Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of meeting:	8 March 2018
Report of:	Danielle Negrello – Customer Service Section Head
Title:	Customer Service Centre Refurbishment

1.0 Summary

1.1.   This report provides an overview of the objectives, benefits and outcomes of the Customer Service Centre face to face redesign.

1.2.   The council's Customer Service Centre was first opened in 2005 and had not undergone any significant change or refurbishment since this time. There had been a growing need for it to reflect the new ways that customers wished to interact with the organisation to access services and the council's ambition to ensure that services were 'digital by design' necessarily included those queries which are initially submitted via the Customer Service Centre.

1.3.   The project was delivered through the Watford 2020 Programme, within the Enabling projects workstream.

2.0 Potential Risks

2.1.   This project has been closed and therefore there are no outstanding risks.

3.0 Recommendations

3.1.   That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the report

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Danielle Negrello, Customer Service Section Head

Telephone extension: 01923 278927   email: danielle.negrello@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by Andrew Cox, Head of Service Transformation

4.0 Project Rationale

4.1.   The council's Customer Service Centre was first opened in 2005 and had not undergone any significant change or refurbishment since this time. It had started to show signs of its age with wear and tear to some areas and facilities that no longer reflected the requirements of the customers visiting the Town Hall.

4.2.   There was an increasing need for an area that allowed customers to interact with the council through our online channels, through both enabling access to computers or mobile devices or through face to face support for customers so enable them to apply for service online themselves.

4.3.   The project came together under the Watford 2020 programme and was an amalgamation of a number of service improvement projects either in the pipeline or already in progress.

5.0 Project Objectives

5.1.   The project set out to:

- Deliver the Qmatic customer management system to: improve the customer experience when visiting the Town Hall, realise shorter wait times at reception and improve the experience for staff working on the previous receptions desk where queues formed and sensitive issues were often discussed in a very public area. The system would also enable the pre-booking of customer appointments for duty services.

- Replace the previous large traditional reception desk with a new smaller reception pod to open up the reception area and remove the bottle neck where customers gathered at the main door. The desk was also to encourage staff to proactively meet and greet customers visiting the Town Hall.

- Relocate the customer waiting area so customers had a larger more comfortable waiting space away from the enquiry desks, improving privacy for customers discussing enquiries with officers.

- Deliver additional self-service tablets, computers and telephones to enable customers to access our services online or over the telephone.

- Introduce new ways of working within the Customer Service team to encourage customers to take-up self-service channels. This would reduce the levels of demand on services and allow Customer Service staff the flexibility to offer appropriate levels of support to customers who do not feel confident interacting digitally with the organisation.

6.0 Project Outcomes

6.1.   Overall the project has successfully delivered on its objectives.

6.2.   The implementation of Qmatic had immediate benefits for both staff and customers. Staff are now able to manage the queue on the reception desk more efficiently, management information is available to assist with the planning of resources (across all services who offer a service from the CSC). Customers are able to book themselves in to see services and see their position in the queue as they wait.

6.3.   The removal of the large reception desk opened up the reception area, removing the bottle-neck of customers at the main doors and creating a more open and welcoming environment.

6.4.   Improvements to the self-service facilities, particularly PC's and telephones, have encouraged customers to make use of these facilities either on their own or with assistance from CSC staff.

6.5.   The implementation of Qmatic, new Reception Pod and access to additional self-service PC's have encouraged self-serving to reduce the levels of queues in the Customer Service Centre and allow existing staff to support those who do not feel confident interacting digitally with the organisation.

6.6.   The relocation of the customer waiting area delivered a more spacious seating area. With waiting customers no longer overlooking the enquiry area, there is improved privacy for customers when at the enquiry desks.

7.0 Feedback

7.1.   As each phase of the project was completed customer feedback and satisfaction was monitored to

evaluate customer sentiment. Views were also taken from both CSC and service staff working in the area.

7.2.   The feedback received has been overwhelmingly positive with an upswing in customer satisfaction levels recorded over the course of the project, reflecting customers positive view of the changes as they were introduced. The table below shows the trend in customer satisfaction over the course of the project.
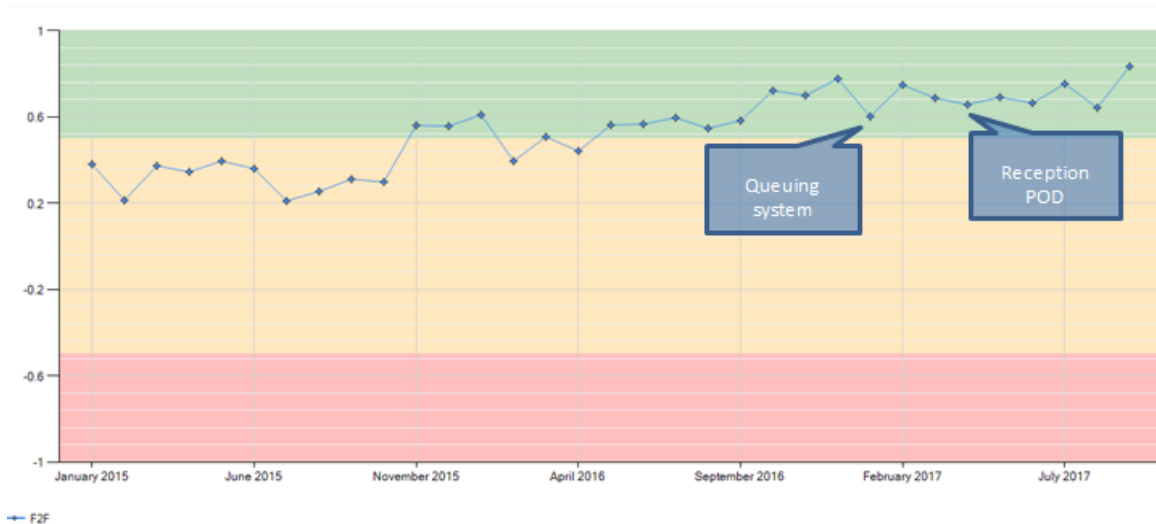
7.3.   Examples of customer comments received through the GovMetric Kiosks and given directly to staff included: 'Good new ticket system', 'Good service, phones on table', 'The area looks much more welcoming' and 'The desk looks better there'.

7.4.   Although customer comments were positive, a number of CSC staff had initial concerns about not having a physical barrier between themselves and the customers with the introduction of the reception pod. However, with the changes now embedded these concerns have subsided and staff have embraced these new ways of working and continue to look to improve the experience for customers visiting the Town Hall.

8.0 Ongoing Review

8.1.   Although the project has been closed, the CSC remains focussed on the continuous improvement of our face to face offer for customers. This has in the main been managed firstly, through an ongoing focus on satisfaction data and working in collaboration with our service colleagues to improve services and secondly a CSC Face to Face improvement team.

8.2.   Feedback and satisfaction data is reviewed on a monthly basis and discussed at regular formal service meetings where improvements are identified and actions to take these forward agreed. This has resulted in improvements such as more in depth training for Customer Service Staff on Housing, the introduction of an appointment booking system for Planning duty and an on call system in the Benefits service where Qmatic is used to monitor numbers of customers in their queue with additional resource allocated to the face to face area when more than two customers are in the queue.

8.3.   The Face to Face Improvement Team, made up of a number of Customer Service Advisers has been brought together to review working practices on face to face and to develop a best practice framework to ensure the best experience for customers who visit the council.

8.4.   Initial improvements identified by the working group are:

- Repositioning of the Reception Pod to make it more obvious for customers

- Introducing a back-up meet and greet officer to be on hand to ensure the pod is staffed at all times and improve the availability of support to customers to access services online

- Arrange improved signage for tablets to increase uptake

- Development of a service delivery/model customer journey framework for roll out to the team. Future staff performance monitoring will be measured against this framework

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

- None