Part A

Report to: *Overview and Scrutiny Committee*

Date of meeting: *21 June 2023*

Report author: *Digital Development Manager*

Report sponsor: *Assistant Director of Customer and Corporate Services*

Portfolio holder: *Cllr Mark Watkin*

Report title: *Report It Review*

Nature of report: *Information and noting*

1.0   Executive Summary

1.1   The Report It improvement project analyses one of our most highly used digital processes and corresponds with the following specific deliverable within the Council's Delivery Plan:

> *'Make sure we deliver an outstanding customer experience and the high-quality services our community expects'*

1.2   In line with the council's commitment to continuous improvement, this report summarises the suggestions made by Councillors, staff and customers, the actions taken to date and the resulting improvements.

1.3   It identifies any limitations encountered and areas where it is not recommended to progress suggestions. It outlines any existing risks and actions, both completed and outstanding, to mitigate these.

2.0   Recommendations

2.1   Overview and Scrutiny Committee note the update on the improvements to the 'Report It' function.

3.0   Report pathway

3.1   Next review body: *Not applicable*

3.1.1. Indicative date: *Not applicable*

3.1.2   Final review body: *Not applicable*

3.1.3   Indicative date: *Not applicable*

4.0   Contact Officer:

For further info contact: Lee Anderson, Digital Development Manager
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Reviewed and signed off by: Liam Hornsby, Associate Director of
Customer and Corporate Services

5.0   Detailed proposal

5.1   The 'Report It' process was launched in 2018 as part of the council's Watford 2020 Transformation programme. It was designed to provide an easy-to-use method for residents and communities to report street cleansing and parks issues to the council. The responsibility for responding to these various issues sits within different parts of the organisation and the intention was for back-office functionality and system integration to handle the complexities involved in the internal process and provide customers with a high-quality customer experience.

5.2   In line with the council's commitment to continuous improvement, our Digital Improvement team are tasked with regularly reviewing our suite of online processes and forms to ensure that they work as well as possible for customers. The 'Report It' process is one of the most well-used forms with nearly 600 forms submitted on average every month and, as such, it is particularly important that the process continues to work well.

5.3   Whilst the Digital Improvement team regularly respond to feedback from customers, a project was initiated last year to focus specifically on the 'Report It' process, proactively collecting feedback from members and customers. Between the project initiation and the first round of workshops held with councillors, 18 recommendations and areas for action were identified. Five additional suggestions were made at the workshops, while further feedback and information relating to several of the identified areas was received from councillors throughout the project.

5.4   These 23 suggestions can be broadly grouped as follows:

• Improvements to form text and advice

• Map enhancements

• Responses provided to customers

• Particulars of enquiry types which are usually Hertfordshire County Council (HCC) but sometimes Watford (such as potholes in council owned car parks)

A full list of suggested improvements is enclosed within Appendix A but a summary of the changes made under each of the headlines above is included below:

6.0   Improvements to form text and advice

All actionable, identified improvements have been implemented. There are some instances where the core Firmstep functionality cannot be changed. These are detailed in the appendices.

6.1 Map enhancements

The most prominent and visible changes to the map have been completed in the live environment:

- Map layer upgraded
- The user's current location is now identified
- When a relevant enquiry type is selected, litter bins are now visible

However, there are some limitations with the map layers or underlying data which has resulted in some suggestions not being completed:

- Distance from pin drop to address (identified as per Wandsworth's pin drop information)

Discrepancies between where the pin is dropped and where the nearest property's UPRN (Unique Property Reference Number) is in the underlying data means that the distance is often very wrong, and therefore confusing to the customer. It has therefore been decided not to take this suggestion forward.

It is anticipated that benches will be added to the map at a later date. A mapping exercise has been requested from the contractor as an audit of the data on record showed that it is not accurate.

6.2 Responses provided to customers

There is an ongoing risk of the Firmstep system sending a 'fully resolved' email when the enquiry is not resolved, if the member of staff chooses a code in their source system (Echo for Veolia, Uniform for Environmental Health) which is not mapped to a Firmstep resolution code.

This process works well for almost all enquiries; however a number of problems were reported through the lifespan of the project in relation to trees. A new code was set up in December 2022 for officers to use when they had booked in work for the tree contractor to complete, which was expected to resolve the issue. Veolia outsource some of this work and are unable to provide timescales to the resident.

The digital team have also worked closely with Veolia's new tree officer. Together, the following actions are in progress:
- In cases where no resolution code in the Veolia system is applicable, the tree officer will call the resident to provide an update before actioning in Echo
- A specific document regarding trees is passed to contract managers.
- The digital team and the tree officer will undertake a test of all codes that are currently being used in Echo.

6.3   Enquiry types which are usually HCC, but WBC in some locations

Examples include potholes in sports centre car parks and street lighting in some parks.

It is not recommended that the existing procedure is changed. There is a Report a streetlight or pothole option on the WBC website's Clean Streets menu, which divert users to the HCC website. There is no facility to report these issues with the form. Contract managers have stated that when enquiries are submitted to the wrong organisation, they are forwarded to the correct place quickly without any service disruption. There is functionality within the system for WBC and Veolia to forward incorrectly received enquiry types to each other.

When dealing with very small areas such as a car parks, there are two issues which may prevent the enquiry going to the correct place:

- If the user clicks very slightly to the side of the boundary, they can avoid the form blockers and submit without us wanting them to

- The underlying UPRN or location data is one coordinate rather than the asset's entire surface area. This point is sporadic – for instance it may be the corner of a sports centre car par, and clicking at the other side of the car park may match the pin drop with a closer UPRN, such as the sports centre.

The accuracy on these small areas will be poor and easy for customers to navigate around. To address this issue would take considerable consultancy time and cost. As the number of these enquiries is relatively small, it's believed that it would not represent good value for money.

7.0   Implications

7.1   Financial

7.2   There are no financial implications. The Report It form operates from the council's Customer Relationship Management system which is already funded within existing budgets.

7.3   Legal issues (Monitoring Officer)

7.4   There are no legal implications.

7.5 Risks

Nature of risk	Consequence	Suggested control measure	Response (treat, tolerate, terminate, transfer)	Risk rating (combination of severity and likelihood)
Online forms are not easy to use	Customers are unable to transact with the council digitally	Continuous review and improvement of online forms	Treat	2 x 2 = 4
Ongoing enquiries are marked as resolved due to a failing with the digital process	Customer dissatisfied and receiving a poor customer experience	Provide specific guidance in areas where this happens. Conduct testing with services where necessary	*Treat*	*2 x 3 = 6*
Online forms do not work as expected	Customers are unable to transact with the council digitally and receive a poor customer experience	Ongoing checks and clear methodology for reporting issues. Team in place to resolve.	Treat	2 x 4 = 8

7.6 Equalities, Human Rights and Data Protection

7.6.1 **Equalities**

7.6.2 Having had regard to the council's obligations under s149, it is considered that the original EIA completed when the Customer Relationship Management system was implemented is sufficient to cover the equalities considerations of Report It.

7.7 Data Protection Impact Assessment

7.7.1 Having had regard to the council's obligations under the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018, it is considered that officers are not required to undertake an additional Data Processing Impact Assessment (DPIA) for this report, beyond that completed when the Customer Relationship Management system was implemented.

7.8 Next steps should recommendations be approved

7.8.1 The council's Digital Improvement Team will complete recommendations suggested in the report. Customers and Members will be encouraged to continue to report any issues to the Digital Improvement Team should any be experienced.

8.0 Appendices

8.1 Appendix 1 – list of proposed improvements