Agenda – Executive Policy Committee – January 20, 2016

REPORTS

Item No. 11 311 Contact Centre - Revised Performance Target and Service Efficiencies

WINNIPEG PUBLIC SERVICE RECOMMENDATION:

That this report be received as information.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: **311 Contact Centre Revised Performance Target and Service Efficiencies**

Issue: **Public Service Response to 311 Contact Centre Audit, Recommendation #2**

Critical Path: **Executive Policy Committee – Council**

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO/COO
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RECOMMENDATIONS

That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On February 18, 2015, the Audit Committee considered the 311 Contact Centre Audit Final Report, and upon the Committee's recommendation, Council received the report as information on February 25, 2015.

The Winnipeg Public Service has implemented nine of 13 recommendations of the Audit, and is working toward completion of the remainder. This report relates to Recommendation #2, in which the Auditor recommended that the "311 Contact Centre management develop a report for consideration of Council to revisit the performance target of 80% of calls answered within 30 seconds with a mind to revising it to a more realistic target consistent with what the City can afford. The revised target should consider exploring areas where service efficiencies can be gained through the expanded use of IVR* and modifications to the hours of operations."

** IVR: telephone interactive voice response*

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications to the recommendation that the report be received as information.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The portion of Recommendation #2 relating to service level targets and service efficiencies is being addressed through the implementation of operational changes outlined in this report, to enhance quality and efficiency of service, and reduce caller wait times.

With respect to the service level target, the public service has studied the potential impacts of a change to the target, and no longer supports this portion of the recommendation. Analysis outlined in the report indicates such a change would not add value from a customer service standpoint, and could be perceived as a degradation of service.

The portion of Audit Recommendation #2 relating to operating hours has been reviewed. An initial, high-level analysis of costs versus savings shows that many, complex call types would have to be rerouted or unanswered during an overnight closure of 311 leading to service degradation and, furthermore, that recurring annual costs to implement such a closure would outweigh the anticipated savings. Therefore, the public service will not be recommending such a change.

HISTORY

Establishment of a 311-style service was a recommendation of the former Mayor's Red Tape Commission (2005). The 311 Contact Centre was launched in January 2009 to provide access to City of Winnipeg information and services 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

The Audit report noted that the "311 Contact Centre has expanded access channels to contact the City, contributed to improved management accountability and reduced the cost per call minute as defined in the objectives of the original business case for the creation of the 311 Contact Centre." It also noted that the "311 Contact Centre is delivering service to citizens in a more transparent and accountable manner." At the same time, it observed several areas for improvement.

Prior to implementation of 311, citizens called departments directly, often having difficulty as departmental offices, or in some cases call centres, had relatively few telephone lines or personnel to accept incoming calls. Implementation of a 311 service dramatically expanded the number of lines for telephone and, at the same time, introduced other access channels to contact the City (e.g., email, fax, TTY for people with hearing disabilities).

Winnipeg's is one of the most comprehensive 311 contact centres in Canada in terms of the wide variety of City services to which it connects citizens. The Winnipeg 311 model has enabled the City to reduce the cost per call minute from $1.13 prior to 311, to $0.68 in 2012. The current cost is $0.73 per call minute (2015, year-to-date). At the same time, 311 has increased transparency and accountability through such initiatives as the regular publishing of performance data on the 311 website, http://winnipeg.ca/311.

In an industry dominated by private sector contact centres, the 311 Contact Centre has been recognized as a leader in several operational areas by its peer organization, the Manitoba Customer Contact Association, through the Manitoba Excellence in Contact Centre Achievement Awards:

2011 - Technology Award (using technology in place to meet customer service needs)
- Training and Development Award (building employee knowledge and skills to achieve service objectives)

2012 - Technology Award
- Employee Satisfaction Award (recognizes a centre where employee survey results show a high degree of career satisfaction)

2013 - Training and Development Award

2015 - Training and Development Award

Service Delivery Challenges

The implementation of 311, along with ongoing performance reporting, contributed to improved management transparency and accountability, and reduced the City's cost per call minute. As the Auditor noted, however, "Original objectives such as answering 80% of the calls within 30 seconds, further reducing cost per minute call and revenue generation require further analysis to evaluate if achievable within current environment."

Since its inception, the 311 Contact Centre has evolved and enhanced its function as a "single window" through which Winnipeggers can obtain information and make requests for service, 24 hours per day, seven days per week. This evolution has led to significant changes to its responsibilities, in both scope and scale.

These enhancements and expansions to service have been accomplished without changing the number of full-time equivalent (FTE) positions, meaning that while technology has been leveraged to enhance service, some of the enhancements come at the expense of having fewer staff available to answer incoming phone lines. This, in turn, leads to longer wait times for callers.

The Centre received 1,654,520 citizen interactions in 2014. Original methods of interaction included phone, email, fax and TTY (telephone device for persons with hearing disabilities). Since 2009, additional channels for interaction have been added: social media (Twitter and Facebook, including direct messaging to protect citizen privacy) web self-service, mobile app, optional callback feature, and face-to-face counter service at City Hall, 510 Main Street.

The City organization has relied heavily on the 311 Contact Centre to support its response to day-to-day issues. Examples include: inclement weather and its effects on City services, infrastructure and facilities, City departments' change initiatives (e.g., Water and Waste's recycling and garbage collection transition), and assistance in multi-departmental responses to and recovery from emergencies (e.g., floods, and the 2014 frozen pipes emergency).

As well, citizens call 311 for information on many issues that are not City-administered services and for which CSRs do not have information readily available to them.

These factors all combine to place additional strain on existing resources, which adds to talk times and, ultimately, wait times.

Adjusted Service Level Performance Metric: Analysis of Service Delivery Challenges

Prior to the 2009 opening of Winnipeg's 311 Contact Centre, the industry standard service level in call centres was 80/30, or answering 80% of calls within 30 seconds. This standard was adopted in Winnipeg, however this target has been met or exceeded only twice over the past six years.

Within the call centre industry, and specifically the governmental call centre sector, few centres have achieved this or similar benchmarks. 311 is a relatively new service delivery option; therefore, in most cases, historical performance data were not available and instead have been gained through experience. The following chart compares performance in a number of contact centres:

Government Contact Centres – Comparative Data (2014)				
Government Contact Centre	Service Level – SL (percentage of calls answered / # of seconds to answer)	# of Months Service Level Achieved (2014)	FTEs (CSR)	Call Volume (average per month)
Winnipeg 311	80/30	0 of 12	67	125,000
Vancouver	80/30 (changed to 70/60, January 2015)	0 of 12 (at 80/30 SL)	40-50	77,327
Region of Peel	80/20 (changed to 80/30 in January 2014)	0 of 12	37	82,000
Calgary	70/30	0 of 12	65	* 99,025
Service Regina	80/20 to 2011 80/120 2012-2014 80/30 in 2015	1 of 12 (at 80/120)	17.5	14,800
Hamilton	80/30	10 of 12	31	35,000
Region of Waterloo - Service First	80/60	11 of 12	26	22,100
Toronto	80/75	11 of 12	150	166,000
Oshawa	70/30	12 of 12	13	9,500
Edmonton	80/25	12 of 12	170	183,000

** Calgary 311 does not handle transit inquiries; these are handled by a separate call centre.*

Furthermore, in Winnipeg, increasing complexity of calls in 2013-2014 led to a longer average speed of answering (ASA) and a trending down of the percentage of time the 80/30 service level (SL) standard was met, as shown below:

Changes in Average Speed of Answer (ASA) and Achievement of Service Level (SL):			
Year	**ASA**	**SL @ 80/30**	
2009	:01:22	58.62%	
2010	:01:21	59.86%	
2011	:01:28	58.59%	
2012	:01:21	61.80%	
2013	:02:02	49.87%	
2014	:04:19	38.39%	
2015	:02:56	44.86%	YTD as of Sept. 30, 2015 *(inbound calls only)*
2015	:04:56	39.34%	YTD as of Sept. 30, 2015 *(includes call-back queue, which started January 2015)*

There are several factors affecting the speed of answer, and longer call wait times in 2014:

- Increase in service requests related to discoloured water
- Increase in information/service requests on frozen water pipes (Winter 2014-15)
- Increase in outbound calls related to 2014 civic election
- Longer talk time on Assessment & Taxation and Animal Services related calls

As noted earlier, the introduction of new services (or new channels through which to reach 311) reduces the amount of personnel available to answer calls, which remain the highest percentage of interactions from citizens:

Total Citizen Interactions with 311 (2014)	Telephone Contacts	Email Contacts	In-person Contacts	Social Media Contacts	Self-service online Contacts	Mobile App Contacts
1,654,520	1,510,299	105,756	29,671	4,490	2,932	1,372
100%	91.3%	6.4%	1.7%	0.3%	0.2%	0.1%

Frontline CSR assignments				
Telephone	Email	Social Media	510 Main St. Counter	Total Frontline CSR FTE
59	3	2	3 *	67

** Of the three CSRs at the 510 Main Street counter service area, two are CSR2 positions, a higher-graded position for escalation of requests/inquiries*.

Another area adding pressure to 311 resources is the relative growth of service requests (SR) in comparison to information requests (IR). Information requests are closed at the time of the call, by providing information, assistance, or referral. Service requests typically take longer to complete, since there is, generally, additional information to obtain from the citizen in order to direct the request to the appropriate department for resolution and closing of the service request. Below is a depiction of the growth of service requests as a percentage of all requests:

Year	Number of SRs	% of total requests	Number of IRs	% of total requests
2012	440,446	26.8%	1,204,964	73.2%
2013	511,799	30.2%	1,184,490	69.8%
2014	496,893	36.4%	869,529	63.6%

For 2014, the lower combined number of SRs and IRs can be attributed to a higher percentage of callers ending the call before speaking with a CSR. The reasons for abandoning a call may include:

- The caller's question may have been answered by one of the messages playing on the IVR during the wait time,
- The caller gave up waiting, and instead used email/online reporting options, or
- The problem was resolved in the meantime (e.g., traffic light restored).

Call-abandon rates, 2012-2014			
Year	2012	2013	2014
Abandon rate	14.55%	18.81%	31.25%

To meet the current service level standard of answering 80% of calls within 30 seconds while continuing to provide service through other channels (email, fax, TTY, social media), the City Auditor's analysis, conducted in 2014, indicated an operating budget increase of 20 FTE or $976,340 (for 2016, salaries and benefits, increasing to $1,015,860 by 2018) would be required. This would be an increase from 67 to 87 frontline CSR FTEs.

Funding for such an expansion does not exist in the 311 Contact Centre operating budget. Noting this, the Auditor recommended that the public service prepare a report giving consideration to changing the target to one that is a more realistic target, consistent with what the City can afford.

The public service reviewed several options for a new service level target. With current resources, a benchmark of 70/120 (70% of calls answered within two minutes) would be reached 57.90% of the time when considering inbound calls only (compared to the actual 44.86% at 80/30); and 49.40% for inbound and callback queue (compared to the actual 39.34% at 80/30).

Given that the forecast performance of the potential 70/120 target is only 10-13% higher than the current performance and still well below 100%, a change to 70/120 is not in alignment with a continuous improvement philosophy and, as it is so far off the industry standard (80/30), little or no value-add could be anticipated. Further, while a public education campaign would communicate the change as a performance measurement metric, it is possible that the change could be perceived as a lowering of quality standards or, worse, a reduction in service, though neither would be the intent, but this could erode public confidence and satisfaction.

While the public service agreed with the recommendation during the Audit, the research and analysis conducted since that time does not justify a change to the service level target from either a customer service or performance management perspective. Therefore, the public service no longer supports the Audit recommendation to revisit the service level target.

Review of Operating Hours

In Recommendation #2 from the 311 Audit report, the City Auditor suggested that, in conjunction with consideration of a new service level target, efficiencies be sought through the modification of operating hours.

Many of the after-hours calls 311 receives are for emergency service related to water main breaks and other critical services. If 311 were to be closed overnight (e.g., 10:00 p.m. to 6:00 a.m.), such calls would either be unanswered, or would have to be routed back to departments during off-hours. In many cases, this would lead to additional costs for departments, as they currently do not have overnight, administrative staff to handle incoming customer service calls or emails.

A preliminary and conservative, high-level estimate of incremental costs to departments as a result of an overnight closure of 311 shows costs for departments to handle after-hours calls would exceed the savings associated with an overnight closure.

A reduction in operating hours and the resulting diversion of after-hours calls would be a fundamental shift in the City's service delivery model, and would be incongruous with the customer service philosophy, business case, and cost-per-call-minute savings that were part of the justification for establishment of 311 in 2009.

As the qualitative and estimated, quantitative impacts of reduced operating hours negate the potential savings, the public service will not be recommending a modification in operating hours.

Upcoming Enhancements to Service Delivery

To enhance the overall performance of the centre and the customer service experience, the public service is preparing to move forward with a number of operational process improvements with the goal of increasing efficiency and accuracy of customer service, and lowering call wait times. Examples of changes include:

1. The routing of Transit calls related to single-bus trip schedules to TeleBUS by using Interactive Voice Response (IVR) technology.
    - Call volume (April 2014 – May 2015): 474,101 information requests
    - Call duration (average): four minutes

    This change builds on the philosophy of promoting self-service options for technology-savvy customers, while respecting that some are not equipped, or prefer to "talk with a real person."

    Winnipeg Transit offers a number of self-service options via web, mobile web, and telephone. TeleBUS is a self-service phone option for current and near-future, single-trip bus schedules using a five-digit bus stop number.
    Routing 311 calls to this existing technology through a designated IVR is expected to reduce call volume by approximately 12%, according to the City Auditor's 2014 analysis. The actual performance of this change would be monitored.

    Callers who do not know their five-digit bus stop number, require specific information related to trip planning, or multiple route options, would still need to speak with a CSR. The public service would make technology adjustments to implement the IVR change for single-trip Transit calls.

    As well, continued communication efforts would remind citizens of other options available for obtaining transit information (web, mobile web, Navigo trip planner, and TeleBUS).

2. The routing of Assessment & Taxation Department calls to subject-matter expert staff within the 311 Contact Centre.
    - Call Volume (April 2014 – May 2015): 18,739
    - Call duration (average): six minutes

    Most Assessment and Taxation inquiries require extensive knowledge of taxation policies and billing principles. CSRs are generalists for the most part, therefore many do not possess this level of knowledge, and calls are regularly escalated to 311 team leaders. Routing these calls to CSRs with subject matter expertise will increase efficiency and accuracy.

3. Routing of Animal Services inquiries, which require more triaging. CSRs must gather a number of details from the caller (e.g., on dangerous animal calls, to help assess a threat to

animal and public safety) and use that assessment to make a decision to refer the case to Animal Services, 911, the Humane Society, or Manitoba Conservation. CSRs with specific knowledge in this area would enhance the caller's experience during what may be a difficult situation, while ensuring accuracy and efficiency.

- Call volume (April 2014 – May 2015): 8,611
- Call duration (average): 17 minutes

The routing Assessment and Taxation, and Animal Services calls to a group of subject-matter experts within the contact centre would create an internal "centre of excellence" to provide support on these complex calls. It is anticipated that these changes, and the routing of Transit single-trip calls would have a reducing effect on wait times, however, actual performance would be monitored and measured to determine the efficacy of the changes.

4. The 311 Self Service website has been refreshed and reorganized within the limits of the existing web platform, to improve comprehensiveness by expanding the amount of information and services accessible, and improving user-friendliness of the display. The changes have been developed with intuitiveness in mind, so that the user experience is as seamless as possible.
    - It is anticipated that, as more people become aware of the self-service options, they may prefer those options instead of calling; this could further reduce wait/call times.
    - Further, significant changes would require replacement of the current website platform (circa 2008) with an investment in a web content management system.

A public awareness campaign (news release, media availability, social media posts, IVR message, and a prominent highlight on Winnipeg.ca) would follow, to help citizens to understand how to access the services across the various methods of interaction (phone, web, email, social media, and self-service). This communication campaign will continue the promotion of self-service options to increase reliance on options other than telephone, to further reduce wait times.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement **Date:** December 24, 2015

Project Name:

311 Contact Centre Revised Performance Target and Service Efficiencies

COMMENTS:

This report is received as information only and has no financial impact.

Original signed by R. Hodges
Ramona Hodges
Manager of Finance (Campus)
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

In preparing this report, there was consultation with:
Winnipeg Transit
Assessment and Taxation Department
Animal Services Special Operating Agency
City of Vancouver
Region of Peel
City of Calgary
Service Regina
City of Hamilton
Region of Waterloo – Service First
City of Toronto
City of Oshawa
City of Edmonton

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

The 311 service delivery model aligns with and supports OurWinnipeg Section 03 – Quality of Life.

SUBMITTED BY

Department:	Corporate Support Services
Division:	311 Contact Centre
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Date:	December 24, 2015