

## SERVICE UPDATE

<b><u>Name of Function:</u></b>	Customer
<b><u>Date:</u></b>	2 February 2024
<b><u>Title of Update:</u></b>	Festive Period Service Delivery
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### UPDATE:

This service update is to provide Members with information around service delivery over the festive period 2023/24. This includes details of the demand for emergency council services and performance information.

### **Background**

The Customer Contact Centre provides a frontline service for a wide range of services. This includes our Emergency Response team (Regional Communications Centre – RCC) who respond to emergency enquiries, including community alarm calls.

During the festive period each year, the Contact Centre teams operate an emergency only service to mirror the approach undertaken by the services that they support. The website and telephone messages asked callers to make contact after the 2 January 2024, if there was no risk to people or property. Non-emergency matters could be reported online throughout the festive period and the chat bot was available to assist with enquiries.

The Housing Repairs Contact Centre team were open 9am to 5pm on the two working days between Christmas and New Year (27 and 28 December 2023). In addition to this, they were available for calls from 9am to 3pm on 29 December 2023. The Community Support Team also operated on these days and on 2 January 2024, to take calls in relation to Crisis Grants and urgent vaccine related calls for the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Storm Gerrit caused a significant increase of calls on the 27, 28 and 29 December 2023 which impacted call wait times. Due to the emergency nature of out of hours operations, we do not operate a call back service.

The Met Office issued a yellow weather warning throughout the storm, yet the damage and associated emergency requests that the Contact Centre received,

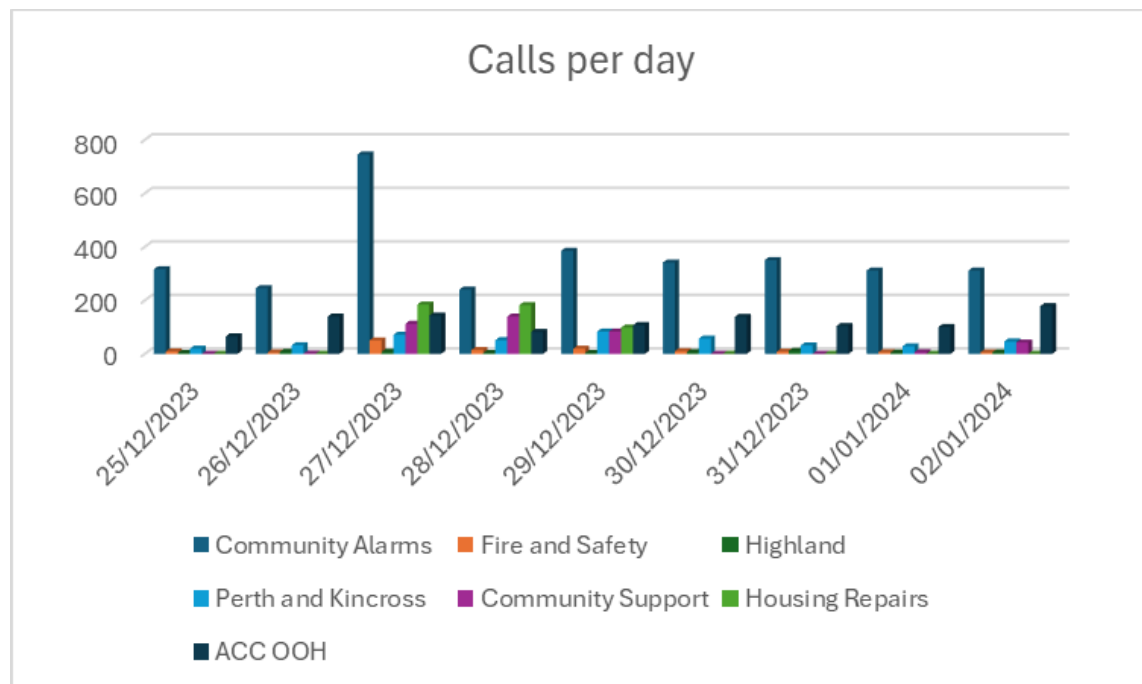
indicated that the weather was more severe. The storm also impacted Community Alarm calls due to power failures which require a response from the Emergency Response Team. Additional staff worked within the Emergency Response Team during the festive period to increase capacity and social media messages were posted to help reduce telephony demand by emphasising emergency contact only.

### **Total Requests**

The chart below details call demand between 25 December 2023 to 2 January 2024, from 9am to 5pm.

The category 'OOH' relates to Aberdeen City Council out of hours calls, e.g. Housing Repairs, Waste, Roads and Streetlighting whereby customers are advised to only call if emergency criteria is met. The Emergency Response Team call data indicates that 5% of the calls received related to non-emergency repairs. There is no data available around non-emergency contact made to the Housing Repairs Contact Centre team Contact Centre.

Data demonstrates that 169 enquiries relating to council services were submitted to the chat bot. 396 non-emergency housing repair requests were submitted online over the 2022/23 festive period.



## **Performance**

The Contact Centre teams answered over 5,000 calls during this period. There were occasions where unfortunately due to the storm, some callers experienced longer wait times. The longest wait time was 1 hour and 10 minutes on 27 December during the storm, when calls were at their peak. The longest wait time reduced significantly when the storm passed. Our analysis of the data demonstrates that the long wait time was by exception and significantly different to the average wait time over the festive period. Further detail is provided below.

### **Emergency Response Aberdeen City Out of Hours Calls**

- The team handled 1,273 out of hours emergency calls between 23 December and 2 January.
- The average wait time over this period was just over 3 minutes.

### **Community Alarm and Fire & Security Calls**

- The team handled 3,370 calls between 23 December and 2 January.

### **Housing Repairs Team**

- The team handled 464 calls between 27 to 29 December.
- The average wait time over this period was 16 minutes.

### **Community Support Team**

- The team handled 378 calls between 27 December to 2 January.
- The average wait time over this period was just under 2 minutes.

## **Operation and Protective Services Response**

Building Services run an “out of hours” business as usual approach for emergency building works to council properties over the festive period and responded to 433 emergency repairs in total. This consisted of:-

- 98 Electrical jobs
- 121 Joiner Jobs
- 126 Plumber jobs
- 34 Roofing jobs
- 4 Lift Engineer jobs
- 1 Specialist for security cover
- 48 Various external contractors (Blocked Drainage, Door Entry systems etc)

Environmental Services' emergency response approach to tree works over the festive period is based on a priority response to risk. The team's focus during storms and busy times is to prioritise higher risk trees i.e. those blocking roads. There are some trees that come down that pose a minimum risk to the public and the team will return to the lower risk trees when capacity allows.

The Arboriculture Team responded to all emergency requests raised over the festive period in relation to trees. There were over 100 requests raised.

### **Improvement**

An exercise is being carried out to identify lessons learnt. This will include the exploration of alternative operational service delivery models and enhanced contact centre technology to help manage telephone demand more effectively. The chat bot will be further developed to help provide 24-hour access to information, alongside improvement to website and social media content to ensure that citizens are better informed of call wait times during busy periods. We will also seek to improve our communication around anticipated high demand when the festive period ends and non-emergency service resumes, to better manage expectations around call wait times. In addition, we will look at options to make it easier for elected members to make contact during the festive period for emergencies that do not require a response from the Duty Emergency Response Coordinator (DERC).

### **Summary**

In summary, the Contact Centre teams handled a high volume of calls over the festive period, under extremely demanding circumstances and the weather warning did not appear reflective of the situation which made it more challenging to prepare for. Arrangements were made to help manage demand as effectively as possible, including the promotion of online options for non-emergency matters and staff agreeing to work additional shifts.

At the period of peak demand during Storm Gerrit, call wait times were longer than the rest of the festive period, which we recognise caused frustration for those making contact regarding emergency housing repairs. Potential improvements have been identified with a view to improve the citizen experience going forwards.