Minutes – Executive Policy Committee – March 18, 2025

REPORTS

Item No. 8 Customer Service and Wait Time Improvements within 311 Service

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

The Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and recommended to Council:

1. That this report be received as information.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY:

Moved by Councillor Santos,

That the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service be concurred in and forwarded to Council.

Carried

David Grant submitted a communication in support of the matter.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On January 30, 2025, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and granted a further extension of time of up to 60 days for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter.

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On January 21, 2025, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the following to Council:

1. That a further extension of time of up to 60 days be granted for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on Recommendation 1.U. of the 2024-2027 Multi-Year Budget as follows:

    A. Progress to date to improve customer service and wait times within 311 service, including the plan to achieve continued improvements and value for money for the additional funding provided.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On October 24, 2024, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee and granted an extension of time of up to 90 days for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter.

DECISION MAKING HISTORY (continued):

EXECUTIVE POLICY COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION:

On October 16, 2024, the Executive Policy Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and submitted the following to Council:

1. That an extension of time of up to 90 days be granted for the Winnipeg Public Service to report back on the matter.

2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.

COUNCIL DECISION:

On March 20, 2024, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee, which included the following recommendation:

1. U. That Council direct the Public Service to provide a comprehensive report within 180 days on progress to date to improve customer service and wait times within 311 service, including the plan to achieve continued improvements and value for money for the additional funding provided.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

Title: Customer Service and Wait Time Improvements within 311 Service

Critical Path: Executive Policy Committee

AUTHORIZATION

Author	Department Head	CFO	CAO
F. Wiltshire	F. Wiltshire	T. Graham	S. Armbruster, Interim CAO

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investments made in the 2024 Budget increased funding to the 311 Contact Centre by $1.25 million to improve wait times at 311.

In 2024, 12 new Full Time Equivalents were added in the 311 Contact Centre. The overtime budget was also increased to offer more overtime hours to deal with unexpected increases in calls to 311.

In 2024, the average phone wait time at 311 decreased to 1 minute 43 seconds. In 2023, the average wait time was 5 minutes and 54 second. In 2021 and 2022 the average wait time was approximately 11 minutes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That this report be received as information.

REASON FOR THE REPORT

On March 20, 2024, Council concurred in the recommendation of the Executive Policy Committee, which included the following recommendation:

1. U. That Council direct the Public Service to provide a comprehensive report within 180 days on progress to date to improve customer service and wait times within 311 service, including the plan to achieve continued improvements and value for money for the additional funding provided.

Extensions were subsequently provided by Council in October 2024 and January 2025.

IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no implications associated with receiving this report as information.

HISTORY/DISCUSSION

The 2024 Balanced Budget Update increased funding for 311 by 25 percent to enable the recruitment of additional staff and improve retention of existing staff. This budget increase resulted in an additional $1.25 million in operating funding available to 311 in 2024. The funding adjustment began in April 2024 following the adoption of the 2024 budget.

To date, 12 new Full Time Equivalents (FTEs) were created in the 311 Contact Centre to help address staffing shortages across the division with the overall goal of reducing 311 wait times.

Of these new positions, nine are at the CSR I level, which are the frontline staff who answer phones, along with responding to emails and social media.

Two additional Knowledge Management Liaison positions were added, bringing the full complement to five. These positions are responsible for writing and updating 311 scripts, specifically with the goal of achieving the Plain Language Policy recommendations. These scripts are used by 311 staff when dealing with service requests and information requests. They are also working on updating, reviewing, and creating new online service request forms.

An additional Council Liaison position was added to increase the hours of Council 311, bringing the total compliment to two. Last year, 311 received more than 7,000 requests directly from Councillors.

Approximately $110,000 has been put towards the overtime budget. The 311 Contact Centre relies heavily on overtime in order to deal with unexpected surges in call volume due to unexpected events such as storms and having more funding available in the overtime budget allows us to use this more without concern of exceeding available budget resources.

Finally, a portion of 311's funding was carried into 2025 as a Commitment Reserve, as the Public Service continues to navigate the 311 positions included in the Special Wage Adjustment that is being negotiated. The goal is to increase the base salary for CSR I and CSR II positions, which will help with recruitment and retention.

As a result of the investments made in 311, and the strategic hiring of additional staff, 311 Contact Centre was able to once again significantly reduce the average wait time for customers. In 2024, the average phone wait time at 311 decreased to 1 minute 43 seconds. In 2023, the average wait time was 5 minutes and 54 second. In 2021 and 2022 the average wait time was approximately 11 minutes.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

Financial Impact Statement

Date: January 27, 2025

Project Name:
Customer Service and Wait Time Improvements within 311 Service

COMMENTS:

There are no financial implications in receiving this report as information.

Randy Bernard

Randy Bernard, CPA, CMA
Manager of Finance & Administration (Campus)
Corporate Finance Department

CONSULTATION

This Report has been prepared in consultation with:
n/a

OURWINNIPEG POLICY ALIGNMENT

1.19 Equitable Service Access
Achieve best practice standards in equitable customer service and communications, enabling all community members to understand and navigate municipal service-delivery systems and decision-making processes, in the official language of their choice

WINNIPEG CLIMATE ACTION PLAN ALIGNMENT

Consideration was given as to whether this report connects to the Winnipeg Climate Action Plan (CAP), and it was determined that the CAP is not applicable to this specific report.

WINNIPEG POVERTY REDUCTION STRATEGY ALIGNMENT

Goal 6: All City Services are Equitable, Inclusive and Accessible

Action 6.3 – Increased Communications of City Programs and Services

Strategically use communications tools to increase awareness of existing City programs and services that benefit people experiencing poverty. These include, but are not limited to, updating the centralized information page on the City website (winnipeg.ca/SupportingWinnipeggers) and sharing with community partners, enhanced promotions for key City services (e.g. multi-lingual interpreter service available on 311, Recreation Fee Subsidy and third-party referral program, WINNpass program, low-cost shower-only ($1.95) option at Recreation facilities, etc.)

SUBMITTED BY

Department: Customer Service & Communications
Division: 311 Contact Centre
Prepared by: F. Wiltshire
Date: January 28, 2025
File No: N/A

Attachments: N/A