

Committee of the Whole (2) Report

DATE: Tuesday, March 19, 2024

WARD(S): ALL

TITLE: SERVICE VAUGHAN 2023-2024 UPDATE

FROM:

Nick Spensieri, City Manager

ACTION: FOR INFORMATION

Purpose:

To provide an update on Service Vaughan, including call volumes, wait times, and initiatives to enhance the public's experience interacting with their local government and achieving first-point-of-contact resolutions.

Report Highlights:

- In 2023, Service Vaughan received 169,330 calls (with an average wait time of three minutes, 43 seconds), 25,356 emails, 12,807 in-person visits to the Welcome Desk at City Hall and 9,750 calls to the overnight contact centre. All emails received by Service Vaughan are actioned or responded to.
- Fifty-nine per cent of calls, emails and in-person visits were resolved at the first point of contact. As Service Vaughan continues to expand its scope of work, by integrating with more departments' processes throughout the corporation, this percentage will increase, resulting in more resolution at the first point of contact and an improved resident experience.
- Critical milestones for Service Vaughan include improving centralized services for in-person service delivery and expanding the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool across the corporation.
- As part of Service Vaughan's commitment to generating timely, informative and accurate data analytics that allow staff to better support the public, the department worked closely under the leadership of Public Works and the Office of the Chief Information Officer to develop a Service Vaughan-specific dashboard.

Report Highlights continued

- Service Vaughan launched a winter operations pilot program with their after-hours contact centre, which resulted in access to up to 10 additional agents during winter weather events to decrease wait times.
- Service Vaughan continues to make progress on the internal audit management action plan.

Recommendations

1. That the Service Vaughan 2023-2024 Update be received.

Background

Given the importance of first point-of-contact resolution (the percentage of inquiries agents resolve on the first attempt), Service Vaughan remains committed to ongoing improvements.

Findings from an internal audit conducted by the City of Vaughan's Internal Audit department for Service Vaughan were presented to Council in June 2022. The department's management action plan to respond to the audit findings was also presented. At that time, Service Vaughan staff committed to increasing engagement with the Mayor and Members of Council and City staff, including annual reporting to Council, given the importance of first point-of-contact resolution for the public.

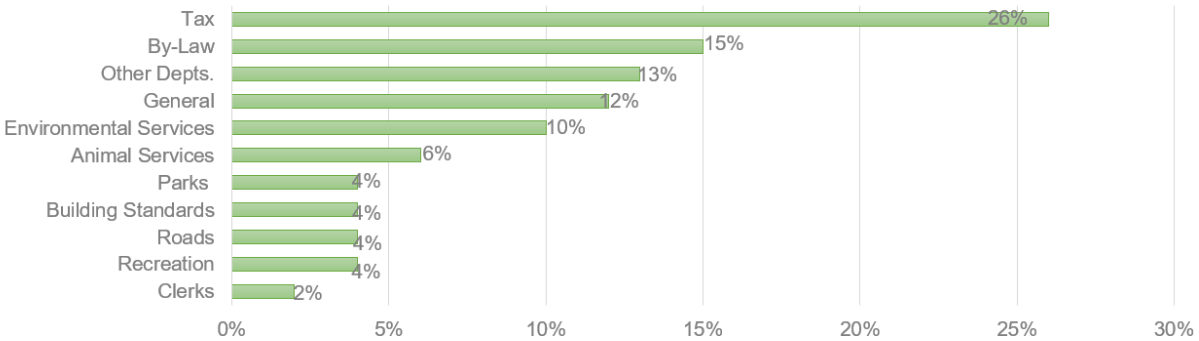
The timing of this report coincides with critical milestones for Service Vaughan. These include the progression of the re-opening of the Welcome Desk at Vaughan City Hall, which has been operational for 20 months since May 2022, improving centralized services for in-person service delivery; the expansion of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) tool across the corporation; and opportunities to renew and strengthen the mandate of Service Vaughan's efforts to improve the resident experience and deliver ongoing Service Excellence to the public, including Service Vaughan's Customer Service Strategy, which is anticipated to launch in Q4 2024.

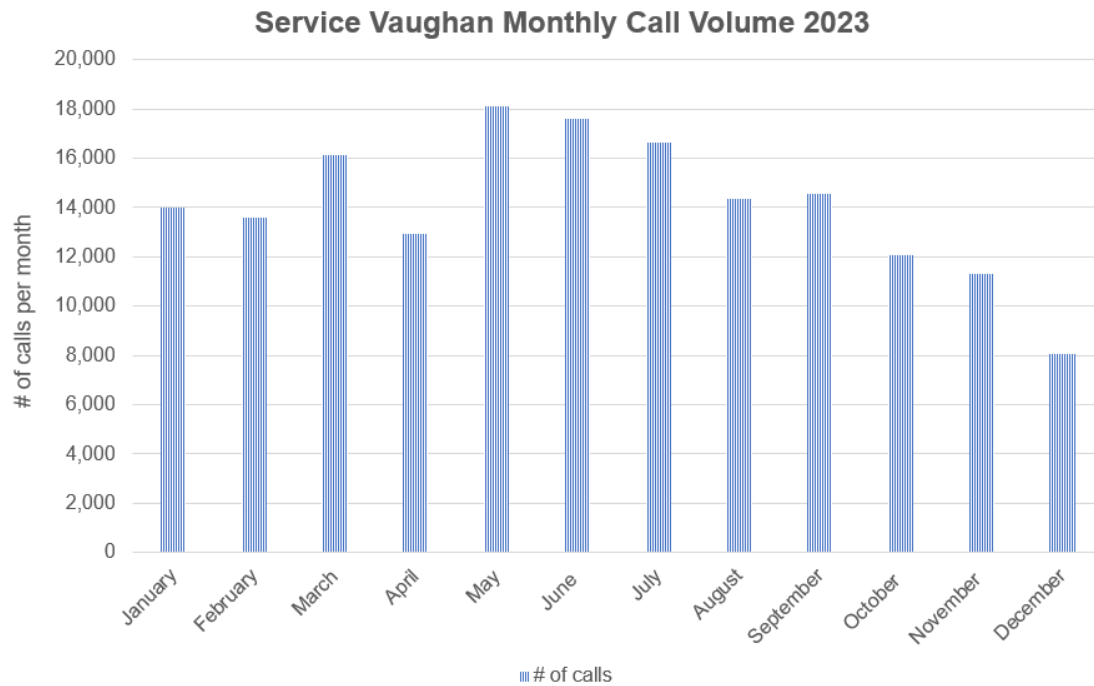
Service Vaughan continues to collect data on the volume of inquiries for calls, emails and in-person services at Vaughan City Hall.

Every week, the Service Vaughan Leadership Team updates the Mayor and Members of Council and the Senior Leadership Team – Executive on key metrics that are top of mind for Vaughan residents. This information includes average wait times, calls received and responded to, emails received and responded to, visits for in-person services, resolution rates, trending inquiries and key metrics for the after-hours call centre (Liveconx is the service provider). The average wait time for 2023 remained below four minutes.

January to December 2023	
Overnight contact centre weekly overview (7:30 p.m. to 8:30 a.m.)	
Wait time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Averaging two minutes
Call volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9,750 calls received
Trending inquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Animal Services: reports of injured/dead wildlife By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services: parked cars and parking permits
Service Vaughan contact centre yearly overview (8:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.)	
Wait time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Averaging three minutes, 42 seconds
Call volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 169,330 calls received. 131,825 calls responded to. <p><i>Examples of unanswered calls include unintentional dialling, resolved matters and preference to call back later.</i></p>
Email volume	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 25,356 emails received and responded to
In person at City Hall	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12,807 in-person visits to the welcome desk at City Hall
Resolution rate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 59 per cent of calls, emails and in-person visits were resolved at the first point of contact. <p><i>In this context, resolution is not intended to mean all work regarding the inquiry and/or request has been completed.</i></p>
Trending inquiries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Services: overdue accounts, late payments and arrears By-law and Compliance, Licensing and Permit Services: booking and cancelling parking ticket dispute appointments Recreation Services: program registration, drop-in activities and fitness memberships

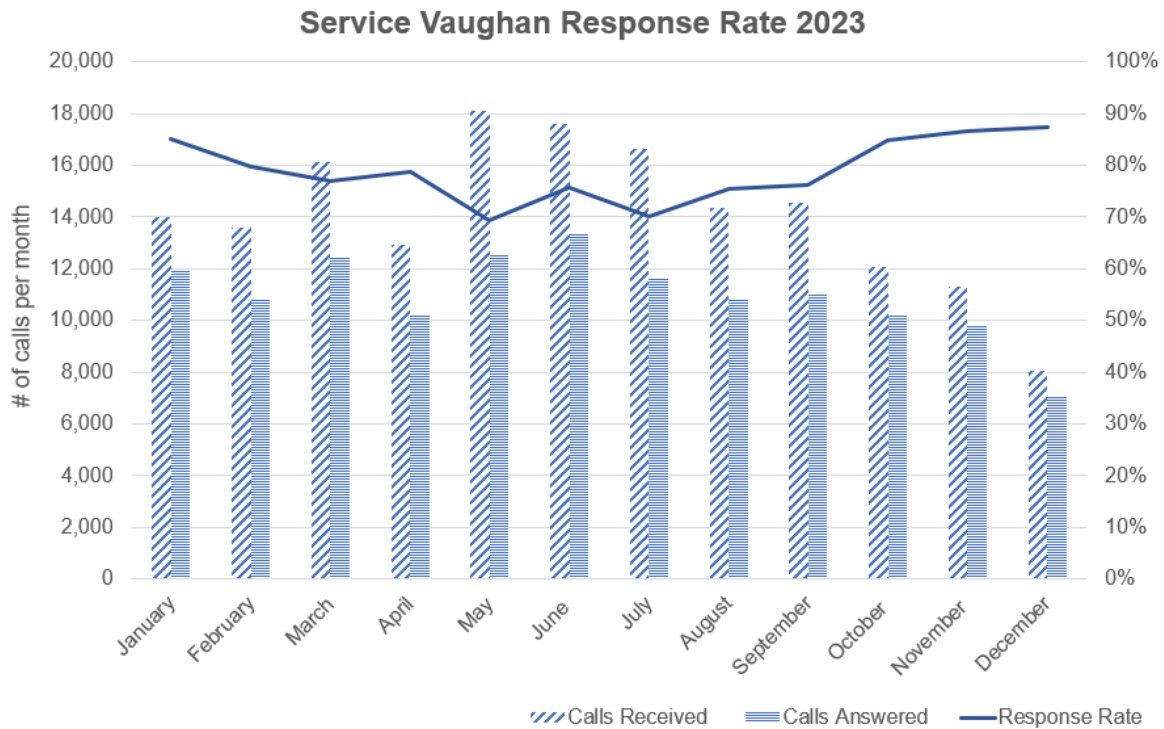
Trending Inquiries for 2023





Service Vaughan routinely experiences an increase in call volume in March due to the first property tax installment due date. Calls also increase in May/June when temperatures rise, as residents spend more time outdoors and are more likely to submit requests for seasonal maintenance, like tree pruning.

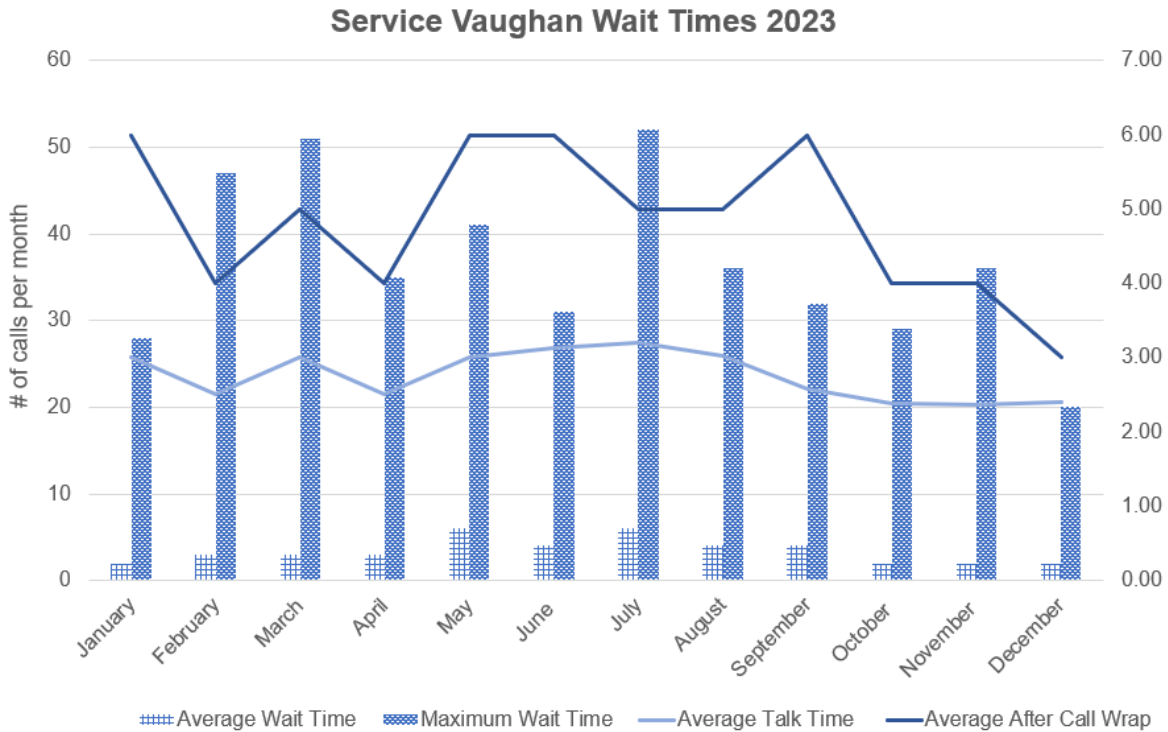
The City’s Communications, Marketing and Engagement department employs campaigns to encourage residents to leverage telephone and virtual services to mitigate high wait times in light of self-serve options available on the Service Vaughan portal. The increase in online service offerings has also contributed to an increase in email inquiries to Service Vaughan. The overall monthly call volume average for 2023 was 14,110.



This graph shows the calls received and responded to from January to December 2023. The number of calls is shown on the left y-axis (horizontal striped bar) and the percentage of calls answered (or response rate, the solid black line) is shown on the right y-axis.

One key trend is the difference between calls received and calls responded to. The greater the difference in calls received versus calls responded to is the result of increased call volume and/or staffing shortages. Some examples that generate an influx of calls are weather changes in May/June, which means residents spend more time outdoors and submit service requests like tree pruning or grass cutting. Other reasons include property tax bills and installment due dates (March and July) and recreation program registration (during the weeks of Feb. 21, Feb. 28 and March 7).

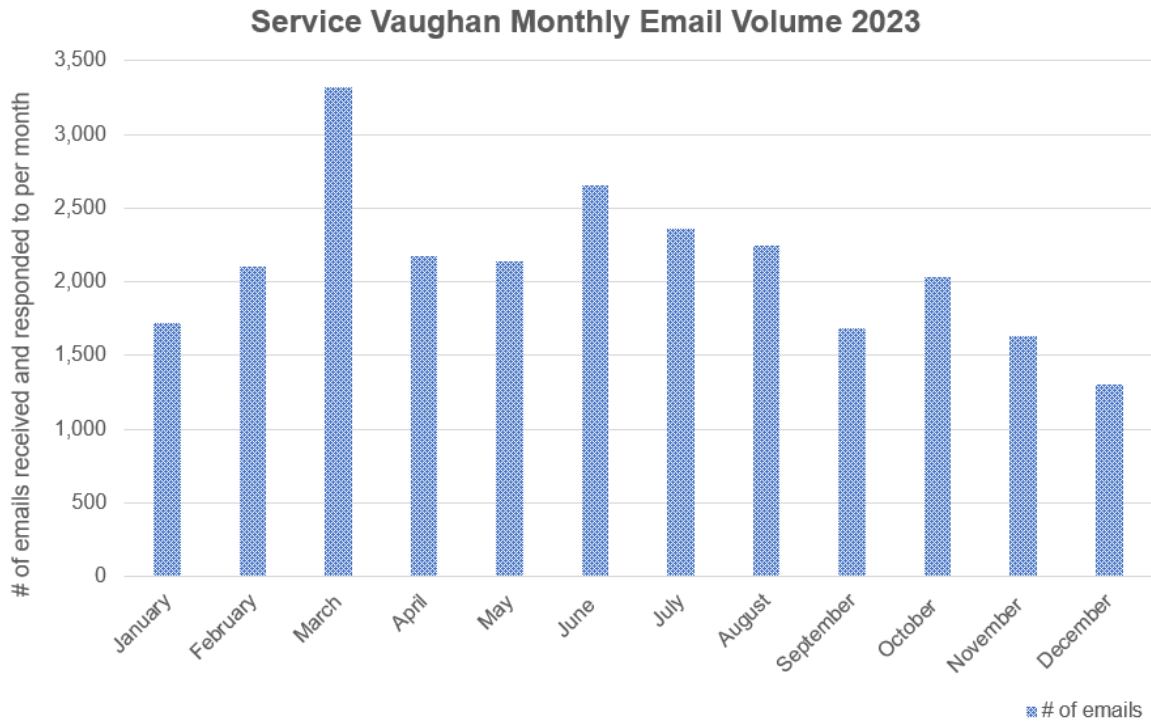
All callers that remain on the line are connected to a Service Vaughan agent and receive an action or response to their inquiry. Calls may not connect to a Service Vaughan agent due to behavioural and/or technical issues, such as having an inquiry addressed via the on-hold messaging, the resident dialling an incorrect number, the resident determines it is not an ideal time to speak to an agent or the resident prefers not to wait to speak to an agent.



This graph shows the average wait time (lattice line), maximum wait time (adjacent to lattice line), average call length (horizontal grey line) and the average after-call wrap for agents to complete (horizontal black line) from January to December 2023.

Call length reflects the time an agent spends communicating with the caller, while the after-call work, captured in the 'Average After Call Wrap' time reflects what the agent needs to do to complete service delivery. For example, creating and assigning files, tracking interactions and communicating with other City staff as required. Service Vaughan responds to a variety of inquiry types. Some types exclusively require information sharing to achieve first point-of-contact resolution. Other types require information sharing and additional action, such as case file creation and call-out to City staff to ensure matters are addressed in a priority sequence.

A key trend to note is after-call wrap time is highest in January and May due to the winter and spring weather, as almost every call relating to weather requires a file to be created and assigned for investigation and service delivery. It is important to note the **average** wait time for telephone service reflects more commonly what residents are experiencing when they call the Service Vaughan contact centre. In contrast, the maximum wait time reflects the **longest** possible wait time during that month.



This graph shows the total number of emails (actioned or responded to) received by Service Vaughan from January to December 2023. The team typically experiences an increase in emails in March due to property tax inquiries, with residents requesting to join the Pre-authorized Tax Payment (PTP) program before the **first interim** bill installment due date. The same is experienced in June, with residents requesting to join the PTP program before the **first final** bill installment due date.



This graph shows the number of people who visited City Hall for in-person service delivery from January to December 2023. In addition to an increase in emails, Service Vaughan experiences an increase in in-person visits in March because of the first property tax installment due date. In-person volume continues to be monitored to identify areas for improvement.

An example of a recent service improvement implemented by the department was continuing to have a dedicated space for tax inquiries. In-person data continues to show steady volumes and interest in tax-related visits. As a result, service delivery remains modified to reflect the required delivery of services (in this case, the dedicated service station for tax-related inquiries).

With the continued expansion of CRM technology throughout the corporation, Service Vaughan can further improve front-line service to the public.

CRM is a tool that allows Service Vaughan agents and other City staff to:

- create resident profiles and maintain a centralized database across the organization.
- create case files to receive and respond to resident reports of issues throughout the City.
- manage all communication and interactions with Vaughan residents.
- generate performance reports to track case volumes, resolution timelines, and resident satisfaction.

- improve resident satisfaction with a more accurate and efficient response to reported issues.
- improve the efficiency of administrative tasks associated with case management.

The City's CRM tool was introduced in 2019 through Service Vaughan and Environmental Services. After a successful launch, plans were made to onboard Parks, Forestry and Horticulture Operations, Transportation and Fleet Management Services, Water and Wastewater Services and the winter operations team. These business units were onboarded between 2020 and 2022. In 2022, this expansion of the CRM was leveraged to provide new self-serve options to the public online via vaughan.ca. Examples of self-serve options include reporting missed waste collection, reporting a pothole and requesting tree pruning.

As part of Service Vaughan's commitment to generating timely, informative and accurate data analytics that allow staff to better support the public, the department worked closely under the leadership of Public Works and the Office of the Chief Information Officer to develop a Service Vaughan-specific dashboard.

In 2023, the CRM technology expansion continued with two additional departments: Development Engineering and Infrastructure Development. With the Office of the Chief Information Officer staff managing the CRM project and configuring platform changes, these two departments can now create, update and track case files within the CRM.

As the CRM software is adopted by more departments within the corporation, the delivery of services and the ability to resolve resident inquiries at the first point of contact will improve, as all information is housed in a central repository. Furthermore, Public Works leveraged Power BI (through the CRM) to create a dashboard specifically for Service Vaughan. This CRM dashboard provides staff with important information, such as:

- a centralized hub for performance metrics.
- access to live activities, such as key performance indicators and other essential metrics, in a visually appealing, dynamic and interactive manner.

A dashboard providing easy, efficient access to key metrics is essential. It allows real-time data analysis and informs decision-making without generating and sorting through cumbersome reports.

The Service Vaughan contact centre generates a wide variety of data. This data is analyzed by department staff to inform and enhance accurate and responsive management of operations and guide how the contact centre will expand its services. Performance metrics are shared in several ways, including with other departments, to help inform staff of top-of-mind issues for the public.

Creating the Service Vaughan-specific dashboard was done using existing budget and staffing resources to ensure it was created in a cost-effective manner. This means there was no need to issue a request for proposal or additional budget.

The dashboard showcases the contact centre's critical performance indicators with the content refreshed automatically on a daily basis. It can be customized to inform real-time decision-making and can be further analyzed to understand emerging issues.



Service Vaughan continues making progress on the internal audit management action plan.

The Service Vaughan Leadership Team has developed and implemented various operational and staffing strategies to improve service levels. Service Vaughan has reviewed, and will continue to review, key metrics including the data capture and reporting requirements from the after-hours contact centre and improvement opportunities.

Stakeholder consultations and evaluations of service standards and performance metrics for optimal service standards for this project were completed in Q4 2023. In the short term, these efforts will further inform reporting requirements and staffing strategies for peak business periods and provide context for a longer-term staffing strategy based on business demand, which continues in Q1 2024.

The internal audit also led to a winter operations pilot project with the after-hours contact centre to improve customer service during winter storms. The project was created in collaboration with Procurement Services, the Office of the Chief Information Officer and Transportation and Fleet Management Services. It leverages the after-hours contact centre service provider during Service Vaughan's operational hours throughout inclement

weather to respond to winter-related inquiries. By leveraging the existing operating budget, the pilot project provides the call centre access to up to 10 additional agents during winter weather events to decrease wait times. Service Vaughan continues to work with Public Works ahead of anticipated winter weather events to ensure a co-ordinated response to keep wait times low.

In addition to leveraging technological advances for business process improvement, the Service Vaughan Leadership Team continues to develop call-centre scripting to direct residents to the online service portal and schedule communications to provide event-based status updates. These updates are then used to inform the main knowledge repositories that the team of agents access, namely the CRM. Service Vaughan is migrating all knowledge articles from the current Knowledge Tool on SharePoint to the CRM. A phased approach is being implemented to migrate all service information and remove outdated information. Upcoming technology advancements, including implementing new contact centre technology, will support staff scheduling and provide a mechanism to capture resident satisfaction levels.

Furthermore, the Service Vaughan Leadership Team is developing Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) and improving the agent training program. The training developed for payment processing functions is also translated into an SOP. All SOPs will be developed for the Service Vaughan team of agents, fully outlining the roles, responsibilities and accountabilities of operational stakeholders.

A plan to conduct periodic performance assessments is being implemented to improve the agent training program with target completion by Q2 2024. Further reviews of the SOPs and performance evaluation methods are anticipated to be completed by Q4 2024 and will be ongoing, as required. Progress continues to be made on audit findings, resulting in increased operational efficiency and an improved resident experience.

Office of Communications and Economic Development department heads meet monthly with Council office staff to discuss planned communications and call volumes, among other initiatives.

Department heads from the Office of Communications and Economic Development hold monthly briefings with Council staff. These briefings include updates about planned communications, call volumes, wait times and emerging and trending issues, among other initiatives. It is also an opportunity to receive feedback from Council staff on matters that require enhanced communications based on what Members of Council hear directly from their constituents. Council staff provide valuable situational analyses that help each of the Office of Communications and Economic Development departments prioritize work. In addition, the weekly Service Vaughan email updates complement the standing briefings to the Mayor and Members of Council to ensure open and effective communication on an ongoing basis.

Previous Reports/Authority

- [Access Vaughan Update and Next Steps](#)
(Item 34, Report 30 of the Committee of the Whole, June 28, 2022)
- [Service Vaughan Internal Audit Report](#)
(Item 3, Audit Committee, September 19, 2022)

Analysis and Options

Continuous improvement is critical to implementing the City's mission statement: **Citizens first through Service Excellence**. Service Vaughan continues to pursue its mandate of maintaining low wait times and increasing resolution rates by expanding the department's work scope through partnership integrations. This facilitates continuous improvement within Service Vaughan, ensuring residents receive the most efficient and effective service delivery, which remains a top priority.

Service Vaughan will continue delivering on continuous improvement as outlined in the Service Vaughan Customer Service Strategy and the internal audit management action plan.

The Council-approved Service Vaughan Customer Service Strategy includes the following:

1. Integrated service

- Identifying and implementing in-person service integrations with all departments to ensure first-point-of-contact resolution, where possible.
- Executing telephone enhancements to prioritize call reasons (e.g., municipal emergencies), triage incoming calls, reduce wait times and increase first point-of-contact resolution for telephone, email, and in-person service.

2. Digital transformation

- Identifying opportunities for innovation and process improvement.
- Leveraging tools and technology (e.g., CRM) to automate service delivery further.

3. Service standards and performance measurement

- Develop service standards for all types of service delivery (in person, call, email, social media) to ensure accountability.
- Track and monitor performance metrics to identify strengths and opportunities for improvement.

The Service Vaughan Customer Service Strategy is a major focus area for service delivery excellence as the department continues to improve and modernize the resident experience.

Service Vaughan will continue implementing findings from the internal audit management action plan.

The results of the 2022 Internal Audit Risk-Based Work Plan included an audit of Service Vaughan (previously Access Vaughan) and work on this project was completed in June 2022. Service Vaughan staff continue to collaborate with the Internal Audit department to fulfill the priorities within the management action plan.

The scope of the management action plan includes the following components:

- Develop effective and operational staffing strategies.
- Leverage technology.
- Develop an SOP and improve the agent training program.
- Develop a strategy to engage service partners.

These components are aligned with Service Vaughan's mandate and the Service Vaughan Customer Service Strategy. Delivering on this action plan and focusing on the strategy will result in the continuation of effective wait time management, improved first point-of-contact resolution and expansion of the CRM technology (including but not limited to increased use of the dashboard and collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to ensure an overall improved resident experience).

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with this report.

Operational Impact

There are no operational impacts associated with this report.

Broader Regional Impacts/Considerations

- The Service Vaughan Leadership Team represents the City's contact centre at the York Region Customer Service Best Practices Group. This customer service group includes all the leadership personnel of all the municipal contact centres in York Region. The group meets to discuss new and ongoing trends, contact centre metrics and contact centre business practices within York Region and beyond.
- The Service Vaughan Leadership Team also represents the City's contact centre at the Municipal Services Delivery Officials (MSDO) Association. MSDO brings together senior service delivery professionals for educational and professional development. It also provides municipal representation in federal-provincial-territorial service delivery initiatives. The association focuses on contact centres, service centralization, digital service delivery and emerging technologies.

Conclusion

The Office of Communications and Economic Development, established by Vaughan Council in December 2021, will continue to enhance staff relations between Service Vaughan and Communications, Marketing and Engagement to achieve first-point-of-contact resolution. The departments continue to work closely to ensure the public receives timely, accurate and responsive information and service – whether by phone, email, in person or through social media. Service Vaughan continues to collaborate with other departments to find process efficiencies and develop partnerships that will continue to improve the resident experience through increased first-point-of-contact resolution.

The CRM can create additional opportunities for Service Vaughan to find efficiencies in data analysis, knowledge repository management and quality assurance. The Service Vaughan Leadership Team will migrate its knowledge repository and tracking system to the CRM. Additionally, the Leadership Team will continue to enhance the dashboard, working with colleagues in Public Works to review metrics and find efficiencies such as automating case file updates, tracking case thresholds and working towards a reduced need for residents to follow up on the case file status.

The Service Vaughan Leadership Team will leverage technology and operational and staffing solutions to ensure low caller wait times and quick email response times.

The Office of Communications and Economic Development will ensure Council continues to receive ongoing reporting about Service Vaughan operations.

Attachments

N/A

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