
NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

31 January 2023

Audit & Scrutiny Committee

Title: Elected Member Service Requests

Purpose: To inform the Audit and Scrutiny Committee of the Elected Member constituent service request/query process and performance for the period 1st April to 30th September 2022.

Recommendation: That the Committee notes the report and the information provided.

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report details how Councillor service requests and queries logged on behalf of constituents are classified and handled in the Council's Customer Record Management system EMPro (formerly called *Lagan*).
- 1.2 The process for logging complaints is distinct from that relating to Councillor service requests.
- 1.3 Performance in terms of response times for the period 1st April to 20th September 2022 is highlighted for the information of Members and is subject to ongoing monitoring by the Executive Leadership Team.

2. Background

- 2.1 The current system for handling Elected Member service requests was derived following a workshop involving Councillors, Members Services and Council Officers with a view to enhancing and streamlining the process some years ago. Several improvements were identified and implemented as a result of the review, some of which reflected parts of the Council's Two Stage complaint handling procedure. The process which is in place is detailed below.
- 2.2 Councillors are automatically provided with a unique NAC Member online account when elected, allowing Members to log constituent requests and queries directly into EMPro quickly, easily and at any time. Councillor service requests and queries raised on behalf of constituents that require little investigation or are non-complex in nature will be investigated, actioned (if applicable) and responded to by the relevant Service by no later than 5 working days. Such cases are known as **Stage One** cases and this mirrors the terminology and timescale of a Stage One corporate complaint.

- 2.3 Councillor requests and queries raised on behalf of constituents that require detailed investigation, third party involvement or are complex in nature will be investigated, actioned (if applicable) and responded to by the relevant service by no later than 20 working days. Such cases are known as **Stage Two** cases and this also mirrors the terminology and timescale of a Stage Two corporate complaint.
- 2.4 All Councillor cases are logged with a default position of Stage One. If the Service investigating the matter determines it is complex or requires detailed investigation before a response can be provided, the Service will update the case to Stage Two which will automatically recalculate the due date to 20 working days from the date the case was first logged. Again, this process mirrors the Stage One to Stage Two escalation process within the Council's Two Stage corporate complaint handling procedure.
- 2.5 When cases are logged, notification of timescales are provided to Councillors and updates provided in the event the status of a case changes from Stage One to Stage Two. Services screen Councillor enquiries when they are logged to ensure that they are escalated for urgent action in the event that this is required.
- 2.6 Appendix 1 details the process flow followed when a constituent approaches a Councillor with a request or a query which requires Council involvement.
- 2.7 During the period from 1st April until 30th September 2022, 1,995 service requests were logged on the EM Pro system, 1,703 of which were raised by Councillors. The remaining 292 service requests were enquiries from MPs or MSPs.

93% of MP/MSP requests were closed on time and 89% of Councillor requests were closed on time. Requests that did not meet timescales were due to multiple factors, including:

- operational pressures
- employee absence/annual leave
- reduced/lack of resources
- further information required to progress requests (including from third parties)
- request complexity including cross-service enquiries

Whilst there is no national target for timescales to deal with Councillor enquiries, using the analogy with the complaints process where the national target of 80% is set for dealing with stage 1 complaints, the performance level for responding to stage 1 Councillor enquiries at 89% represents positive performance.

- 2.8 Only one Councillor enquiry was treated at Stage 2 during the period. Several enquiries would have qualified for consideration at Stage 2 of the process in view of their complexity, which would in turn have affected the performance statistics by reducing the number of cases breaching the target response time.

Where requests breach (or are going to breach) their due dates, Services are advised to keep Elected Members updated so they can manage their constituents' expectations.

- 2.9 Six monthly management team reviews monitor performance on an ongoing basis. The reasons for Services breaching response times are detailed in paragraph 2.7. It should be noted that some Services were still facing challenges in the post Covid 19 period

which has affected response times however the internal escalation processes in place ensure that urgent enquiries requiring immediate service intervention are dealt with quickly.

- 2.10 Complaints follow a separate route under the Scottish Public Service Ombudsman model complaint handling procedure. Appendix 2 details the process for logging complaints when a constituent approaches a Councillor wishing to raise a complaint about the Council.

3. Proposals

- 3.1 It is proposed that the Committee review and note the report.

4. Implications/Socio-economic Duty

Financial

- 4.1 None.

Human Resources

- 4.2 None.

Legal

- 4.3 None.

Equality/Socio-economic

- 4.4 None.

Climate Change and Carbon

- 4.5 None.

Key Priorities

- 4.6 The Two Stage Councillor Service Request Handling Process supports the Council's key priority of delivering more effective and efficient service provision. It demonstrates commitment through focussing on service improvement and delivery for North Ayrshire residents, customers and visitors

Community Wealth Building

- 4.7 None.

5. Consultation

- 5.1 None.

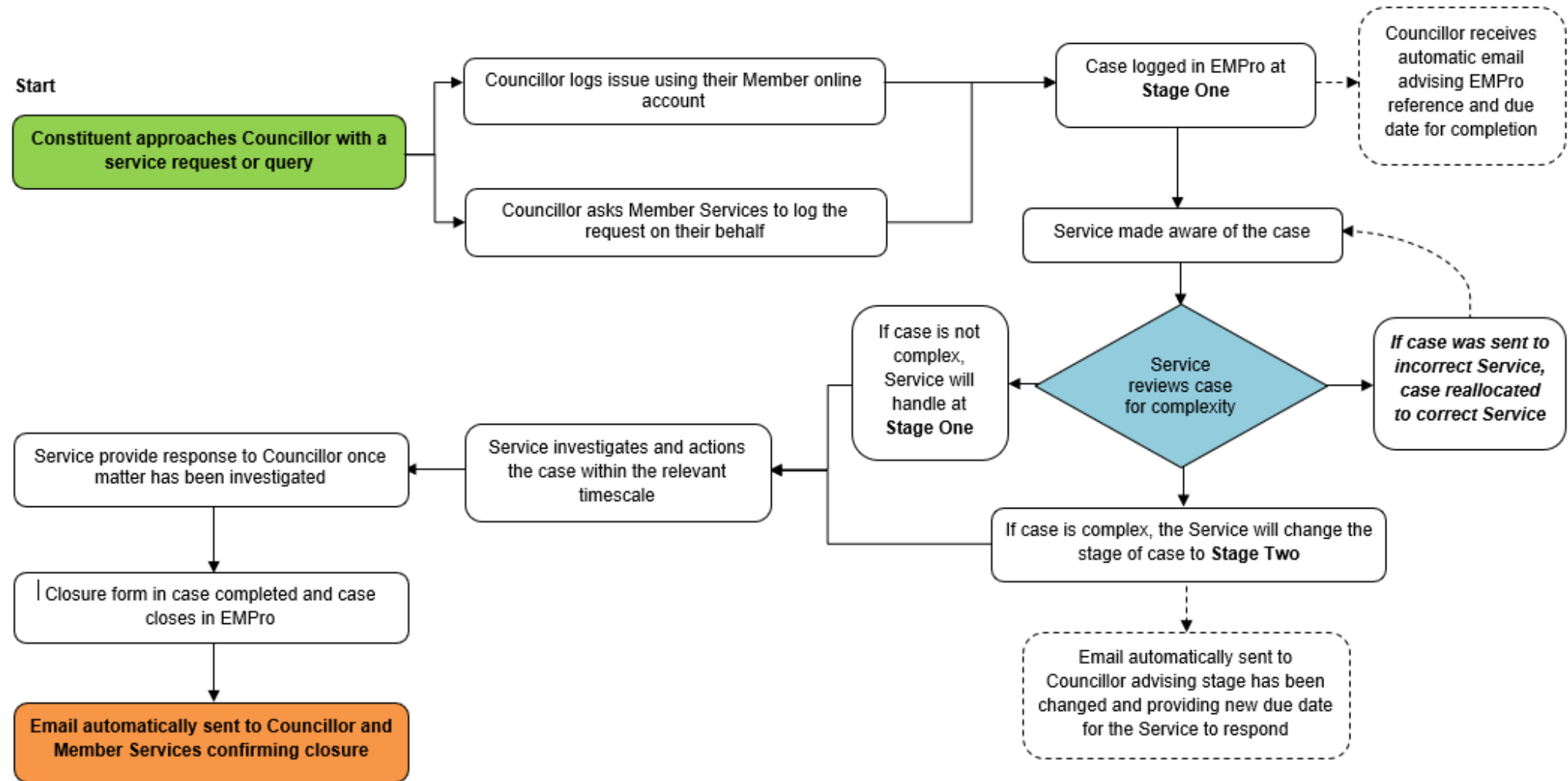
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Background Papers

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Appendix 1: Process for when service requests/queries are received from constituents



Stage One requests – typically non-complex matters that require little/no investigation. Timescale to resolve **5 working days**

Stage Two requests – complex matters that require detailed investigation. Timescale to resolve **20 working days**

Appendix 2: Process for when complaints are received from constituents

