

## CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

24 September 2025

<b>COUNCILLOR     - CABINET MEMBER FOR</b>
For the period July to September 2025

<b>1       Progress on Portfolio Matters.</b>
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**Customer Services.**

The Customer Services team has continued to manage a high volume of enquiries over the summer period, with August in particular proving challenging due to staff leave, school holidays, and reduced advisor availability. Despite these pressures, the team has worked hard to minimise disruption, and we are pleased to report that the average call wait time was reduced (8 minutes 1 second on average) compared to the times recorded in earlier months, a positive trend we aim to sustain going forward.

For July and August, traditional customer contacts were as follows:

- Calls answered: 7,091
- Face-to-face customers assisted: 1,304
- Letters/Documents received in the post: 1,793

A major development delivered during this period has seen the expansion of our online contact form functionality. Building on the success of the Revenue Services forms launched in February, July saw the introduction of contact us forms for Housing Benefits, Housing Services, Planning, Environmental Health, and Non-NNDC related services such as Highways, Transport, and Education.

These new forms enable customer enquiries to be triaged more effectively, directing residents to self-service options where available, and ensuring that staff receive all essential information upfront. As part of this rollout, departmental email addresses (excluding planning) have been replaced with contact us form details in outbound correspondence and on the website, further encouraging use of the forms.

The impact has been immediate: in the two months since going-live. Online form submissions have **increased by 46.8%** compared to the same period last year (9,441 submissions compared to 6,431). Overall, **online form usage is up 52.2% since March** when compared to the previous six months (26,899 submissions compared to 17,666). This growth is already helping to alleviate pressure on our phone lines, supporting the reduction in call wait times

reported in August, despite reduced capacity as referred to in the opening paragraph. It must be noted the growth in online forms does not mean people cannot access services directly but provides flexible choice for those who the online option is a preferred choice.

Staffing has also been a key focus this quarter. While recruitment, long-term sickness, and training commitments have temporarily reduced advisor capacity, we are pleased to report that a new team member, Charlotte, has successfully completed her induction and is now answering enquiries. She has also stepped into the role of office receptionist during her first weeks, demonstrating the adaptability and commitment we value across the team.

These early results are very encouraging, but this is just the beginning. As we move further into the year, it will be important to monitor the wider impact that the new forms have on customer behavior, service efficiency, and overall demand across different contact channels.

## **2      Forthcoming Activities and Developments.**

Work is ongoing to monitor, improve, and further develop the new contact forms, ensuring they remain accessible, user-friendly, and effective in triaging enquiries. Feedback from both staff and customers will be vital in shaping future enhancements.

At the same time, development of the C3 Contact Centre workflow system continues. This remains central to our plans for modernising contact handling and escalation processes, supporting more efficient management of enquiries across all channels.

Together, these initiatives will help reduce handling times, strengthen system resilience, and support the Council's wider commitment to delivering efficient and accessible services for all residents.

In addition, colleagues in Electoral Services have been posting out the Annual Canvass forms to all domestic properties. This naturally leads to a rise in customer enquiries, and our team will be managing the resulting increase in contact over the coming weeks.

We are also exploring ways to encourage more customers to make payments online, reducing dependency on phone-based transactions. This work will involve close collaboration with colleagues across the organisation to identify opportunities for further channel shift.

Finally, we are pleased to report that our second new team member is progressing well in her induction training. She is expected to begin answering residents' enquiries in the coming weeks and has shown strong enthusiasm to contribute to the team's work.

<b>3</b>	<b>Meetings attended</b>