

## Corporate Planning and Financial Services Briefing to

Executive Committee

2024 May 14

ISC: UNRESTRICTED

EC2024-0440

## Improving the Customer Experience with City Service Requests

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### PURPOSE OF BRIEFING

This briefing informs Council and Calgarians of the work Administration is doing to improve the customer experience when requesting services from The City of Calgary. This includes service and information requests made after calling 311, submitting requests online, or through the 311 mobile app.

### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

#### *Background*

Service requests are an important part of providing responsive City services. The 311 service acts as the invisible string that connects Calgarians to front-line operations through a few simple channels. In 2023 alone, Calgarians used 311 to reach City services nearly one million times.

While 311 provides many benefits, responding to all these service requests is complex and can sometimes be a source of frustration for Calgarians. The City has heard this feedback and is committed to improving the customer experience. For example, the new call-back feature along with investments in more on-call agents has significantly reduced 311 wait times since last year.

The City continuously seeks opportunities for improvement, including those identified in the 311 Response Audit ([AC2021-0923](#)). This audit found that the decentralized nature of how we respond to service requests leads to inconsistent customer experiences. Administration has started a new cross-corporate program focused on implementing the audit recommendations plus other improvements we have heard are important to Calgarians. Throughout this work, we will seek additional opportunities to touch base with Calgarians to better understand their experience with service requests.

#### *What is being improved?*

The program aims to improve the customer experience with City service requests. Our specific focus is reducing the uncertainty after Calgarians submit a request and keeping people informed about what is happening with their request. This includes providing faster and better information about the status of requests while the work is underway and after the request has been closed. Once process improvements have been implemented, Calgarians will have greater insight into what happened with their request and how it was addressed.

#### *How are we improving the experience?*

To make these improvements, we need to work together across the organization. The program is taking a cross-corporate approach, being co-led by two Executive Sponsors (General Manager, Operational Services, and General Manager, People, Innovation & Collaboration Services). This ensures the intake and operational sides of service requests are working together towards a common goal. The program is managed by the Elevate Calgary team in Corporate Planning & Financial Services.

There are hundreds of service request types and a complex network of teams that are responsible for responding to those requests. The program is first reviewing a subset of service requests that are often escalated or redirected between different service providers within The City, which can be frustrating for Calgarians. From there, lessons learned will be applied to other parts of the 311 process and other service providers.

The program is divided into five phases, which will be completed by the end of 2025:

Phase	Title	Date
Phase 1	Identifying improvements to service request intake and implementing audit recommendations	2023 Q3-Q4
Phase 2	Identifying improvements for service requests that are often escalated	2023 Q4 – 2024 Q3
Phase 3	Identifying improvements for service requests that are often redirected between different groups	2024 Q3 – 2025 Q1
Phase 4	Applying lessons learned in all remaining areas	2024 Q4 – 2025 Q4
Phase 5	Wrapping up the program and sustaining the changes	2025 Q4

The impacts of these changes will be seen through results in the semi-annual Survey of Calgarians and by monitoring the impacts on service request performance.

*Common Definition of “Closed” Service Request*

One of the things we heard most clearly from Calgarians is frustration when service requests are “closed” when the work has not been completed from their perspective. As a first step towards addressing this concern, Administration worked together to agree on a common definition for when a service request can be considered “closed” to better align with customer expectations:

<p>A service request is considered “closed” when:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work has been completed (<i>operational/maintenance work or service restored</i>); or</li> <li>• Work request has been included in future workplans (<i>major projects or improvements</i>); or</li> <li>• Work request has been denied (<i>functioning as designed/not required or areas outside of The City’s jurisdiction</i>);</li> </ul> <p>And</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Information/feedback has been provided/passed along to the customer.</li> </ul> <p>Where appropriate, the requestor will have access to resolution of each service request including details when relevant within the Service Level Agreement.</p>
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We are now working with service providers to apply this common definition and provide a more consistent experience for Calgarians. Having this common definition also addresses one of the recommendations identified in the 311 Response Audit.

## *Engagement with Councillors' Offices*

In addition to using 311, Calgarians often reach out to their Councillor when they identify a service need. As such, Councillors' offices have important and valuable insights that can inform this work and help shape the recommended improvements. Interviews were held with Councillor office staff in January 2024, with staff from 11 wards participating. Through these meetings, two clear themes emerged: expectation management, and timely response and follow-up. Attachment 1 provides a summary of key insights heard in those sessions.

## **ATTACHMENTS**

1. Attachment 1 – Key Insights from Engagement with Councillors' Offices

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General Managers Carla Male, Doug Morgan and Chris Arthurs, concur with the information in this Briefing.