Milton Keynes Council's Digital Transformation Journey.

Milton Keynes Council (MKC) delivers more than 240 services to the 265,000 people of Milton Keynes, from collecting waste to managing planning applications to providing social care and much more, and is expected to grow to 400,000 people by 2050. It has an economy worth £10.9 billion and is repeatedly placed first in the UK for jobs growth. Our vision is a leading, smart, digital city, where everyone has the choice to access services through both self-service and traditional assisted channels.

Our strategic digital principles are:
- Connected: Universal digital connections can be accessed when and where needed
- Collaborative: Collaborating to create the best possible digital environment for our partners
- Innovative: Maintaining Milton Keynes reputation as a test bed for the latest technologies and building on the success of our smart city project
- Inclusive: Taking opportunities to expand inclusion and narrow the gap

All these are underpinned by secure IT systems – ensuring data and systems are kept safe.

The Journey

Since beginning our partnership with Firmstep in April 2015 we have both enhanced services for local people and delivered efficiency savings in excess of £650K. Two years on and local people are demonstrating their strong preference for the self-service, with over 70% (24K) of all our 2018/19 Q1 customer services enquiries being handled as wholly self-service transactions. Over 71k of customers have registered onto the self-service platform.

Our Customer, Digital and Transformation Team work in partnership with service areas delivering day-to-day efficiencies and innovation. Senior managers have a clear vision for the digital future of the Council and our Chief Executive sends out a weekly newsletter to all staff to keep every employee informed of new policies, developments and achievements. Our Communications team keep residents well informed and engaged through many media channels. Our Customer, Digital and Transformation Team put the customer experience at the heart of all our digital developments.

We've managed to achieve this owing to the insightful design of the product with their rich features key amongst these are:
- Accessible, multi-page online forms
- Secure customer accounts
- Efficient customer relationship management
- Powerful web services integration tools
- Secure and reliable off site web hosting
- Simple and powerful reporting tools
- Bi-weekly upgrades and fixes
- Effective consultancy and project management services

In addition –

- Customers are kept updated about the progress of their issue through each stage of its journey from logging, through assessment, corrective action to resolution.
- We have integrated 11 key 'back office' systems including waste, street cleansing, highways, landscaping, housing, council tax, adult social care, registrars, our corporate local and property gazetteer, graphical information system and payment systems.
- The CRM allows an advisor to promptly gain an overview of the customer and the history of their enquiries with us, when dealing with face to face or telephone enquiries.
- We have replaced our legacy complaints system, and improved performance, monitoring and control over the timeliness and quality of complaints handling.
- We have over 70 forms on our digital platform covering over 250 service request types and this number is constantly increasing as we redesign more of our service processes.
- This work was led by our Customer, Digital and Transformation service and through successful collaboration between the service area representatives, Web Team, ICT, our contractor Firmstep and our customers. The redesign of our digital platform has delivered many savings:
    - Street lighting: Reduction in the cost per repair achieved through streamlined end-to-end process, right first time information, removing duplicate enquiries.
    - Highways: Reduction in the cost per repair achieved through streamlined end-to-end process, right first time information, removing duplicate enquiries.
    - Landscaping: Maximising the number of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact and streamlined business process.
    - Waste: Re-design of processes including the implementation of 'in cab' technology has reduced enquiries by providing real time updates to the corporate customer service team into the Firmstep CRM system. This allows the customer service advisor to track the progress of waste collection services in real time and to quickly diagnose the issues being reported by customers as they occur. For example, a customer report of their recycling not being collected from 22 Acacia Avenue can be cross referenced to a real time report from the waste collection vehicle of contaminated recycling at the same address.
    - Adult safeguarding: Since April 2016, our partners in health and social care have the choice to make a safeguarding referral online using a Firmstep form. The form is integrated with our line of business Adult Social Care system (Frameworki). In two thirds of cases, an automated match is achieved between the person identified on the referral form and the records held in our Frameworki database. This allows a referral to be automatically uploaded into a Social Worker's daily task list for prompt action. Over 1,000 referrals have made this way during 2016-17 and 77% of these were automatically uploaded using Firmstep integration capabilities.

Milton Keynes Council strives to be at the forefront of digital and we want to share this exciting journey with other councils. To celebrate our successes in 2017 we held a free digital event in partnership with Firmstep. Over 90 delegates from other councils attended. We demonstrated that to deliver a successful digital transformation programme you need; a 'customer first approach', to find solutions and overcome barriers, to improve outcomes and make rapid adjustments to changing requirements and adapt to better meet the needs of customers.

Future Plans

More service managers at Milton Keynes are recognising the potential of working with our corporate customer services team to drive up service performance and reduce costs. Here is a summary of the leading projects in development for launch in early to late 2018 19-

•   Hospital Referrals. Our Adult Social Care department provides care services to local people in partnership with Milton Keynes University Hospital (MKUH). Like most hospitals, MKUH experiences excessive demand on its acute care beds and the timely and well managed discharge of patients into the community is a priority issue. For the most vulnerable patients the discharge is accompanied by a transfer of caring responsibilities from MKUH to community based health and social care services. Each referral ties up a nurse and a social worker for between 20 and 45 minutes on the phone. Each year around 2,000 referrals are made – consuming an enormous quantity of nursing and social work resource. We are currently finalising the design of Firmstep form that will allow the referral to be made online. The principal benefits will be, improved accuracy and quality of information about the patient's care needs, time saving features to ease form completion such as auto completion of GP surgery details, the ability to 'save and continue later' and automated integration of the referral with our Adult Social Care database (Frameworki).
•   Bookings and Appointments. We are developing a capability to extend our online and assisted services to permit customers to book appointments directly with staff. Our first service will be for planning appointments and will allow customers to select apply, select, book and pay online. The service will also be available to telephone and face to face customers with the assistance of our corporate customer services team.
•   Homelessness Prevention. We are redeveloping an established online service that assesses eligibility to homelessness support from the Council to be compliant with the Homelessness Prevention Act.

We are currently undertaking a complete review of demand coming into MKC and using a demand management approach to design the next iteration of digital transformation.

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