

CABINET MEMBERS REPORT TO COUNCIL

22 July 2026

**COUNCILLOR L WITHINGTON
COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

- CABINET MEMBER FOR

For the period June to July 2026

1 Progress on Portfolio Matters.

Customer Services

Customer Contact Trends and Channel Shift

In June 2026, customer contact patterns continued to show a shift away from face-to-face interactions and towards digital channels compared with June 2025. Face-to-face contacts decreased by 14.2%, while online submissions increased by 9.2%, indicating that more customers are choosing to access Council services through self-service and online methods. This reflects a continuing trend towards digital engagement and suggests that customers are increasingly confident in using online channels to access information and request services. This trend is also evident when comparing the first six months of 2026 with the same period in 2025, during which online submissions have increased by 37.9%, demonstrating a substantial growth in the use of digital services over the longer term.

The growth in online submissions, combined with the reduction in face-to-face demand, has helped the service manage customer enquiries more efficiently. With fewer customers requiring support in person, staff resources can be deployed more flexibly across customer contact channels, enabling us to meet demand more effectively.

Telephony performance also improved significantly during the period. The number of calls answered increased by 8.7%, rising from 3,579 in June 2025 to 3,889 in June 2026, while average wait times reduced from 10 minutes 9 seconds to 5 minutes 21 seconds, a 47.3% reduction in wait time. This demonstrates that the service was able to handle a higher volume of telephone enquiries while substantially reducing the time customers spent waiting to speak to an advisor.

The reduction in face-to-face demand may have contributed to this improvement by increasing staff availability to support telephony operations and reducing pressure on frontline resources. These improvements appear to have had a positive impact on the overall customer experience. Satisfaction with the ease of contacting the Council increased from 79.69% in

June 2025 to 85.10% in June 2026. This suggests that customers are benefiting from improved access across all contact channels, shorter waiting times and greater flexibility in how they choose to engage with the Council's services.

2 Forthcoming Activities and Developments.

Digital Service Development

Work continues to promote and embed digital channels across the Council's key service areas. Whilst it will take time for the full impact of recent initiatives to be reflected in customer contact trends, early indications are encouraging. The data reflects several service areas are reporting increased use of online contact methods, supporting the wider shift towards digital engagement highlighted throughout this report.

Monitoring activity will continue over the coming months to assess the longer-term impact of these initiatives and identify further opportunities to improve digital access, customer experience and service efficiency.