

Forward Plan reference number: Not applicable

Report title: Funding for the Modernising Customer Contact Programme	
Report to: Councillor David Finch, Leader of the Council	
Report author: Suzanna Shaw, Director for Customer	
Date: 17 January 2020	For: Decision
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County Divisions affected: All Essex	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval for investment to enable the successful implementation of projects to improve telephony and encourage customers to use different modes of access to services as detailed in the 'summary' section of this report.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Approve the withdrawal of £399,000 from the Transformation Reserve over two years for resourcing and culture change to deliver the Modernising Customer Contact Programme.

3. Summary of issue

3.1 Mitel Improvement Projects

- 3.1.1 Mitel is the telephony system used by ECC's customer facing services. The telephony system is outdated and is to be replaced with a new system
- 3.1.2 This version will have the ability to 'turn on' multi-channel methods of communication including: web chat, SMS, email, voice, social media, instant messaging and case management system.
- 3.1.3 Depending on the benefit of such communication methods, ECC may choose to implement some or all the functionality.

3.2 Channel Shift

- 3.2.1 Channel Shift is the process by which organisations seek to encourage customers to use the most efficient and effective method of communication.
- 3.2.2 Organisations are increasingly delivering web-based methods of communication to enhance customer experience and reduce unnecessary calls into Contact Centres.

3.2.3 Similarly, ECC is moving towards delivering a more sophisticated website to enable customers to easily access services without the need to call the Contact Centre.

3.2.4 In 2019, activity was undertaken to identify high calls volumes into the Contact Centre and where customers found the contact 'journey' complex and challenging.

3.2.5 These journeys are bundled into work packages:

Work Package	Project Focus
Highways	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report a 'lit' highways asset issue Request information on highways scheme / application Report a 'road' based highways issue
Blue Badge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for a blue badge Renew an existing blue badge
Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Apply for a school place Appeal against a school place decision Apply for a school transport award
Registrations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Register a birth Register a death Book a wedding Request a duplicate certificate(s)
Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request information on an event / facility at a library Renew library books
Trading Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Request information about a service

3.2.6 The recommendations related to the work packages are policy, process or technology driven and are designed to encourage customers to use the ECC website to fulfil their requirements. This will be underpinned by guidance along with and support for vulnerable customers who are unable to use this channel of communication.

4. Options

4.1 Option 1 – Do nothing

4.1.1 The projects will not be delivered. The consequences of doing nothing is that without dedicated resourcing for the Programme it is unlikely to realise the financial and non-financial benefits.

4.2 Option 2 – Approve the investment to secure MCCP delivery and benefits

4.2.1 This is the recommended option. It allows for a dedicated team of internal and external expertise to deliver against the programme of work, which promotes upskilling internal ECC colleagues.

5. Financial implications

5.1 Costs and Savings

5.1.1 The £399,000 cost required to implement this project relate to additional external resources – specifically programme management, external subject matter expertise and change management skills.

5.1.2 It is anticipated that the project will realise ongoing cashable revenue savings of £290,000 by 2022/23. These savings are already assumed in the current Medium Term Resource Strategy.

5.1.3 A summary of the profile of the costs and savings is shown in the table below

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£000	£000	£000	£000
Costs	77	322	0	0
Savings	0	(174)	(224)	(290)
Net	77	148	(224)	(290)

5.2 Non Cashable Benefits

5.2.1 In addition there are number of non-financial benefits of the Programme including:

- A de-risked telephony system that is up to date and supported by the supplier
- A Contact Centre that is modern and fit for purpose now and in the future
- Motivated Contact Centre staff who are trained in the most up to date communication methods
- Enhanced customer experience that meets the expectations of working and living in a digital age and results in increased customer satisfaction
- Accurate, up to date and timely communication with customers
- Shift in culture change that allows for an optimised customer focused operation, that can easily mobilise in number or task to meet customer demand, whilst embracing technology
- Better customer information that will inform future service improvements
- Skills transfer from external subject matter experts into the business as usual team to enable sustainable ongoing modernisation and continuous improvement

6.2 Legal implications

6.2.1 All drawdowns from reserves need to be approved by the Cabinet Member for Finance.

7. Equality and Diversity implications

- 7.1 The Public Sector Equality Duty applies to the Council when it makes decisions. The duty requires us to have regard to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other behaviour prohibited by the Act. In summary, the Act makes discrimination etc. on the grounds of a protected characteristic unlawful
 - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - (c) Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
- 7.2 The protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, gender, and sexual orientation. The Act states that 'marriage and civil partnership' is not a relevant protected characteristic for (b) or (c) although it is relevant for (a).
- 7.3 The equality impact assessment indicates that the proposals in this report will not have a disproportionately adverse impact on any people with a particular characteristic. *(Describe the specific equality and diversity implications of the proposal, any adverse findings from the equality impact assessment and your proposed mitigation measures)*

8. List of appendices

Equality impact assessment

9. List of Background papers

None.

I approve the above recommendations set out above for the reasons set out in the report.	Date
Councillor David Finch, Leader of the Council	10/02/20

In consultation with:

Role	Date
Executive Director for Corporate and Customer Services	23/01/20
Margaret Lee	
Executive Director for Finance and Technology (S151 Officer)	04/02/20

Director, Legal and Assurance (Monitoring Officer) Paul Turner	17/01/20