

**COUNCIL: 24 JUNE 2021**

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**FINANCE, MODERNISATION & PERFORMANCE STATEMENT**

**AGENDA ITEM:**

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**Into Work Services**

The Into Work team has continued to expand to ensure that the anticipated increased demand on the service can be met. Mentoring projects have seen a sharp increase in numbers, with young people and those who have been recently made redundant making up the highest caseloads. Face-to-face Job Club sessions are also seeing an increase in people requiring light touch support to apply for employment and Universal Credit.

Over the past six months, the team has helped 25,340 people and at least 473 have been supported into employment. The number of Employer Liaison and Self Employment Advisors have also increased. This will continue to ensure that businesses are plugged into the team and that help can be offered to those who want to set up a business of their own.

The new pathway team supports clients through volunteering, work experience, adult learning, Cardiff Works and into employment, providing a complete wraparound service. The service has adapted to specifically support those whose employment has been affected by Covid-19 by reskilling clients in demand employment sectors.

The Onsite Construction Academy was officially launched last month and has so far seen over 80 referrals from across the city-region. Officers have been busy presenting to partners to help raise awareness of the training opportunities and work experience placements that are available.

Cardiff Works has expanded the roles on offer through the agency beyond administration roles to include home carers, cleaners, support workers, forklift drivers and warehouse operatives, with many of the successful candidates coming from Into Work employment projects. 'Get Into...' courses are also provided, which support clients to upskill in areas of high recruitment within the Local Authority.

The Cardiff Works team has provided online information sessions to local community groups to help raise awareness of the temporary employment opportunities that are available within the Council and has a face-to-face presence at Central Library Hub. The assessment process for Cardiff Works is currently being reviewed and will link with the Adult Learning team in order to provide training and support for those facing barriers to signing up to the agency. The team has continued to bid for more external funding to further enhance the services provided to the citizens of Cardiff, ensuring that the Into Work team can support everyone through these ongoing difficult times.

## **Mobile App and Website**

April and May 2021 saw continued progress in the development of our digital services. The Cardiff.gov.uk website had 187,866 visitors in May 2021 viewing 660,202 pages of information. 65.4% of our visitors chose to access the website using a mobile device. The CardiffGov app was downloaded a further 801 times in May 2021, with the total number of downloads since launch having now reached 44,746 as the platform continues to grow its customer base. Over the past few months, the team has been working on improving accessibility for residents using the app. This is in conjunction with the App Accessibility Standards, which come into force from 23 June 2021. We are also working with DAC (Digital Accessibility Centre) to review and make improvements. A new app release with improvements and an Accessibility Statement will be published in advance of 23 June.

## **Chatbot (BOBi)**

As of 31 May 2021, BOBi has had over 65,000 conversations with citizens – averaging 1,015 each week. This is an increase of almost 100 per week since the start of the year. Quality scores remain high, with around 90% of feedback being Very Good, Good or OK. Continuous learning improves BOBi's response accuracy and conversational standard from month to month. BOBi also supported the Senedd and PCC elections in early May 2021 by providing useful information about the election process, where to vote and signposting citizens so that they could register to vote, and request postal and proxy votes. Work continues to broaden and deepen BOBi's capabilities for handling waste & recycling enquiries, and to expand into other services.

## **C2C (Connect to Cardiff)**

In May 2021, C2C received 41,013 calls, 2,796 emails and 1,515 webchats from residents. Interaction on social media continued to be popular, with over 7,929 messages. C2C also extended its opening times on 6 May 2021 between 7am and 10pm to help support enquiries relating to the Senedd and PCC elections on that date.

Responsive Repairs for council tenants has seen a significant number of calls presented, which has been a continuing trend since Covid-19 lockdown restrictions have been lifted. Additional staff are undergoing training to help meet demand, which is at its highest level for several years.

C2C are currently finalising our Customer Strategy, Customer Standards and Customer and Children's Charter, which outline our commitment to delivering first class customer service. Associated training for staff has also been developed, starting with 'Delivering Great Customer Service', which follows on from the 'Introduction to Customer Service' module, which was delivered virtually throughout the pandemic.

## **Microsoft Enterprise Agreement Renewal**

Cardiff Council has, for some time, been an extensive user of Microsoft software and services. The existing three-year contract expires at the end of June 2021 and the Council currently putting in place a new three-year agreement starting on 1 July 2021.

The new agreement provides a volume licensing program that gives the flexibility to buy Microsoft cloud services and software licenses under one agreement, rather than having a myriad of different agreements and terms & conditions, thereby making administration and management of the agreement far easier and giving us access to volume discounts. As part of the agreement, the Council will get access to a national volume discount pricing structure negotiated by Crown Commercial Services on behalf of all local and central government, with additional benefits such as the ability to deploy a common toolset across the whole organisation, 24/7 technical support, planning services, and end-user and technical training resources.

Typical products or licences used within the agreement are the Microsoft Office 365 suite of applications (which includes Outlook, Teams, SharePoint, Excel, Word etc.), Microsoft Project, SQL server (which underpins most of the Council's business applications such as SAP and DigiGov) and the Azure cloud development platform and development tools, which were used to create the Cardiff App and BOBi chatbot for example.

**Councillor Chris Weaver**  
**Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation & Performance**  
**17 June 2021**