
REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES

Members Enquiry Service Update

Reason for this Report

1. The purpose of this report is to inform the Democratic Services Committee of the current performance of Member Enquiries System (MES) and the progress being made to develop the use of the system.

Background

Role of the Democratic Services Committee

2. The Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, Chapter 2, <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/mwa/2011/4/part/1/chapter/2> requires local authorities to appoint a Democratic Services Committee to oversee the Democratic Services functions of the Council, ensure that the work is adequately resourced and report to the full Council accordingly. The Democratic Services functions include Members' Services, Committee Services and Scrutiny Services, but not Cabinet Support Services.
3. In 2016 the Nethelpdesk software was introduced for use with Elected Members Enquiries. With the volume of Elected Members enquiries additional funding was sourced and a dedicated team was established in 2017 to support Elected Member Enquiries using Nethelpdesk.
4. The Members Enquiry System (MES) is an important tool to effectively manage the issues raised by residents with their Councillor as part of their ward casework. Issues raised may include:
 - Request for Service
 - Complex housing cases
 - Social services issues
 - Requests for residents/disabled parking
 - Failed/repeated requests for service queries
 - Road Safety / Traffic calming
 - Council Tax / benefits queries
5. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) was established to provide a full response to member enquiries within 10 working days although with many of the complex case that are received this is not always possible.

6. Members Services team have operational responsibility for the Members Enquiry System (MES) which includes logging enquiries and to escalate issues to managers and provide Senior Managers with monthly performance updates.
7. It was agreed with Community Councils, following the adoption by Cabinet of the Community Council Charter on 13 December 2018, that Member Services would continue to provide the MES service to the six Clerks Community Councils.
8. The Nethelpdesk software used to support the MES was upgraded at the end of October 2020. The Members Services Team who provide the operational support for the MES received initial training and minor implementation issues were quickly addressed. Following this the upgrade the nethelpdesk system became HALO and provided additional functionality which offered the opportunity to improve the facilities provided to Elected Members including:
 - a. Enhancing the ease of recording by updating the “capture form” process for enquiries and enabling elected members to easily record and update their enquiries.
 - b. Developing the data collected for an enquiry to enable meaningful local intelligence to be gathered.
 - c. Enhancement of the monitoring and reporting functionality to enable the team to identify surges in enquiries with specific services.
9. Some of the underspend in 2020-21 was used to fund additional support from the HALO team to better utilise the functionality of the system and the improve to support for Elected Members.

Issues

Development of Member Enquiries with HALO

10. A report was submitted to the Democratic Services Committee on 29 November 2021 outlining the improvements that were planned to be implemented before the Local Government Elections in May 2022. These improvements included:
 - a. A simplified capture form for enquiries which would
 - a. automatically identifies the user from the intranet logon;
 - b. allows a search of the category as you type to find the most likely service to fulfil your enquiry and identifies it in red text for you to select;
 - c. allows for a simple summary to be provided for ease of reference for the recipients of the enquiry;
 - d. the capture form has a simple tool bar which allows you to add more detail including: resident contact details and photographs to assist officers to address the enquiry.
 - e. provides an option to select whether the enquiry has been made in Welsh to ensure that any response for the constituent in the correct language
 - f. a drag and drop facility from your device into the enquiry before submitting the form for processing.
11. It was also identified that additional work may be needed to ensure easy access to a consent form is provided and that confirmation of the need for a consent is included

with in the enquiry. This may then require the provision of an additional field to upload the completed consent form.

12. The committee identified 3 Members to undertake a basic assessment of the test capture form to determine if:
 - a. the new capture form will work for Councillors.
 - b. any additional fields need to be added to the basic form either from the list above or other fields which are available and which a councillor may find useful.
13. The Members tested the form and verbally reported back to the committee advising that with some minor amendments the capture form would be suitable for implementation.
14. The implementation of the new capture form would be supported by the provision of a portal which would enable members to review the progress of their existing enquiries. It would also enable them to view any notifications automatically generated by the HALO system.
15. Prior to the implementation of the revised capture form the existing MES system has a limited reporting capability. Using existing data fields and linking additional information to an enquiry will increase the range and scope of the performance reports that can be generated. Report templates have been developed with the intention of enabling any Member of the team to create easily understandable documents or graphic outputs.

Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management

16. In 2021 a corporate project was commenced to provide a centralised, streamlined approach to the management of complaints, compliments, and enquiries. It aimed to make better use of staff time, improve the handling process, increase efficiency, and provide corporate oversight of the complaints, compliments, and enquiries across the organisation.
17. The project would identify and plan the implementation an appropriate technology solution with a single repository for the management of council-wide complaints, compliments, and enquiries, improvements to these processes, will provide corporate visibility and service area accountability, leading to consistent, quality responses, which will enhance the service the customer receives.
18. The project team engaged with a wide cross section of key stakeholders to understand the current facilities and processes. This highlighted the opportunities for improvement and was used to inform the new 'To Be' model. Process redesign, a corporate oversight function and a centralised technology solution are required to fulfil the project aims. A detailed requirements catalogue was produced by the project team, with input from key stakeholders. These requirements were shared with the Proof of Concept (POC) providers and were used to evaluate the solutions they provided.
19. Both Halo and Civica were asked to provide a tailored POC, which could be shared with key stakeholders for feedback and would allow for testing against the requirements catalogue. Stakeholder engagement with the new processes and the embedding and uptake of the new technology solution will be vital to the ultimate

success of this project. The evaluation criteria for the POC's were prioritised around these considerations. The following were used to evaluate the POC's:

- Feedback (Stakeholder and Project Team)
- Delivery of Requirements
- Cost and Alignment with Benefits
- SWOT Analysis

20. A detailed cost model was put together to show the potential costs for the Complaints, Compliments, and Enquiries Management system over a 5-year period, depending on the chosen solution and whether the solution remains on premise or moves to cloud-hosted.
21. Considering all the evaluation criteria and each supplier's performance against these criteria, the digital programme board approved the decision to progress with implementation of the Halo on premise solution across the entire organisation.

Impact of Corporate System on Member Enquiries

22. The planned implementation of the Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management system required the development of a common routing process for enquiries. Unlike the plans for the improvement of Member Enquiries this would be linked to the Council's Active Directory and provide accurate organisation information and pro-active routing to the teams and services responding to enquiries. This resulted in the planned improvements to the Members Enquiries Service not being able to be implemented to dovetail with the Local Government Elections in 2022.
23. The implementation plan for the Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management system was developed with the improvements to the Member Enquiries Services planned to be piloted from July 2022.
24. To maintain the service for Members the existing service would continue with:
 - a. Returning members using the original capture to log their enquiries
 - b. Newly elected members sending emails to Member Services who would then log the enquiry on their behalf
25. A total of 1007 (31%) of enquiries have been logged by Elected Members using the self-serve facility between 01 May and 31 October 2022 with the remaining 2264 enquiries being logged by officers.
26. Implementation delays for the Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management system has meant that the original plans for the delivery of the MES have been revised with new members now being able to use the [initial capture form](#) available on the Council's intranet. All members will be advised of the process to be used for the logging of enquiries.
27. The HALO system generates automatic updates to the originating Elected Member with links to the HALO system to view these notifications. Without access to the planned HALO portal the links in the notifications cannot be accessed and the

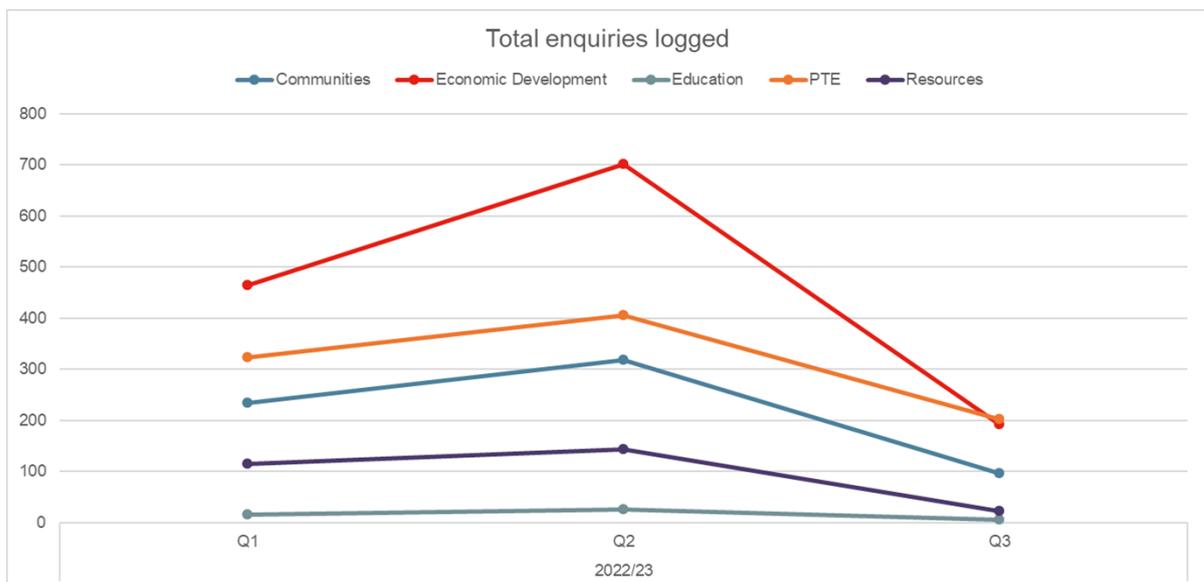
Members Services Team has to be contacted to provide the information in the notification.

- 28. To continue to progress the development of the MES in advance of the full implementation of the Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management system options to provide an interim portal with an updated capture form and basic portal are being investigated.
- 29. To prepare for the implementation of the full HALO reporting facilities the Member Services team are being trained in the use of Power BI, a Microsoft application which enables data to be visually displayed to gain deeper insight into the data. It is hoped that the use of Power BI will provide a range of visual reports that can be proactively used to address and wider implications from the enquiries that are made i.e. the identification of service hotspots across the city.

Performance Update

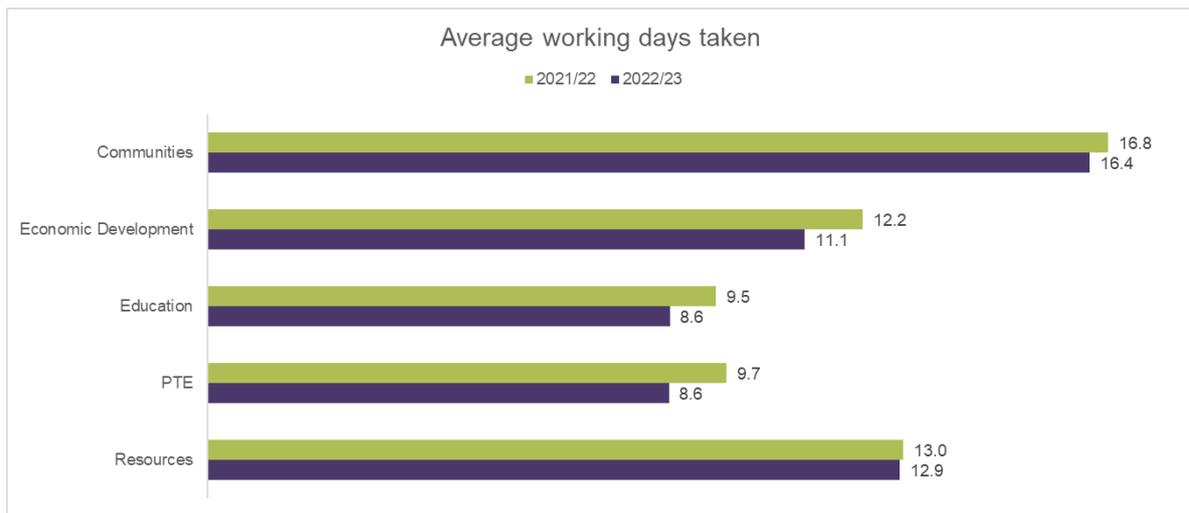
Number of Enquiries

- 30. Between 01 May and 31 October 2022 there were 3271 Member Enquiries logged with the team.
- 31. The following diagram shows the level of enquires which have been received by Directorate since April 2022.



Average working Days taken

- 32. The average number of days taken in 2021-22 and 2022-23 to complete enquiries in the comparable period is shown in the diagram below.



Reporting

33. Enquires approaching the 10-day SLA are flagged with the members services team and are escalated to the relevant managers to address.
34. At the end of each month a list of the outstanding enquiries is circulated to each Director and their performance or business management teams to address and resolve.
35. Reports are also shared with Senior Management Team at regular intervals to provide corporate awareness of the performance for completing enquiries.

Ongoing concerns

36. The Members Enquiry system receives a large number of enquiries. Directorates are under extreme pressure due to their workload not only from Members Enquiries but from the increased demand for services from residents of Cardiff, service recovery and catch up following the pandemic and the budget and resource pressures being faced by the authority.
37. The frustration of Members not being able to have their enquiries addressed in a timely manner has resulted in many members going directly to key officers with their queries. This is not always the most effective method of having their enquiries addressed as these still have to be passed to the service area to be actioned and this may be delayed due to absence from work on holiday.
38. The implementation of the Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management system is continuing to be progressed and efforts to hasten the roll-out out being considered within budget and resource limitations.
39. Work will continue to:
 - a. improve the interim arrangements of the Member Enquiries Service
 - b. develop better reporting tools for Member Enquiries using Power BI
 - c. complete the implement the Complaints, Compliments and Enquiries Management system at the earliest practicable opportunity

Financial Implications

40. The body of the report provides details of the requirements for and sources of funding in respect of Members Enquiries Service and the HALO system. Sources of funding include the Democratic and Members Services budgets and reserves, with the agreement of the Director of Governance and Legal Services.
41. All costs of the activities and services support are to be monitored and contained within the respective funding sources and budgets, and any new costs will require an identified source of funding.

Legal Implications

42. Under the Local Government (Wales) Measure 2011, Part 1, the Democratic Services Committee is responsible for overseeing the democratic services functions of the Council, ensuring this work is adequately resourced; and reporting to full Council accordingly.
43. The definition of 'Democratic Services functions' includes the provision of support and advice to each member of the authority in carrying out the role of member of the authority.
44. In determining how to exercise its functions, the Committee must have regard to the statutory guidance issued by the Welsh Ministers: [https://gov.wales/local-government-measure-2011-guidance \(chapter 3\)](https://gov.wales/local-government-measure-2011-guidance-chapter-3)
45. Under the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, anyone processing personal data (information about an identifiable living individual) must have a 'lawful basis' for processing. One of the potential lawful bases is the consent of the individual concerned. Members may be able to rely on implied consent for processing the personal data of their constituents for casework enquiries, but in certain circumstances, for example, when dealing with safeguarding matters, the explicit written consent of the individual/s will be required. A proforma consent form has been prepared to assist Members, along with advice on when explicit consent is required; and will need to be incorporated within the new MES forms and processes.

RECOMMENDATIONS

46. The Committee is requested to note the content of the report and the progress being made with the Members Enquiries Service.

GARY JONES
HEAD of DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
22 November 2022

Background Papers:

[Members Enquiries Service Update](#) report to Democratic Services Committee dated 29 November 2021.