

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

19 November 2025

**COUNCILLOR L WITHINGTON - CABINET MEMBER FOR
COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

For the period September to November 2025

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Following a hectic summer, the Customer Services team has spent the past few months tackling a range of key projects including the annual canvass, council tax exemption reviews, and supporting colleagues in Electoral Services to ensure residents who vote by post have refreshed their signatures. This work is vital ahead of the forthcoming mayoral elections in May 2026.

We're also starting to assist residents registered with the Your Choice, Your Home website as part of the re-registration project initiated by the Housing Options team at the end of October 2025 continuing up to the end of November.

I'm pleased to report that with our new Customer Services Advisors fully up to speed, call wait times have significantly reduced, and we're working hard to maintain this level of service for residents.

Performance September and October 2025 combined:

- Total customer contacts handled 12,314.
- Average telephony wait time: 5 minutes 19 seconds (3 minutes 8 seconds faster than the same period last year, 37% reduction)
- Customer satisfaction survey response rate: 15%
 - Satisfied with ability to contact the Council: 84.74%
 - Satisfied with helpfulness of CSA: 93.18%
 - Satisfied with advice given: 89.59%
 - Satisfied with overall experience: 85.64%
- Online (Self-Service) forms submitted: 8,400 (65.6% increase on the same period last year)

Customer Feedback

The Customer Services team actively captures feedback from residents and the team continues to receive excellent feedback demonstrating the quality and professionalism of our service. Residents consistently praise our staff for being polite, helpful, and knowledgeable.

Themes from recent feedback include:

- Politeness and professionalism: “Very polite and helpful, appreciated this a lot.” “The lady I spoke with was just so polite and extremely helpful.”
- Clarity and support: “Great guy. Very helpful and super clear with all of his information. A pleasure to speak with.” “Very pleasant lady put me at ease. Explained everything. Thank you.”
- Problem resolution and guidance: “Very helpful and suggested alternative option which I was unaware of.” “The council representative I spoke to was very helpful and knowledgeable. Thank you for the help and support.”
- Positive first impressions: “It was the first time I’d phoned the council...The gent on the phone was excellent, I am most impressed (a rare thing).”
- Efficient face-to-face service: “Moving house. Brilliant service from you to change details. Much appreciated.” “The advisor who dealt with my original query was friendly, helpful and professional. Excellent service. Thank you.”

These comments demonstrate the value of our Customer Services team in delivering timely, friendly, and effective support, while also highlighting the importance of ongoing promotion of online services to continue improving efficiency.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

As we head into the Christmas period, based on historical data, we expect customer contact levels to ease slightly and aim to reduce them further by promoting the Council's online services.

Further developments and improvements to the Council's Contact Us page are already helping to support customers in completing transactions online. This helps to reduce unnecessary contact and we are already seeing the benefits, evident in the increased uptake of online submissions (45% increase this calendar year in comparison to last year).

From our Customer Services contact centre reporting function, we are able to identify the top reasons residents contact us. In many cases, online functionality already exists to address these queries. We are therefore working closely with our Communications team to plan promoting these online services and encourage greater use, supporting a shift to digital channels and helping reduce unnecessary demand on our contact centre.

The most common reasons for contact include:

- Change of address
- Explanation of Council Tax bill
- Renewal of garden waste service
- Purchase of a parking permit
- Reporting a change of circumstances for Housing Benefits

By highlighting these services and making them easier to access online, we aim to improve the customer experience while reducing unnecessary face-to-face and telephone demand.

We are aware that resources will be reduced in CS in the coming weeks due to planned sickness absence and an early retirement, but steps are in place to minimise the impact across the department.