

REPORT TO GOLD COMMAND – 19 NOVEMBER 2020

RESOURCE PROPOSALS FOR ANGUS COUNCIL'S CONTACT CENTRE

SHARON FAULKNER, DIRECTOR OF HR, DIGITAL ENABLEMENT, IT & BUSINESS SUPPORT

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Test and Protect service the Contact Centre has taken on the outbound calling duty to contact individuals who are required to self-isolate.
- 1.2 Under current numbers this represents an increase of traffic to the Contact Centre of 25%. This contact requirement is expected to increase over the winter months and the Contact Centre needs to take steps now to be able to ensure that it is able to cope with both the traffic known about (through T&P) and for any other additional future events.
- 1.3 The Contact Centre has a number of other challenges and changes coming over the next couple of months. These include:
 - a. new Housing choice based letting system which will increase call volumes (11/11/20);
 - b. a new ACCESS Digital Officer coming on board (needs supported and trained initially);
 - c. new ACCESSLine Operator/s being recruited (and will require to be trained);
 - d. design and implementation of a new Contact Centre management structure (originally planned for 1 April 2021);
 - e. keeping all Operators trained and up to date on service changes and new grants etc due to COVID – often with very short notice for implementation;
 - f. absorption of additional calls received due to the reduction in opening days/times of the ACCESS offices;
 - g. support for the planning of the forthcoming Scottish Parliamentary elections;
 - h. supporting services in their recovery.
- 1.4 This pressurised period is expected to last (at the minimum) to March 2021, but in all probability will carry on beyond (the NHS/Scottish Government are currently advertising Covid-19 related contact tracing posts till 2022).
- 1.5 The Contact Centre has already utilised available ANGUSAlive staff and officers are having ongoing discussions with an external provider about support which can be provided in the cases of emergencies e.g. flooding, winter weather.
- 1.6 In addition, there are four (3.5 full time equivalent (fte)) members of the Contact Centre team who are in temporary roles until 31 March 2021. There is only funding available within the Contact Centre budget to retain one fte beyond that date.
- 1.7 It is clear that it is not possible to manage all of these challenges and expectations within existing resources. The following proposals seek (for the medium term) a solution that can see the Contact Centre through the increased workload, to lead on crisis management (including T&P) as well as to lead on the strategic future for the Contact Centre and Customer Services including channel shift.

2. Proposals

- 2.1 It is proposed to set up a Test & Protect team which can, if there are quieter times, support other parts of the Contact Centre.
- 2.2 Working on the current numbers, it would take an additional 3fte Operators (at LG4) to cover the additional workload at current requirements for test and protect, however this would allow for no 'slack' or resilience so it is proposed that the additional resource requirement would be 3.5fte. Ideally, these should be fixed term for the same length of time as the NHS contact tracing function up to 31 March 2022. These posts can be funded from the Contact Centre budget up to 31 March 2021 but budget for a further year up to 31 March 2022 will be required.
- 2.3 It is further proposed that we employ an additional 2 fte Operators (at LG4) until 31 March 2021 to build in resilience for the winter period for general calls. These posts will be funded from an underspend in the Contact Centre budget.
- 2.4 The Contact Centre has recently advertised for an additional temporary Operator until 31 March 2021 (job closed 23/10/20), so it is possible to recruit additional numbers through this advert – 10 applicants have been selected for interview.
- 2.5 There are 3.5fte staff currently employed on a temporary basis until 31 March 2021 and we would wish to extend their contracts to 31 March 2022 to support the additional work outlined at 1.3 as well as progress the customer services strategy including channel shift. One fte can be funded from the Contact Centre budget.
- 2.6 It is intended to continue to access ANGUSAlive support at current levels to support the email channel, however this is only available on a rolling basis (monthly) dependent on external factors such as furlough and face to face service requirements.
- 2.7 We are currently in discussion with an external provider about supporting incident management. The intention is to investigate whether we can organise this on a standby basis (possibly in collaboration with other neighbouring councils).

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 The table below outlines the financial implications associated with the proposals:

2021/22
£172k
3.5fte Test and Protect (£110k)
2.5fte extension of current resource (£62k)

4. Recommendations

It is recommended that a report be taken to the next Policy and Resources Committee on 8 December to seek approval to fund either from the COVID contingency reserve or the Provision for Additional Burdens

- a. The recruitment of 3.5fte operators (at LG4) to form a 'Test and Protect' team within the Contact Centre;
- b. The extension of the 3.5fte Contact Centre Operators who are in temporary roles for a further year up to 31 March 2022.