

Committee Manager: Erica Keegan (Ext. 37547)

22 October 2015

## **HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP**

A meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will be held in Committee Room 1 at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton on **Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015 at 6.00 pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Councillors; Mrs Ayres, Bicknell, Blampied, Mrs Bower, Clayden, Mrs Daniells, Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Oppler, Mrs Pendleton and Mrs Porter.

### **A G E N D A**

1. ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN & VICE-CHAIRMAN

To elect the Chairman & Vice-Chairman for this working group.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSCENCE

Please send your apologies to Erica Keegan - tel:01903 737547 or e-mail: [erica.keegan@arun.gov.uk](mailto:erica.keegan@arun.gov.uk)

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial/pecuniary interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda.

You should declare your interest by stating:

- a) the item you have the interest in
- b) whether it is a personal interest and the nature of the interest
- c) whether it is also a prejudicial/pecuniary interest

You then need to re-declare your interest and the nature of the interest at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent.

4. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 5 March 2015 (attached).

5. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

6. MEETING TIMES

Members are requested to agree the preferred start time for future meetings and to note the future meeting dates of 7 January 2016 and 10 March 2016.

7. HOUSING SERVICES UPDATE

Managers from Housing Services will provide the working group with a presentation on roles & responsibilities (briefing notes attached).

8. CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE

The Head of HR & Customer Services will provide the working group with an update on developments since the working group last met in March 2015 (briefing notes attached).

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To review & agree the Terms of Reference for this Working Group (attached).

10. WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

To plan & note the Work Programme for 2015/16 (attached).

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

5 March 2015 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Clayden (Chairman), Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Bower [from Minute 45], Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate and Squires.

Councillors Elkins and Gammon were also present.

39. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors; Mrs Goad, Mrs Harrison and Mrs Pendleton.

Apologies had also been received from the Cabinet Member for Community Services, Councillor Wotherspoon.

40. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

41. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2015 were approved by the Working Group and were signed by the Chairman.

42. CHANGE TO THE ORDER OF THE AGENDA

The Chairman requested a change to the order of the agenda and the Working Group agreed to consider the Council’s Website Update as the first item.

43. COUNCIL’S WEBSITE UPDATE

The Service Development Manager presented an update with respect to the launch of the Council’s improved website. It was explained that the website had been modernised in line with consultancy advice from the Society of Information Technology (SOCITM) which encouraged a customer focused approach.

The Service Development Manager advised Members that he and his team of two Web Content Writers had been trained to use the new system with the aim of redesigning the content of the pages to SOCITM standards. Members were informed that, as part of this redesign, the web content had been streamlined reducing the existing 2000 pages to just over 400.

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Dated.....

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It was explained that additional software had helped enhance the customer experience. Site-Improve was a system that allowed the Council to track the website’s performance in terms of elements such as spelling errors, broken links or website failure. BrowseAloud was another tool that the Council had employed with the aim of producing the best possible customer experience. The Service Development Manager explained that BrowseAloud added speech, reading and translation support to the website giving access to those people with print disabilities, dyslexia, low literacy, mild visual impairments and those with English as a second language.

The Service Development Manager stated that, in the most part, feedback had been positive. He informed Members that he had received divided opinion on the colour scheme and, although corporate colours had been used, any visual problems would be addressed. It was also pointed out that the Council’s website could now respond to screen size and the view would be adjusted according to the device used to access the site. Members were pleased to note that mobile devices would now be able to access the site in a visually balanced way.

The Head of HR & Customer Services congratulated the Service Development Manager and his team for their work in launching the new website. It was pointed out that the Council had managed the development with additional dedicated resources and it would be important, going forward, to continue maintenance and progression of the site.

Members discussed the update and also congratulated the website team on a job well done. Members were impressed with the streamlining and aesthetics of the website and comment was made that it was easy to use and accessibility was quicker. Following a question, it was noted that the front page of the website provided links to West Sussex County Council and other relevant organisations to efficiently link customers to County or other relevant service providers.

The Chairman and the working group gave their particular thanks to the Service Development Manager and his team for the positive transformation of the Council’s website. Members of the working group were keen that the good work achieved should be both sustained and further developed.

Following discussion, the working group agreed to

RECOMMEND TO CABINET – that

the Council continue with maintaining, developing and supporting the Digital Arun Project to invest in the progress of Arun District Council’s website.

44. GAS SAFETY CERTIFICATES UPDATE

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Dated.....

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The Head of Housing reported that there were 5 outstanding Gas Certificates. It was noted that the Council was moving from one gas contractor to another and Gas Safety Certificates were part of the new contract. It was expected that the number outstanding Gas Certificates would be reduced.

45. ROUGH SLEEPER UPDATE

The Head of Housing circulated a written update from Stonepillow. It was noted that the Rough Sleeper count, taken annually during November, had dropped from 18 rough sleepers to 13.

Members were informed that the Council had agreed a contribution of £10,000 towards Glenlogie’s running costs until 2016. Following this the Council would consider an ongoing arrangement.

The working group were pleased to note the progress with the Glenlogie Project and the Chairman praised the work that had been done as one of the successes of the Council.

46. COUNCIL HOUSING DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

The Principal Environmental Health Officer Housing presented the report on Council Housing Adaptations Policy and provided details of the updates that had been made to this policy.

Members were informed that the main policy change had been to include the consideration of whether a property was under occupied before adaptation. This was noted as a way of managing housing stock more efficiently. Under occupying tenants would be encouraged to downsize to enable the Council to meet the housing demand of other housing applicants. The under occupation incentive of £1500 would be paid to Council tenants downsizing to a right sized property.

The working group discussed the report. A question was raised with respect to the number of adaptation referrals against numbers completed. In 2013/14 there were 93 referrals with just 64 completions. The Principal Environmental Health Officer Housing explained that resources had been limited and this had been addressed by adjusting the way the team works. It was also explained that some referrals may be cancelled or may not complete in the same financial year.

Following further questions which were responded to at the meeting the working group considered the report’s recommendation.

The working group agreed to

RECOMMEND TO CABINET - that

the updated Council Housing Disabled Adaptations Policy November 2014 be approved.

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Dated.....

'Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting'

47. DRAFT HOUSING REVENUE ACCOUNT (HRA) BUSINESS PLAN 2015-2025

The Head of Housing presented the report on the Draft Housing Revenue Account (HRA) Business Plan 2015-2025 for consideration prior to Cabinet at its meeting on 16 March 2015.

It was explained that the amendments to the previous HRA Business Plan took account of the changes which have impacted on the HRA's financial position. Changes outlined included:

- Increased level of Right to Buy (RTB) Sales which impact on rental receipts
- The Council's commitment to the 1-for-1 replacement scheme, which requires the Council to contribute £70 towards each £30 it is able to retain from RTB receipts, to be invested in replacement housing
- Potential impact of changes in welfare reform and rent collection
- Member's ambition to build 150 homes over a 5 year period

The working group noted the key objectives for the 2015-25 HRA Business Plan. These priorities were considered by Cabinet on 18 August 2014 and the following had been identified as the highest priorities for the Council's Housing Service

- The development and acquisition of 150 new homes by March 2020, as in the Council's Corporate Plan
- A 5 year programme of boiler replacements to communal heating systems within sheltered housing schemes, beginning with a £600,000 programme to upgrade boilers to 4 schemes in 2015-16 was agreed by Cabinet in December 2014
- A 5 year programme to improve and develop the Council's sheltered housing, estimated at £1million per annum;
- Establishing appropriate funding mechanisms to ensure the delivery of the above capital programme.

The Head of Housing informed Members that the other key objectives would be to maintain the Council's housing stock, manage the housing service, meet housing needs and effectively manage resources.

It was noted that the established Tenants Scrutiny Review panel had completed one review on complaints and had begun a review on Void properties.

Members of the working group discussed the report and asked questions. Key points raised were:

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- The Head of Housing confirmed that the Council was at the limits of its affordability but recognised the importance of investing in current housing stock.
- It was noted that the development of 22 new homes on the Wick site in Littlehampton would begin no later than October 2015.
- Referring to the financial analysis Members noted that the Council would need to borrow money to invest in properties. This would result in a small annual surplus in 2015-16 followed by gradually reducing deficits for the next 5 years, due to increased provision for repairs and improvements. The Head of Housing emphasised that Risk Management issues had been considered by the Council’s accountants and the financial situation would be continually monitored. The Council’s accountants were satisfied that the Council could borrow the level of money required comfortably.
- Members made comment that they were keen that suitable existing properties were acquired for Council Housing stock as more cost effective than new builds.
- Members were keen and the Head of Housing agreed that the sheltered housing works should begin as soon as possible. It was confirmed that there would be major improvement works to the Council’s sheltered housing during the first 5 years of the Business Plan. This would be funded by a mixture of loans and capital receipts, principally from proceeds from Right to Buy sales.
- A suggestion was made that solar panels should be installed on all new Council housing builds as opposed to after a housing development was completed. The Head of Housing stated that this was a good idea and would be considered. A member urged caution with respect to the installation of solar panels and planning permission, having recently dealt with a case where a new extension had been granted to a property that, when built, blocked light access to the adjacent property’s solar panels.
- A question was raised with respect to short term tenancies and their rights under Right to Buy. The Head of Housing stated that he would investigate this and provide answer outside of this meeting.

The Chairman thanked the Head of Housing for a comprehensive report and the working group then considered the report’s recommendations.

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Dated.....

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

The working group agreed to

RECOMMEND TO CABINET –

- (1) Agree the Business Plan
- (2) Agree the maximum borrowing of £18.1m to fund the Business Plan
- (3) Agree the commencement of work to build 22 homes in Wick
- (4) Authorise expenditure on the social housing element of the new properties in Barnham, developed by WSCC
- (5) Note a 5-year programme to improve and develop the Council’s sheltered housing, estimated at £1m p.a., with work commencing in 2016/17
- (6) Note that a further review of the Business Plan will be presented to the Committee in early 2017

48. WORK PROGRAMME 2015/16

The work programme and meeting dates for the new Municipal Year 2015/16 were noted.

As this was the last meeting of this working group for this Municipal Year (2014/15) the Chairman thanked Members and Officers for their contribution and steadfast support. The Chairman gave special thanks to the working group’s Committee Manager for all her good work and support to the committee over the year.

(The meeting concluded at 7.07pm)

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Dated.....



**HOUSING SERVICE**

**ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

**FOR PRESENTATION TO HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING  
GROUP MEETING**

**3 NOVEMBER 2015**

## **1. OVERVIEW OF THE HOUSING DEPARTMENT** **Head of Housing - Brian Pople**

### Background:-

- *c3300 homes across district*
- *Close to 4,000 households currently rent or lease a home from Arun equating to approximately 5% of all households in the Arun District.  
The majority of our customers (87%) rent their homes; the others are leaseholders who are predominantly tenants who have exercised the Right to Buy their Council flat on a long lease. Approximately 850 individuals rent Council garages.*
- *700+ applicants on Housing Register (Judy will talk more about Housing Register)*
- *Rental income amounts to approx. £17m (2015/16)*
- *Current expenditure amounts to approx. £16.5m (2015/16)*

### HRA Business Plan:-

- *as at January 2015 (issue of latest HRA Business Plan), HRA projected to make surplus of £1.3m in 2021-22, increasing to £4.1m by 2024-25*
- *Programme to deliver 150 new homes and programme of major improvement works to sheltered schemes during first 5 years of Business Plan*
- *HRA Business Plan highest priorities include:-*
  - *delivery of 150 new homes – onsite by no later than October 2015 to deliver 22 new homes at Wick;*
  - *5 year programme of boiler replacement to communal heating systems: in sheltered housing schemes;*
  - *5 year programme to improve sheltered housing schemes:*
- *Action Plan agreed as part of approved HRA Business Plan – doubts over ability to complete/achieve due to recent changes announced by Government*

### Impact on HRA Funds:-

- *Repayment of PWLB loans totalling £70.9m*
- *Additional borrowing of up to £18.1m to enable delivery of 150 new homes*
- *Maximise application of 1-for-1 RTB receipts*
- *S106 agreements and RTB sales to fund new housing developments*
- *Impact of Welfare Reform*
- *Review of service charges*
- *Social Rent v Affordable Rent – what to charge on new builds?*
- *Changes announced in recent Budget Statement re proposal to reduce social rent impacting on rental income/HRA funds*
- *Increased RTB sales – reducing housing stock and consequent rental income e.g. 10 additional RTB disposals each year will lead to reduction of £0.6m in total net rent income over first 5 years of HRA Business Plan*

- *Increase of 1% in interest rates will lead to increase to additional loan charges of £1.3m for full 10 years of HRA Business Plan*
- *Reduction of 1.5% in assumed rate of inflation will lead to reduction of £0.8m in initial rent income over first 5 years of HRA Business Plan*

Steps being taken to mitigate loss of income:-

- *Review contracts*
- *Smarter ways of working – mobile working, reporting repairs on-line, use of Arun Direct for high volume standard enquiries*
- *Review of Lettable Standards*
- *Disposal of non-essential land*
- *Viability of existing assets/flats/houses*
- *Potentially extending planned maintenance cycles*

## **2. PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING**

### **Principal Environmental Health Officer – Louise Crane**

- Private Sector Housing Standards
  - Investigating complaints and inspecting properties using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System
  - Enforcing housing standards
  - Investigating overcrowding complaints
  - Investigating illegal eviction cases
  - Immigration inspections
- Houses of Multiple Occupation (HMO)
  - Issuing of licences
  - Inspecting premises and ensuring terms of licences are maintained
  - Investigating complaints concerning HMO's
- Disabled Facilities Grants
  - For Council and privately owned properties
  - Working with West Sussex Occupational Therapist team to provide necessary adaptations to properties to maintain independence
- Energy Efficiency
  - Advice given re fuel poverty and energy efficiency
  - Promotion of the Home Energy Visitors
- Empty Homes
  - Working with owners to bring empty homes back into use
  - Offering advice and where appropriate financial assistance through grants and loans
  - Taking enforcement action to ensure the empty property is brought back into use
- Landlords Forum
  - Regular meetings with local private landlords
- Landlord Accreditation Scheme
  - Partnership with Chichester District Council and University of Chichester
  - Raising standards in private rented accommodation
- Public Health
  - Investigation of complaints of accumulations of waste/refuse within a property boundary that are prejudicial to health or a nuisance
  - Investigation of filthy and verminous properties/hoarding cases where there is a public health issue impacting on neighbours
- Pest Control
  - Treating a range of pests and insects eg. Rats, mice, wasps, fleas bedbugs etc
  - Providing pest control service contracts for commercial businesses
- Illegal encampment of travellers
  - Liaison with WSCC in relation to enforcement on Council land and use of the transit site

### **3. POLICY & PERFORMANCE**

#### **Housing Policy & Performance Officer – Karen McGreal**

- Housing Policy Development
  - Reviewing and renewing Housing Policies, either at 'end of life' or as reaction to changes in legislation/Government guidance/local need
  - Developing new policies in line with legislation/guidance etc
  - Training and development of staff when new/revised Policies are developed and implemented
- Business Improvement
  - Looking for new/better ways of working to improve service delivery
  - Working with the Housing IT system to continually improve methods of working

#### **4. HOUSING SERVICES**

##### **Housing Services Manager – Judy Knapp**

- Housing Allocations
  - Manage the Housing Register: processing applications; verification of client details; home visits; update clients' change of circumstances
  - Manage the choice based lettings scheme: advertising properties; liaising with housing associations; assistance with bidding
  - Allocate Council properties: offers of accommodation; viewings; sign-up new tenants; liaise with Repairs teams, Occupational Therapists; support services
  - Promote the under-occupation scheme and assist clients with down-sizing
  - Manage appeals/reviews of allocation decisions
  - Development, implementation and review of Housing Allocations Scheme
- Housing Options
  - Advice to those threatened with homelessness or seeking housing advice
  - Negotiate with private landlords to help sustain tenancy if under threat
  - Advice clients in relationship breakdown, financial difficulties, parental eviction
  - Advice for those fleeing domestic violence or abuse
  - Provide updated list of landlords willing to accept tenants on benefits
  - Homelessness investigations & decisions
- Homelessness
  - Complex homelessness investigations & decisions
  - Liaison with Shelter & clients' legal advisers
  - Reviews of homelessness decisions
  - Management of those found to be non-priority or intentionally homeless
- Neighbourhood Services
  - Tenancy and estate management
  - Carry out new tenant visits
  - Deal with neighbour disputes & anti-social behaviour involving Council tenants and/or Council housing estates. Liaison with other agencies such as Police, social services, CAB
  - Respond to breaches of tenancy agreement, taking legal proceedings where necessary
  - Facilitate mutual exchanges
  - Caretaking: cleaning, bulk refuse collection, monitoring communal Housing areas
  - Manage Temporary Accommodation (hostels)
  - Garages: waiting lists, allocation, maintain garage compounds
- Money Advice
  - Debt advice, maximise clients' income, assist clients starting Universal Credit
  - Clients include Council tenants; Housing Options & homeless applicants struggling with private rent; referrals from Housing Benefit & Council Tax teams; referrals from DWP
- Housing Fraud
  - Illegal sub-letting & not-occupying Council properties
  - Fraudulent Housing Register applications
  - Fraudulent Right to Buy applications

## **5. REACTIVE REPAIRS**

### **Housing Customer Services Manager – Elaine Gray**

- Council Housing Repairs
  - To handle incoming repair requests from tenants; phone calls or written requests
  - Raise orders for appropriate contractors. Book appointments convenient to the tenant where possible
  - Manage the performance of ADC term contractor, Mears.
  - Advising tenants of their responsibilities
  - Offering advice to tenants on a range of repair related issues eg damp and condensation, maintenance of various components of their home
  - Recharging tenants for repairs that are their responsibility or that have been caused by their own (or their visitors') neglect or wilful damage Post work assessments to ascertain quality of workmanship and customer satisfaction
  - Review tenant requests to approve their home and give permission where appropriate. Ensure tenants own works comply with building regulations and ADC policy. Post inspect improvements.
  
- Council House Voids (Empty Properties)
  - Pre-void visits to tenants who are moving on to ensure they are clear about their responsibilities when vacating their home. Also to check whether there have been unauthorised alterations made to the property and offering options to the outgoing tenants in relation to these alterations.
  - Pre-work survey to specify works that will be undertaken
  - Oversee void works whilst in progress
  - Sign off properties handed back by our contractor
  - New tenant visits to ensure that any works that were outstanding at the handback stage have been completed and to conduct a customer satisfaction survey

Elaine's other responsibilities:-

- Tenant Participation – Promoting the various ways that tenants can get involved with ADC as their landlord. Facilitating a range of different tenant groups:
  - Tenant Scrutiny Panel – a group of 6 – 8 tenants who are committed to helping ADC to improve the services delivered to the wider tenant community
    - Takes a formal evidence based approach
    - Review one service area at a time
    - Have so far completed reviews on the Complaints Process in Housing and Voids Standards. Next review will be on Tenant Satisfaction with the Reactive Repairs Service

- Environmental Improvement Working Group – A group of tenants who work with ADC officers to allocate funds that improve the appearance or living conditions of tenants
  - Proposals may be submitted from tenants, officers or others
  - Democratically voted on
  - Ensure that available funds are spent on projects that make most difference to tenants
- Arun Tenant & Leaseholder Organisation (ATLO) – open to all ADC tenants and leaseholders.
  - Meetings held every 8 weeks. Alternates between Bognor and Littlehampton
  - Committee Members run the meeting and are all tenants or leaseholders.
  - Regular guest speakers from the local area e.g. St John's Ambulance, Police Service, Neighbourhood Watch
  - An opportunity for tenants and leaseholders to raise issues that affect them and their neighbourhood
  - May be used as a consultative tenant body to test new policies or initiatives
  - Sharing of knowledge and information about Council services



## **6. PLANNED MAINTENANCE**

### **Planned Maintenance and M&E Manager – Keith Deane**

- Planned Maintenance Programme
  - Rolling programme for larger maintenance contracts e.g. central heating, re-roofing, replacement windows, kitchens & bathrooms
  - Achieving value for money contracts for works through tendering process
  - Consultation with leaseholders living in blocks of flats where necessary maintenance/improvement work is taking place
  
- Gas Maintenance Contract
  - Annual Landlord Gas Safety Checks
  - Repairs and maintenance to central heating systems
  - Replacement boilers, heating systems etc
  
- Mechanical & Electrical Service & Maintenance Contracts
  - Programme of electrical testing across Council homes
  - Re-wiring Council homes where/when necessary
  - CCTV
  - Door Entries
  - Fire Alarms
  - Emergency Lighting
  - Lifts
  - Communal TV Aerials

## **7. RENT ARREARS TEAM**

### **Rent Arrears Team Leader – Karen Collins**

#### **•Rent Collection**

- Managing and monitoring Council tenant rent accounts and progressing arrears cases in accordance with Council's collection and recovery policies & procedures in order to maximise collection and minimise arrears.
- Enforcing legal action in accordance with Court Protocol and ADC policy in order to safeguard Council's interest in Council tenanted property
- Providing debt advice and budgeting advice to Council tenants to maximise client income
- Liaising with Social Services, C.A.B, Shelter, Support Workers and client legal representatives to ensure tenants in arrears are receiving appropriate support to make their rent payments.
- Liaising with other Housing Teams, namely Housing Benefits, Neighbourhood Services, Housing Options, Housing Allocations and Homelessness to ensure the individual and their family, (especially where the person is considered to be vulnerable), are able to sustain the tenancy.
- Investigating and responding to complaints in accordance with ADC Complaints Procedure.

#### **•Rent Arrears Reporting Development**

- Setting up and maintaining monthly Rent Arrears Management Reports for Management & Committee reporting purposes to enable realistic and achievable performance targets to be set.

#### **•Right to Buy**

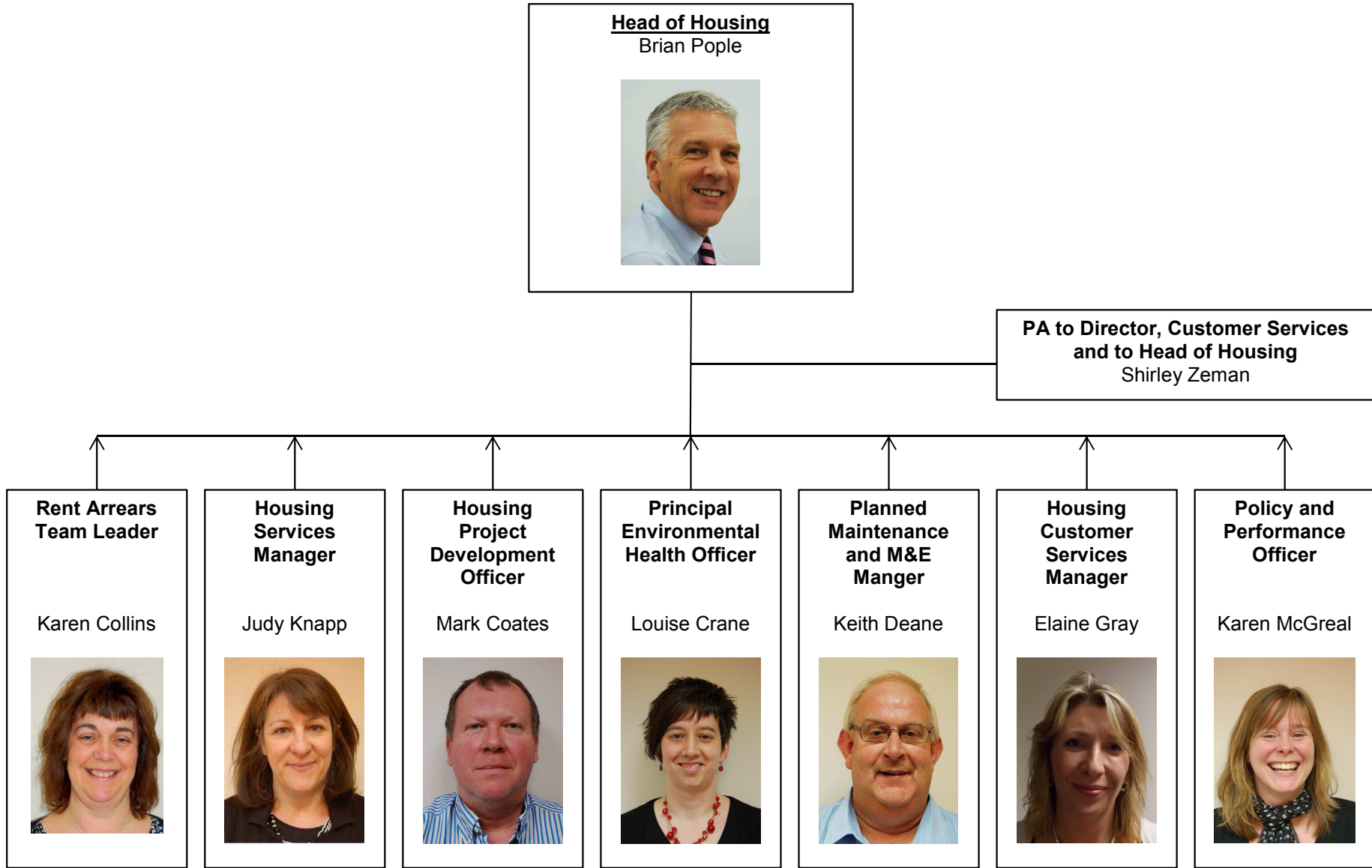
- Receiving and processing Right to Buy applications.
- Calculating discount to be awarded.
- Liaising with other teams e.g. Legal Services to progress application.
- Communicating with applicant throughout process.

## **8. HOUSING PROJECT DEVELOPMENT**

### **Housing Project Development Officer – Mark Coates**

- Development and Acquisition of New Land and Houses.
  - Obtaining Planning Permission and Developing New Council Homes on HRA Land
  - Developing New Council Homes on s 106 sites through land and build agreements with developers
  - Acquisition of existing homes for use as Council Homes,
  - Partnership working with WSCC and other land owners to build Council Homes on their land
  
- Housing Asset Management
  - Assessing Development Potential and Disposing of surplus land and properties to maximise HRA income
  - Granting of Leases and licences
  - Investigating and negotiating the settlement of land grabs and encroachments and enforcing the Councils rights
  - Transfer of management of allotment sites
  - Trees
  
- Leasehold management
  - Management of the 462 leasehold properties in the HRA

# ARUN HOUSING SERVICES STRUCTURE CHART



## **Housing & Customer Services Working Group, 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2015**

### **Customer Services Strategy Update**

#### 1. Introduction

There have been a number of developments since the Housing & Customer Services Working Group (H&CSWG) last met to consider Customer Services issues. This paper is intended to update Members and inform them about possible future projects. Also attached, as Appendix 1, is a copy of the most recent Customer Services update which is sent on a monthly basis to the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Customer Services. This is only a snapshot for September 2015, however the charts for Arun Direct do show the pattern for our service level performance indicators over the previous year with some explanation for the September levels. Different factors, some planned, some unplanned, influence performance at different times of year and these charts show the complex balance between staffing levels, the skills of those staff and widely varying service demands.

#### 2. Queue Management System for Face to Face Customers

We have now installed a new queue management system at Bognor Regis Town Hall (BRTH). The QNomy system means that customers take tickets so that they are seen in the correct order and can 'relax' so far as is possible knowing that they will not 'miss their turn'. Since the beginning of the year we have also had Benefits Assessors based BRTH in Reception who are able to carry out full benefits assessment on site for customers (with appointments), mirroring the service delivered at the Civic Centre in Littlehampton. QNomy allows us to manage the two different queues for these different services. We will be implementing QNomy at the Civic Centre in November 2015.

QNomy does a great deal more than simply manage the queue. It enables us to collect detailed data about wait times, transaction times, reasons for visits, times when staff are not with a customer etc. All of this together with information from Arun Direct and the website, is starting to help us put together a much more complete picture of our customers, how well the service responds to their needs and what we can do to improve.

The QNomy system can potentially be used to set up a room booking and appointment booking system for staff and customers. It is the last of these which may be of particular interest in the future. There is a lot of work still to be done and although this is not currently a priority, it is an example of how we can be thinking about future needs when we purchase new systems.

### 3. Website

As Members know the new Arun website has been up and running since the Spring. We are now starting to better understand how customers are using it and are sending monthly reports to all service managers on their web pages detailing:

- Number of hits
- How long they stayed on the site
- How they got to the site and where they went to next (often indicates how easy it was for them to find what they were looking for)

With a lot more detail available from the Web Team if requested. The Web Team has also offered to attend team meetings to discuss how different areas might use the information to improve services both in terms of efficiency and the customer experience. An example of what we can now do using the SiteImprove software is attached at Appendix 2. This shows hits on all pages by service for Quarter 3, 2015.

### 4. Intranet

The new staff intranet and member's area has been developed over the last 2/3 months, with a number of services working hard to improve their internal offering to the rest of the organisation. The intranet will be formally launched at the beginning of November and the old 'Grapevine' will be switched off, although by now most information has already been migrated to the new intranet. The Web Team has worked hard on this and would particularly welcome any feedback you may have on what is already there and what else you would like to see developed. If any members are not familiar with the intranet the Web team would be pleased to sit down with you and go through what is available on an individual basis.

### 5. Written Communications

We are very aware that sending out poor written communications not only causes problems to the customer, but is a huge source of inefficiency. Figures from Arun Direct indicate that as much as 40% of the Benefits calls into the Contact Centre are from customers who don't fully understand the letter which they have received. We have now done a considerable amount of work to improve the layout and language of the letters which go out to large numbers of customers and are hoping to start a pilot scheme at the beginning of November. This has been slightly delayed due to the work involved in the introduction of Universal Credit locally. We will be monitoring the impact this has on the volume and nature of the calls to the Contact Centre. If, as we hope, this improves both the experience for the customer and decreases the number of unnecessary calls, we will roll the programme out to other service areas. We will know if there has been an improvement within a couple of months and will report back to members at the next meeting.

## 6. E-forms and mobile devices

About half of the e-forms in use by the Council are now mobile friendly. We are aware that this is increasingly important for our customers, with a move from 30% of our online customers accessing services via mobile devices and tablets, rather than their desktop in 2014, to 50% in 2015. The team is prioritising further work on this, looking at amongst other things which transactions customers are most likely to want to do on, say a mobile phone. An example of one they might not want to use a small mobile device for is a change of circumstances form which is up to 18 pages. At the other end of the scale a transaction which is available now and is scaled to fit mobile devices is reporting a missed bin.

## 7. Face to Face and Telephone Service Re-design

Since its inception Arun Direct has worked with a dedicated switchboard and separate workstations for individual service calls. During the summer we removed the dedicated switchboard and the switchboard effectively became another service line coming in to all of the workstations. We further took the opportunity to set up the telephony system so that front line reception staff could also answer switchboard calls from their workstations. This enables them to take calls when they are not busy with face to face customers. The face to face team has been taking 20 - 30% of the switchboard calls, depending on the volume of face to face customers. We are considering how we can develop this model most effective

## 8. Tell Us Once

Members will recall that this is the system developed by the DWP to make the administration processes much easier following bereavement. The average bereaved family contacts central and local government seven or eight times following a bereavement. Tell Us Once is a service that allows people to tell multiple government agencies about a death, at the same time. This Tell Us Once service is offered free of charge. When somebody registers a death the registrar adds the details of the deceased to the Tell Us Once national register. The bereaved individual can then, in the case of West Sussex either telephone or go on-line to complete all the necessary notifications in one transaction. West Sussex has chosen to do it this way because of resource constraints. Other authorities also offer the option of completing the whole notification with the Registrar at the time the death is registered. Nevertheless it is a service much valued by those who need it.

It should be noted that there is a secure on-line registration process to be completed by all the Registrars which needed to be set up initially by the DWP. Arun District Council set this up for West Sussex initially due to the difficulties of getting Capita to do it. At the request of the West Sussex Registration Service we now have a permanent arrangement in place for the registration of any new Registrars within West Sussex.

## 9. The Digital Agenda

Following work with Rupert Webb and Jackie Follis, CMT is currently discussing what the Digital Strategy for the Council should look like. This is about so much more than what we do with the website. We need to look at how we deliver all our services in the future and what resources we need to achieve this. It is right that this discussion is part of the wider debate on the Vision as it will be one of the drivers for and means by which we achieve the Vision.

'Digital by default' is one of the key concepts of the Government Digital Strategy which states:

“For digital by default, we mean digital services that are so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them will choose to do so whilst those who can't are not excluded”

It is almost impossible to argue with this. There is a lot more to be said on our approach to more user friendly and efficient digital service delivery and we would like to talk to Members further about this at the next meeting of the Working Group.

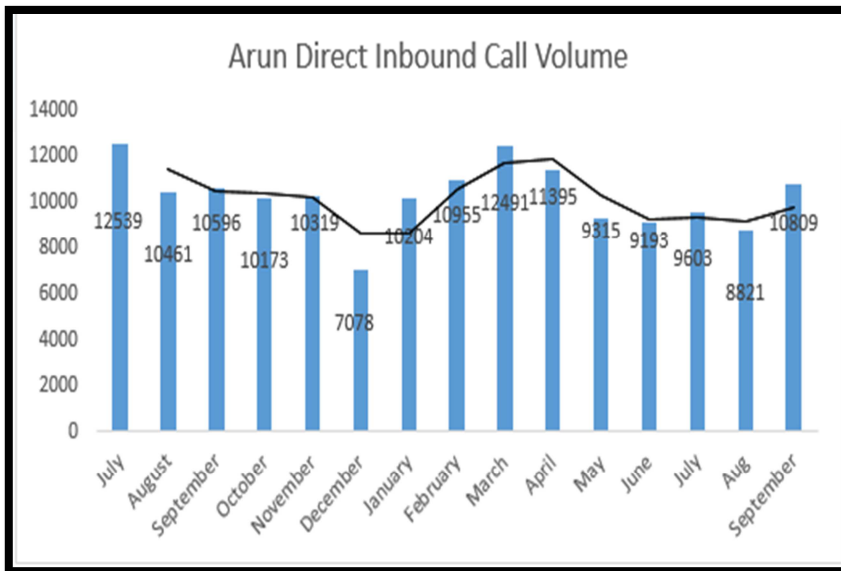
## 10. Summary

It has been a particularly busy, but constructive time for Customer Services over the last six months. We will carry on with existing projects and develop the future programme with the rest of the organisation to ensure that Customer Services is supporting its overall aims – what will be the 'Vision' and individual services.

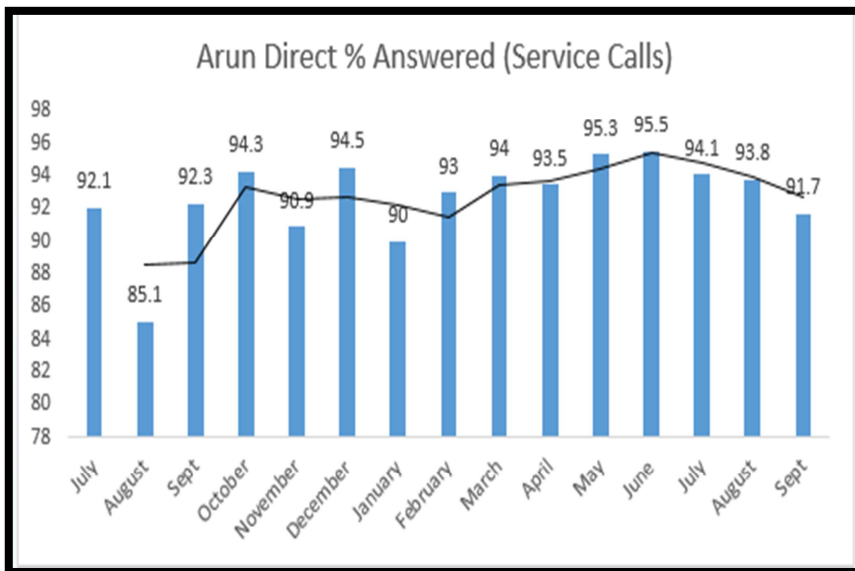
Jackie Follis  
Head of HR & Customer Services  
19 October 2015



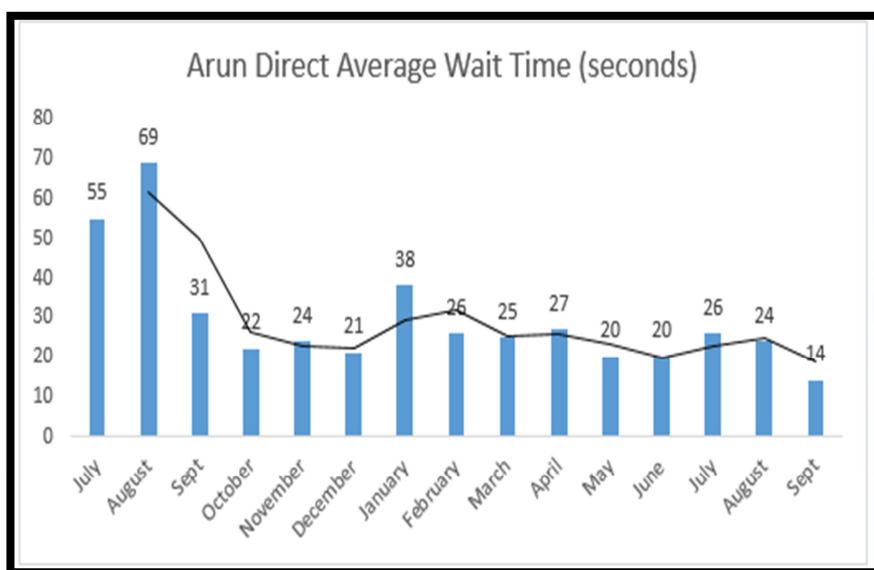
Appendix 1



Call Volume in September increased by 1,988 calls from August. We have received a high number of Election calls, an increase of 380 calls, due to customers responding to HEF Reminder letters. We also saw an increase in Cleansing calls by 200 from August. Benefits calls increased by 400 due to increased turn round times in this service. Revenues calls increased by 800 with 1731 Single resident Review letters sent and a high number of CT Summons and Final calls during this period.



Answer rates remained above 91%. Our 3 new members of staff continue to train and are now able to handle enquiries competently in a number of areas. We continue to have one member of the Team on long term sick leave. Our Face to face team handled 25% of the total incoming Switchboard calls.



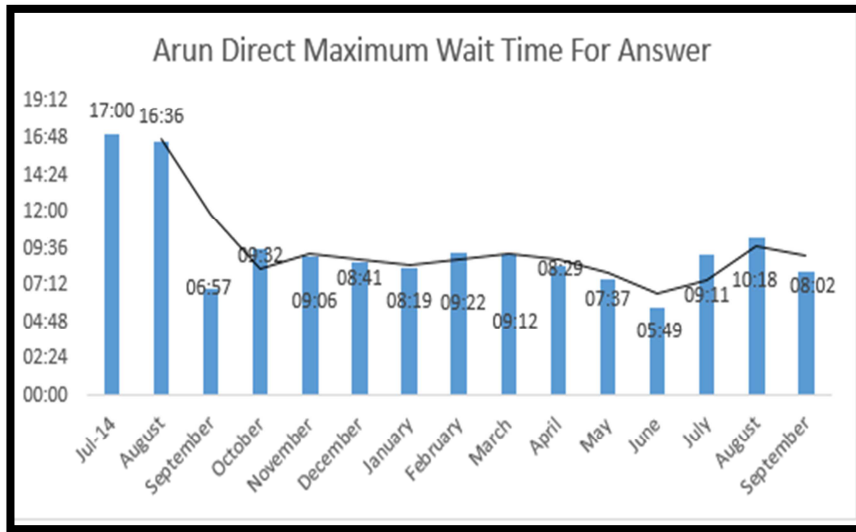
Average wait time across all services reduced by 10 seconds from July, to 14 Seconds, achieving our target for the 8<sup>th</sup> consecutive month. However the performance across different services is very variable. For example, average wait time for a Benefits or Council Tax call is over 40 seconds, whilst it is 20 seconds for Cleansing and Elections. The overall improvement is because we now have new staff who can deal with Elections and Cleansing calls, (which are two

of the areas of increased volumes this month) and the face to face team are dealing with switchboard calls. The new staff cannot yet deal with more complex queries. This demonstrates

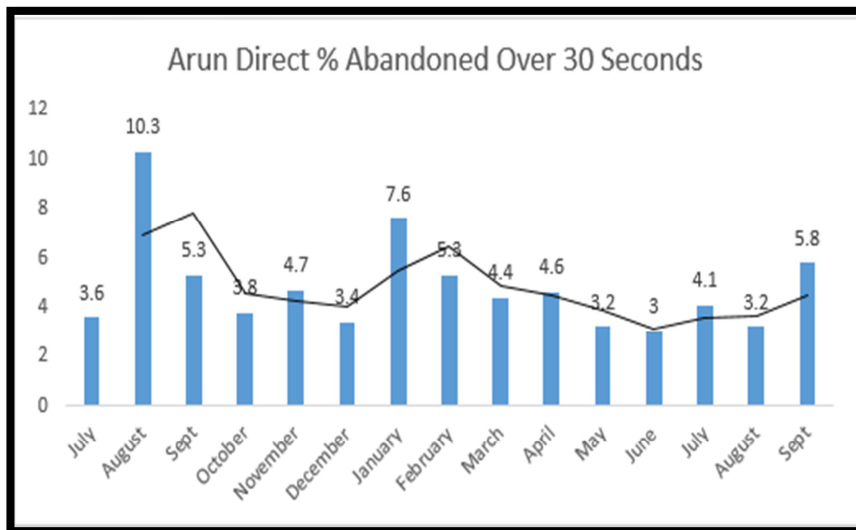
Appendix 1

the need to understand the detail and complexity of call patterns across all services, in order to improve the service we offer.

Maximum wait time in September was reduced to 08:02 from 10:18 in August & 09:11 in July. We continue to work hard to keep wait times down, we hope this trend will continue now we have a full Team.

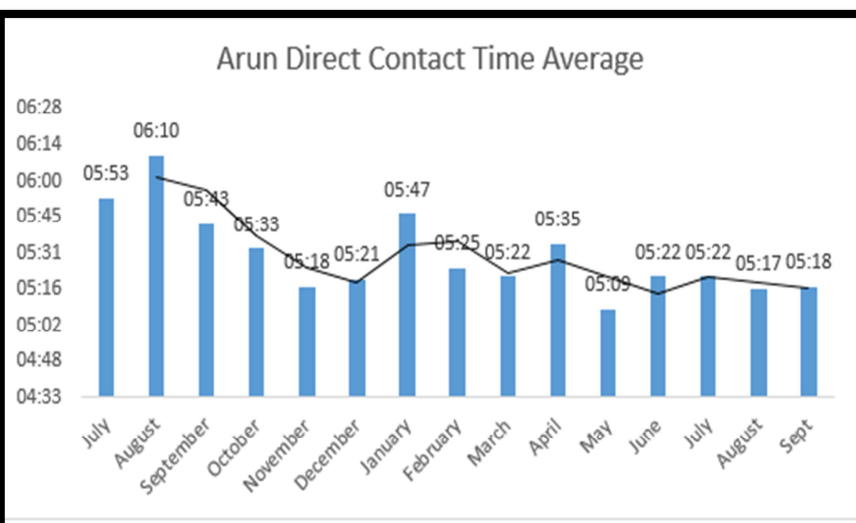


Adjusted abandonment rate, (this excludes all calls terminating within 30 seconds of entering the queue), was over the desired level however this was on the back of considerably increased call volume and staff unavailability mainly due to training. This figure is expected to reduce over the next period as training is completed and new team members are more confident able to handle enquiries alone. Again the variation between services is significant



with 3.7% of cleansing call abandoned after 30 seconds, which increases to 6.7% for Revenues.

Average contact time remains the same as August, both Revenues and Benefits were again in excess of 6 minutes (Revs 6m40s & Bens 6m56s) both slightly up on August figure, the highest it's been for this year. As previously mentioned these are our two areas of highest demand, they have the biggest impact on overall performance.



Further information on telephony performance for all service areas

## Appendix 1

is available on our SharePoint site and may be accessed using the link below

<http://sharepoint.in.arun.gov.uk/custservice/arundirect/AD%20Statistic%20Pages/Home.aspx>

## **Service Development**

Training activity has been our main focus, with new staff making excellent progress in terms of being able to deal with a number of services. We will be losing an experienced member of the Team, in the middle of October when she moves to a new position within the Environmental Health Team. We also recently lost another long standing member of the team to Benefits. Whilst this inevitably causes short/medium term problems for Arun Direct, the positive slant on it has to be that both of these members of staff can take good practice out to other teams and help them to understand how best to work with the Contact Centre.

Working toward a more multi-skilled Team, we have arranged Training with Civic Centre Reception to ensure any cover we are able to provide is useful and competent. It is expected that once the training is complete further face to face training will be arranged between BRTH Reception staff and the Contact Centre.

We have worked with the Benefits Team Leader on the Sharepoint Pages and information required to handle any Universal Credit enquiries when we go live on 12<sup>th</sup> October, this is not likely to have a big impact on the Contact Centre, but will have a much greater impact on face to face delivery.

Essentially the move to Universal Credit will mean that single people with uncomplicated personal circumstances will be expected to make their application for benefits on-line from 12<sup>th</sup> October. The numbers are predicted to be 6 a month initially, with no clear timescale for rolling out more complicated claims. We have had to arrange for another public use PC at BRTH, as there is only one at the moment. (The Universal Credit application could take 45 minutes if a customer chooses to do it at our premises, as they may not have access to a PC elsewhere.) Front line staff may also be asked to assist less IT literate customers. A number of changes to Housing processes are also due to be implemented in the same week which may also lead to increased demand for PC's. We are keeping the situation under review.

The principle here is that some elements of our service delivery are moving to a digital delivery model in which staff assist customers to transact with us or other organisations on-line, rather than doing it for them at a face to face meeting or giving them a paper form to fill in. This should, over time, save duplication, reduce errors and move information straight into back office systems without the need for it to be input manually by a member of staff. We must of course continue to ensure that there are a range of ways in which people can work with us and that our most vulnerable customers are not disadvantaged.

## **Forward Planning**

We have just completed a consultation exercise with staff, following the departure of James Howman. This will be reported in more detail next month.

An Emergency Planning exercise is planned for Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> Nov and the Contact Centre will be involved in making 'dummy' calls to test the process.

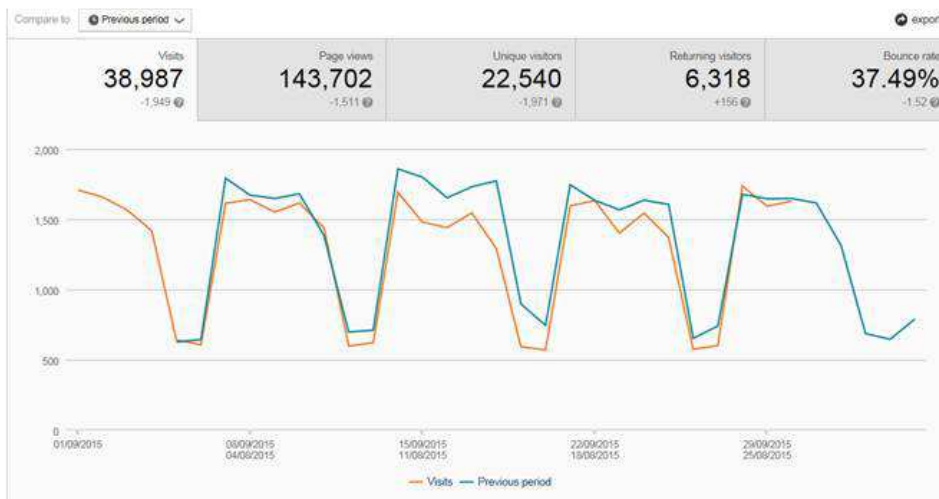
## Appendix 1

Having agreed some Business Continuity arrangements with Chichester, we are waiting to give them a trial run. This will basically mean that either we or Chichester will have local arrangements in place to host a team of 6 people from the other authority should there be no telephony available to them in an emergency situation. The arrangements are relatively simple, but we do need something in place.

The telephony project is ongoing and we are now working on a detailed specification, including options for the contact centre module. The new Environmental Health IT Project has been discussed and 2 members of the Arun Direct Team have been invited to become part of the project team, the first meeting will be held at the start of November. Both of these projects demonstrate how essential it is that services and Arun Direct communicate at all stages when changes to service delivery are being considered.

## Website

Overall statistics for website use are set out below, with September figures shown in orange.



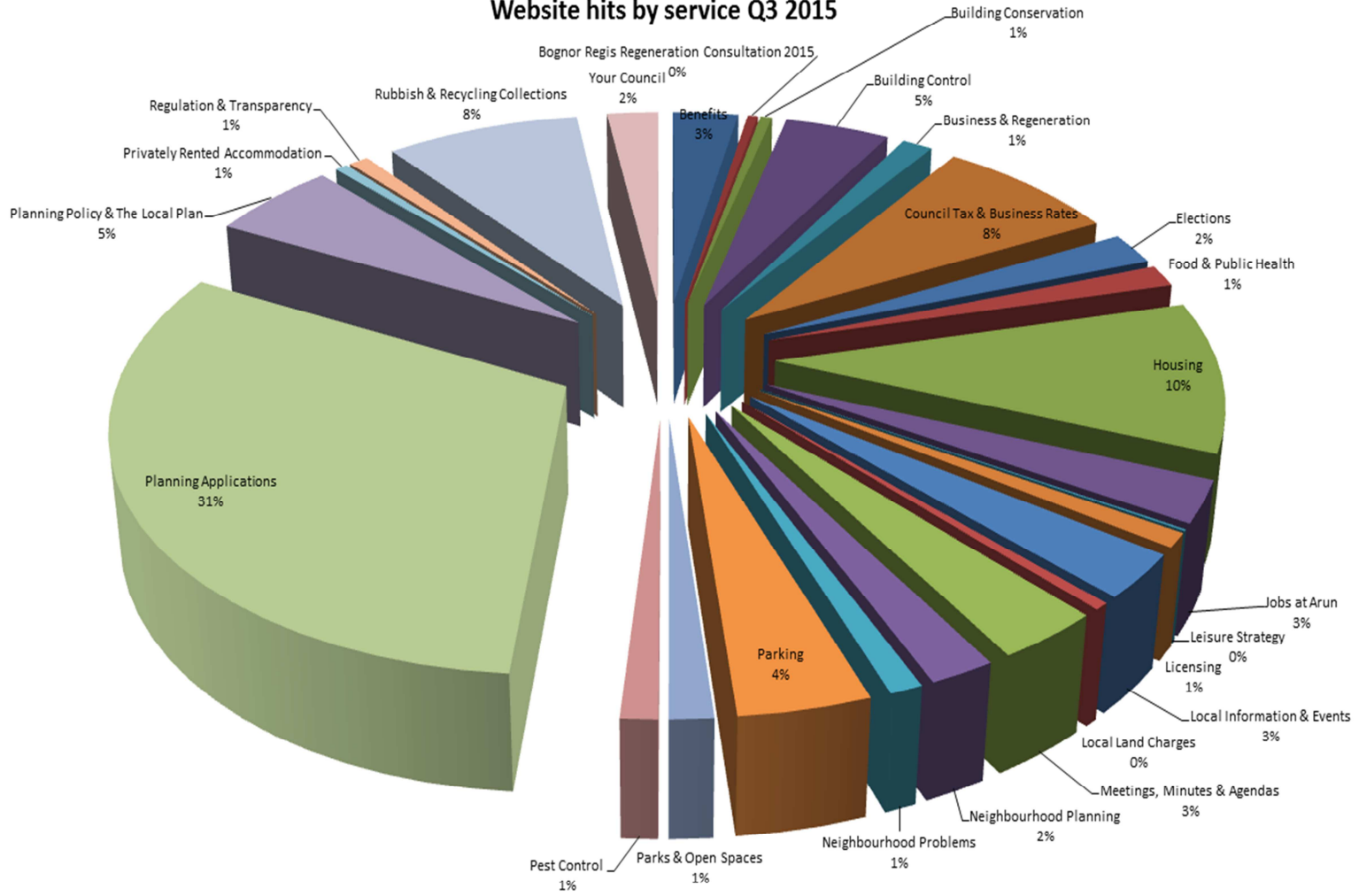
In September we launched the Single Residents Review online, as an eform, for the first time. This saved money and time for customers and the council.

CMT is now discussing the future of the website and what further requirements are to ensure that it is robust and can deliver all the functionality we foresee for the future. The outcome of this discussion will be reported in November.

Jackie Follis  
Head of HR & Customer Services  
8 October 2015

# APPENDIX 2

## Website hits by service Q3 2015



## HOUSING &amp; CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE 2015/16

<b>Working Group</b>	<b>HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>
<b>Established</b>	Established following the decision taken at the Full Council Meeting on 24 March 2011 to change the arrangements for meetings for the new Council year 2011/12
<b>Background</b>	Following Consultation with working parties and all Members the Overview Select Committee meeting on 15/3/2011 recommended that Working Groups be introduced. This was agreed by Cabinet on 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2011 and forwarded to the Governance Committee so that changes to the Constitution could be made. The Full Council meeting on 24 March 2011 made the decision to implement the recommended changes. This Working Group has operated for just over a year and no change was made to the Working Group's remit following review in March 2012. In July 2012 there was a review of responsibility of Working Groups following a management restructure and reallocation of Cabinet Portfolios.
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Membership as at May 2015</b> (Confirmed at Annual Council )  Cllrs; Mrs Ayres, Bicknell, Blampied, Mrs Bower, Clayden, Mrs Daniells, Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Oppler, Mrs Pendleton, Mrs Porter.  <b>Quorum</b> – 4 Members
<b>Chairman/Vice-Chairman</b>	The Chairman and Vice Chairman will be nominated by the members of the Working Group at the first meeting of the Municipal Year.
<b>Aim of Working Group</b>	To consider policies and strategies and to review performance and other issues relating to the Housing & Community Services Portfolios. The Working Group may be requested to consider issues by referral from the Overview Select Committee, Full Council and Cabinet. The Working Group may also determine its own work and propose items to be included in the Work Programme.  The Working Group will not consider issues dealt with by existing Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council unless items are referred to it by such a Committee. It may, however, consider any outcomes from such Committees.
<b>Work Programme</b>	The Work Programme to be agreed and reviewed by the Working Group. Terms of Reference to be reviewed annually by the Working Group.
<b>Reporting arrangements</b>	Working Groups can report into the Overview Select Committee, Cabinet, and Full Council
<b>Open to the public?</b>	Yes
<b>Term</b>	Ongoing
<b>Programme of meetings</b>	Regular meetings will be held at least once per meeting cycle. Agreed dates for 2015/16 are: 03 November 2015, 07 January 2016 and 10 March 2016.
<b>Consultation programme</b>	Consultation to be carried out as required and agreed by the Working Group.
<b>Research/documents</b>	As required.
<b>Lead Officers</b>	Brian Pople and Jackie Follis
<b>Support Officer</b>	Committee Manager (Erica Keegan)

<b>Housing &amp; Customer Services Working Group - 2015/16</b>						
<b>Meeting Date</b>			<b>03-Nov-15</b>	<b>07-Jan-16</b>	<b>10-Mar-16</b>	
<b>Item</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Origin</b>				<b>COMMENTS</b>
Election of Chairman & Vice-Chairman		ToR	*			
Terms of Reference		ToR	*			
Work programme - set and review 2015/16		ToR	*	*	*	
Customer Services - Update	JF		*			
Housing Services - Update	BP		*			
The Vision - Update	PA				*	
Impact of Welfare Reform Act (including Bedroom Tax, Housing Rent Arrears and Housing Allocations)	RA					Deferred from 2014/15 work programme to later in 2015 per RA
Update on new Housing IT System (QL) (To be presented in early 2015)	RA					Deferred from 2014/15 work programme to later in 2015 per RA
<b>Agenda Prep Timetable</b>						
Send to Gemma for CMT by 2pm Thurs			01-Oct-15	26-Nov-15	04-Feb-16	
CMT Tues			06-Oct-15	01-Dec-15	09-Feb-16	
Draft Reports to Erica by 11am Thurs			12-Oct-15	03-Dec-15	11-Feb-16	
<b>Agenda Prep Date 3pm</b>			<b>n/a</b>	<b>09-Dec-15</b>	<b>17-Feb-16</b>	
<b>Room</b>			<b>n/a</b>	<b>CR2</b>	<b>CR2</b>	
Final Reports to Erica by 11am Mon			19-Oct-15	14-Dec-15	22-Feb-16	
Despatch Agendas by 2pm Thurs			22-Oct-15	17-Dec-15	25-Feb-16	
<b>Date of Meeting 6pm</b>			<b>03-Nov-15</b>	<b>07-Jan-16</b>	<b>10-Mar-16</b>	
<b>Room</b>			<b>CR1</b>	<b>CR1</b>	<b>CR1</b>	
OSC Meeting Dates			24-Nov-15	26-Jan-15	15-Mar-16	
Cabinet Meeting Dates			16-Nov-15	18-Jan-15	21-Mar-16	
Full Council Meeting Dates			11-Nov-15	13-Jan-15	16-Mar-16	