

CORPORATE RESOURCES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of
Meeting:

18 April 2002

Title: CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW - UPDATE

Report of: City Treasurer

Report
reference: Financial Memo 2002/03 No 4

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to inform the Resource Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the progress so far of the Project Team conducting the Customer Contact Best Value Review.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to note:-

- a. Further results from the consultation exercise on the current service
- b. The progress in consultation of the new customer contact policy
- c. The progress on the work in detailing a final customer contact model for adoption by the Council
- d. Detailed proposals for improvements of any future service
- e. Progress for including partner organisations

And are asked to:-

- a. Approve a variation to, and extension of, the challenge element of the review
- b. Approve a recommendation to proceed with six elements of the review before the completion of the best value process
- c. Consider whether, nearer the time, a visit to a facility closely resembling any final proposal would be appropriate

Contact Officer: John Nutley

Ext: 7250

CITY OF CARLISLE

To: The Chairman and Members of the Financial Memo

Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2002/03 No 4

18 April 2002

CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW – UPDATE

Since the last update to this Overview and Scrutiny (O&S) Committee, work has continued on a number of fronts and this report details that work.

1 Current Service - Consultation Exercise

1.1 Supplementary reports building upon the consultation work carried out to date have been received. These comprise of:-

- a. Results of the mystery shopping exercise
- b. A commentary prepared by the project team about the lessons to be learnt from the mystery shopping exercise
- c. Results of a random survey drawn from the citizen's panel

1.2 These reports form Appendix A to this report. In general, these additional reports confirm earlier consultations that although the service has areas where it is carried out well, there are problems in providing the service to a consistently high and uniform standard. These problem areas colour the customer's overall perception of the service.

3. In the light of this and this Committee's previous comments about the current state of the service, one final piece of consultation has been commissioned. A focus group comprising of customers randomly selected from the citizens panel has been arranged for 17th. April. These focus groups have proved very effective at opening up different areas under discussion and are felt necessary to balance the internal focus groups already held.
- 4. *This Committee is asked to note the work and make comments as appropriate.***

2. New Customer Contact Policy

1. This Committee approved a draft customer contact policy at it's last meeting.
2. This policy has now gone out to consultation to service managers and staff.
3. The project group is considering the different routes that could be used to carry out the important consultation that needs to take place with the customer about the new customer contact policy.
- 4. *This Committee is asked to note the work and make comments as appropriate.***

4. Extending the Challenge

1. At the last O&S meeting, Members requested that detailed proposals be drawn up for two different contact models, namely a separate, single customer contact unit and a DSO run customer contact unit.
2. Work has progressed on the former but it has now been realised that the latter is so similar that the two models are almost identical, differing only in the way the service is managed.
3. Advice has been given that because the differences are so slight that they might not constitute a robust enough challenge to the existing service. In order to sustain the challenge a variation to the existing proposed models are needed.
4. The project team considers that by including in one model provision for the out of hours telephone and electronic element to be provided by a third party then this would satisfy the challenge requirement and provide the robustness the best value regime requires.
5. In summary the project team would be asked to provide a detailed plan for the implementation of a central customer contact centre and also for the same contact centre with the telephone, web and e-mail elements provided for separately.
- 6. *This Committee are asked to approve this variation to the to the detailed models to be investigated.***
7. In the interim, work has been progressing on the details of a central customer contact centre for the Authority. As part of that exercise visits are being arranged to sites whose customer contact regimes closely align to the new proposals.

8. Members are asked to consider whether, nearer the time, they wish to visit a facility that would closely resemble any final proposal the project team might make.

5. Challenge – Detailed Service Proposals – Draft Final Report

1. Members will recall that a number of key issues were identified as being barriers to providing an effective service. These were summarised in Appendix A of Financial Memo 2001/02 No 130.
2. At the last meeting of this Committee the project group presented a number of key solutions to address these key issues. They have since refined these solutions and ranked them in order of merit. They are shown in Appendix B-1.
3. When analysing the solutions it was realised that some six recommendations were should be implemented as a matter of urgency, ideally before the review was complete. These have been noted in the report and are summarised separately in Appendix B-2.
4. These solutions will still need to be circulated to service managers, staff and customers for comment.

5. Members are asked to:-

- **Note and make appropriate comments on the recommended key solutions**
- **Recommend proceeding immediately with those key recommendations that have been highlighted in Appendix B-2**

5. Partner Organisations

1. Tentative contact has been made with partner organisations to asses their willingness to host information points on behalf of the Authority

6. Revised Timetable for the Review

7.1 The projected timetable for the review is now as follows:-

- Final Customer Contact Policy: Draft Customer Contact Model for decision – 13th. June O&S. 2002
- Final Report on Customer Contact Model: Finalised Action Plan. – 1st. Aug O&S 2002
- 2nd. Aug Final Best Value Report Issued for Executive approval.

D THOMAS

City Treasurer

Contact Officer: John Nutley Ext: 7250

City Treasury,

Carlisle

9th. April 2002 JN/CH/f40203

Face to face approach: Scenario 1

Name: **Rachel Lytollis** Date: **21st March 2002** Exact time of interview: **10.20 hours**

Ask at the Keepers desk (main reception area, ground floor) where the reception area is for the Leisure Department. When you reach the 5th floor ask if it is possible to get funding for a Jubilee street party

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How helpful were the Keepers at the ground floor reception desk? (If no keeper available, please mention this)	<i>I was told immediately where the Leisure Department was and directed to the lifts.</i>
2) How friendly were the keepers?	<i>Polite and friendly</i>
3) Describe Keepers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Formal – professional</i>

4) On reaching Leisure, how long did it take before your query was dealt with? (Please say 'immediately' or give time in minutes)	<i>I rang the bell and the lady came out immediately</i>
5) How friendly was the Officer that answered your query?	<i>Reasonably – she seemed to be rushing</i>
6) How helpful was the Officer that answered your query?	<i>Not very (see below)</i>
7) Describe Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Formal</i>
8) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>Only partially</i>
9) How many people/depts did you see in total?	<i>1</i>
10) All in all, how long did you spend in the Civic Centre?	<i>5 minutes</i>
11) How satisfied are you with the response to your query?	<i>Not very happy</i>
12) Was all staff courteous whilst you were making your enquiry? (If not, please give details)	<i>She was courteous but wasn't willing to offer information</i>
13) Overall impression and other comments: <i>I went to the reception and rang the bell (5th floor). The lady came out immediately. I said that I wanted to find out about funding for a Jubilee Street party. She said "I'll get the form". She came straight back with it and said "here you are". I said, "so I fill this in?" She said "yes and bring it back". She gave no explanation about anything. If I hadn't said "so I fill this in?" she wouldn't have told me to bring it in. She appeared to not want to get involved with giving any explanation and was holding the office door open all the time like she wanted to get away.</i> <i>NB – I found it unclear as to where to go when I arrived at the fifth floor via the stairs, as there is no directional arrow to the reception desk.</i>	

Face to face approach: Scenario 2

Name: **Rachel Lytollis** Date: **21st March 2002** Exact time of interview: **10.10 hours**

Visit Tullie House main reception. Ask how to go about renewing old Tullie Card. Explain that your old card has been lost. Also enquire if any special exhibitions are planned during the summer months.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How helpful was the receptionist?	<i>Very helpful</i>
2) How friendly was the receptionist?	<i>Extremely – seemed interested in my query</i>
3) Describe receptionists' manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Formal</i>
4) If you saw any other Officers answer 5-7 (if not go to 8)	<i>N/A</i>
5) How helpful was the Officer?	<i>N/A</i>
6) How friendly was the Officer?	<i>N/A</i>
7) Describe Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>N/A</i>
8) How long did it take to answer your query? (Were you seen 'immediately' or did you have to wait)	<i>20 seconds. She was finishing a query with someone else</i>
9) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>Totally</i>
10) How satisfied are you with the response to your query?	<i>Very satisfied – couldn't fault it</i>

11) Was all staff courteous whilst you were making your enquiry? (If not, please give details)	Very courteous
12) Overall impression and other comments: <i>Although there were a lot of customers around and a school party in, the receptionist was pleased to help. She gave me the form that I needed and told me that I didn't need to get a photo taken. She spent time to ask my exact situation ie "Did I still have my old card?"</i>	

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Face to face approach: Scenario 3

Name: **Rachel Lytollis** Date: **21st March 2002** Exact time of interview: **10.25 hours**

Visit 7th floor reception. Explain you are interested in buying a property in the Belle Vue area, but are concerned at the possible impact of the Carlisle Northern Development Route. Perhaps some background research is necessary?

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How friendly was the receptionist?	Very friendly
2) How helpful was the receptionist?	<i>She was trying hard but I felt that she didn't have much information on the subject</i>
3) Describe the receptionists' manner (formal/informal?)	Formal
4) How long did it take before your query was dealt with? (Please say 'immediately' or give time in minutes)	Immediately
5) How many people/depts did you see in total?	1
6) How friendly was the Officer that answered your query?	
7) How helpful was the Officer that answered your query?	<i>The lady on the reception answered the query</i>
8) Describe Officers manner (formal/informal?)	
9) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	
10) All in all, how long did you spend in the Civic Centre?	6 minutes
11) How satisfied are you with the response to your query?	Quite satisfied
12) Was all staff courteous whilst you were making your enquiry? (If not, please give details)	Yes
13) Overall impression and other comments: <i>I spoke to the lady on reception. She said that it (the CNDR) was being dealt with by the County Council. She gave me a booklet (Carlisle Northern Development Route – Non-Technical Summary of the Environmental Statement) and said that it was probably a little out of date now as it was 2 years old. She opened the map and showed me the route of the road. She suggested that I should contact Cumbria County Council and underlined the numbers that I needed on the booklet. She tried very hard, but seemed a little unclear on the subject.</i> <i>NB – When entering the Planning Department reception area it is quite confusing where to go as there appears to be a lot of people sitting at the tables in the centre and the reception desk isn't obvious. (I think it is partly hidden from the side by a large plant).</i>	

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Face to face approach: Scenario 4

Name: **Rachel Lytollis** Date: **21st March 2002** Exact time of interview: **10.35 hours**

Visit Town Clerk's reception area. Say you would like to talk to someone about licensing regulations for running a horse drawn

vehicle. When a member of licensing comes ask them how to go about getting a license to run a horse drawn vehicle for pleasure rides in the City during the school summer holidays.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How friendly was the receptionist?	*S
2) How helpful was the receptionist?	*e
3) Describe the receptionists' manner (formal/informal?)	*e
4) How long did it take before your query was dealt with? (Please say 'immediately' or give time in minutes)	
5) How friendly was the licensing Officer that answered your query?	*n
6) How helpful was the licensing Officer that answered your query?	*u
7) Describe Officers manner (formal/informal?)	*m
8) How many people/depts did you see in total?	*b
9) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	*e
10) All in all, how long did you spend in the Civic Centre?	*r
11) How satisfied are you with the response to your query?	
12) Was all staff courteous whilst you were making your enquiry? (If not, please give details)	*13
13) Overall impression and other comments: *I went to the reception desk and rang the licensing bell. There was no answer. I rang it again two minutes later and twice more in the next two minutes. Three people went into the photocopying room next to me, smiled, but never asked if I was being served. Eventually a lady came out and said that she couldn't help but she would get them to ring me. There was no one in who could deal with it until 11.00 am. I said that I would call back, so she wrote down the names of the vehicle licenses. All in all I spent 10 minutes in the Civic Centre.	

Face to face approach: Scenario 5

Name: **Rachel Lytollis** Date: **17th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **10.07 am**

Visit Sands Centre. You are new to the area and are under the impression that there are swimming facilities at the Sands. You are particularly interested in swimming facilities for infants.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How friendly was the receptionist?	Very friendly
2) How helpful was the receptionist?	Very helpful – she asked whether I was in a car and gave me a detailed description of how to get to the Pools from the Sands. She gave me a leaflet ('The Pools') and told me that there were swimming pools for children there.
3) Describe the receptionists' manner (formal/informal?)	Formal but friendly
4) How long did it take to answer your query? (Were you seen 'immediately' or did you have to wait)	Immediately
5) Were you advised of alternative swimming facilities? (If	Yes – see question 2

so, what details were you told?)	
6) How many people did you see in total?	1
7) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	Totally
8) How satisfied are you with the response to your query?	Very – I was given a full answer
9) Was all staff courteous whilst you were making your enquiry? (If not, please give details)	Yes
10) Overall impression and other comments:	Friendly, professional service

Telephone Approach: Scenario 6

Name: **Kath Wallace** Date: **19th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **12.35 hours**

Phone Housing Department (via main switchboard on 01228 817000). We are new to the area and want to know the average wait for a three bedroom house in a rural part of Carlisle.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered by operator	Immediately
2) Is correct introduction given, i.e. "Good morning/afternoon, Carlisle City Council"	No greeting – just "Carlisle City Council"
3) How helpful is the operator?	Very fast
4) How friendly is the operator?	Too fast to judge if friendly or not
5) Describe the operator's manner (formal/informal)	Very formal
6) Are you transferred to the correct person/dept?	Yes
7) Is the call answered by correct person/dept?	Yes, after listening to options available
8) Describe Housing Officers manner (formal/informal?)	Fairly formal
9) How friendly was the Housing Officer?	Quite friendly
10) How helpful was the Housing Officer?	Very helpful
11) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	Partially – told depended on circumstances
12) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	Yes
13) Overall impression and any other comments:	Got the impression the reception staff wanted to field the call out as soon as possible. The Housing Officer could not answer my query but did explain that it depended on how many points etc we had accumulated.

Telephone Approach: Scenario 7

Name: **Susan Adams** Date: **18th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **15.25 hours**

Ring Car Parking (81-7471 or 7472 or 7492 or 7493). You have been given a parking ticket at the Sands Car Park. As far as you are concerned this should not have been issued, as you had purchased a valid ticket from the machine. You returned to the car

within the permitted time but your ticket had fallen off the windscreen. Why should a fine be payable?

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered	<i>It was answered immediately (less than 1 ring)</i>
2) Did you have to be transferred? (If yes, how many times?)	<i>No</i>
3) How friendly was the Officer?	<i>Couldn't describe it as 'friendly' – just formal and unsympathetic</i>
4) How helpful was the Officer?	<i>Couldn't say helpful – more informative than 'helpful'</i>
5) Describe the Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Formal</i>
6) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>It was answered totally</i>
7) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	<i>Only spoke to one member of staff who was courteous throughout the call</i>
8) Overall impression and any other comments: <i>The impression I got was that it would be difficult to try to receive any consolation/sympathy from this member of staff if the scenario happened to be real. However, I was given a full explanation as to why I would receive a fine.</i>	

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Telephone Approach: Scenario 8

Name: **Kath Wallace** Date: **19th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **12.20 hours**

Ring Carlisle Works (01228 625000). You are a new householder, ringing the Carlisle Works call centre to ask for a dustbin and to ask when rubbish is collected and if there are any facilities for recycling. Also, will they remove a sofa and some chairs that the previous residents have left behind. There is also an old bath to remove – will they also take this? Have an address in mind before making the call.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered	<i>2</i>
2) Did you have to be transferred? (If yes, how many times?)	<i>Yes, once</i>
3) How friendly was the Officer?	<i>Quite friendly</i>
4) How helpful was the Officer?	<i>Very helpful</i>
5) Describe the Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Informal</i>
6) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>Totally</i>
7) How professional was the Officer?	<i>Quite professional</i>
8) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	<i>Yes</i>
9) Overall impression and any other comments: <i>The Officer knew all the answers to my questions and delivered them in a friendly and informed way.</i>	

Telephone Approach: Scenario 9

Name: **Susan Adams** Date: **19th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **11.40 hours**

Call Environmental Services (via the switchboard operator 817000). Explain that a neighbour's cats are continually fouling your garden. Surely this is a health hazard? What can be done?

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered by operator	<i>Less than 1 ring</i>
2) Is correct introduction given, i.e. "Good morning/afternoon, Carlisle City Council"	<i>Yes, but barely audible as it was so quick</i>
3) How helpful is the operator?	<i>Helpful</i>
4) How friendly is the operator?	<i>Fairly friendly (difficult to say because of the above)</i>
5) Describe the operator's manner (formal/informal)	<i>Formal</i>
6) Are you transferred to the correct person/dept?	<i>Transferred to the correct department but not the person</i>
7) Is the call answered by correct person/dept?	<i>It seemed to be answered by a 'receptionist' and then transferred to the correct person</i>
8) How many times were you transferred?	<i>From the very start to finish - twice</i>
9) Describe the Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Formal</i>
10) How friendly was the Officer?	<i>Friendly but not very sympathetic</i>
11) How helpful was the Officer?	<i>Very helpful</i>
12) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>Totally</i>
13) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	<i>All staff were courteous</i>
14) Overall impression and any other comments: <i>I was impressed by the amount of information that I received from the Officer. I now know everything about the legislation for the above!</i>	

Telephone Approach: Scenario 10

Name: **Susan Adams** Date: **15th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **12.25 hours**

Call Personnel (817070). Request a job application on the deadline for returning the form. Will they accept the completed form after the deadline? Can they fax out a form or is there an online application form available?

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered	<i>3 rings</i>
2) Were you transferred? (if so, how many times?)	<i>No</i>

3) How friendly was the Officer?	<i>The Officer was friendly</i>
4) How helpful was the Officer?	<i>Very helpful</i>
5) Describe the Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>It was formal and efficient</i>
6) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>Yes - totally</i>
7) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	<i>I only spoke to one person who was courteous throughout the call</i>
8) Overall impression and any other comments: <i>Very helpful. Although today (Friday 15th March) was the deadline for returning the requested application form, the Officer suggested that if I returned it immediately, then it would be dealt with. I was also offered an E-mail address so that my request could be dealt with as soon as possible.</i>	

Telephone Approach: Scenario 11

Name: Susan Adams Date: 18th March 2002 Exact time of interview: 15.50 hours

Ring switchboard (817000) and ask to speak to the Town Clerk & Chief Executive's Dept. You are complaining about the lack of decent bus services on the 71 bus route to Moorhouse. Some background research may be needed on the actual times. NB: This enquiry is not the responsibility of Carlisle City Council and caller should be told this.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered	<i>1) 2 rings and then 2) 2 rings to necessary department</i>
2) How many times were you transferred?	<i>I was transferred only once</i>
3) How friendly was the Officer?	<i>She sounded 'chirpy' and friendly</i>
4) How helpful was the Officer?	<i>She was keen to offer help – although sounded a bit hesitant and unsure</i>
5) Describe the Officers manner (formal/informal?)	<i>Fairly formal</i>
6) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	<i>Not at all</i>
7) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	<i>All staff were courteous</i>
8) If you were supplied with contact information for another organisation, what details were you given?	<i>Wasn't supplied with any information from this call</i>
9) Overall impression and any other comments: <i>My impression was that the Officer was unsure as to whether this department dealt with this type of enquiry. I was put on 'hold' for five seconds while the Officer 'checked' with someone. The Officer then asked me where I had got the phone number from as I was through to the Legal department. I was then told that if I could leave my telephone number the Officer would phone back with the relevant information.</i>	

Telephone Approach: Scenario 12

Name: **Susan Adams** Date: **20th March 2002** Exact time of interview: **09.55 hours**

Ring Environment and Development (Highway Maintenance & Improvement - 817461) to complain about the traffic lights/hazard at the Debenhams/Warwick Street/Rickergate junction. NB: this is now the responsibility of the County Council and caller should be told this.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many rings until call is answered	No rings – answered immediately
2) How many times were you transferred?	Not transferred
3) How friendly was the Officer?	Sounded a bit ‘nonchalant’
4) How helpful was the Officer?	Very helpful
5) Describe the Officers manner (formal/informal?)	Fairly informal
6) Was your query answered: totally, partially, or not at all	Answered totally
7) Was all staff courteous throughout the call? (If not, please give details)	Yes
8) If you were supplied with contact information for another organisation, were you given a contact name and number?	I was given a contact name and telephone number
9) Overall impression and any other comments: The Officer was well informed and was able to give me the relevant details immediately. He used the title ‘Capita Department’ of which, when I asked what that was, explained that it was the County Council.	

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Written request: Scenario 13

Date letter sent: **18th March 2002 – No response as of yet (28th March)**

Write to: Electoral Registration, Town Clerk & Chief Executive Dept, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG, asking about the possibility of obtaining a copy of the electoral register. Ask how much it will cost, what forms it is available on (e.g. paper/electronic etc). Ask if there is a way of accessing the electoral register through the Council’s Website.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	
2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	
3) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	
4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	
5) How fully was your query answered?	
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e-mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	

8) Overall impression and other comments:

Written request: Scenario 14

Date letter sent: 19th March 2002

Write to: Economic Development, Town Clerk & Chief Executive Dept, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG, to request information on assistance for starting up a business in the area, but do not specify the type of business.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	4
2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	No
3) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	No
4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	By letter
5) How fully was your query answered?	In full
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	No
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e-mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	Formal, business-like, informative
8) Overall impression and other comments: A very informative letter which gave me more information	

Written request: Scenario 15

Date letter sent: **15th March 2002 – No response as of yet (28th March)**

Write to: City Treasury, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG, as a business wishing to pay Business Rates in Euros.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	
2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	
3) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	

4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	
5) How fully was your query answered?	
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e- mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	
8) Overall impression and other comments:	

Written request: Scenario 16

Date letter sent: **20th March 2002**

Write to: City Solicitor, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG. Under the Data Protection Act, you would like to know how to go about finding out what information is held about you by the City Council, either electronically or on paper?

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	<i>Date on letter is 21st March. Received in post – 23rd March</i>
2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	<i>No</i>
3) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	<i>No</i>
4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	<i>By letter</i>
5) How fully was your query answered?	<i>The query was not answered because further forms have to be completed</i>
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	<i>Yes – a ‘Subject Access Request Form’ which costs £10 and also a Carlisle City Council ‘Proof of Identification’</i>
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e- mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	<i>Formal</i>
8) Overall impression and other comments: <i>Very thorough and informative. Also had enclosed literature on Carlisle City Council’s Data Protection Policy.</i>	

Written request: Scenario 17

Date letter sent: **19th March 2002 – No response as of yet (28th March) (Letter received 30th March)**

Write to: Town Clerk & Chief Executive Dept, Carlisle City Council, Civic Centre, Carlisle, CA3 8QG. Write requesting how to access the Council minutes and reports on the sale of the Airport.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	<i>Date on letter – 26th March. Received through post – 30th March (5 full days including Saturday)</i>

2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	<i>Saturday was included</i>
3) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	<i>No</i>
4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	<i>By letter</i>
5) How fully was your query answered?	<i>Fairly – minutes received but not any reports</i>
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	<i>Yes – it was suggested if I could offer an idea as to which reports I wished to see so as to reduce the time it would take for me to look through them all</i>
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e-mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	<i>Fairly formal</i>
8) Overall impression and other comments: <i>A friendly and helpful approach to the letter – trying to save the letter writer some time by offering to make arrangements for the requested reports to be made available.</i>	

E-mail request: Scenario 18

Date E-mail sent: **21st March 2002 – Time 20.30 hours**

E-mail: enquiries@carlisle-city.gov.uk To enquire what methods of payment are available for paying Council Tax for someone usually resident in the USA.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	<i>2 days</i>
2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	<i>No</i>
3) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	<i>No</i>
4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	<i>E-mail</i>
5) How fully was your query answered?	<i>Completely</i>
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	<i>No</i>
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e-mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	<i>Formal</i>
8) Overall impression and other comments: <i>Very thorough</i>	

E-mail request: Scenario 19

Date E-mail sent: **20th March 2002 – Time 21.54 hours**

Find an e-mail address over the Internet for the Carlisle Tourist Information Centre. Enquire as to suitable bed and breakfast accommodation in the Carlisle area, for a disabled person in a wheelchair.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How long did it take you to find the e-mail address?	10 minutes
2) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	One day
3) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	No
4) Was your letter forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	No
5) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	E-mail
6) How fully was your query answered?	Not fully
7) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	No
8) How would you describe the style of the letter/e-mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	Short
9) Overall impression and other comments: <i>I thought some suggestions may have helped</i>	

E-mail request: Scenario 20

Date E-mail sent: **14th March 2002 – Time 20.22 hours**

E-mail: webdesigner@carlisle-city.gov.uk. You are enquiring on behalf of a company. Ask whether it would be permissible to use the Castle logo on their Website to link to the Carlisle City Council's Website.

QUESTION	COMMENTS
1) How many full days did it take before the Council initially responded? (If you received a reply the same day, or never received a reply please say)	5 days
2) Did you include the weekend in the response time above?	No
3) Was your e-mail forwarded to any other department/unit (if yes, give details)	No
4) How did the Council respond to your letter enquiry? (letter/e-mail/telephone)	E-mail
5) How fully was your query answered?	Thoroughly
6) Were you requested to send any additional information to the Council, before they could complete your query?	No
7) How would you describe the style of the letter/e-	Formal

mail/telephone response(s) from the Council? (formal/informal etc)	
8) Overall impression and other comments: Business like	

Mystery Shopping – Summary, Thoughts & Comments

Face to Face Interviews

1. Always seem to produce the most favourable impressions. In an ideal world we would conduct all of our transactions in this way. But it's not always convenient and is expensive.
2. When it goes wrong then it leaves an impression that can outweigh all of the good work done with the other face to faces.
3. Person answering the queries needs to be knowledgeable
4. Décor and environmental conditions are noticed and commented upon. They form part of the customer contact experience.
5. Signage seems to be particularly important in getting the customer to the correct information point in the first place.

Telephone Interviews

1. It apparent that everyone's telephone skills need updating. We're giving the impression of being short and not very friendly. Though some people seem "naturals".
2. Related to the above there is a need to adopt a common method and style of answering the telephone.

Written Requests

1. Produce slower responses (obviously) – but there is a big variation.
2. There seems to be different standards about how long people should take to reply. This applies to both timescales and the quality of response. These need to be standardised.

E-Mail

1. Have the impression that e-mail responses are unstructured i.e. no formal corporate standards for reply. Are these queries and their responses logged?
2. Also surprised at the length of time for some of the replies in what should be an instantaneous medium. Some of the written replies were faster! The response times need to be shortened in order to reflect the immediacy of the medium.
3. Because of the nature of the medium, e-mails should be acknowledged straight away. Standard holding replies could be sent if more detailed information is needed by the sender.

Overall

1. Face to face produced the best results but the person must know the answers
2. You score extra marks for providing more information than is required
3. Provision of extra material (leaflets etc.) for the customers to browse in their own time seems popular.
4. People seem to take onward referral to other agencies in their stride. There seems to be an acceptance of non-joined-up government. What would be the reaction if they were put straight through to e.g. Capita?
5. It's important to get customers to the right person early on.
6. Overall the service isn't too bad but it only takes one area not to perform to let the whole side down.
7. Full time receptionists, dedicated to customer contact, always score more highly than someone who is doing it as part of another job.

8-April-2002



Results from the CUSTOMER CONTACT SELF-COMPLETION Survey

CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW

APRIL 2002

Corporate Policy & Strategy Unit

Lynne Wild

RESULTS FROM CUSTOMER CONTACT QUESTIONNAIRE

As part of the Customer Contact Best Value Review, a questionnaire on customer contact issues was sent out to a random sample of 700 Carlisle district residents. After the initial mail out, in January, a reminder letter and a final reminder questionnaire were sent to the sample. 247 completed questionnaires were returned, giving a response rate of 35%. CN Research was contracted to carry out the questionnaire, including the mailing and data entry. Final analysis was carried out by CPSU. Results should be read to within + or – 6% of all Carlisle district residents.

Summary of findings:Test

- 74% contacted staff in the Civic Centre to make an enquiry/get information, 18% wanted to make a complaint and 23% said ‘other’.
- 84% of those that contacted Council run organisations outside of the Civic Centre did so to make an enquiry/get information. 6% wanted to make a complaint and 18% said ‘other’.
- Although figures are small, the people making complaints are three times more likely to be making complaints to the Civic Centre staff, than council run organisations outside the Civic Centre, (18% compared to 6%)
- Overall, 70% think staff in the Civic Centre are efficient. This is comparable with staff in council run organisations outside of the Civic Centre where 79% think staff are efficient.
- When calling the Civic Centre, 87% say the telephone is answered very or fairly quickly and 82% say it is easy to get through to the person they want to speak to. In Council run organisations outside the Civic Centre, 66% say the telephone is answered very or fairly quickly and 68% say it is easy to get through to the person they want to speak to.
- 66% of the sample find the opening hours in the Civic Centre very or fairly convenient. Only 2% think they are inconvenient. 32% do not know.
- 53% prefer face to face communication and 47% prefer communication via Telephone, Internet/e-mail. Respondents could only choose one of the two options.
- 72% think that service by council staff is ‘about the same’ as the private sector
- When asked what they think of customer contact areas, people are more likely to give a positive response. However, people giving a negative response are over twice as likely to be negative about the Civic Centre compared to other council run buildings (24% compared to 10%)

Demographics:

46.5% of the sample are male and 53.5% are female. Respondents represent residents from across the entire Carlisle district, see Table 1. 39% of respondents are aged 50 or less and 61% are aged 51 and over, see Table 2 for a more in-depth breakdown.

Table 1 Table 2

Break % Respondents	
Base	247
What is your age?	
16-25	2%
26-30	5%
31-35	3%
36-40	9%
41-45	9%
46-50	11%
51-55	10%
56-60	12%
61-70	19%
70+	17%
Not answered	2%

Absolute Break % Respondents	
Base	247
Which postcode do you come under?	
East - CA1	42 17%
West - CA2	76 31%
North - CA3	44 18%
Rural - CA4-CA8	81 33%
Not answered	4 2%

"Have you communicated with any Council staff in the Civic Centre in the last two years?"

68% have communicated with Council staff in the Civic Centre in the last two years. 32% have not.

About 7 out 10 that have contacted Council staff did so in the last 6 months, see Table 3:

"Which staff have you communicated with?"

Of the 168 that have communicated with staff, around half has been in contact with the Treasury. 42% have contacted the Civic Centre receptionists and Environmental Services and 31% have contacted the Ground floor reception/Keepers, see Table 4:

Table 3

Absolute Break % Respondents	
Base	168
How long ago was this?	
In the last two months	68 40%
Between 2-6 months ago	49 29%
Between 6-12 months ago	33 20%
Between 12-18 months ago	9 5%
Between 18-24 months ago	9 5%

Table 4

Service	Number (base = 168)	%
Treasurers (Council Tax, Business Rates, Bus Passes, Benefits)	83	49%
Civic centre telephonists	70	42%
E & D Environmental Services, Planning, Property Services, Design (inc Car Parking)	70	42%
Ground floor reception/Keepers desk	52	31%
Cashiers (Payments)	35	21%
Energy Advice Centre	28	17%
Housing Reception staff (Ground floor)	21	13%
Leisure and Community Development	17	10%
E & D 8 th Floor Photocopying Service	10	6%
TCCE Reception (First floor)	8	5%
Economic Development Enquiries	4	2%
Corporate Complaints (TCCE)	3	2%
Personnel (TCCE)	3	2%

"Did you contact the Council to make an enquiry/get information or to make a complaint?"

74% contacted the Civic Centre to make an enquiry/get information, 18% wanted to make a complaint and 23% said 'other' (see below). Responses do not sum to 100% as some respondents listed more than one reason.

Other reasons for contacting Civic Centre staff (23%)

- Renew bus pass *5
- About repairs when needed/To report a housing repair/Request for repair work
- To get job finished
- To sort out housing benefits
- Paying council tax *3
- Pay rent and council tax
- To change council tax payment date
- Discussing council tax on unoccupied properties
- Arrange council tax rebate
- To request removal of a tree in front of kitchen window
- Requested topping of shrubs and removal of overgrown tree next to my property
- To prune hedges and trees on council property and to have household rubbish removed
- Social Services
- Sort out parking ticket
- Collect and return disabled parking disc
- New parking permit
- Car parking
- Activities trying to keep a leisure amenity
- Make suggestions re rubbish bins and dog waste bins
- Ask permission to hold activities in City centre
- Frequent communication with Environmental Services in relation to our environmental project
- Matters regarding taxi licence
- Photocopying
- Business
- Pay money
- Delivering letters of invitations to civic leaders
- Liaise with planning department re. progress with building work
- A planning application
- Seeking to purchase second-hand equipment
- Clerk to a parish council
- Wanted to know what action council was going to take about previous query

"How efficient are the staff?"

Overall, 70% think staff in the Civic Centre are efficient, 17% say they are adequate and 5% think they are inefficient. (8% do not know)

The following shows a breakdown by unit, percentages are included unless the base figures are too small.

Energy Advice Centre

75% of the 28 that spoke to Energy Advice Centre staff think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 11 (39%)
- Efficient 10 (36%)
- Adequate 6 (21%)
- Don't Know 1 (4%)

Ground Floor Reception/Keepers Desk

Of the 52 that spoke to Ground Floor Reception/Keepers Desk staff, 77% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 21 (40%)
- Efficient 19 (37%)
- Adequate 8 (15%)
- Don't Know 4 (8%)

E & D – Environmental Services, Planning, Property Services, Design

70 respondents spoke to staff in Environmental Services and 76% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 35 (50%)
- Efficient 18 (26%)
- Adequate 9 (13%)
- Inefficient 3 (4%)
- Very inefficient 4 (6%)
- Don't Know 1 (1%)

Leisure & CD (5th floor)

71% of the 17 people that spoke to staff in Leisure and Community Development think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 9 (53%)
- Efficient 3 (18%)
- Adequate 2 (12%)
- Very inefficient 1 (6%)
- Don't Know 2 (11%)

Housing Reception (Ground Floor)

Of the 21 that spoke to Housing staff, 67% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 6 (29%)
- Efficient 8 (38%)
- Adequate 5 (23%)
- Inefficient 1 (5%)
- Don't Know 1 (5%)

Civic Centre Telephonists

Of the 70 that spoke to Civic Centre Telephonists, 67% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 19 (27%)
- Efficient 28 (40%)
- Adequate 12 (17%)
- Inefficient 1 (1%)
- Very inefficient 1 (1%)
- Don't Know 9 (13%)

Cashiers

66% of the 35 that spoke to Cashiers staff think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 10 (29%)
- Efficient 13 (37%)
- Adequate 9 (26%)
- Inefficient 1 (3%)
- Don't Know 2 (5%)

Treasurers (C Tax, Business Rates, Bus Passes/Benefits)

Of the 83 that spoke to Treasurers staff, 64% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 18 (22%)
- Efficient 35 (42%)
- Adequate 16 (19%)
- Inefficient 3 (4%)
- Very inefficient 4 (5%)
- Don't Know 7 (8%)

E & D 8th floor (Photocopying service)

- Very efficient 3

- Efficient 3
- Adequate 2
- Don't Know 2

TCCE Reception

- Very efficient 2
- Efficient 3
- Don't Know 3

Economic Development Enquiries

- Very efficient 2
- Efficient 1
- Don't Know 1

Personnel (TCCE)

- Efficient 1
- Adequate 2

Corporate Complaints (TCCE Dept)

- Very efficient 1
- Very inefficient 1
- Don't Know 1

"Have you telephoned staff in the Civic Centre in the last two years?"

122 respondents telephoned staff in the Civic Centre in the last two years. 87% say the telephone is answered very or fairly quickly and 82% say it is easy to get through to the person they want to speak to, see Charts 1 & 2.

Chart 1

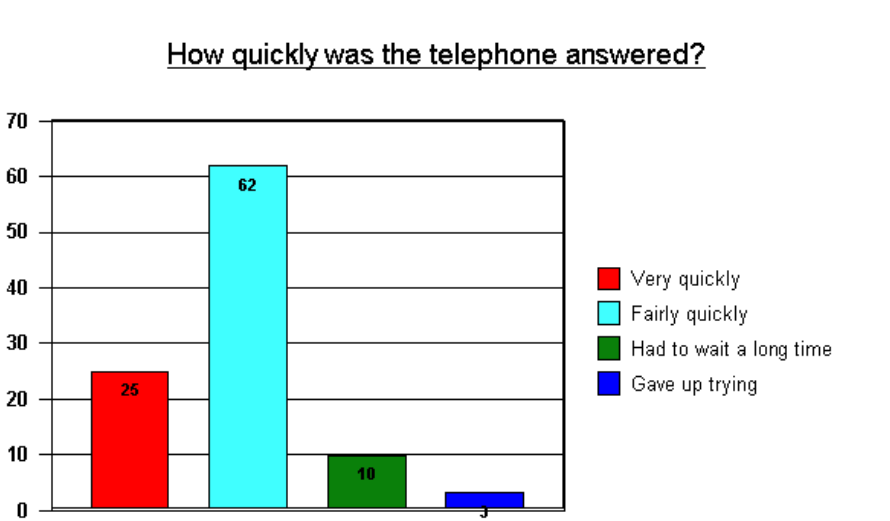
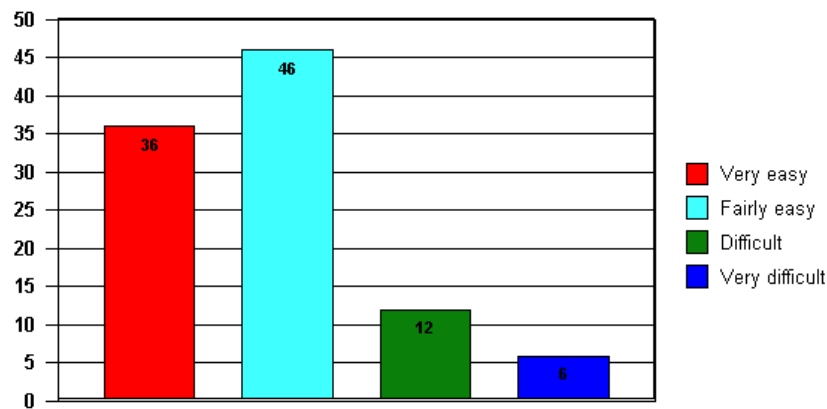


Chart 2

How easy was it to get through to the person that you wanted?



"Have you communicated with Council staff outside of the Civic Centre over the last two years?"

40% of the sample has contacted staff at the Sands and 31% has contacted staff at Tullie House, see Table 5:

Table 5

Absolute Break % Respondents	
Base	247
Have you communicated with staff at any of...	
Sands Centre	99 40%
Tullie House	76 31%
The Pools	41 17%
Bereavement Services	13 5%
Tourist Information	50 20%
Benefits Advice Centre	27 11%
East Cumbria Countryside Project	6 2%
Carlisle Works	36 15%
Housing Offices	12 5%
Shopmobility	10 4%
No - not communicated either face to face or by telephone (GO TO Q15)	64 26%
Not answered	13 5%

Overall, 76% had contacted the above organisations in the last 6 months, see Table 6.

Table 6

Absolute Break % Respondents	
Base	170
How long ago did you contact the organisat..	
In the last two months	74 44%
Between 2-6 months ago	54 32%
Between 6-12 months ago	25 15%
Between 12-18 months ago	8 5%
Between 18-24 months ago	7 4%
Not answered	2 1%

"When you contacted the organisations, was it to make an enquiry/get information or to make a complaint?"

84% of those that contacted the organisations did so to make an enquiry/get information. 6% wanted to make a complaint, this is three times less than the percentage of people making complaints at the Civic Centre. 18% said ‘other’ (see below). Responses do not sum to 100% as some respondents listed more than one reason why they contacted the organisations.

Other reasons for contacting the organisations (18%)

- Sorting out my Mother's affairs after her death
- Purchase Sands ticket *2/Book tickets *3/Bookings
- Attending exercise sessions
- To book a squash court
- To use the gym and sauna
- Exhibition
- To take out membership at Tullie House museum/Renew Tullie card *3
- Visiting Tullie House
- Shopmobility - regular user, Tullie House - use the shop, cafe and exhibition
- To report unsafe tree on grass verge outside house - to date two years later, no action, still unsafe. After recent cable disruption, now dangerously leaning
- To report a housing repair *2
- Give notice on late father's flat
- Frequent communications with ECCP in relation to our project
- Taxi vehicle test
- Business
- Book courses - I use the facilities
- Report street lighting failure
- How to get 'Shopmobility'
- Carlisle Works were requested and result was very satisfactory
- I go for tea every Saturday
- Work related
- Not stated

"How efficient are the staff?"

On average, 79% think staff in council run organisations outside of the Civic Centre are efficient, 15% say they are adequate and 3% think staff are inefficient. (3% do not know)

The following shows a breakdown by organisation, percentages are included unless the base figures are too small.

Tullie House

76 spoke to Tullie House staff and 87% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 32 (42%)
- Efficient 34 (45%)
- Adequate 8 (11%)
- Inefficient 1 (1%)
- Don't Know 1 (1%)

Tourist Information Centre

50 spoke to Tourist Information staff and 84% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 15 (30%)
- Efficient 27 (54%)
- Adequate 6 (12%)
- Inefficient 1 (2%)
- Don't Know 1 (2%)

Sands Centre

99 spoke to Sands Centre staff and 82% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 40 (40.5%)
- Efficient 41 (41.5%)
- Adequate 14 (14%)
- Inefficient 1 (1%)
- Don't Know 3 (3%)

The Pools

41 spoke to Pools staff and 78% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 13 (32%)
- Efficient 19 (46%)
- Adequate 8 (20%)
- Inefficient 1 (2%)

Carlisle Works

36 spoke to Carlisle Works staff and 72% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 16 (44%)
- Efficient 10 (28%)
- Adequate 4 (11%)
- Inefficient 4 (11%)
- Don't Know 2 (6%)

Benefits Advice Centre

27 spoke to Benefits Advice staff and 66% think they are efficient.

- Very efficient 12 (44%)
- Efficient 6 (22%)
- Adequate 7 (26%)
- Inefficient 1 (4%)
- Don't Know 1 (4%)

Bereavement Services

- Very efficient 7
- Efficient 3
- Adequate 2
- Don't Know 1

Housing Offices

- Very efficient 4
- Efficient 3
- Adequate 5

Shopmobility

- Very efficient 7
- Efficient 1
- Adequate 1
- Don't Know 1

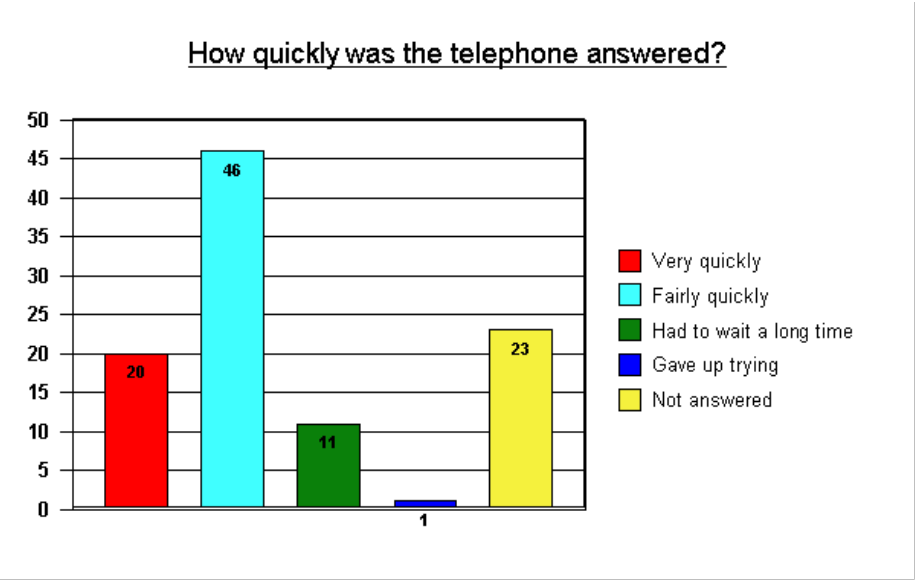
East Cumbria Countryside Project

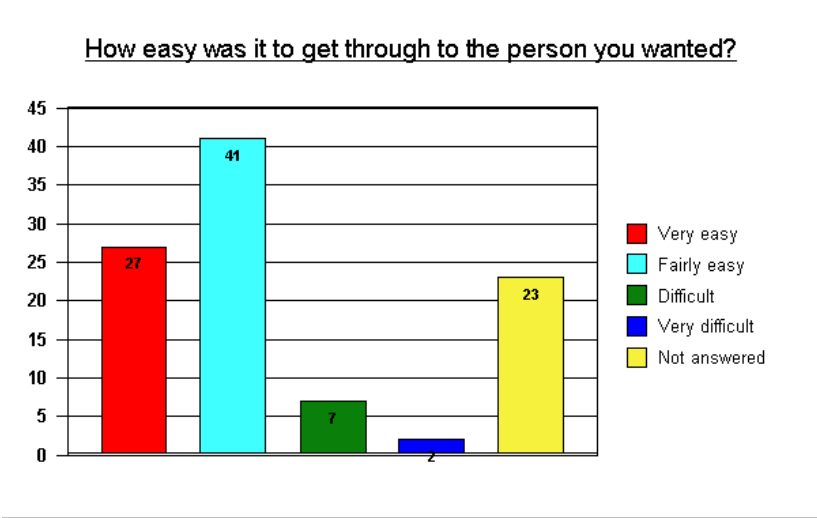
- Very efficient 4
- Adequate 1
- Inefficient 1

"How quickly was the telephone answered?"

169 respondents telephoned Council organisations outside the Civic Centre in the last two years. 66% say the telephone is answered very or fairly quickly and 68% say it is easy to get through to the person they want to speak to, see Charts 4 & 5.

Chart 4

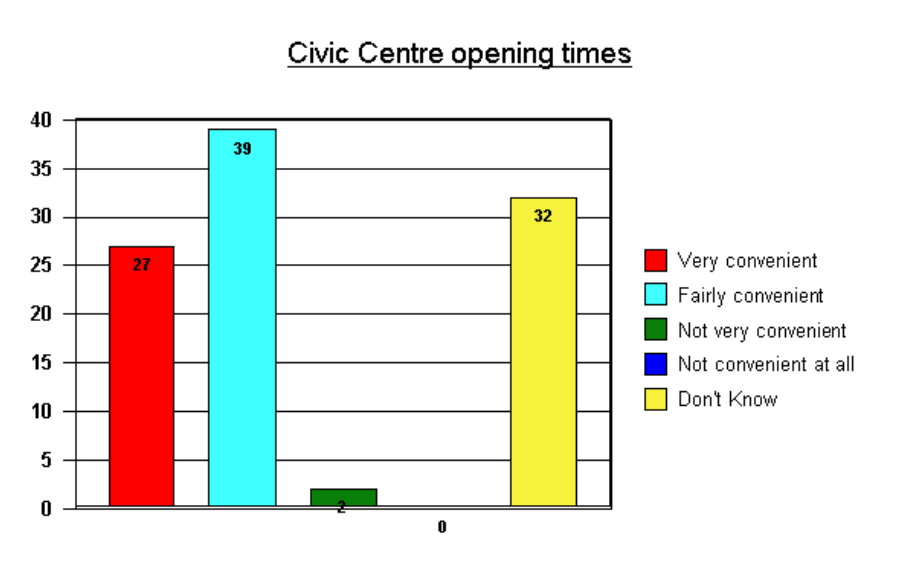




"How convenient are the opening hours in the Civic Centre?"

66% of the sample find the opening hours in the Civic Centre very or fairly convenient. 32% do not know. Only 2% say that opening hours are inconvenient, see Chart 6:

Chart 6



"If inconvenient, which opening hours would be suitable for you?"

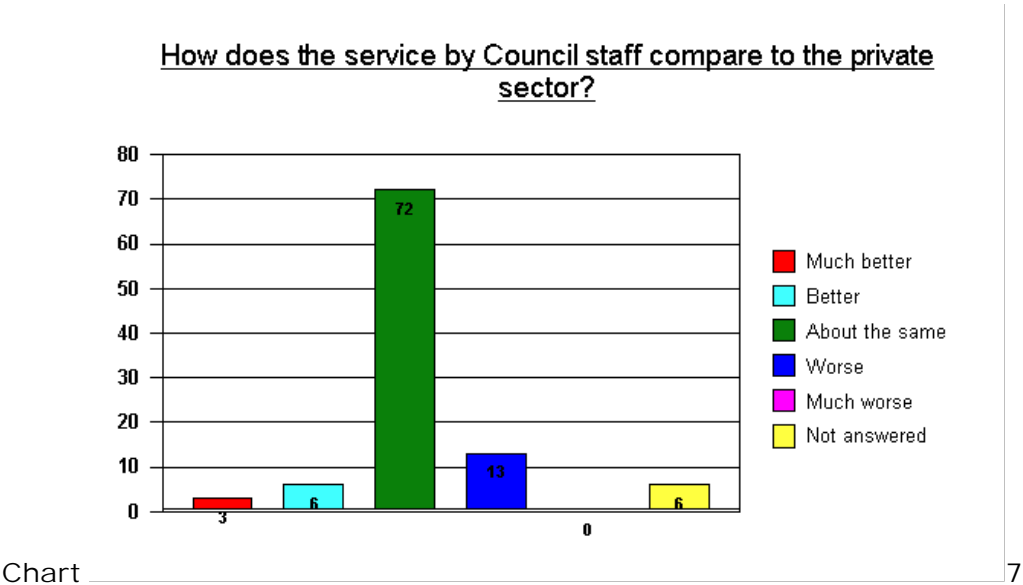
- 9am to 7pm
- Evening availability required
- Saturday opening would help but I appreciate this might be difficult
- Should be open later in the evenings and weekends
- Saturday
- After 4.30 pm and Saturday mornings

"Would you prefer to communicate with the Council face-to-face, or by other methods, such as telephone/Internet/e-mail? (Choose one only)

When the 12% who did not answer the question are removed, 53% prefer face to face communication and 47% prefer communication via Telephone, Internet/e-mail. Respondents could only choose one of the two options. (As the responses are so close it is important to bear in mind the + or – 6% confidence limit of this sample)

"How does service by council staff compare to private sector staff?"

72% think that service by council staff is 'about the same' as the private sector, see Chart 7.



"If you have visited the Civic Centre, what did you think of the surroundings in customer contact places?"

Out of 153 comments, 107 are positive (70%), 37 are negative (24%) and there are 9 'other' comments (6%), see Table 7.

"If you have visited other council run organisations, such as Tullie House, The Sands, Pools, Bereavement Services, Shopmobility, Tourist Information Centres, Benefits Advice Centre etc, what did you think of the surroundings in their customer contact places?"

Out of 189 comments, 165 are positive (87%), 19 are negative (10%) and there are 5 'other' comments (3%), see Table 8.

"Do you have any comments, or suggestions, about how we deal with the Public?"

Out of 70 comments made, 12 are positive (17%), 34 are negative (49%), 24 are neutral or 'other' (34%), see Appendix 1.

Table 7 – Comments on Civic Centre customer contact areas

Negative *37	Positive *107
A little sparse	Acceptable *3

Civic Centre is ugly	Adequate *22
Dangerous entrance (slippy). The Benefits office has a musty smell and could do with a 'face lift'	Clean and tidy *6
It's a horrible building	Fair
It's a lot unfriendly looking - everybody looks as though they are bosses	Functional *2
It's untidy – especially around the leaflet display in main entrance hall	Good *17
Not very impressed	It is very nice inside
Not very private *8	Modern & convenient
Not very welcoming *5	No problem
Quite dark and gloomy *8	Ok *20
The Civic Centre building is an eyesore	Quite suitable
The Housing Benefit enquiry area is too small. Why no chairs at the housing enquiry area?	Satisfactory *6
The last time I visited was to pay council tax. I found it absolutely terrible and changed to direct debit so I wouldn't have to do it again	Spacious and organised if dated in decor/layout
They're a bit utilitarian	They're alright *2
Toys in Housing/Finance waiting area were broken and old	They're basic *2
They're not particularly attractive	They're comfortable and organised *2
They're poor	They're excellent
Very old fashioned *2	They're fine
	They're not bad
	They're ok but probably needs updating for most people these days
	They're perfectly satisfactory *2
Others:	They're reasonable *3
I didn't take much notice *4	They're serviceable
I have no complaints	They're very pleasant *6
It has taken time to improve	Very comfortable and nice, cosy atmosphere. Pleasant surroundings and pleasant staff.

Not visited *2	Very well kept with efficient, pleasant male receptionist.
No comment	The Planning is interesting

Table 8 – Comments on council run organisations (outside Civic Centre)

Positive *165	Negative *19
Acceptable *5	Benefits advice! I think the waiting area should be operated from Reception, a little more private
Adequate/satisfactory *16	Pools reception needs to be smarter and more secure
Average	Quite 'cold' looking
Bereavement Services reception is as it should be	Shopmobility is busy
Clean and tidy *9	The Pools – long wait to pay for swimming if people are booking swimming lessons
Excellent	The Pools are a 'tatty' *2
Helpful *4	The Pools are not bad but could be better
High standard	The changing rooms are very often dirty and smelling foul
I have no complaints *4	The Sands would benefit from an upgrade - something artistic
Not bad	There was no reception area, you walked into the shop and the counter/information service was to the right
Only visited the crematorium which was quite pleasant considering	They're grubby looking - not very inspiring/welcoming
Pleasant *7	They're not big enough, especially the Benefits Advice Centre
Quite suitable	Staff unable or unwilling to deal with complaints
Reasonable	They're small and not very private
Reception areas have improved	They're too open
Sands staff at reception – excellent	The Sands is too high for disabled people who use wheelchairs

The Pools – OK *2	Pehaps a few more chairs would be helpful for the elderly, tired people
The Sands Centre is good *7	Could be better
The Sands Centre is satisfactory *2	
The Sands is fine	
The Shopmobility was great and also Bereavement Services and Tullie House.	
The Tourist Information Centre is very pleasant *2	
They are bright, light and airey, full of information, clean and brightly coloured	
They feel comfortable *2	
They're adequate and practical – positions are easily located	
They're excellent *2	
They're fine *6	
They're good *29	
They're ok *16	
They're quite nice	
They're reasonably attractive and functional	
They're satisfactory *3	
They're suitable	
They're very accessible *3	
They're very efficient	
They're very nice, open spaces and clean	
Tourist Information Centre well laid out	
Tourist Office – good*3	
Tullie House - first class,	
Tullie House – everything seems to be well laid out and appointed; all the staff are very helpful. The staff in Shopmobility are faultless but it would be better situated at ground level	
Tullie House – excellent, The Sands Centre – good, The Pools - good,	

although gave up trying to get through on the phone,	
Tullie House and The Sands are pleasant, relaxing and welcoming *2	
Tullie House and The Sands have a good size contact area	
Tullie House is excellent *2	
Tullie House is nice *2	
Tullie House is very good *8	
Tullie House is well presented *2	
Tullie House most pleasant	
Tullie House only – very impressive	
The Pools reception area is adequate.	
Other	
Never noticed, Not visited *4	

APPENDIX 1

"Do you have any comments, or suggestions, about how we deal with the Public?"

Positive *12

- I have had very helpful care from (named member of staff in housing) for the last 6 months.
- We have no complaints
- It is good to deal with someone directly - not a call centre located beyond the area
- It's usually very friendly
- I have always been satisfied with the staff. I found paperwork re. rent and council tax I received after the death of my father very confusing though I think this area could be looked at
- Generally most helpful
- Staff are extremely helpful
- I find most of the council staff most helpful

- I have always found the staff very helpful and have not had any problems whenever I have visited the Civic Centre. I only feel it is too far out to visit at times
- In my experience they are always helpful and courteous
- All staff I have spoken to are helpful and pleasant
- Benefit Advice Centre staff was excellent - they visited me at home and were very understanding of peoples' needs

Negative *34

- Whenever I have telephoned the Council Tax section, I have had to give up. If no staff are available there should be an answering machine for customers to leave a message. Staff would then phone back.
- Both telephone numbers appear to be engaged. The majority of the time I have often telephoned in excess of 2 times before being answered. This is very frustrating and time wasting
- Council tax/Housing telephone number is permanently engaged - very frustrating. At least give council tax a separate number from housing benefit and employ more staff on phone duty
- Less superior attitude 2. Sounding less bored
- Telephonists in the Civic Centre could sound like they care.
- Staff at the Sands could be better informed about the content of shows. Disagree with your policy at the Sands of paying a surcharge when paying by switch card
- That instead of passing the buck!- they try to provide person to person results.
- Some present information in a very informed way. Unwilling to accept criticism or suggestion.
- To be treated as someone who is paying the wages rather than a second class citizen which is the impression I have had on the five occasions I have visited the Civic Centre.

APPENDIX 1 (CONT)

- Listen to what we, the tax payers are asking you to do i.e. wasting taxpayers money on projects we won't be using. Would you please involve the people in my village (Kershope Foot). We have lived here for 10 years and as yet have never been involved in any of the decisions in Carlisle, maybe by the Council.
- I would appreciate an acknowledgement of my letter at least. Second letter was replied to, but not the first.
- My only contact has been with the Sands Centre and on the whole, the reception staff are very rude, unhelpful, to the point of ignorant. Fortunately there is a new member of staff who could teach the other staff her great skills of customer service.
- Training should be given to front line staff. Officers are arrogant, off-hand and will use put-downs to avoid facing the real issues. The officers do not look objectively at issues but take a defensive stance in an adversarial manner
- Welcome the public as if they are an individual
- Maybe you should employ more staff or re-organise the Benefit section. Payments are made far too late. I have been in debt on quite a few occasions waiting for revenues etc
- The new 'traffic wardens' want to be trained to do their job with a bit more dignity. I have a disabled badge & last week a lady warden watched me park in the 'taxi-bit' in Lonsdale St. - I was in the shop for 5 mins. & came out to find that she had booked me. She didn't warn me that I couldn't park there - that is no way to work with the public! I was unaware that I was in a taxi rank.
- Deal with the public more quickly and be more informative
- Staff seem to be more apathetic when dealing with the public compared with private sector staff
- Sometimes can be difficult getting telephone numbers for different departments, can get sent around lots of switchboards
- Try to be more helpful

- It could be better
- I think the attitude of housing and benefits officers should be less arrogant and more friendly. They seem to think 'we the public' do not have any intelligence and are all trouble makers
- Honestly - stop passing the buck!
- I found the staff in the council tax office could be more pleasant to members of the public.
- Tell the truth about conservation areas - what restrictions people will face. 2) Answer letters 3) Answer all points and questions in letters - not just what you fancy or the ones that are easy
- Tullie House desk and gallery staff. They should be told they are there because of the public and that the public should not be seen as a nuisance in their working day. This applies to only a couple of women
- The Treasury Department is very poor -very arrogant. The photocopying in the council tax section is big waste of public money. The upstairs only want our money only

APPENDIX 1 (CONT)

- It is often difficult to speak to the person you want even if they are your 'contact' from previous communications and it is exasperating to have to explain complicated circumstances over and over
- None of 'them' listen to the people who they serve. They look down at us, as if we are different to them. It always seems as if it is 'them and us'. Too many partitions between us
- In the past we have found that when a lot of the staff are speaking to the public they do so with an air of authority in their tone as if speaking down to you. Also a lot of the time decisions are not made on individual merits but done in text book style which sometimes does not make any sense
- Counter areas are too open
- Be more prompt with action eg reply to queries
- Reply to a request within a reasonable time. Not having the client pursuing the repair, request etc
- Be honest with the public – if you don't know, say so, do not talk a load of rubbish. Say you don't know then find out.

Neutral *15

- Tourist office staff could be more flexible, how many of them speak a foreign language?
- Complaints should be recorded and complainant should be informed of action taken. Form does not provide space for stating nature of complaint
- Public areas should be warm and inviting. Comfortable areas for private discussion should be available. Lowering the ceiling in the main atrium would create better atmosphere. Ongoing training on customer care both face to face and on telephone
- Should be polite and helpful as one should be in any business
- Always remember - we pay your wages!
- More training
- Treat the public in a pleasant manner and be helpful - after all council staff are working for them
- Some staff, although very few, seem to forget that they are supposed to serve the public
- Maybe remember that they are 'civil servants'
- It is how you feel at the time
- I would expect to be treated pleasantly
- I pity you having to deal with many rude and ignorant individuals. it must be difficult not to 'tar all members of the public with the same brush'

- Consultations could perhaps be carried out in private locations
- To continue with printed updates is satisfactory for me
- I think it is important as an employer to remember that the public are not always the nicest/easiest people to deal with especially in the public sector. The public are becoming rude and discourteous, often out to pick a fight from the start, as opposed to try to explain a problem/situation. My own experience with your staff has always been good and I have no complaints. I do feel it is important to note that the customer (public) is not always right

APPENDIX 1 (CONT)

Other *9

- Be more strict
- Why is it that the unemployed gets more help when moving into a council property? Help those more who are putting money into the system
- I'm sorry you have the wrong person on departments.
- Positive action then minimises expense to ratepayers
- No
- Make more information available about what is for sale and what you can take
- About eight years ago had cause to complain about building extension next door, which was thrown out without explanation. The result can still be seen and is a national disgrace. Would no longer trust Carlisle City Council
- I believe that there are real problems and this is not in the general run of the Civic Centre. There are very serious problems in traffic handling and roadworks generally. I believe that this can only come under the heading - failure
- The library is excellent

Key Solutions Summary - Prioritised

Key: 1* = Implement before end of Review: 1=Key Recommendation : 2=Recommended : 3=For future Consideration : X= Not Recommended

Central Issue	Importance	Solution	Detail	Comment
Environment	1*	Location Directors	Location of Civic Centre to be included on road signs. A prominent sign signifying the Civic Centre location be commissioned.	
	1*	Toilets	Improvements needed. SLA improved to increase frequency of cleaning and clearer signposting.	
	1	Effective Signposting	Clearer signposting that will enable customers to the place where their enquiry will be answered at the first asking. Staff are the most efficient signposts.	
	1	Corporate standardisation of Customer Care	By adopting this measure we will eliminate the service being delivered at different levels, some good and some bad	

	1	Display Area	Re-think the area for displaying notices and announcements. New standards to be created and controls put in place	
	1	Reception Area	Visitors to see officers are not to be directed unescorted to Departments. An area set to be set aside to wait whilst awaiting someone to come down and greet and escort visitors to where they need to be.	Issue of frequent visitors to be resolved
	1	Dedicated staff	Nominated staff should work full time on customer contact as their primary and only function. Dedicated staff who specialise in this area will produce a better service than staff who only do it as part of another job.	
	1	Environment extends beyond Civic	Better presentation of services before customers makes contact prepares the customer for the service they are to receive. A budget to be set aside to promote access to services.	
	1	Staff Facilities	Tea/staff room – helps motivate staff – well motivated staff equals a better service	
	1	Extended opening hours	Late night opening on Thursday initially for all services to complement City Centre initiative and to test demand.	Foyer services only in order to test demand
	1	Identify customers	Lowther Street entrance to be used for all staff and deliveries/collections. Rickergate entrance for customers only.	
	1	Porters & Telephonists	Porters need to be relocated as they play no part in direct customer contact. Telephonists will form part of the customer contact service.	Relocated to the Lowther Street entrance
	1	Meeting and Greeting	All customers to be acknowledged when making contact. Met and greeted at reception points and acknowledged through other access channels.	
	1	Customer contact restricted to ground floor only	Customers shouldn't be required to "ride the lifts". They should be attended to at a main floor reception with officers coming to them if necessary. Eliminate non ground floor reception points.	Expert advice needs to be taken on this point
	1	One Stop Shop	No multiple reception areas. Staff would also deal with initial voice and electronic contact.	
	1	Call to be resolved at first contact	Front line staff to be empowered to make decisions	
	1	Extend access through electronic services	Services delivered 24x7 through electronic service delivery aimed at	

			meeting Governments 2005 targets.	
	1	Customer Contact Location	Engage architect/designer to advise on utilising alternative locations for customer contact (Assembly Rooms, "Thrupenny bit" town centre retail premises) or plan to redesign existing reception area.	
	2	Electronic Signposting	Replacement of current keepers board and the introduction of an electronic information and messaging board.	
	2	Extend access through electronic access points	Use of kiosks, phones and video conferencing	Particularly in the use of phone technology for transactional type queries
	2	Colour code services	Similar idea to that used in hospitals:- Blue for Council Tax, Green for Cashiers etc.	
	2	Improve reception area furniture for customers	Tables, chairs, drinks machine, supermarket queuing/ticketing system, provision of pens etc.	
	2	Enquiry Filters	By reducing the filtering and routing of enquiries you improve the chance enquiries will be answered at the first asking – if adequate signposting is employed	
	2	Utilise existing resources	Extend/Incorporate the Careline, CCTV operations and/or other existing resources as part of out of hours customer contact	
	3	Discourage attendance at Civic Centre	Promote electronic access as the primary route to services.	Strong feeling there must always be the option to make physical contact
	3	Extend opening hours	Customer contact to be provided out of hours by home workers supported by ICT	
	3	Cashiers	Lessons about receipting cash to be learnt from the retail and banking industry. Introduction of building society style counters with drop down security shutters.	Expert advice needs to be sought on this point
	3	Screens	Should screens be introduced at reception areas.	As above
	3	Joint service provision	Utilisation of a physical, open environment, in conjunction with other agencies to deliver services.	Partnership working

	X	Reception Point Locations	These should be located close to customer access points e.g. opposite lifts and entrances	Unlikely to proceed within the context of the review
	X	Reception Point Access	Lifts, automatic doors, ramps to be standard	As above
Ownership	1*	Implement a problem management/tracking/reporting system	Commence specifying, prior to the purchase and implementation, a Customer Relationship Management system.	Initial Specification can be worked upon
	1	Front office staff to make early decisions	SLA's will regulate the degree of staff empowerment but the underlying assumption <u>must</u> be for greater rather than less autonomy for front office staff.	
	1	Underpinned by Service Level Agreements	There should be a two way service level agreement in operation between the front office staff and the supporting Departments	Staff and customers to be involved in setting SLA's
	1	Cross department approach	Service requests to be dealt with in a consistent manner independently of which department they are directed to.	
	1	Call to be resolved at first contact	Front line staff to be empowered to make decisions	
	1	Request filtering	Efficient filtering of requests, accurately targeted to the person best able to help	
	1	Awareness Raising	Raising awareness and training in the art of customer contact and customer care amongst staff/management/members will encourage personal ownership	
	1	Comment and suggestion sheets	Responding to these will also encourage ownership	
	1	Back office to create & retain control of front office decision making process	Scripts, Flowcharts, Decision Tree's for the front office should originate and be maintained by the specialist back office staff.	
	2	Back office/Front office ownership	A series of joint performance indicators need to be developed	
	2	SLA Database	To control and monitor the interaction between front and back office and will form part of any implemented CRM	
	2	Cross department approach	Customer Contact TIR's, SLA's and Service Improvement Plans between front office and back office staff will encourage boundary crossing and ownership	
Performance	1	Best practice dissemination	Mechanism is needed to review and	

Management			implement any best practices that are identified	
	1	Published PI's	PI's should be published for staff and customers. For staff these should be at very frequent intervals in order for them to see positive feedback for any improvements implemented	
	1	Quality to be measured	Performance management should include measures of quality not focus entirely on quantitative measurements	
	1	Training of back office staff on customer contact	Performance will be improved if back office staff are trained and exposed to real customer contact situation. Perhaps mentoring or using a buddy system	
	1	Multi-channel PI's	Any performance indicators must take account of all customer channels not just visitor contacts	
	1	Customer satisfaction surveys	Performed on a regular basis, should feed to TIR's as a method of improving performance	
	1	Staff satisfaction surveys	Again feeding TIR's and leading to service improvements	
	2	Customers satisfied at first contact	This is a key measurement to drive and improve customer contact. It should be measured on a daily basis.	
	2	Formal external measurement of customer service	Aim to be an Idea Level 5 Authority. Are there any other external verification of customer service that are applicable. E.g. Chartermark	
	2	IT System required	A system, preferably digital and automatic, is required for resource planning and performance measurement of any and all customer contact channels.	
	3	Quality responses tailored to customer need	Any customer contact will be delivered in a way that suits the customer. If some customers require more time to deal with than others and this needs to be allowed for. E.g. NHS Direct	
Communication	1*	Electronic communication	Intranet system required for both front and back office. Repository of all service knowledge	
	1*	Published material	A centralised digital library containing all published material to be created	
	1	Immediate	All communication channels to be immediate	
	2	Customer surveys & market research	Greater emphasis to be placed on the results of such exercises with a closer link to service improvement plans	

	2	Access channels to be customisable	Access channels to be capable of customisation in specific circumstances	
	2	Consistent consultation	All consultation exercises to be carried out at regular intervals to a consistent level	
Organisation-i) Central point of contact	1	Central Service Desk	Central service desk to rationalise existing proliferation of reception desks	
	1	Customer Service Manager	Appointment of a Customer Service Manager with specific customer contact and customer service information	
	1	Staff	Service desk attended by well motivated staff	
	1	Common contact point	Common phone number, e-mail address, mail address, reception	
	1	Focused staff	Seperated from mail handling, delivering and other sundry duties	
	1	Identity required	A separate identity or branding, themed within any corporate branding, will be required so customers can immediately identify locations and sources of help	
	2	Secure environment	Contact point to be secure – covered by CCTV and visible people/security presence	
ii) Silo Working	1*	Knowledge dissemination	Creation of a knowledge customer service data base / hub intranet	
	1	80% threshold	80% of calls to be answerable directly but those common answers should be available to all staff via an intranet who should be encouraged field queries	Work can be started in conjunction with CRM project
	2	Transferred calls PI	An alternative measureable to "Calls answered on first contact". A high level of tranfers might indicate a back office silo mentality	
	2	CRM	Available as a corporate resource throughout whole organisation	
	2	Consistent decisions	In discretionary situations there should be consistent decisions	
iii)Links to partner organisations	1	Exposure to external influences	Networking with similar operations to learn best practice	
	1	Identify benefits	Identify and quantify the benefits to customers of such links to enable prioritisation	
	2	Training	Joint training with other organisations	

	3	Joint policy formulation	Establish joint customer care policies and strategies	
	3	Common channels	Common access channels and interfaces to be established with partner organisations	
	3	SLA	Establish SLA's with partner organisations	
iv)Corporate Approach	1	Handbook and induction training	Customer contact to be included in induction training and training to be extended to include existing staff	
	1	Policy	Customer contact to be generated and maintained by a "standing committee" of Portfolio Holder, Customer Service Manager, staff rep, Department Head, rotating head of service, customer rep.	
	2	Global PI's	Identification and introduction of global PI's	
	2	CMT Involvement	Customer contact/care to be a standing item at CMT	
	2	Reporting	Reports on customer contact to portfolio holder and Executive	
v)Customer Orientated	1	Customer suggested improvements	Suggestion books, boxes etc. routed thro' to "Standing Committee". Responses required to suggestions	
	1	Service flexibility	Service to change and adapt to changing customer needs	
	1	Service statement	Annual "state of the service" statement from the customer service manager	
vi)Customer Care Culture	1		Creation and maintenance of a customer care culture	
	1		Standing items on TIR's. Mandatory TNA entry for all staff.	
	2		Externally driven, inspected and tested care standard. Examining body yet to be identified:- Chartermark, ISO, BSI etc.	

Key Recommendations for immediate implementation

Solution	Detail
Location Directors	Location of Civic Centre to be included on road signs. A prominent sign signifying the Civic Centre location be commissioned.
Toilets	Improvements needed. SLA improved to increase frequency of cleaning and clearer signposting.

Implement a problem management/tracking/reporting system	Commence specifying, prior to the purchase and implementation, a Customer Relationship Management system.
Electronic communication	Intranet system required for both front and back office. Repository of all service knowledge
Published material	A centralised digital library containing all published material to be created
Knowledge dissemination	Creation of a knowledge customer service data base / hub intranet