communications solution, is predicated by a number of challenges outlined below. These were identified during development of the DigitalINL Business Case and the detailed design stage of the Work Packages.

- 2.11.1 Different Services hold different information on customers and service users, preventing the council from developing a single view of each customer and targeting services accordingly.
- 2.11.2 There are various routes into Services (e.g. First Stop Shop; Customer Contact Centre; main office; telephone) and the customer experience is different across each of these.
- 2.11.3 There is no standardised operating model for the provision of ‘front office’ functions across the council, with an inconsistent experience for the customer and little co-ordination or sharing of best practice across front office activity.
- 2.11.4 There is a low level of digital maturity in how customers access the council, with the majority of contact via telephone or face to face.
- 2.11.5 Community empowerment and participation is inconsistent and often reactive.

### Proposed Customer Service Hub Solution

- 2.12 A number of underlying operating and design principles are fundamental to delivery of the Customer Service Hub. The first of these relates to the absolute paramount requirement for the Customer Service Hub to be delivered in tandem with the release of more proactive and targeted communication feeds via the council’s website and other social media platforms alongside the introduction of digital self-serve options. The new website (and the technology supporting it) gives the council far more flexibility to highlight relevant content to service users in a way that is based on customer need. In turn, this maximises the opportunities for self-service and reduces demand on council services. The new website will be considerably streamlined and easier to navigate for customers.
- 2.13 Taken collectively, the Customer Service Hub, improved website and targeted, proactive communications represent the new face of the council’s front office. Our ambitions for customer service need to aspire beyond our existing provision and adapt to reflect community expectations of modern service delivery. Operating across five inter-connected strands, the Customer Service Hub will deliver Customer Contact and Support functions. The website, customer operations and customer feedback functions sit alongside – providing business intelligence, continuous improvement and communication feeds/messaging to improve the overall customer experience.



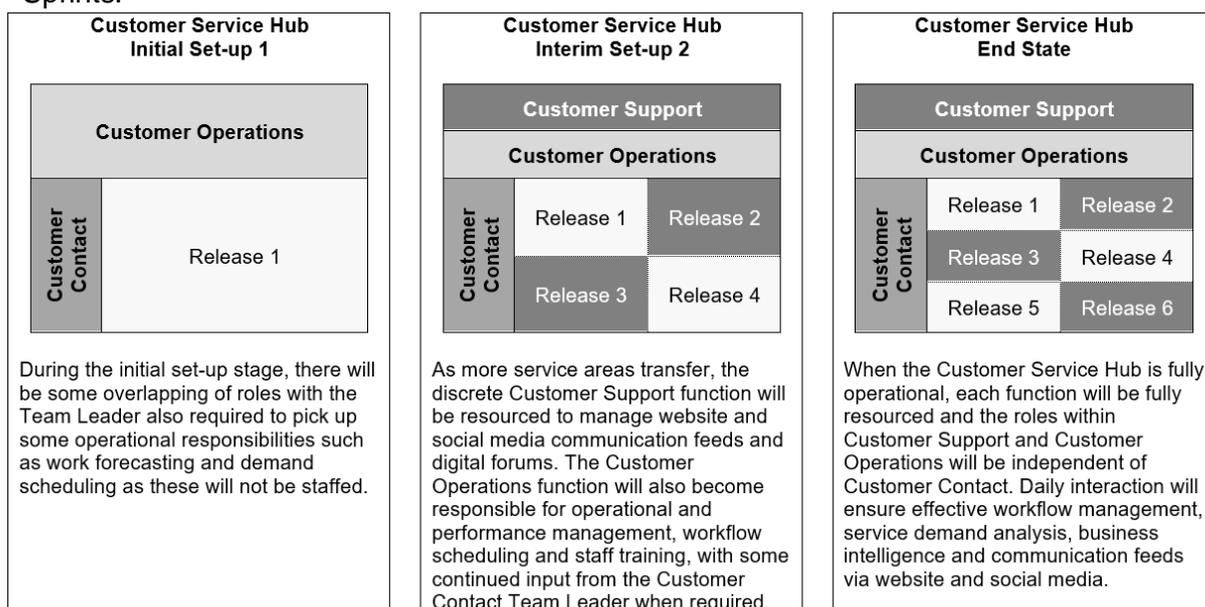
- 2.14 By proactively pushing communication feeds and messaging the council can pre-empt enquiries and provide services without any requirement for customers to engage with a council service or visit an office – reinforcing our Covid-19 Recovery Plan. Individuals and community organisations will further benefit and be empowered through access to up to date and relevant information. Appendix 1 illustrates the initial operating model and establishment structure.

### Customer and Council Benefits

- 2.15 The commitment to satisfying customer expectations, while at the same time addressing the challenges identified at 2.11 above, form the basis of the design and operating principles governing development of the Customer Service Hub. Through this new approach, the council will meet community and business demands for modern and efficient customer service, while also releasing efficiencies, delivering customer outcomes and improving performance. Appendix 2 summarises the design principles initially considered at the Transformation and Digitisation Committee in February 2020, with anticipated benefits for customers and the council also outlined.

### Implementation

- 2.16 Services and staff will transition into the Customer Service Hub based on the Service Construct Release Plan, i.e. on an iterative basis and following individual Service Sprints.



### Corporate Communications

- 2.17 The council has significant experience in the effective use of communication campaigns to inform customers and, where desired, change behaviours – e.g. fostering; anti-dog fouling; under-age sales of alcohol. Systematic production of timely campaigns is already digitally driven by the service and the sharpened focus on successful digital communication and the insight and analysis obtained through the response to coronavirus is crucial to the future success of campaigns. Through the Customer Service Hub, and its location in Corporate Communications, there is the potential to extend and strengthen this as described below.

- 2.17.1 Providing the right information to customers and channelling them to the most appropriate resource on the website provides valuable data and insight on customer needs and service demand.

- 2.17.2 Analysis of this data and insight allows us to shape and target future campaigns, external and internal communications, service delivery and customer service.
- 2.17.3 Having a “single view” of our customers will allow Corporate Communications to tailor future campaigns and communications to better meet service delivery need. Taking it further, elements of strategic communication campaigns can be used to increase engagement and generate behavioural change on behalf of a service where this is desirable.
- 2.17.4 Creative campaigns with compelling content generate interest, which transfers into ‘*click throughs*,’ ‘*likes*’ and ‘*shares*’ – all of which drive and increase the volume of traffic to the council’s website and increase future engagement with key messages, further establishing the council as a trusted source of information.
- 2.17.5 Effective strategic communication (including its ability to incite behavioural change); the services that customers are able to access; and the customer service they experience when doing so, are critical factors in improving the council’s reputation.

---

### **3. Equality and Diversity**

#### 3.1 Fairer Scotland Duty

- 3.1.1 The council is required to ensure that its policies and service delivery decisions do not adversely affect people either because of their particular characteristics, e.g. age, gender or ethnicity, or because of their socio economic status. An Equalities and Fairer Scotland Impact Assessment will be completed for the Customer Service Hub developments described in this report, along with separate assessments for specific service areas in advance of their transition to digital delivery channels.

#### 3.2 Equality Impact Assessment

- 3.2.1 As above, combined Fairer Scotland and Equality Impact Assessments will be completed as part of the Service Sprints.

---

### **4. Implications**

#### 4.1 Financial Impact

- 4.1.1 The 2019/20 budget for the design element of the Customer Service Hub was £161,381. Year Two costs are linked to the build phase, including the digital platform and Customer Relationship Management System (CRM). All costs are contained within the overall indicative five year investment (£28.8m) and regular monitoring, control and reporting on revenue and capital is carried out in line with the council’s Financial Governance arrangements.

#### 4.2 HR/Policy/Legislative Impact

- 4.2.1 Development and stand up of the Customer Service Hub will be incremental as service areas are released. An indicative Establishment Structure for the interim state is provided at Appendix 1.
- 4.2.2 Release of Sprints 1 and 2 (Waste and Built Environment) will require staff redeployment from existing service areas to the Customer Service Hub. HR Business

Partners will engage with the relevant Services, employees identified as being in-scope and trade unions to ensure a smooth and effective transition.

#### 4.2.3 Preparatory tasks in advance of staff transfers include:

- Developing a communications strategy to support staff redeployments to the Customer Service Hub;
- Developing training programmes with an initial focus on:
  - Customer Relationship Management;
  - Customer Care;
  - Service area expertise.

#### 4.2.4 Staff training materials will be informed by business intelligence on the most frequent and 'typical nature' of customer enquiries to ensure that Customer Service hub representatives are:

- Knowledgeable about the service area;
- Familiar with the nature of the business and customer needs; and
- Aware of anticipated levels of enquiries, demand and trends.

### 4.3 Environmental Impact

#### 4.3.1 There are no immediate environmental impacts arising from this report, however, it is intended that a series of environmental indicators will be developed as part of the overall Customer Service Hub development and asset rationalisation proposals.

### 4.4 Risk Impact

#### 4.4.1 The design phase of the Customer Service Hub was subject to regular risk assessment and reporting through the DigitalNL Project Board. This workstream is now closed-off as 'complete' and we move to the build and implementation elements. A risk assessment will be completed with Risks, Assumptions, Issues, Dependencies and Exceptions (RAIDE) reported monthly through the DigitalNL Project Board.

---

## 5. Measures of success

### 5.1 Success will be demonstrated against a range of measures and performance indicators. These will be developed as each phase of the Service Construct Release Plan is delivered and the Customer Service Hub and enhanced front office are stood-up. Early deliverables will include:

- 5.1.1 New website going 'live' this year with increased functionality in Waste Services and improved, consistent format across all pages;
- 5.1.2 Release management principles agreed with Services to determine transition arrangements, including staff redeployment to the Customer Service Hub;
- 5.1.3 Communications Strategy and Training Programme in place to support staff redeployment;
- 5.1.4 2020/21 and Future Years' Service Release Plan approved; and,
- 5.1.5 Development of annual Corporate Communications Plan to demonstrate integration of customer insight into evaluation of campaigns.

### 5.2 Benefits realisation projections were completed as part of the DigitalNL Transformation Programme Full Business Case considered in March 2019. Recognising that a number of posts will be redeployed to deliver services via the Customer Service Hub, some potential remains to reduce the overall FTE requirement for front office activities by an indicative total of up to 200 FTEs over the 5 year investment period.

5.3 Success overall will be determined through the successful application of digital technology to provide a modern, customer facing Customer Service Hub underpinned by targeted communications and robust operational and performance management.

---

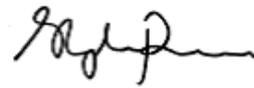
**6. Supporting documents**

- 6.1 Appendix 1 Customer Service Hub – Interim Establishment Structure & Operating Model  
Appendix 2 Customer Service Hub Design Principles – Community and Council Benefits



**Head of Business Solutions**

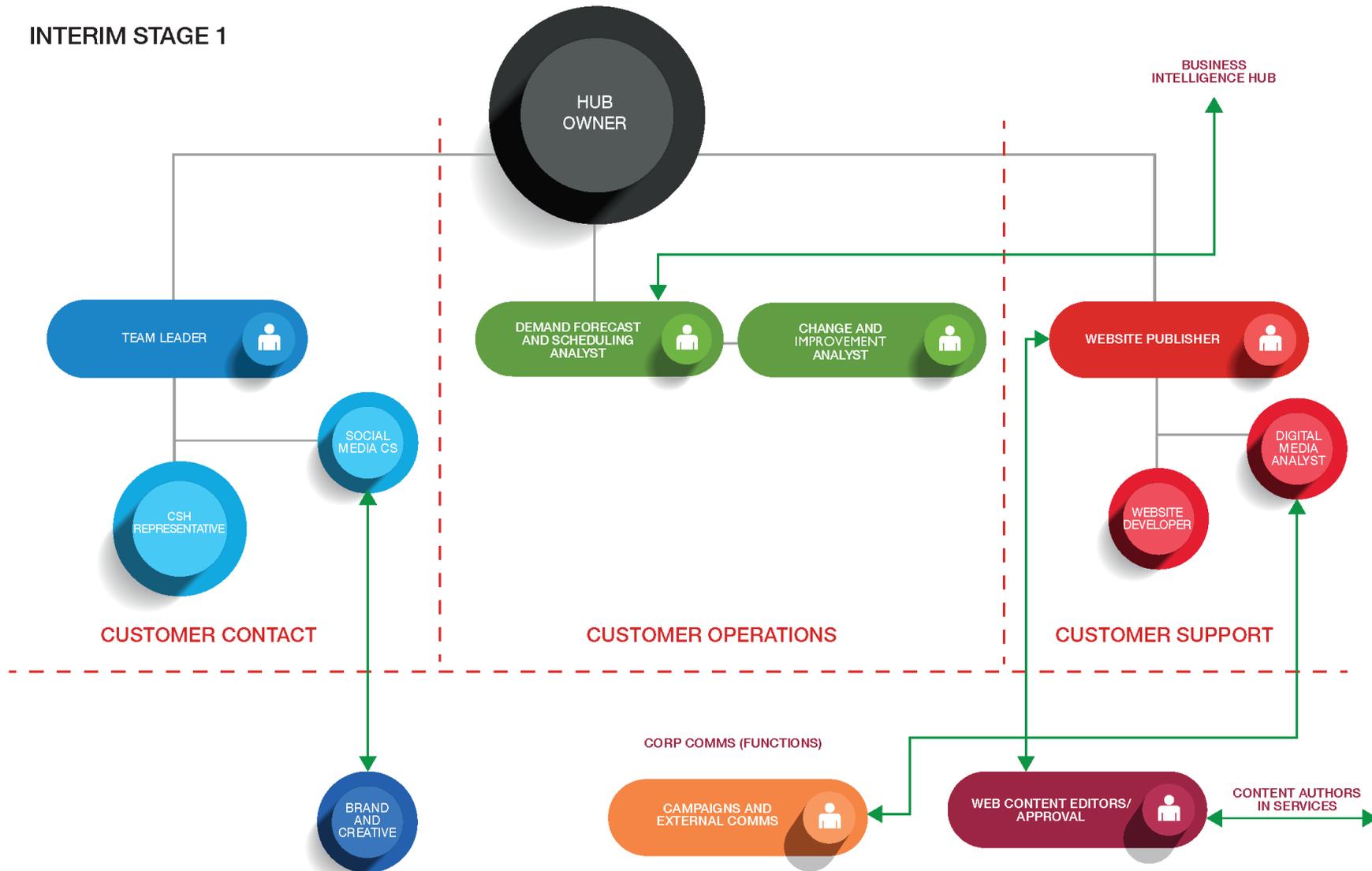
**and**



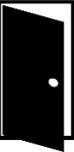
**Head of Strategic Communication**

Customer Service Hub – Interim Establishment Structure and Operating Model

INTERIM STAGE 1



## Customer Service Hub Design Principles and Customer Benefits.

 <p><b>Customers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Single point of contact for all service areas</li> <li>• Customer contact is professional and highly skilled, with high levels of customer care and expertise from all services</li> <li>• Enquiries resolved at first point of contact, with only the more complex enquiries passed to specialist Service Contact Teams</li> <li>• Automatic e-mail messaging, confirming actions and sending status updates</li> <li>• Enquiries, service requests, applications and payments can all be handled through Customer Service Hub and website</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Online</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to self-serve digital channels for the majority of service requests and enquiries</li> <li>• Website will be accessible across laptop, phone and tablet and customers will also have access to the downloadable NLC app</li> <li>• Updated with information to meet users' needs and in a style and 'Tone of Voice' that is easy to understand and consistent</li> <li>• Consistent look and feel to the council's website with web forms produced in a consistent and simple format</li> <li>• Webchat offering instant interaction with customers browsing the website</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Accessible</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rationalised telephone numbers and reduced requirement to visit offices in person</li> <li>• Rationalised office bases – mobile working and virtual Community Service Hub</li> <li>• Continued availability of existing Out of Hours specialist services (e.g. Homelessness; Anti-Social Behaviour; Community Alarms; Social Work)</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Community</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communication feeds and messaging on current issues and FAQs</li> <li>• Timely and accurate information for customers</li> <li>• Increased community resilience and empowerment</li> <li>• Enhanced community engagement and participation, including a central and secure platform where community groups/digital forums can share ideas</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Payment</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers can pay for services upfront</li> <li>• Payment completed using a third party provider to deliver extra security</li> <li>• Customers passed to third party provider at the end of the their call and after their request has been handled</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Account Management</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customers will be able to create an account online to allow secure interaction with the digital platform hosting the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system</li> <li>• Customers will be able to manage their account profile to update contact details and notification preferences</li> <li>• Customers will be authenticated initially on a "least privilege" basis; first access is only to the services they need</li> <li>• Customers will be able to increase their level of access by providing further information to identify and verify themselves</li> </ul>

## Customer Service Hub Design Principles and Council Benefits.

 <p><b>Customers</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of a 'single view' of each customer via the CRM system and an instant view of all previous interactions with the council</li> <li>• Improved customer experience and satisfaction rates</li> <li>• Heightened reputation and improved perceptions of the council - delivering The Plan for North Lanarkshire</li> <li>• Multi-skilled customer advisers, covering all service areas and empowered to deliver services that enhance customer experience and outcomes</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Technology</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesigning services around the needs of communities and businesses through ultra-fast broadband, artificial intelligence and next generation smart devices</li> <li>• Digital by default offering a multichannel approach and enabling customers to progress a request as far as they can via online route</li> <li>• Quick effective solutions, redirecting traffic from traditional means and providing timely and accurate information for customers</li> <li>• Consistency across service areas, common processes driven by technology</li> <li>• Effective use of CRM and digital platform to direct service delivery</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Process</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common processes and technology delivering efficiencies, consistency and improved customer service</li> <li>• End to end workflow management and customer journey</li> <li>• Service areas and staff will transition to the Customer Service Hub based on a phased and iterative basis, as per the Service Construct Release Plan</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Organisation</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Alignment and data sharing between the Customer Service Hub and Business Intelligence Hub will allow performance data and customer feedback to inform service improvements and communications</li> <li>• People and Performance Management Framework in place to govern operations and continuous improvement</li> <li>• Highly skilled workforce, trained in customer care and empowered to resolve majority of enquiries at first point of contact</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Resources</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cost effective solution, designed around fully integrated customer service outcomes, rather than internal structures or existing stand-alone processes</li> <li>• Asset rationalisation through reduced requirement for public offices in line with Recovery Planning Group recommendations and development of town and community hubs</li> <li>• Rationalised suite of telephone numbers as the initial point of contact</li> </ul>
 <p><b>Comms</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inbound and outbound communications co-ordinated across all service areas</li> <li>• Proactive communications and messaging, informed by business intelligence, analytics and insight, to anticipate customer queries and demands</li> <li>• Opportunities for community collaboration and engagement with the council and partner organisations via digital forums</li> <li>• Social media messages and signposting of new services or routes to information</li> <li>• Track and monitor customer responses and reactions alongside identification of community trends</li> </ul>