

CORPORATE
RESOURCES
OVERVIEW AND
SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE

Committee Report

Public

Date of
Meeting:

05 September 2002

Title: CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW - UPDATE

Report of: The City Treasurer

Report
reference: Financial Memo 2002/03 No 48

Summary:

The purpose of this report is to produce the final report of the Customer Contact Best Value Review and bring to a conclusion the review of the customer contact service within the Authority.

Recommendations:

The Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked:-

- a. To note and comment on the work carried out to date by the review team
- b. To note the work which will carry forward after the conclusion of the review
- c. To approve the arrangement for the Carlisle Works call centre conditional upon the proviso's detailed
- d. To note and comment on the finalised best value report on customer contact

Contact Officer: John Nutley

Ext: 7250

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CITY OF CARLISLE

To: The Chairman and Members of the Financial Memo

Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee 2002/03 No 48

05 September 2002

CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW – UPDATE

1.0 This report details work carried out since the last meeting of this Committee and concludes the Customer Contact Best Value Review.

1. Current Work

1. This report presents a number of pieces of work that were underway or started since the last report to this committee. These include:-
 1. Consultation through inviting comments from staff on proposals for improving the service. These are presented in Appendix A.
 2. Consultation via a focus group with customers on proposals for improving the service. These are presented in Appendix B with a summary of comments in Appendix C
 3. An Internet survey of all staff on the overall proposals of the review. These are presented in Appendix D.
 4. Completion of the Action Plan for improving the service. This work forms part of the Final Report.
 5. A site visit for Members was organised Members on the Wednesday 28th. August. Details of this visit are reported separately by the Committee Clerks.
- 6. *This Committee is asked to note and comment on the work carried out to date by the review team***

2 Audit Inspection

2.1 The Audit Commission has now confirmed that this review has been included in their programme of inspections scheduled for this quarter.

3. Ongoing work

1. There are a number of pieces of work that commenced as part of the review teams work that will continue beyond the life of this review. These are listed here.
2. The customer contact policy is presented as a final. However, during the review process it has become clear that the customer contact policy is a dynamic document that will always be subject to constant revision. It will continue to be subject to update and change.
3. Contact has been made with the Language Line translation service detailed in the last report and an implementation plan is being prepared.
4. A number of the actions identified for immediate implementation in the last report to this committee still have to be completed. The current state of play with these is shown in Appendix E.
5. The costs associated with the implementation of the new Customer Service Unit, particularly the proposed Customer Contact Centre, are being reviewed. The latest figures, which show a significant reduction are the ones presented in the Final Report. Work is still being carried out to finalise these.
6. Agreement, in terms of responsibility and time scales, on the Action Plan is still to be reached with the Business Units. This is mainly due to the fact the organisational structure is currently in a period of transition.
- 7. *This Committee is asked to note the work which will carry forward after the conclusion of the review***

3. Carlisle Works

1. The last meeting of this committee expressed concern at the call centre operating from within the proposed Street Scene operation and questioned whether this fitted well within the overall tenets of the review proposals.
2. After reconsidering the situation, the Lead Officer has concluded that whilst the situation does present an anomaly, for the time being operational efficiency outweighs the benefits of incorporating this operation into a central customer contact centre.
3. However in order to ensure alignment with the customer contact proposals this arrangement should only be permitted with the following proviso's:-

1. That the contact service is not separately branded and marketed as Street Scene
 2. Separate contact channels (telephone number, e-mail or web address) are not utilised. The corporate contact channels being used to connect to the service.
 3. The IT systems used at the Street Scene are the same as used by the corporate customer centre.
- 1. *This Committee is asked to approve the arrangement for the Carlisle Works call centre conditional upon the proviso's detailed.***
2. A reference to Council Tax and Benefits being incorporated into the corporate call centre is made in the previous minutes. There is no proposal to exclude these services for the recommendations of this review.

5 Final Report

1. At the commencement of this review three specific outcomes were detailed:- A review of the current service, an action plan to improve the service and a new customer contact policy. These have been incorporated into a final report which is presented in Appendix F.
2. Due to the shortness of time available for preparing the report there are still some cosmetic changes needed to improve the presentation of the report. These will be complete before the report is presented to the Executive. However, although some detail may alter before then, to all intents and purposes the report as presented is complete.
3. The evidence file, which contains much of the supporting documentation accumulated during the course of the review, is available on request in CD-ROM form.

5.4 This Committee is asked to note and comment on the finalised best value report on customer contact

D THOMAS

City Treasurer

Contact Officer: John Nutley Ext: 7250

City Treasury,

Carlisle

30 August 2002

-----Original Message-----

From: Steve Tweedie
Sent: 19 July 2002 13:14
To: Brian Blackburn
Subject: Customer Services feedback re 12th July meetings.

Brian,

Please see the attached for your reference re the feedback/comments as a result of the meetings held on the 12th July with Revenues Clerical/Reception staff. All staff were present so everybody has had the opportunity to respond.

Steve.

CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW – CONSULTATION

Feed back from Customer Services Section re 12th July 2002.

- As part of any new set up individuals need to have an area in the back office they can call home. If staff are to be asked to process information or work on a phone bank they need to have a dedicated desk rather than be constantly moving around. The positions occupied when dealing with the public face to face should not be seen as a permanent desk space.
- How will staff be able to cope with the amount of knowledge they would need to be able to have to deal with the multitude of questions the public would have in a generic customer service centre? What would be the plans for training staff to incorporate the disciplines.
- If the development of the centre is to be phased in with additional services being added over a rolling period, what opportunity would staff in the centre have at having their job scale reviewed?
- When the 'back office' operation is perceived as failing to deliver will there be a provision for the Customer Services Section to have an input into improvements they could be making?
- As part of any Customer Contact Policy there must be a section advising what is expected of the customers not just what the customer can expect of us.
- The image created in the Centre needs to be professional so front line staff should not be expected to have to trail back and forward to see any back office staff or indeed have 3 way conversations on the phone. If the front line staff does not have the knowledge to deal with the enquiry then they need to be able to call on support without having to leave their desk.

Prepared by ST 17.07.02.

-----Original Message-----

From: Steve Tweedie
Sent: 17 July 2002 11:51
To: Anna Clarke
Cc: Brian Blackburn
Subject: RE: Restructure

Thanks for your comments Anna, which I have forwarded to Brian.

It's nice to hear you are looking at the changes positively. You are right in what you say that it is often the fear of change and the uncertainty that it brings which causes people to be uneasy with any new proposals. I would like to think that any new set up here will bring fresh 'challenges' and 'opportunities' for us all and if the process is managed correctly should bring major improvements to our service delivery. Time will tell as they say!

Cheers, Steve.

-----Original Message-----

From: Anna Clarke
Sent: 16 July 2002 16:12
To: Steve Tweedie
Subject: Restructure

I kept very quiet during the meeting as I wanted to have a think about things and also my views on the restructure are quite positive. I understand that implementing the "one stop shop" would be a logistical nightmare and would not occur over night. But looking towards the future, the service to customers would be greatly improved. Although there would be a great deal of training, this can only be good for staff, creating far more pathways, when looking to further their careers.

One of the things that has surprised me about my position is the depth of knowledge that you are expected to have. There is no way that we handle only simple enquiries. Personally this does not bother me as I find it more interesting than simply passing on enquiries. I am aware that we would not be expected to have this amount of knowledge on all areas and streamlining people to appropriate desks on arrival, e.g colour coding would be of benefit to them, in providing a more skilled and efficient service.

I feel that as I have only worked here for a few months I am slightly more open to change than people who have worked here for years. The thought of change can be quite daunting for some people that may have been in the same routine for some time. My interpretation of the restructure is that our jobs will completely change. Although I can understand the reservations of some of my colleagues I do feel very positive about the proposed changes. I feel that Carlisle is becoming a far more diverse and thriving town, and that the proposed restructure reflects the council addressing this and keeping up with the times. Bringing us into line with our counterparts in Newcastle and other larger cities.

-----Original Message-----

From: Vivienne Whiteman
Sent: 12 July 2002 09:11
To: Brian Blackburn
Cc: Pat White
Subject: Customer Consultation

Brian,

Just a couple of comments from Patrick, myself and Cashier on the above.

1. We are not at all sure that any lessons could be learnt from the retail industry regarding receipting cash, in fact it could well be the other way round.
2. Lessons to be learnt from the banking industry may be relevant although it is possible that that is already brought into the section by those of us who are bank trained staff anyway.
3. Any less security than we have now would be considered to be a mistake, coming from all of us taking cash from the public and who would not feel comfortable with any less.
4. We all feel that the counter should be given its facelift as it is not pleasant for either staff or customers.

Vivienne

Ext. 7237

-----Original Message-----

From: Catherine Elliot
Sent: 11 July 2002 12:05
To: Brian Blackburn
Subject: Customer Contact BV Review

I am responding for the Economic Development Unit and have the following comments:

1. In the second paper, in the proposal for 'Carlisle Direct' I cannot see a reference to the Enterprise Centre or the Brampton Business and Telecentre as regards the centralisation of reception points. It is clearly right that they are left as stand alone units but is their omission an oversight or deliberate? If there is any intention to link them formally into the system we need to know now so that we can make appropriate comments.
2. The Council needs to consider allowing payment by credit card over the web. An EDU example would be a business data base that is currently in development. Other examples might include online planning applications etc.

Catherine Elliot

-----Original Message-----

From: June Carswell
Sent: 11 July 2002 10:29
To: Brian Blackburn
Subject:

Customer Contact Best Value Review

Having discussed these documents with my staff, below are the comments they have made, although they all appear to be "negative" we feel that we as a "specialised department" should have been included along with Tullie House and the Sands! We already offer an excellent customer service and have won awards for "Most Helpful Cemetery and Crematorium". We already aim to answer all our telephone calls within 5 rings and all mail is answered within 5 working days., all staff wear name badges at all times, because of the sensitivity of our roles we are always polite, helpful and treat all our customer with respect, public, funeral directors, clergy etc. We offer reception duties from 8-00am - 4-30pm Monday - Friday and a telephone service weekends and bank holidays (365 days per year).

Staff comments and concerns

Agree that this would improve the customer care within the Civic Centre and hopefully avoid the public being passed from department to department.

All agree that response times to letters and e mails is fair

All of our queries are specialised so how can someone who hasn't been trained for this particular role be able to answer the publics questions?

How will staff on the "front desk" gain access to our database, which is confidential?

Do you intend to move a member of staff from Bereavement Services to the Civic helpdesk? If so how do you intend to replace the already low staffing within the department and who will pay?

Is the intention for any query or complaint being immediately passed to our department?

-----Original Message-----

From: David Atkinson
Sent: 08 July 2002 14:33
To: Brian Blackburn
Subject: Customer Contact BV Review - Consultation

I thank you for asking me to comment on your reports. Separately, I am writing about property issues in some detail. As far as my brief points are concerned (some property/some other)< they are:

* Having had two lunch time spots fielding enquiries at 7th floor reception, I very much support your review. We treat our customers really poorly, from pillar to post, in a departmental style that must change with the restructure, to begin a shift in corporate culture.

* Policy - Your Customer contact policy is excellent and I support it. I assume there will be a point of contact on it, post restructure?

* Model - The model is a good one but I recommend a more rigorous challenge of the property aspects (such as the merger of TIC's/use of Tullie House - which might raise extra income & save costs to pay for your improvements) - see my report to follow this week.

I believe your recommendation (6) should be (1).

In my limited experience on the counter, I thought the corporate information we have to hand to be dire. In a one location office, there needs to be a library of forms, journals, publications, reports and so on. There needs to be attention to what is put on public display - and how - in order to market the Council's and City's activities to best advantage. We are rather naff at all this, presently, to say the least.

* Solutions -

Location Directions - I recommend that your remit should go much wider than just directions to the Civic. The city centre directional signage (in car and on foot) is hopeless and needs a radical overhaul. As a visitor to other cities, I note that there are proper signs from railway stations, bus stations and car parks to city centre facilities - along with city centre maps. There are also road signs stating where car parks are, which presumably will increase income and be environmentally friendly by reducing drive times. I think you need a recommendation about this, in partnership with providers/funders, as BV inspectors elsewhere have been critical.

Image - similar to comments about information, special attention needs to be placed on image for displays/advertising boards (could be some sponsor income here), city centre maps etc I like your idea of a back door for staff, to get away from the image of smokers at the front door, which looks so awful. Perhaps you should also suggest some radio advertising of Carlisle Direct (good name, by the way) - it is the best for local targeting, I believe.

Security staff - an increasing problem, but I believe it is something that will need attention. I have advocated for many years, the appointment of an outside security firm similar to that used by shops like M&S, with properly trained and uniformed staff. It gives out the right image and is comforting both to staff and customers.

I hope that this is useful. In general, well done. All credit to colleagues for being involved.

David Atkinson

8th July 2002

-----Original Message-----

From: John Nutley
Sent: 01 July 2002 16:52
To: Brian Blackburn
Subject: Comments from CT

Brian,

I said I'd pass on the Treasurer's comments about the consultation we're currently carrying out on the new proposed model for customer contact within the Authority.

In general the Treasurer was happy with the overall shape of the model and there were few surprises in it for him.

He had a concern about the provision of cashier facilities being made available outside of normal Civic Centre hours. The possibility of the public using the Civic Centre before the building was fully open would need to be looked at.

John

-----Original Message-----

From: Jo Pointing
Sent: 06 June 2002 15:54
To: CC_Review
Subject:

Attached are my comments/ideas on the draft model. My apologies that there are probably more questions than answers/solutions, although admittedly a lot relates to the finer points of designing Carlisle xxxxx and so perhaps a little ahead of myself! Also turned into a bit of a discussion over what i see as important issues-the 80/20 split and the definitions of 'resolution' these are important and I don't personally have solutions-something for future discussion!

Enjoy!

I have a lot of questions regarding the 80%/20 split and the ownership issues. I still have to question whether we can achieve this level of service when the market leaders (Brent) still achieve less than 60% of queries dealt with at first point of contact, and they have been in the business for nearly 10 years!

Perhaps it all boils down to definition? How is 'resolved' to be defined? A very low level could be set for some services which would paint a good picture but not necessarily achieve anything in terms of customer services. The definition could of course affect how the split will be achieved? Will there be different levels for different services?

Page 3, paragraph headed 'the Benefits'

Regarding the management information, it may be beneficial to feed this information back to staff and customers (in a useable/understandable format!). This would then show when and what we are achieving and provides the opportunity for continuing feedback and maintains communication as per the organisational review!

Page 3, paragraph headed 'Back office experts'

Skilled back office staff-If customer services staff are going to provide a high level, effective services, are they not also 'skilled staff', skilled in another area? If customer services is to be high priority/important to the council, the provision of these should also be recognised as a skill in their own right.

Seconding 'back office' staff. There should be a set minimum customer services training level so as to ensure standards are maintained. Grading could also be an issue, as could location if the one stop shop is sited away from the civic (this could also be a problem is staff are to work on the section on a part time basis).

Page 3-4 Resourcing Carlisle xxxxx

The theory may be no cost, but in reality there have to be costs, first thing that springs to mind is training.

Obviously the staffing of the section is a huge issue, similar to the process underway with LSVT/TUPE. Perhaps too detailed to raise at the moment, but obvious questions are how the jobs will be aggregated and the impact this will have on current front/back office services.

Page 4, Relationship between back office and the Carlisle xxxxx

Other than the organisational review are there plans to review back office procedures throughout the council, other than imposing customer services standards? It will not matter what we put out the front if the back office is delivering an ineffectual/poor service. Customer services may be top notch perfect delivery but it can then take a step back and say 'not our fault'. Does this then maintain silo working? How can customer services really be an extension of back office services if ultimately the back office owns it, surely then customer services is acting as an agent, with no responsibility/answerability? This will also depend on definitions of 'resolution' and SLA's.

John, there are a few typos in the report which will no doubt be picked up on proof reading (just stuff that spell check wouldn't identify!) also on page 8 i think it would be appropriate to replace 'to man a customer contact centre' in the first line with 'staff' !

I am forwarding this draft to members for comments.

One of the things my section were concerned about were the scales of staff and this is certainly not mentioned, perhaps too fine a detail at this stage, although i notice staff budget is specified?

Also I hadn't realised that ctax and benefits were possibly going to be separate? I know this is something that was discussed early and actually think it is

probably the most appropriate thing given the volume and nature of the sections work.

Is it anticipated that customer services staff will not do any other work at all. Its quite likely that there will be quiet times. I seem to recall something about post routines being taken on by the centre?

I think I am right in saying that the whole thing is going to be seen as quite fluid with flexibility built in, I am thinking particularly about staffing levels here as the work of the centre develops, and also in the initial stages when setting up

I would also comment that the action plan at appendix c was quite difficult to understand. I note the comment about revenues that this should be set up and running with service handovers a routine matter, I would actually say that as a member of staff on this section it is not quite so straightforward and would hope that given the whole review of customer contact that this aspect still falls within the remit for change/review even if a separate part.

Do we have a breakdown of how the staffing levels were worked out, I seem to recall a chart about the existing service analysis very early on but I haven't seen anything that goes down to staffing levels, have I missed it somewhere?

I will now be on holiday for 2 weeks! so please accept apologies for next meeting. if any urgent issues arise which need union consultation please contact Chris Wright.

Thank you

Jo. Pointing

John

Sharon forwarded to me your final draft of the Customer Care document for comments. I have spotted some literals as I've been reading through it and have made some amends on a hard copy which is in the internal mail and should be winging its way to you very shortly - hope this is helpful.

On the content, my only comment is - very good. I think such a radical approach to customer care, in the face of the shortfalls highlighted in the Best Value Review, is the only way to address the issues. Let's hope everyone gets behind it.

Regards

Carolyn Taylor

Principal Communications Officer

x 7534

Comments

I agree with most of the points made in the draft Final Report. From over two years dealing with Corporate Complaints the key findings summarise very well the current service experienced by the customer as well as my own inability to set the escalation of complaints to stages 2 and above against the total authority complaint population.

Post the reorganisational review implementation I believe one of the key dangers could be a new silo effect in that some staff in other business units perceive "customer care" as being solely the responsibility of the new customer service unit rather than being a part of their daily duties and responsibilities.

My only comments focus on the Customer Policy.

Customer Policy

In the Complaints section of the Customer Contact Policy could the word "department" be replaced by "service" to bring it in line with the proposals of the BV Organisational Review and the current transitional Complaints stationery. The wording "Head of Corporate and Administrative Services" should be replaced with "Corporate Complaints Section", a function of the new business unit Legal & Democratic Services.

In terms of the Local Government Ombudsman what would be the best point of contact for the customer, the Corporate Complaints Section or the Civic Centre reception? For basic enquiries, sending out of forms the new Customer Contact Centre would be most cost effective however some queries would need the back office expertise/knowledge/advice of the Corporate Complaints section. From the Corporate Complaint Section's point of view it would also enable the monitoring officer to be aware of possible direct LGO complaints which for what ever reason have not used the Council's own procedures.

Regards

Penny Crack

TCCE Senior Admin Assistant

with responsibility for Corporate Complaints & Town Twinning

From: Paulette Pattinson

Sent: 15 August 2002 10:45

To: Ian Lunn

Subject: CUSTOMER CONTACT BEST VALUE REVIEW

Customer Contact Best Value Review

Draft Final Report

John, well done you have put a lot of hard work into this. My observations are as follows: -

- 1. Shopmobility not mentioned in Key Recommendations. Presume you are pursuing with Walter Davidson.
- 2. Interim Solution 1. Customer Services Manager. I wondered if we have any timetable to put in here. Appointment of CSM and when likely to take over responsibility for existing reception services. (I note key recommendation 13 – can we ascertain when immediate control will be?)
- 3. Solution 2. Similarly is there a time scale for the negotiation between the service manager, CSM and staff concerned for the transition to the new structure.
- 4. Out of Hours service. I seem to recall discussion at one of the meetings on in house provision via CCTV operators but cannot recall any outcome.
- 5. Customer Contact Policy. Reception opening hours. Is it the intention to initially stay with the standard 9am – 5pm and review.
- 6. Action Plan. Sorry but I am struggling with this. I don't find it easy to follow and again should there be some programmed timescale. I don't understand how the transfer/closure of the 7th Floor Reception will work and I am concerned about the implications for the two part time Receptionists.



Carlisle City Council

INTERNAL MEMORANDUM

From:	Head of Committee and Admin Services	Please ask for:	Ian Dixon
		Extension:	7033
To:	John Nutley, Head of IT Services	E-mail:	lanD@carlisle-city.gov.uk
		Your ref:	
		Our ref:	IJD/KR
Copy:	Penny Crack		16 August 2002

RE: CUSTOMER CONTACT - FINAL REPORT

I would make the following points regarding the Final Report of the Customer Contact Best Value Review Team:-

1. Key Finding 8

"The main telephonists switchboard acts as the central point for customers, a function for which it has not been designed."

The telephonists are not in fact front line receptionists but do provide cover for the Front Desk in the absence of the Keepers.

2. Key Recommendation 13 Organisational Implications - Interim Solution

I consider that these recommendations and comments step outside the Brief of the Group and have begun to lay the process for implementation. Quite apart from the question of whether implementation issues are part of the Review's Brief, I do not consider that the proposals, particularly in respect of line management supervision of staff who spend a part of their time on Reception is feasible. The proposal that such staff should be supervised by the Customer Care Unit whilst they are on reception duty and line management from elsewhere whilst they were not on reception duty raises many questions and I do not consider it to be workable ie if the Reception staff have a query who do they turn to, when they book leave/have sickness who do they report to? Also what effect will this have on the Units in which they work. As I have said, I disagree with the proposal and consider that it is a matter which should be addressed by the new Customer Contact Centre and not by the Best Value Review Team.

With regard to the wording of Organisational Implications Paragraph 2 The Creation of a New Unit within the Authority, your report infers that the Keepers deal exclusively with Customer Services. As I have mentioned previously, the Keepers have a number of duties and their work with customers forms only a part of their overall role. Their other duties being janitorial in terms of opening the building, security in terms of monitoring the alarms, portering and Mayoral Sergeants in terms of their work with the Mayor etc. You may need to reword that part of the report.

With regard to Penny's response on Customer Policy, I note her suggestion that the "Head of Committee and Administrative Services" should be replaced on the Complaints stationery with "Corporate Complaints Section". I understand why Penny has made the suggestion ie to make the process clearer and more understandable to the "customer". However, at the present time I am not aware of any proposals to establish a "Corporate Complaints Section" within the Legal and Democratic Services Business Unit.

Head of Committee and Admin Services

Apologies for delay in responding.

The current service is not, according to the two surveys undertaken, as bad as the report suggests in my opinion though there are obvious areas which can and should be addressed. The report deals with these fully and proposes practical solutions.

The out of hours move to a third party needs close analysis otherwise we may be paying for an expensive ansafone. I still think the effective and economic answer to this lies with better utilisation of our CCTV function and resources rather than outsourcing.

What do you mean on page 5, 14) vii "The out of hours emergency response facility be managed by the customer service team"?

The customer contact policy is excellent and this alone will improve matters. As will a corporate approach and understanding of quality service.

Bet your glad the paper chase is almost over.

Now the real work begins!

Les Tickner

Carlisle Works

Carlisle City Council

Customer Contact

Focus Group

The focus group was held on Monday 29th July 2002 in the Slupsk Room, Civic Centre, Carlisle.

Personal

The group was made up of 8 people (5 males and 3 females). Four members of the group were from the Stanwix area, one from the city centre and one from Morton, another from Hallbankgate and one from Brampton. The group comprised two retired gentlemen, a retired primary school headmaster, a retired local government officer, a retired civil servant, a dairy and sheep farmer, a farmer's wife and a gentleman who had been on long term sick leave, but hoped to return to work shortly.

Do you agree or disagree that a central physical contact centre would improve our service to customers?

The group had mixed feelings as to how beneficial a central contact point would be. Whilst some thought that it would be help improve the service to customers, others were concerned that unless staff were very well informed, the central point would actually act as a barrier between the customer and the department that they needed.

Comments

"I just think that overall it would be easier for the customer to deal with."

"I could possibly see there being some problems, as if someone comes to see the Council, will the person that they initially dealt with be there, or will they get passed on to someone else."

"Whoever was manning the desk could have a general knowledge of everything, but a specialist knowledge of some areas."

"I think that it is important to train staff so that everyone has a good working knowledge and they should also be very interested in their job - it would show in the way they deal with you. I think that it is an important job and you need someone who acknowledges you when you go in."

"It sometimes feels that they work to a policy to make you feel uncomfortable."

"The job must be motivating."

"I still don't understand the need for a single contact point. At the moment I can go to the reception and ask where the Accounts Department is and go to it, so they can answer my query directly. Whereas instead of that you are going to set up a new system where everything is going to be done in duplicate. First contact is absolutely vital and I want my first contact to be with someone who can answer my query. I want a notice board that tells me where to go. It's just an expansion of the current system."

"I'm inclined to agree with that."

"I've done it before. You might have to climb flights of stairs, but I saw the right person straight away and that's satisfying."

"If you put too many people in the middle. If you get them to the right person straight away then it pleases people."

If such a service were provided then what would be the most important elements of that service from the customer's point of view?

Some members of the group felt the service might improve speed of service and minimise the number of people that the customer

had to speak to in order to resolve their problem.

Comments

"Speed, I should think. How long you would have to wait."

"Minimising the number of people that you have to see. I remember that I was once transferred literally 20 times and back to the start on the 20th time."

What could the contact centre provide for older people?

Access to the contact centre was seen to be the primary problem for elderly people. The group suggested that there should be a bus stop outside both the Sands Centre and the Civic Centre. A postal system was also seen as being important for those living out of town. It was suggested that complaint cards could be sent out with the Council Tax bill.

Comments

"The problem would be for them getting there - there are fewer and fewer buses."

"The road systems don't allow buses to pull in at the Sands Centre and the Civic Centre."

"You have to think of the old people in the country. You could have a postal system. They would never get on a bus to complain and why should they? You could send details with the council tax bill and I'm sure you'd get more responses."

Thinking about out-of-hours contact, how do you feel about that?

The entire group agreed that in this day and age, where many businesses operate 7 days a week, the Council should be accessible on a Saturday and also into the evening. Many felt that there should be a contact point 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as it would enable those working shifts to conduct business regarding Council related issues. Although many focus group members preferred face-to-face contact, it was agreed that it would at some times have to be a non face-to-face service, whether by phone or with the use of the computer. It was acknowledged that many people, particularly the elderly are not happy using modern technology as a means of contact and therefore the service provided should take this into consideration.

It was agreed that telephone numbers and other means of contact should be very well publicised in order that everyone knows how to contact the Council.

Comments

"I would put that first. People could speak to the Council without even leaving home. That is the best way to encourage people to complain - make it easy for them, at home. You might end up with too much paper to deal with at the other end, though."

"Older people need to be taught how to use technology - out in caravans in the street - to teach them how easy it is."

"Older people should be shown face-to-face."

"There are still a percentage who are frightened and we shouldn't force them to do it. They have enough stress in this day and age."

"I think that it is very important. I would like to see them open on Saturday mornings and 2-3 evenings per week. And what about shift workers? There should be some system for them to say something easily and at present there isn't."

"There could be something for urgent things."

"There could be something for non-urgent as well if you are working in the middle of the night."

"There could be a telephone service for out-of-hours."

"We are entering an age where people work 7 days a week and yet the Civic Centre is closed Saturdays and Sundays. I think that the opening hours should be changed to be open to 1p.m. on a Saturday."

"At Tullie House they are closing earlier. I used to like it when it was open until 7p.m. And the catering establishment thinks that they should close 2 hours earlier still. It has cut most of the food off 1½ hours early. They should be made to do their job."

"The library should open on Sundays for a couple of hours, or later in the evening."

"If you have a complaint you can leave a message on the answerphone for staff to come back to you."

"I prefer to speak to someone face-to-face."

"I think that whatever way you do it, every section of the public should be catered for."

"Perhaps for younger people, there should be contact until 8 p.m. Elderly people still see it being open from 9 a.m.- 5 p.m. and that is fine."

"If it's an emergency then you need help."

"It would be useful to have a number that would tell you which department you need."

"I know that in the phone book there is a list of numbers to call."

"They should publicise this though."

"They shouldn't put these non-regional phone numbers in as it puts people off calling due to the cost."

"I don't think it's possible to have a face-to-face service 24 hours a day."

"If it was open on a Saturday as well then it would be a solution, it wouldn't be perfect, but it would be alright."

"I would aspire to a 24/7 service as being ideal."

"I think it could open later on a Thursday as it was traditionally late night shopping day."

"Would it open at all over holidays like Christmas and New Year. I think that it should be open for an hour or two over the holiday."

Thinking about the draft Customer Contact Policy, is there anything about it that you would change?

The vast majority of the group thought that the draft document was fine with only a couple of exceptions. Firstly that the hours of operation should be extended to include Saturday mornings and also a late night during the week. Secondly one gentleman thought that it was important that the document didn't include any jargon that the public did not understand. Finally, all agreed that the process shouldn't be rushed simply to meet the 2 year time-scale and it would be much better for it to be done thoroughly over a longer period, which would ultimately produce a better service.

Comments

"I think the document is fine as it is."

"I think that the only point would be extended hours on a Saturday morning and a Thursday evening."

"Tullie House should be open until 7 p.m. in the summer."

"It is very pleasing to see the draft document, as everything that we have discussed in the previous groups has been included. I think that the 2-year timescale is very optimistic. I would rather it take longer and them spend plenty of time on all the things, rather than in several years find that it hasn't improved much."

"There is one point that I would like to make. They must make sure that the public understands the jargon in the document e.g. 24/7."

"The catering in Tullie House and the Sands needs to be improved."

The group then spent a few minutes completing the priority list that was included in the pack that they were sent.

A member of council staff then gave a brief talk on the subject.

Having clarified the point that it would be a single point of contact at reception, rather than then having to go up to the departments, would this principle change your view of how effective it would be?

Many members of the group were still concerned that a reception may act as a barrier to the departments, and should simply be a desk that directs people to the right department. A number of people reiterated the point that the Council should publicise departmental telephone numbers and e-mail addresses more widely.

Comments

"I just don't think that there would be enough expertise on a reception, compared to that in the departments."

"Why can't technology be used to send information to people's televisions, so they know where to go before they leave the house?"

"Why can't the Council list their e-mail addresses in the directory?"

"I actually agree with the reception desk, but only as a way of sending people to the right department."

"Why can't they just have a row of phones for people to use, right through to the department. There would be no charge as it is an internal line."

"I think face-to-face contact is better."

"You learn a lot more by speaking to people directly."

"There is technology available to do a lot of things, but not all of it is practical."

"In the last few meetings we have had, the thing that has always come out is the need to improve customer contact - make it polite and efficient. That is the priority and should be the focus. It would inspire me with confidence to see a proper reception."

"There is one point that I would like to make- make sure that an electronic system is simple enough to be used by all computers, as it will frustrate the public if it is not."

The member of Council staff then talked about the Council's partners as a number of members were not clear what the term was referring to.

The group thought that it would be a good idea if the public could access Council services in as many places as possible, ideally in their local neighbourhood. It was suggested that the Council could send out an up-to-date list of telephone numbers along with details of what are its responsibilities, in with the Council Tax bill each year. Finally, it was pointed out that the attitude of some Council employees needs to change so that the customer is treated as the priority, rather than as an interruption.

Comments

"Access to the same service in different places is good, i.e. so people don't have to go as far."

"If you make it very easy to contact them, you have to make sure that there were enough staff."

"One thing that I am never sure about is what the City Council are responsible for and what the County Council do."

"It would be good if there was something that the public could refer to, put in with the Council Tax bill every year, which had the telephone numbers on."

"I would put the reception and the customer contact as the first priority, as I think that during any contact that we make with a member of the staff, we are treated as an interruption to their work, rather than the cause of the job. Customers are your priority."

"It can be the simple things that work, it doesn't have to cost a lot."

Carlisle City Council

Customer Contact Focus Group

July 2002

Summary Report

Background

The City Council asked CN Research to hold a focus group to discuss the interaction between the customer and the council. The discussion explored issues such as the physical contact centre for customers, the service provided for them and out of hours contact. The subject of the Customer Contact Policy was also discussed with the group completing a priority list that was included in a pack that was sent to them.

Methodology

The group was made up of 5 males and 3 females. Six members of the group were from Carlisle and two were from the Brompton area. The discussion was held on Monday 29th July in the Slupsk Room, in the Civic Centre, Carlisle.

Do you agree or disagree that a central physical contact centres would improve our service to customers?

Some mixed feelings initially as to the benefits of a central point. Whilst some thought that it would help to improve customer service, others felt that it could act as a barrier if staff were not well informed.

Comments included:

"Whoever was manning the desk could have a general knowledge of everything, but a specialist knowledge of some areas."

"I still don't understand the need for a single contact point. At the moment I can go to the reception and ask where the Accounts Department is and go to it, so they can answer my query directly. Whereas instead of that you are going to set up a new system where everything is going to be done in duplicate. First contact is absolutely vital and I want my first contact to be with someone who can answer my query. I want a notice board that tells me where to go. It's just an expansion of the current system."

If such a service were provided then what would be the most important elements of that service from the customer's point of view?

Improved speed of service, minimising the number of people that the customer had to speak to in order to resolve the problem.

What could the contact centre provide for older people?

Ease of access. The group suggested there should be a bus stop outside both the Sands Centre and the Civic Centre, and a postal system for those living out of towns. One suggestion was to send cards out with the Council Tax Bill to encourage feedback.

Thinking about out of hours contact, how do you feel about that?

The entire group agreed that accessibility of the Council should be increased to include Saturday and further into the evening. Many

felt that there should be a contact point 24 hours per day, 7 days a week. Although many preferred a face to face contact, it was agreed that telephones and computers would suffice, but there were some concerns regarding the elderly accessing new technology. Publicising their telephone numbers and other means of contact were viewed as crucial.

"We are entering an age where people work 7 days a week and yet the Civic Centre is closed Saturdays and Sundays. I think that the opening hours should be changed to be open to 1 pm on a Saturday".

"I know that in the phone book there is a list of numbers to call..." They should publicise this though".

Thinking about the draft Customer Contact Policy, is there anything about it that you would change?

The vast majority considered the draft document to be fine. Only exceptions were that the hours of operation be extended to include Saturday mornings and a late night during the week. One person mentioned that the document should avoid jargon.

The entire group agreed that it would be better to take their time than rush the process to meet a time scale.

FOLLOWING A BRIEF TALK FROM A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL STAFF

Having clarified the point that it would be a single point of contact at reception, rather than then having to go up to the departments, would this principle change your view of how effective it would be?

There was still concern among many members that a reception may act as a barrier to accessing the correct person in the department, and that there should simply be a desk that directs people to the right department. It was again re-iterated that direct contact numbers could be publicised more widely.

The group also thought it would be a good idea to access Council services in as many places as possible, ideally in their local neighbourhood.

Throughout the interview the attitude of Council employees is seen as important.



RESULTS FROM THE CUSTOMER CONTACT STAFF INTERNET SURVEY

AUGUST 2002

Corporate Policy & Strategy Unit

Lynne Wild

RESULTS FROM THE CUSTOMER CONTACT STAFF INTERNET SURVEY

Introduction:

As part of the consultation process for the Best Value Customer Contact Review, staff were e-mailed a questionnaire outlining proposals developed by the Customer Care Best Value Review Team and were asked questions relating to them. To remain within the timescale of the Customer Contact Best Value Review, time allowed for completing the questionnaire was 3 days, 84 staff responded in total. Results are

accurate to + or – 10%.

Q1: From the main recommendations above, which 3 do you feel will be the MOST effective in improving the customer contact service?

The three most popular recommendations cited by the sample are:

That whatever channel is utilised by a customer, they always receive the same high level of service (48%)

That a corporate-wide customer care culture be established (44%)

That a central physical contact centre be established by consolidating existing reception centres within the Civic Centre (43%)

Chart 1



Q2: From the main recommendations above, which 3 do you feel will be the LEAST effective in improving the customer contact service?

The three least popular recommendations cited by the sample are:

That an out of hours telephone service managed by a third party be provided for customers. (54%)

That partner access channels be established - with, for example, the Tourist Information Centres and Tullie House - to enable reciprocal delivery of services. (49%)

That a central telephone service be developed to deal with all telephoned service requests. (41%)

Chart 2



The table below, using data from question 1, shows how important the sample considers each recommendation to be.

Table 1

Recommendation	Percentage of sample
6) That whatever channel is utilised by a customer, they always receive the same high level of service	48%
8) That a corporate-wide customer care culture be established	44%
2) That a central physical contact centre be established by consolidating existing reception centres within the Civic Centre	43%
7) Where possible the new customer care unit will answer simple queries and transactions. It will not operate purely as a sign posting service	38%

9) That new I.T. systems be introduced to deal with customer contact and tracking of service requests along with a knowledge database about all the services the Council provides	32%
1) That a separate unit be established to manage and operate all initial contacts with the general public	27%
4) That a new access channel be developed to include e-mail and Web access to services	25%
3) That a central telephone service be developed to deal with all telephoned service requests	23%
5) That an out of hours telephone service managed by a third party be provided for customers	14%
10) That partner access channels be established - with, for example, the Tourist Information Centres and Tullie House - to enable reciprocal delivery of services.	5%

Q3: ***Overall do you feel that customers will enjoy a better service from the Council if the recommendations are adopted?***

Almost three quarters of the sample think that customers will enjoy a better service if the recommendations are adopted. See Chart 3.

Chart 3

Q4: ***Please can you say why you think this?***

Better service (52)

- We have needed a corporate customer contact policy for many years.
- Will be more customer-care orientated. 2) Improved development of IT multi-media.
- They currently find the organisation daunting.
- I have served on reception and know that we treat the customer with utter contempt. This must change. Any move towards a corporate culture is welcomed.
- Customers like to be cared for and not be passed on person to person. If the customer care section have knowledge of all services they should in theory be able to direct them to the correct department first time.
- Because the City Council is recognising the need for customer care throughout the entire organisation. The customer is the most important part of the services we deliver and I think the above recommendations will be an excellent start to achieving customer satisfaction.
- I think that people will prefer to have one point of contact rather than be passed from pillar to post as happens at the moment.
- Because they will not have to trail the civic centre to find the right department to deal with their query, nor be transferred from extension to extension trying to find the right person to deal with their query.
- It should reduce confusion about who to contact/where to go (even staff don't know) and a consistently helpful, pleasant and informative approach to customers will improve confidence in, and the image of, the Council.
- The service at present is fragmented, customers are unsure of where to go to register their interest, and are occasionally passed from one area to another, before finally being dealt with by the appropriate officer.
- Customers/members of the public will be able to speak to someone without being passed from pillar to post!!! A centralised area where all enquiries can be dealt with or the contact can help you speak to the right person.
- The increased awareness and publicity should make more staff remember that our job is to provide best and most effective service to customers.
- Customers deserve the best possible service as they are the taxpayers. The recommendations should give speedy replies without going around the building first.
- As things are at the moment, it is not uncommon for Customers to see several people before they get the right person. This is due mainly to the fact that most of the staff are totally unaware of what other departments/staff roles are. If there was one base of knowledge the staff running this service would soon become familiar with the services provided by the rest of the organisation, and in some cases be able to answer simple/frequently asked questions.
- Personnel are more customer friendly than location boards

- If customers are received quickly and efficiently it will change many peoples perceptions of the Local Authority and perhaps be little more patient with the more difficult enquiries they may have if they are dealt more efficiently with 'easy' regular enquiries
- One contact is better than being transferred to various departments who often do not want to speak to customers.
- Public do not always know which department to contact. It is frustrating to be passed round. Working people sometimes find it difficult to access services in work hours - I myself often contact my council by e-mail in the evening
- It can only be of benefit to the customer in that one of the biggest complaints I receive is that they are passed from pillar to post to have a straight forward enquiry dealt with. In addition it is plain to see that when a customer walks in through the front door and they don't know where to go, they find it difficult to work out where they should be from the 'green board' next to the keepers. Whilst the keepers try to be helpful, they are not really there to deal with enquiries, only to refer customers on.
- Gets over the difficulty of having to know who to contact. Success of "one stop shops" elsewhere.
- Currently too many "independent" reception areas. One central point essential, capable of dealing with simple telephone, e mail and personal calls without onward referral. This should not however prevent the public from contacting officers directly where a working relationship has been established. Use of officers personal e mail addresses should be limited as this can result in unacceptable delays during officer absence.
- Customers won't waste their time walking around the Civic Centre looking for the correct floor to answer their queries. They won't waste their money and time telephoning different departments trying to get an answer to a query. If Personnel got rid of their reception desk it would mean that the area around the offices would be more secure.
- People from outside the Council do not understand, or care, about which department deals with particular issues - they just want a central point to contact and have their request responded to quickly and efficiently.
- There are too many points of contact
- Overall, yes if an effort is made rather than just offloading jobs onto others who know nothing about particular queries. An out of hours call centre and improved web/email access is a good idea, but in my experience, centralised call centres during office hours are extremely frustrated as you are on hold for hours and are then passed through various people, having to explain the whole story each time. Initial point of contact should be more than a sign-posting facility and should deal with simple transactions as customers paying by cash are often sent upstairs, only to be sent back downstairs to cashiers.
- A centralised customer service will only work if the staff are well trained in all aspects of the councils work. At present this is not so and the general management attitude is that the counter staff are little better than performing monkeys who only require a modicum of training are graded on the lowest scale yet they have to deal with some of the most difficult situations and queries under a high degree of pressure. Maybe if management valued their contribution more and trained and remunerated more realistically staff would be retained and a better level of service would result.
- Customers become annoyed if they feel they are being fobbed off.
- The public aren't bothered whose responsibility something is, they just want a satisfactory answer, preferably at the first port of call.
- Consistent response to queries rather than pot luck in who deals with the query or bouncing off
- The reception area at present is looking very tired and sad and does not give a very good impression of an efficient service.
- As all customers will receive the same high level of service from all departments.
- Well it's got to be better than what the poor saps have to put up with at present.
- They won't have to be transferred around different departments as much.
- Members of the public should be able to make one contact with the Council, and have all of their queries / transactions dealt with at one location. Whilst a 24 hour answering service is not necessary, I believe that extending operating hours to, say, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. would afford most people the opportunity to have their queries dealt with. Outside these hours, e-mail, ansaphone facilities should be available.
- Services easier to access
- Single point of contact, clear expectations, proper customer focus

If a separate unit was established to deal with initial contacts the general public would be less likely to be sent from pillar to post!

- Because it will simplify the process for customers. However, I think the adoption of a 'customer culture' will prove problematic in practice...
- Although there will always be a minority of customers who will take advantage of any service that is made available to them, I think that customer care & satisfaction should be our prime objective, identifying their request(s) and unless circumstances prevent it, their request(s) actioned ASAP. A customer care timetable for dealing with enquiries for each business unit should be set up and adhered to, with home visits a possibility if a query cannot be resolved at the Civic Centre.
- If customers have their enquiries RESOLVED & ACTIONED at the initial point of contact it will save them having to contact us on numerous occasions for the same request and also reduce our own costs. Having an interactive Website where customers can relay their service request without having to contact us by telephone will allow customers more flexibility on when they can contact us.
- A lot of customers feel like they are pushed from one section to the next for similar queries. Whilst I appreciate that more experienced staff members can provide more assistance to the customer, I think we could prevent a lot of minor queries and disruption of other members of staff work by introducing one central unit.
- One stop shop provides consistent and immediate response to 80% of the enquiries potentially
- On the whole I think that providing a more customer friendly atmosphere can't fail. The telephone service could be good after work hours as quite often people cannot ring through the day.
- But only if it carried out and funded properly with correctly trained staff. I am not convinced, however, that all services of the Council do provide a bad service at present.
- "One Stop Shop" benefits as already adopted by many local authorities.
- There needs to be some uniformity in the level of service being given to customers with the CORRECT information instead of being passed onto several extension numbers/people in different departments
- It wouldn't be any worse so it must improve but it is the customer's opinion of this which is important.
- I do not think we have a clear customer focus at present.
- Easier access, less time going from pillar to post, standby system allows people to do their own job through the day, no added time off
- In general terms, I believe that a co-ordinated approach is necessary to ensure continuity and consistency of service is delivered. Additionally with the existing pressure on certain staff to deliver a wide range of initiatives corporate/council priorities sometimes detract from providing adequate responses to customers.
- At the moment customers receive a very different response when contacting different departments. The proposals above would help ensure that customers are dealt with in a consistent and helpful manner.
- Having filled in for a receptionist before, there is nothing worse than receiving angry customers who have been passed from pillar to post.

Not a better service (20)

- In an ideal world this would be a fantastic state of the art service bringing all services together, BUT as a whole, CCC have more fingers in more pies that I really think it will be an impossible task reducing the quality of information given out. The keepers direct the public to the various department/Officers which in my opinion works.
- I strongly believe that users of my teams services want to contact an 'expert' so that their query etc can be addressed by the right person straight away I have numerous eg's when users ring and are most grateful that they have got through immediately to somebody who can answer all their questions straight away and that they do not have to wait, be put through to somebody else or wait for somebody to ring them back/look up the answer/ask someone else etc We all know how frustrated we get

dealing with call centres in our personal lives, I am not convinced that what is proposed would be any better What is the point of an out of hours phone service if there is no out of hours service?

- It will be very difficult for staff to be able to keep up to date with new regulations and it is expecting a lot for staff to be expected to have a working knowledge of all the different services the Council provide. If counter staff who at present can answer questions on specific area of work are no longer able to do this it will impact badly on staff who at present are doing paper work rather than answering queries.
- I do not think a Central Call Centre can deal with all the different Services carried out by the Council.
- I don't believe you can keep the same level of customer care if the idea is to make all reception staff answer all queries. If the idea is that staff will still answer queries on their existing specialist area just all the reception staff will be together then I believe it will work. If they are expected to answer basic questions on everything then customer service will be worse than it currently is.
- There is absolutely no corporate working in the authority – the restructure has done nothing for morale and has probably seen levels of morale fall. The empire building that the restructure was supposed to address is still there and is in all honesty probably far worse with 13 empires being created, rather than the 5 departments we used to have. This customer care department being a prime example. Simply by creating a central point for dealing with queries will not improve the situation if staff aren't happy. The restructure has simply shuffled the pack.
- People will be speaking to customer service teams who know a little of a wide variety of topics. Not in depth answers to their queries that they obtain now.
- I don't think the customers enjoy a poor service at present and the expense involved in the creation of the above, bot the physical environment and increased salaries, is unjustified.
- Can't really answer yes or no as some recommendations could work and others not. Although the idea of a central contact centre is favourable, realistically I don't understand how it could work. Staff who work on this centre would need to have such a broad and complex range of knowledge to know who to pass customers queries on to, let alone actually deal with the queries themselves. To revert back to a central telephone service would also revert back to the old problems i.e. time for calls to be answered, calls passed on to wrong people, or unanswered calls passed on to other extensions in the same department just to get a response. Direct lines have improved customer contact immensely and if an answer machine takes the call another number is always provided as an option
- No, because the council has a policy of staffing its reception areas with junior/lower graded staff who don't always have the experience which will be required to achieve the councils aims - because they are paid the lowest salaries historically, this can cause resentment and therefore cultivate a culture of non motivation regarding customer care. (Dealing with the public can be very harrowing day after day)
- Because it will be too stressful for the people that have to work on reception as it will be hard for them to know everything about the city council and will therefore only have basic knowledge of the council rather than extensive knowledge of a particular council service
- Because you would need a very wide knowledge of the council and all its facilities
- Customers at present can access the person they want to talk to. They do not want to have to explain their query twice and a one stop shop, so to speak, would only work if whoever manning it knew everything about all departments and could answer all. Otherwise it means passing customers on, much the same as happens now.
- Not dealing with the same person all the time
- I don't think there will be one person who will have enough knowledge of the whole council to deal effectively with all the queries that come in. The range of information that will be required is too much for a central desk.
- Customers currently attend the Civic Centre and are directed to the appropriate department from within which the appropriate officer (more often than not) is able to give a full answer to their question. Officers with the necessary detailed expertise would still be located throughout the building regardless of the consolidation of 'reception' areas.
- The service will become too centralised and essential support staff removed from units to enable someone to empire build and not really provide customer service
- Enquiries are dealt with more efficiently and effectively if the appropriate staff are contacted at first, where possible.
- I think people prefer to have enquiries answered by the contact they know to be the person who will action a response. i think the one stop shop takes away the feeling of getting a personal response. We might as well have a 'hole in the wall' which

dispenses pre recorded answer to typical questions. It is my view that 'centralisation' is not a good idea.

- Call centres are impersonal, they may work when dealing with one line of work, but not multi-task agencies such as city council. First point of contact may deal with standard questions of a non technical nature, but enquiries on technical or specific matters. e.g..tree maintenance or grass cutting will only be able to be answered by staff from parks and countryside. One main enquiry area on ground floor, but further area on 7th floor for technical enquiries ...planning, leisure, env health. Presume public can still ring extensions direct??? What about a-z of services to public so they can ring specific service they want...will that go??? Have admin staff been involved and consulted, what do they think of idea??

Other comments (2)

- I think that Customer Care in the building does need looked at but I'm not sure that a one stop Customer point is the answer. Individual departments have built up a good knowledge and to give that to someone unknowlegable will not serve customers as well
- It will be better if it works, however, I believe it will add to staff feeling more stressed.

Q5: *Are there any other recommendations that you feel would improve the current customer contact service? (48)*

- Pursuing shared facilities with other service providers
- Bring all receptions to the same physical standards. Provide uniforms for all reception staff. Provide a policy for all receptions to stick to.
- The new section to monitor other department responses, for example, if they direct someone to a member of staff and are then turned away it will be the new customer care section that will receive a bad reputation rather than the department concerned. If you wish to deliver good customer care then we all have to work together to achieve it not just one department!
- Ensure that every member of staff within the City Council undergoes customer care training
- A uniform may give the impression of being more professional and more capable of dealing with the customers enquiry.
- I do think that more focus should be put on Customer Care and training staff in this.
- All City Council Services enquiries be dealt with centrally. Customers services should be of the same standard throughout the City Council whatever the service.
- That the customer care culture should be enforced in some way with those staff who are rude and unhelpful to customers being trained or redeployed. That back office staff should be rotated onto reception desks to enable them to get back in touch with what they are doing and who they are doing it for. Some kind of reciprocal thing so that customers are also aware of what we expect of them, i.e. that they should not be abusive or violent towards staff. Less separation between work of back office and front office, we should all be working towards same goal.
- A more user friendly printed telephone book!-something that could be done immediately What are partner access channels? (point 10) Why can't we speak in plain English? Getting rid of voice mail as you don't know if the person is away temporarily or on leave for a month! Users should always be able to speak to a real person A separate unit for initial contact is a good idea but the staff on that unit should be competent and knowledgeable enough to pass the user through to somebody who can deal with the query
- Departments should talk to each other and not assume they know about another service thus giving wrong information to customers. This then reflects badly on the department who has to contact that customer with the correct information as we're deemed to be one service.
- General employee attitude
- Much more communication between different departments on changes to procedures etc.
- Keep the customer contact staff's existing specialist areas.
- Regular Customer Contact training, not just those in contact with the public. Internal services have customers too and it can be easy to forget this.
- This may be a bit radical, but have things like cashiers been looked at. To me, it appears that most visitors to the Civic are here to pay bills, would it not be more customer friendly if they could pay them at Post Offices, banks etc. Who knows, it may even be cheaper (no doubt its probably been looked at with Housing going, car parks moving to works – sorry cats. Aren't Capita looking

to set up some sort of housing benefits service? How many actual visitors to the civic are we talking about (to me it looks like a few planning/building control enquiries, personnel (which is basically handing a form out). It also looks like this council is determined to externalise every service we provide further reducing the number of visitors we will have.

- How about having them in a uniform, similar to other organisations who have been working in customer services for years. Whilst it doesn't necessarily mean that they give a better service they certainly do look more professional than we do currently.
- Investigate the development of "appointment periods" so that receptionists could inform customers that a specialist enquiry can be dealt with at a given time and date rather than having to arrange for an officer to contact the customer to establish a suitable appointment.
- Uniforms for staff manning reception areas (or staff in general - sometimes it can be hard at first glance who works here and who is just visiting.
- Customer care and contact training should be part of the induction procedure for new employees to instil in them the importance of the customer to the City Council.
- Better e-mail access
- Assuming there will still be a main reception (or contact centre), it could be refurbished to be more welcoming. The high counter currently used surely doesn't comply with DDA. IT seems to be the way forward for much of this.
- Better training pay and grading
- If back office performance was improved - the volume of customers contacting the council would obviously reduce.
- In my experience of dealings with the public, customers like personal attention and service
- Staff to look as if they are pleased to see customers.
- Perhaps if the current reception were more clear about which departments did what and a current list of people who work here and what they do was available easily then no changes would be needed
- Better facilities for those who have to deal face to face with the public., i.e., interview rooms which have a less council feel taking the lead from the banks perhaps, but of course not spending the publics hard earned cash on luxury.
- I feel that some of the present staff on the desk would benefit from customer care training.
- Immediately apply the bulk of the recommendations to Housing Dept customer contact. I have recent experience of dealing with them and it was particularly poor in my opinion.
- An improved reception area either in the Civic Centre or at a different location, say in the City Centre, would be more customer friendly.
- A decent web presence.
- Recommendation 7 states that the customer care unit will deal with simple queries and transactions. The definition of 'simple' needs clearly defined with the emphasis being on dealing with the majority of all enquiries. Staff on the section should have the relevant skills to be able to resolve queries and be graded accordingly. Things are only 'difficult' when you don't know what you are supposed to do!
- Ask the customers and then act on their wishes.
- Adequate resources for current policies, or prioritised policies or exit strategies from things of a lower political priority and either stop doing them - or find a partner who will!!
- If staff could learn basic information from other departments it may help when trying to transfer customers in the correct direction, which would stop customers getting angry and irritated.
- Training for staff in aspects of customer care recording of telephone calls
- Nothing apart from a more corporate structure but going through a central point first
- I consider that extra means of contact such as such as Internet and an out of hours service will improve customer service
- I feel that the needs of business customers need to be considered as a specific sector. We need to demonstrate joined up

thinking. A one stop service or advocacy role is needed. To some extent the EDU tries to do this now, but it would be better if this was more formalised with the Customer Care Unit. For example, somebody setting up a Bed and Breakfast will need to talk to several officers in different departments, Planning, Environmental Health, Tourism (Marketing), plus Fire Officer, District Valuer. Could we make the route more simple?

- Develop a culture amongst staff, which encourages them to view customers as friends, not nuisances.
- A more person friendly interview room, designed to accommodate more than two people.
- In addition to the recommendations listed above there is a need to ensure that departmental priorities do not override the corporate business of the authority.
- Improved security, one point of entry, 2 reception areas, CCTV on every floor. A knowledge of what everybody does for staff in new section
- Customer contact training for staff.
- No *4

Q6: *Are there any aspects of the customer contact service that you feel have been overlooked by the review team? (41)*

- Staffing issues - but I'm sure these will be addressed in the final report.
- Sharing services and facilities with other similar organisations
- I do feel that for example an out of hours telephone service is taking customer care a little too far, the public realise that the Council employees have to go home at times.
- Staff training/knowledge that would be required to do the job successfully.
- If Officers are requested to be seen by the Member of the public, having to travel to the ground floor will take them away from their desks for a longer period of time, instead of as is now being able to see the public quickly and without time consuming trips in the lift. Also files, paper work on that person will be to hand rather than return lift/stair journeys to get further information
- That all services the City Council's provides be dealt with centrally!! So that the level of service can be dealt with effectively and efficiently and maintain a high standard of customer care to members of the public!!!
- The level of service provided by 'back office'. If this service is poor it is going to be demoralising and frustrating for both staff and customers that after all their efforts the way work is done is still the same. Not much point in putting a pretty face on the same poor service.
- I assume that full access will be available for those users who have hearing/visual difficulties, there is no mention specifically of how this will be achieved
- In most cases the Receptionist provides the first contact between customer and organisation. Therefore, how that initial contact is handled often reflects on how the organisation is viewed by the customer. This often results in people being giving the impression that we are not a very professional organisation and that we are often seen to be lacking in knowledge. This is not the case, it is more likely to be lack of communication between different departments/individuals which is the cause.
- Staff attitude and local government/public sector culture. We need to ensure customer is 'king' and adopt a private sector attitude to our customers.
- Payments – whilst customer contact/care is obviously extremely important, I don't think it needs the creation of a new empire to resolve the issues. It needs a one stop shop on the ground floor – staffed by existing receptionists with good general knowledge of the authority, backed up with training. If this was going to be too costly, then simply by extending say the 7th floor reception and closing all others, customer contact could be improved. The present arrangements at personnel (where you have to wander round the back of the lifts) and leisure where you have a choice of 5 bells are totally ridiculous and could be addressed immediately at no additional cost.
- This questionnaire is a waste of time - to fill in I would need to print it out read the questions - defeating the object - I hope this is not a sample of high level service.
- It is hard to say, but please ensure that you spend enough time training the 'front line' staff as experience has shown me that if you don't, you will suffer for it further down the line. I would add that it is vital that this team is staffed sufficiently and that you do not have to beg, steal and borrow from other teams all the time. If you are trying to make staff take ownership of this change,

you cannot expect staff from other teams to assist every time someone phones in sick or when a team leader allows too many staff off at the same time.

- I think the review team have failed to talk and listen to staff involved in day to day contact with the customers at present.
- What is the cost going to be to supply this all singing all dancing customer contact service ? I feel that if the customers have to speak to a person then the message has to be passed on to the actual person, then that person has to contact the customer, then that is very time consuming
- Could the following be clarified. It is intended that the central physical contact centre will deal with the majority of enquiries, however it is not clear how and where those enquiries that require individual, personal and technical consideration will be dealt with by the relevant officers. Will there be meeting rooms located elsewhere in the building, or only on the ground floor? If the latter, officers may, in dealing with a specific enquiry, have to travel up and down the building in order to provide the satisfactory level of service that the public expects. The above is not intended to be a negative view but it is, I feel, an area that requires clarification.
- Just a minor point - when telephoning the Civic Centre and having been put on "hold" the caller doesn't have anything to listen to and could think they have been "cut off". Could some kind of pre-recorded message about Council events be put on so at least there is something of interest to listen to whilst waiting to go through to the correct person.
- The majority of staff taking calls from the public also do admin support work. The units would lose this support if they were removed. This would then not save any money.
- If a Central Contact Centre was established, would this mean that staff would attend customers at this point? If so, where would discussions take place, will there be meeting rooms set aside, how will the officer know what paperwork to take with them to assist the customer etc? - or is it to be used as a meeting point, and therefore do they take the customers back up to their offices?
- The reality of the job! It is demanding often thankless and you often have to deal with the less pleasant spectrum of society !
- The effects on staff - who, on a particular existing customer service reception point, are already stressed by bureaucracy and procedures and basic communication at present can be difficult. I have been unable to find out whether these same staff will be expected to be able to answer queries outwith their own personal knowledge. Personally, I would not be comfortable reading from a 'script', as may be an option I believe, if I had no background in the area pertaining to the question posed. If we are not to operate a signposting service what is the alternative -- the whole consultation with staff is very vague
- How about suggestion slips and a box for customers to say how they rate they way they were treated.
- Not aware of any
- Perhaps the need for Saturday morning services
- I believe not all receptions can be integrated because of confidentiality factors. e.g Personnel
- Physical practicality of having qualified staff on hand to deal with "in person" queries at a central reception?
- Yes - the services not empire building
- Having one area for physical contact i.e. meeting people if professional staff are needed to respond to customers and files/resources are needed in the office what potential cost is their to the Council for providing this level of service? It is easier with scattered reception areas to get information required especially when the customer isn't entirely sure about what they want.
- For many enquiries, receptionists do not have the knowledge or information to answer questions.
- Yes...the distinction between admin and technical enquiries and how to deal with the latter. Need min of 2 reception areas.
- No. it seems to have been a thorough review, but recommendation 1 refers to consideration of a separate Unit, when recommendation 7 suggests it's already agreed.
- No, a lot of hard work has been carried out.
- No *9

Key Area	Suggested Improvements	Status

Telephonists	An appropriate and consistent greeting be agreed for the telephonists on the main switchboard	Complete
Lighting	Ambient light levels in the foyer area are to be maintained. Regular checks are now made to ensure all lighting is checked on a regular basis and replaced when faulty	Complete
Toilets	New signage has been ordered. Physical improvements have been completed – new floor, décor and equipment fitted. Regular inspections have been implemented.	Complete
Meeting and Greeting	Keepers to be reminded to proactively assist any customers who might appear to need assistance in the foyer area.	To be arranged
Cash Hall	Provision of a facility to deposit cheques when the Cash Hall is closed	Complete
Display Area	The Communications Unit have agreed to manage and police the existing display area until any new arrangements are put into place	Complete
Committee Room Signposting	Provision of an alternative to the current method of displaying in the foyer which committees are meeting in which room	Under investigation
Listening to Customers	Comment and suggestion sheets to be provided in the foyer area. Web comments to be directed to a member of the Best Value Review Team.	To be arranged
Customer Service Manager	There is a gap in the current customer service in that no one person has been allocated overall responsibility. A member of the Best Value Review Team to co-ordinate existing customer contact activities until a full time Customer Service Manager is appointed.	Complete
Multi-lingual capability	Subscription to foreign language translation service to enable responses to be made in over forty languages.	Under investigation
Web Access to services	General e-mail to be temporarily set up on the web site as a catchall for any Council Service – directed to a member of the Best Value Review Team	To be arranged

Customer Contact Best Value Review

Final Report

Contents

Page
1 Introduction
2 Key findings
4 Key recommendations
6 Organisational implications
9 Cost and budget implications
11 Action plan
14 Conclusion
Appendices

A Proposed customer contact model

B Proposed customer contact policy

C Action Plan

D Service Migration Plan

E Electronic Evidence File

E – 1 Scoping panels agendas, minutes & reports

E – 2 Review team agendas and minutes

E – 3 Challenge – Officer Sessions

E – 4 Challenge – ISB5 Documents

E – 5 Communications & Correspondence

E – 6 Consultation

E – 7 Customer Contact Centre

E – 8 Customer Contact Consultation

E – 9 External Review

E – 10 Overview & Scrutiny Minutes etc

E – 11 Partners

E – 12 Project Plan

Introduction

This report presents the work of the best value review on customer contact within the Authority. Commissioned as one of the Council's first thematic reviews, this review was given the brief of examining all aspects of customer contact within the Council.

The scope of the review was:-

- (i) To provide a framework for the current and future provision of customer contact and care within the Authority.
- (ii) To conduct a review that is customer focused.
- (iii) To ensure any resulting changes in customer contact will result in customer satisfaction moving into the upper quartile.
- (iv) To ensure any resulting changes in customer contact will result in the Council fulfilling the requirement to comply with BV1157 (% of interactions with the public which are capable of electronic service delivery) moving towards 100% by 2005.
- (v) To result in a more effective and efficient regime of customer contact that will deliver to clients a high quality and easy to access interface to Council services that meet their needs.
- (vi) To result in a regime more closely related to a client's needs such as life event driven rather than related to the Council's organisation.
- (vii) To result in a higher overall level of customer care than that which is currently enjoyed.
- (viii) To produce a more resource efficient customer contact service.

The report details its findings, makes recommendations and then goes on to suggest a new customer contact model that will meet the requirements laid out by the scoping panel. In addition an Action Plan is produced to achieve these changes and a new corporate customer contact policy for the Authority is presented.

The evidence supporting the findings of the review has been electronically collated and is available separately in an electronic form.

Key Findings

The review team consulted extensively about the current customer contact service. The following points represent the general state of the service.

- 1) Whilst there are some examples of good practice, in general the Council's customer service is being delivered in an uncoordinated manner, to different levels and standards.
- 2) There is no one officer or section charged with the overall management and delivery of customer service, which leads to duplication and disparity in the service.
- 3) There is no standard customer care policy operating within the Authority.
- 4) A customer care culture does not exist within the Council.
- 5) The customer service is very much structured on the internal organisation of the Council, which can make it difficult and confusing for customers to find the service they want.
- 6) Customer service standards are different for different services.
- 7) Key management information about the overall service is not being collected. Data on costs, customers' needs and requirements are only being addressed on a service-by-service level.
- 8) The main telephone switchboard acts as the central telephone contact point for customers, a function for which it hasn't been designed.
- 9) Training in customer services is available but is unevenly applied and very rarely beyond the level of receptionist.
- 10) The use of modern electronic systems to manage the customer relationship is practically non-existent and is certainly not deployed in an integrated corporate manner.
- 11) In general, no service improvement plans directly aimed at customer service exist.
- 12) The use of the internet for service delivery is at a nascent stage, with the Council falling behind others in this area. Where it is being utilised, its use is characterised by a silo – or non corporate approach – probably borne out of frustration at the lack of progress at the centre.
- 13) As currently constituted it will be difficult for the Council to present their services in a joined up manner, which is a fundamental requirement of the Government's 2005 e-government target.
- 14) Consultation, development and delivery of customer service take place on a service-by-service basis.
- 15) There is a lack of recognition of customer contact as a separate discipline. Managers and staff tend to accommodate this particular function as an extension of their normal duties rather than as a separate role.
- 16) There is no ownership at the senior management level on the subject of customer contact.
- 17) Performance is not being measured in a consistent manner – a necessary pre-requisite to improving any service.
- 18) No evidence has been found of any meaningful external partnership working in the area of Customer Contact.
- 19) Despite the limitations of the organisation of customer service within the Authority, there is strong evidence of the willingness of staff and management at all levels to provide a high level of customer service even whilst hampered by the current framework through which it is currently delivered.
- 20) In overall terms, whilst there are failings in the service and improvements that could be made, the service does tend to deliver at a basic level.

Key Recommendations

To address the findings detailed above, the following improvements are recommended for implementation.

1. That a separate unit be created to deal exclusively with all aspects of customer contact within the Authority, particularly performance, presentation, costs and delivery.
2. That the customer contact model detailed in Appendix A be used as the basis for this.
3. That the resources for setting up this unit be found by transferring them from existing business units.
4. That this unit manages the service via service level agreements with other units - and manages and operates a service improvement plan on behalf of the Authority.
5. That this unit standardises the customer contact service across all services.
6. That a central contact point be created and promoted for customer service requests and that all other contact points be channelled through this central point.
7. That a council wide customer care culture be introduced.
8. That senior management take ownership of customer contact by requiring the customer services manager to be consulted on any new initiatives and requiring s/he report quarterly to their management team.
9. That information systems be procured to handle and deal with customer contact on a corporate basis.
10. That the customer care unit works with service departments and the Communications Unit to develop the concept of electronic service delivery.
11. That the customer contact policy detailed in Appendix B be adopted for general use throughout the Council.
12. That mutual delivery of services takes place, after agreement with partners, via the concept of Partner Access Channels (PAC) that is detailed elsewhere in this report.
13. That an out of hour's service be developed and delivered by an external provider selected through the normal tendering process.
14. Whilst the planning and delivery of the recommendations are being carried out, that the Customer Service Manager assumes immediate control of all aspects of the current customer contact service.
15. That these recommendations apply to all Council Services with the following variations:-
 - i. Leisuretime - that the Customer Relations Method Statement accepted as part of the bid from CLL be implemented as the method of ensuring good customer contact within the services and that, where appropriate, ways of co-operating with other parts of the Council to ensure best practice in customer care be developed.
 - ii. Housing – be exempted due to LSVT and be noted that Carlisle Housing Association will vacate the Civic Centre within fifteen months but that they be invited to participate in the Partner Access Channel programme.
 - iii. Carlisle Works – their service desk continue in operation but be subject to a number of restrictions approved by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee. Recommendation 12 should form part of their service.
 - iv. Tullie House – be exempted but to be involved, and be a senior partner, in the development of the Partner Access Channel concept. Recommendation 12 should form part of their service.
 - v. Tourist Information Centres – be exempted but to be involved, and be a senior partner, in the development of the Partner Access Channel concept. Recommendation 12 should form part of their service.
 - vi. The Enterprise Centre - be exempted as this service primarily addresses the business sector rather than the citizen - but be part of the Partner Access Channel. Recommendation 12 should form part of their service.
 - vii. The Brampton Business and Telecentre - be exempted pending further discussions with the Centre Manager - but be part of the Partner access Channel. Recommendation 12 should form part of their service.
 - viii. The out of hours emergency response facility be managed by the Customer Services Team.
 - ix. The possibility of running the Shopmobility service from, and integrated with, the Customer Contact Centre should be investigated.

Organisation Implications

There are five main organisational implications arising from the recommendations:-

1. The interim solution

This comprises of the Customer Services Manager, after agreement of the Unit Managers about working arrangements, assuming responsibility for all existing reception services and customer contact points prior to the implementation of the review's recommendations. This would result in elements of Departments and Units service being controlled and delivered by someone outside of their control. It would also mean members of their staff would be directed by someone who is not their line manager. These day-to-day issues are surmountable but it is a new method of working for the Council. There are significant advantages to this recommendation though:-

- a. It helps the Customer Service Manager understand the business and leads to a smoother transition when the final

recommendations are implemented

- b. It helps staff understand their changing role against a background of which they're familiar
- c. This method and style of working is likely to become more common in other areas as traditional barriers are broken down as the implications of the Council's organisational review are felt i.e. everyone to work as part of the Council rather than for a Unit or Department.

2. The creation of a new unit within the Authority

These recommendations will result in the creation of a new unit of significant size within the Authority. The unit will, using the current estimates, comprise of some 16 staff, rising to 25 if council tax and benefits are included. With cashiers the number rises to 32.

Elements of the unit will be formed by staff transferred to the Customer and Information Services unit as part of the organisational review. However, the balance of the unit will be staffed with posts transferred from other business units that have a large degree of exposure to customer contact. Some 12 staff will need to be transferred from these other business units. Depending on the underlying nature of their business the managers of each of the new twelve business units will need to transfer between 0 to 3 staff.

On the basis:-

- 1. the Customer Contact Centre will be performing some back office functions
- 2. the organisational review has consolidated units which should produce some efficiencies

it should be possible to find the staff resource to transfer to the new Customer Contact Centre

To a large extent, the implications arising here are anticipated and allowed for within the current organisational review. What will be needed is delicate negotiation between the service manager, customer service manager and staff concerned to ensure a smooth transition to the new structure.

1. The creation of a central contact point for all service enquiries

The recommendations will result in all initial enquiries to the Council being routed through one single point of contact in the future. This will be a major cultural change for service departments who value their direct link with customers and feel that direct link is inherent to good service delivery. Service departments need to understand that these proposals don't prevent access to customers but manages the contact process on their behalf. However, to be clear, for this proposal to work it must be understood that all initial contact with the customer will be through the new customer contact unit. One implication of this is that all contact details for Carlisle services will be those of the new Contact Centre.

2. Service delivery moving from service departments to the new unit

Currently all services are delivered by the Departments directly responsible for that service. Under the new scheme Departments would have to let another unit deal with those transactions which are routine in nature and have predictable outcomes. This will require a major cultural change for service departments within the Authority who may perceive this change as a loss of control over some part of their service. However, it should be viewed as an opportunity for improving their service with this as way of releasing staff to concentrate on their core business and the non-routine (and perhaps more interesting?) aspects of the service. In many cases this degree of change will mean the customer contact staff will form part of departmental business processes even to the extent of accessing and updating information systems.

3. Partnership Access Channels

The recommendations will lead to the creation of a new concept called partner access channels (PAC's). Following agreement, this is a mechanism to be put in place where the Council will be in a position to provide information about, and in some advanced partnerships, deliver services on behalf of partners. The organisational implication arising from this is that partners who are part of the scheme will, in turn, be placed in a position to deliver services on behalf of the Council.

Cost and budget implications

The costs of implementing the recommendations outlined above may be broken down into four elements:- staff, building, IT and Supplies and needs to be split into capital and revenue costs. The budget implication will arise when the nett figures are considered. To arrive at the budget figures a detailed analysis of transactions for the current services has been carried out. However, whilst confident of the figures shown, these must still be considered provisional and subject to confirmation

1) Staff

Considerable work has been undertaken to estimate the resources required to deal with the number of transactions likely to be routed through the a new customer contact centre. It is estimated that 16 staff would be required to run a centre that did not deal with Council Tax and Benefits, at a total cost of £323k. But this would include the existing telephonist section and elements of the existing keeper section. Including the Benefits and Council Tax service would increase this number to 25 staff at a cost of £488k. Relocating other staff or parts of their posts, from existing units would find a large proportion of these costs.

The net cost to the Authority would depend on how successful this transfer is and would be the subject to delicate negotiations between the existing managers and the new customer services manager. The process has already commenced with a view to confirming figures but it is safe to assume that there will be some shortfall in staff transfer and for budget purposes it is assumed that three posts would need to be created at a cost of £60k. This figure could rise or fall depending upon the successful outcome of negotiations with unit managers.

For the purposes of Benefits and Council Tax, it is assumed that these sections are adequately staffed and if they transfer to the new unit there would be no impact on the net figures quoted

2) Building

Based on the assumption that the customer centre would be located in the Civic Centre, the Building Manager has produced very rough estimates of the costs needed for re-modelling and fitting out the foyer area. If these particular proposals were accepted, then for budget purposes a capital sum of £660k would be required. This is a reduction on the first estimates and has come about by deleting the recommendation that staff and deliveries should use the Lowther Street entrance.

A formal fully costed proposal for the Customer Contact Centre has been commissioned but this will take two months to complete. It is though that the final figure will be lower than that shown.

A notional £10k revenue cost would need to be set aside as a Repair and Renewal contribution towards replacing what will become a showcase for the Councils' services.

3) IT

A large part of the work of the customer centre will be underpinned by technology and information systems. Many of these are details are contained in the Council's IEG statement. The capital costs for this, including hardware, will total in excess of £120,000 but will be funded entirely from IEG monies.

There will be a revenue budget required to deal with the on-going costs of the IT investment – typically 15% - or £18k p.a.

4) Supplies & Services

There will be costs in providing equipment and supplies to the new unit and costs associated with the running of the unit. These are typically grouped together under the general heading "Supplies and Services". Start-up costs should be set at £60k with an annual revenue cost estimated at £30,000. It may be possible to transfer some of these costs from existing budget holder when staff transfer ("staff dowries") but these are only likely to be nominal amounts – allow 15k.

The following table summarises the information detailed above:-

	Capital	Revenue (= Future Base budget)	Net Capital	Net Annual Revenue
Staff	0k	323k	0k	60k
Building	825k	10k	825k	10k
IT	120k	18k	0k	18k
Supplies & Services	60k	30k	60k	15k

In summary, the total revenue budget for the new service unit would be £381k , with a capital sum of £660k needed to set the unit up. The net costs to the Council would require an increase in the revenue budget of £103k per year.

Action Plan

During the course of the review 5 key areas were identified which, if addressed, would improve the overall service.

These areas were:-

1. Environment
2. Ownership
3. Performance Management
4. Communication
5. Organisation
 - i. Central point of contact
 - ii. Silo working
 - iii. Links to partner organisations
 - iv. Corporate Approach
 - v. Customer orientation
 - vi. Customer Care Culture

Individual issues were identified in each of these areas and actions were identified to resolve and improve them. Appendix C-1 tabulates actions in each of these key areas. These run to a total of some 87 recommendations, each being assigned a target end date and lead unit to be responsible for taking the action forward.

Appendix C-2 lists the actions by date and forms the basis for the action plan. The actions fall into one of six general phases around which the review recommendations are centred: These are:-

- a) Set up the Customer Services Unit - Dec 02
- b) Commence Voice and Electronic Service – Apr 03
- c) Arrange the out of hours service – Jun 03
- d) Set up mail contact service – Jul 03
- e) Commence face to face service - Aug 03
- f) Initial partnership working – Jan 04

These broad phases are overlaid with a migration plan for individual services to migrate to the Customer Contact Centre that is detailed below.

Appendix C-3 lists the actions by unit taking the lead responsibility for implementation. Due to the stage currently reached in the organisational review it has not been possible to have these actions and agreed by the relevant unit managers. However, the actions fall within the specified unit's core competencies.

Phased implementation for migrating services

The project team are recommending that a phased implementation for moving services to the customer contact centre take place. They have identified 13 different phases for transferring other services' customer contact operations into the new customer contact centre. These different phases and the rationale behind them are shown in Appendix D.

The physical setting up of the customer contact channels, implementation of the action plan recommendations and the phased transfer of customer services all running alongside each other will present a challenge in terms of timing and scheduling. Effective project management will be required to ensure that the programme keeps on track. Therefore the project team are recommending that a full time project manager be designated to manage the process to ensure its success.

Conclusion

The current customer service within the Authority is in urgent need of improvement. It is not possible to modify the current service to a point where a significant improvement in customer service would be noticed. A more fundamental approach is needed to obtain measurable results.

By adopting the recommendations in this report, a radically altered service will be implemented which will deliver the customer service improvements required and demonstrate the Council is seen as improving and modernising. More importantly, the Council will have produced a valuable asset, a customer contact centre, which other services and partners will be able to draw upon in the future.

Thanks

The following members of the review team are thanked for their valuable input and time given up during the course of the review.

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Sharon McKee Mark Whitworth

Lynne Wild – Consultation & Research

Thanks are also extended to the large number of people, both internal and external, who have contributed by way of consultation during the course of the review.

Customer Contact - Model for Carlisle City

The Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee have approved the overall shape of the new customer contact service within the Authority. This paper outlines in more detail the new model for dealing with customers who contact the Authority for a variety of services, advice and transactions

Recommendations:-

1. That a separate unit be established to manage and operate all initial contacts with the general public
2. That a central physical contact centre be established by consolidating existing reception centres within the Civic Centre
3. That a central telephone service be developed to deal with all telephoned customers service requests
4. That a new access channel be developed to include e-mail and web access
5. That, whatever the channel utilised by a customer, they always receive the same high level of service
6. That a corporate wide customer care culture be established
7. That partner access channels be established
8. That the customer service methodologies, tools and services be available to back office staff
9. That the service, although managed and operated by a customer service manager, should operate under service level agreements with the back office.

The Vision

It will be possible for any Citizen, within or without the Authority:-

- o to make contact using any access method of their choice
- o to make contact at any time of their choice
- o to have their request satisfied at the first asking or have definite information about when and how they might expect the Council to act.

To achieve this the Council will operate a single point of contact for all services and enquiries, delivered to the same high level of service, managed and operated as a single entity.

It will brand and actively promote the service it delivers as Carlisle Direct – a working title subject to confirmation. Carlisle Direct will be the primary contact point for requesting services and contacting the Authority.

To deliver this vision the Council will set up a Customer Contact Centre – a central customer service facility located in the Civic Centre (subject to confirmation) to provide:-

- a central reception service
- a telephone contact service
- an automated electronic contact service
- a mail handling service
- an out of hours service
- a multi channel cash receipting facility.

In addition, Carlisle Direct's role will:-

- Include being tasked not only with the initial customer contact but with delivering those elements of a service which can be dealt with immediately
- Encompass certain elements of what is traditionally recognised as the "back office"
- Have the ultimate long term aim of responding to 80% of all customer contact enquiries directly – though it is recognised this depends on the nature of the service being requested.

Carlisle Direct's role would not deal with professional contacts, scheduled appointments or expert queries where the team would solely act as a signposting service.

The Council will run a partnership programme with the customer contact services of other external organisations to enable them to access a subset of Council services and allow the Council to provide a similar service to the partners' customers.

Eventually all Council services will be accessed through Carlisle Direct, replacing all existing reception services as the programme is rolled out. The only variations to this process will be Tullie House, the Sands Centre (prior to externalisation) and Tourist Information Centres. Due to their different client base and in recognition of their existing high quality customer service these centres will carry on as before. However, they will be expected to become senior partners in the partnership programme providing a range and depth of Council services to the point where they could be described as mini-Council Centres. Similarly, in a move to bring these service cultures together, the Customer Contact Centre will be geared up to provide a range of senior partner services.

[Statement regarding operation of Carlisle Works Operational Centre to be inserted here]

Supporting the Vision

Underpinning the customer contact service will be a series of Information, Computer and Telephone (ICT) systems. These will cover the following functional areas:-

1. Knowledge database of services and frequent service requests
2. Call tracking and management system (CRM)
3. Voice call handling system
4. Visitor queuing system
5. Middleware to connect to back office systems
6. Automated processing of service requests
7. Scanning and video conferencing technologies.

These systems will go much of the way to satisfying the Government's requirement on the Authority of ensuring that all transactions with the public are capable of being delivered electronically by 2005.

The Benefits

Improved access to service

It won't be necessary for any customer to understand the structure of the Council to access the service they require.

A new electronic service channel will be introduced.

The hours during which customers may contact the Council will be more suited to them.

Improved levels of service

The customer will always be given information about how their service request will be taken forward at the first point of contact.

Resources may be switched within the Customer Contact Centre to meet peak and unexpected demand.

It will be possible to offer services that are linked together at the same point of contact.

Improved quality of service

Customers will have their requests dealt with to a consistent standard.

The service will be subject to a continuous improvement regime and will aim to achieve a nationally recognised service qualification.

Improved management of service

Meaningful management information becomes available about our client base and the nature and volumes of the services they request. This will help in the planning and directing of the Council resources in the future.

There will be an identified officer who has responsibility for the overall customer contact service within the Authority.

Back office experts

Whilst most of the business arising from customer contacts will be dealt with by the Customer Contact Centre staff there will always be a need for senior and more experienced staff to deal with those queries that are specialised, more difficult or non-routine in nature. These may form a large number at first but the aim is to reduce these to 20% of service calls. To cater for these non-standard enquiries, the specialist staff will need to be available to augment the customer service staff. In other customer contact centres this is achieved by the permanent secondment of staff on a rotational basis to the unit where transaction volumes are high or a standby rota system where such transactions are lower. The obvious gain here for service managers is that they relieve their skilled staff from routine customer service tasks to allow them to concentrate on mainstream back office activities.

Resourcing Carlisle Direct

The revenues and capital budget considerations are still being assessed.

The set-up cost should include a project officer required to help during the implementation.

No new function is being undertaken by the creation of the customer service team and so there should not be any extra cost. The same work is being carried out but in another Unit. A large section of the customer service team will be resourced by reallocating the resources from where the function is currently performed to the new unit. In those cases where there is an identifiable member of staff associated with an existing customer contact function they will be transferred to Carlisle Direct.

However, the best value review team is aware that the people carrying out customer contact duties within Units at the moment are also carrying out other duties which will still need to be performed after the transfer. To avoid a complicated process of job evaluation Managers for the new Business Units will be expected to release staff to the new customer contact centre and reorganise accordingly. It is thought this will be possible because:-

- i. consolidation of business units after the organisational review will produce efficiency gains
- ii. the customer contact centre will take over customer contact on behalf of unit's and hence reduce some of their responsibilities

Audit has been asked to conduct a transaction analysis of those budgets associated with customer contact with a view to re-allocating these to the new unit.

Each service will have to be approached individually to establish how much of their front end service will transfer. It will make more sense if this process is carried out with the new Heads of Service following the organisational review.

The Council will be expected to invest a significant capital amount in the creation of the Customer Contact Centre.

A large proportion of the technology aspect of Carlisle Direct will be funded through year one IEG money.

The servicing of customer contact from within one specialised unit will produce economies of scale that will make up any overall resource shortfall.

New resources have already been found by the Council to support improved customer contact. A significant investment has been made by the Authority in a call handling system and the Council has agreed to create the new post of Web Designer. It's interesting to note that investment in customer services need not necessarily be made directly in the Customer Contact Centre. It's a sign of the changing culture of the Council that investment made in one part of the Authority is now considered to be made available for use elsewhere.

Migration towards Carlisle Direct

There will be a phased roll out with the main operational services moving over their customer service elements as part of the detailed implementation plan arising from the Best Value Review.

The phasing should also apply to the access channels. The order of implementation here would be face to face, electronic, telephone and then mail.

The relationship between the back office and Carlisle Direct

There will be a normal and natural reluctance at first for service managers to release the front office element of their service. This is especially true when coupled with some resource (budget and staff) transfer.

However, Unit managers are urged to look at the bigger picture. One of the prime objectives of the current organisational review is to break up silo working and facilitate cross service working. The traditional concept of vertical delivery of services must be left behind. Business Units should view the customer contact service as being an extension of their existing service. Importantly, the Review Team has reached the conclusion that for this to happen then Carlisle Direct must be considered to be acting in a contractor role for customer contact on behalf of the other business units of the Authority. In addition, by passing those elements known as "commodity transactions" to the customer contact centre their services will be freed to focus on their core activities.

Attention is drawn to Business Unit managers that for Carlisle Direct to be successful, the front office staff will need access to back office information systems. This will obviously need to be done in a controlled manner but is essential for dealing with routine enquiries. However, the Customer Service Manager is served notice that this access to information systems is bilateral. The Client Business Units will have access to Carlisle Direct's customer contact information systems.

The relationship between Carlisle Direct and the corporate aims and objectives

The new corporate plan has set targets for customer service.

These are awaiting confirmation of the corporate plan by Council.

In general terms the customer service team would seek to strive for continuous improvement in terms of quality of service, volumes of transactions handled and the success of the new electronic access channel.

Because customer contact is controlled through a separate unit there is a danger that the organisation as a whole loses sight of the fact that it exists to service the needs of the customer. This might lead a Business Unit to detach themselves from customers requirements if they no longer need to undertake customer contact. The review team were particularly impressed by the input from external organisations that customer care should be the responsibility of everyone in an organisation – regardless of where the customer contact is delivered. A customer care culture must be introduced throughout the organisation and be included as part of the induction process for new staff.

CARLISLE CITY COUNCIL

CUSTOMER CONTACT POLICY

We Aim To:

- Put customers first.
- Develop equality of opportunity to access services.
- Encourage the involvement of the community and to listen to Carlisle residents in developing services.
- Consult local people about the planning and delivery of services.
- Provide the services that people want and need.
- Make sure our services are delivered by well motivated staff who are well informed and trained.
- To provide a service regardless of the office hours of the Council

Our Staff Will:

- Be polite, helpful and treat you with respect, in return they will expect you to do the same to them.
- Listen carefully in order to understand and respond to your needs.
- Give their name and wear identification.
- Give you an explanation of their actions.
- If necessary, assign your query to an appropriate, named officer who will follow through your query from beginning to end and keep you informed of progress.

When you come to the desk:

- Our reception desks will be easy to access for everyone wherever possible.
- The reception areas will be clean and welcoming and provide information about Council services in a variety of formats.
- The reception desk opening hours will be 09:00 to 17:00.
- The staff will be trained in customer care practices and will have received disability awareness training. A multi-lingual facility will be available.
- They will be competent, well-informed and helpful on the complete range of services the Council provides.
- All customers will be treated equally, regardless of age, race, gender etc.
- Our reception staff will see you promptly and if they cannot deal with your query, they will arrange for you to see someone who can. If this cannot be done immediately, they will make an appointment for you.
- Whenever possible and if requested, staff will move you to a private interview room to discuss your query.
- If you have an appointment, we will give you an explanation if there is more than a 10 minute delay.

When you telephone us:

- We aim to answer your call within 18 seconds.
- If you ask to speak to a specific individual, you will be put through to them.
- If the person answering your call cannot deal with your query, they will put you through to a named person who can.
- If the person you want to speak to is not available, we will log your call and give that person a message to ring you back as soon as possible.
- If you get through to somebody's voicemail, their message will tell you when they are next available and give you an alternative extension to dial.

When you write to us or e-mail us:

- We will register your enquiry and we will aim to respond to it within 10 working days.
- If there is a reason why we cannot respond within 10 days, we will acknowledge your enquiry within five working days of receipt, explaining the delay, and aim to reply in full within 15 days of receipt.
- Our reply will identify the employee who is dealing with your enquiry and give contact details.
- The language in our correspondence will be simple, avoiding the use of jargon and will directly answer the questions asked.

When Council staff visit you at home:

- As far as possible, they will arrange a mutually convenient appointment in advance.
- They will always carry and show you their identification and tell you their name.
- You can ring the Council to check their identification before you invite them in on 01228 817000, should you be concerned.
- They will take a comprehensive note of your query and give you a reference number so you can follow it up easily afterwards. This employee will remain responsible for your query until its conclusion, unless they need to pass it on to a more appropriate person, in which case they will inform you of this and tell you the new name and contact details.
- Our staff will aim to deal with the query you raised at home within 10 working days. If this cannot be done, they will tell you why, either by letter, e-mail if requested or telephone call, within 5 working days.

If you have any complaints:

- You should complain if you think that:-
 - We have failed to do something we should have done
 - We have agreed to do something but haven't
 - We have given a poor service
 - We have treated you unfairly or discourteously.
- We will first try to resolve your complaint informally at the reception facility either in person, by letter, phone or e-mail. The customer service staff will contact the appropriate business unit for you.
- If your complaint cannot be solved this way, the reception staff will give you a complaints form to complete (they can help you do this if you wish). If you complete it at home, no stamp is required to post it back to us. The complaints form is also available from community centres and other City Council buildings.
- When we receive your complaint form, we will register it and send you an acknowledgement within five working days. Your complaint will be investigated by a manager of the business unit concerned and a response will be issued to you within 15 working days of receiving your complaint.
- If you are still not satisfied with the result of your complaint, you should contact the Head of Committee and Administrative Services who will call a Board of Arbitration made up of three City Councillors. They will examine your complaint and discuss it with you. Their decision will be sent to you within 20 working days of your meeting with them.
- If you remain dissatisfied, you can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman. Contact Civic Centre reception and they will send you information on how to go about this.

Contact Information:

Carlisle City Council

Civic Centre

Rickergate

CARLISLE

CA3 8QG

Telephone: 01228 817000

Minicom: 0800 959598

Fax: 01228 817048

E-mail: services@carlisle-city.gov.uk

Website: www.carlisle-city.gov.uk

Appendix A

Action Plan - Master List

Central Issue	Ref-Id	Detail	Measured Output	Comment
Environment	CC-01-ENV-01	External Location Directors	1) Location of Civic Centre to be included on road signs leading into the City. 2) Civic Centre location to be included on finger posts 3) A prominent external sign to be commissioned signifying the location of the Civic Centre.	
	CC-02-ENV-	Toilets	1) Improve SLA to increase frequency of cleaning	

	02		2) Clearer signposting 3) Cosmetic "makeover" 4) Eventual re-location to a better site	
	CC-03-ENV-03	Effective Internal Signposting	1) Employ signs that use graphical/pictorial elements 2) Utilise staff to direct customers 3) Signs to relate to services required rather than Council structure 4) Consistent signposting across all mediums including voice and electronic	
	CC-04-ENV-04	Corporate standardisation of Customer Care	1) Create quality customer care standards for the Authority 2) Arrange standard to be adopted and rolled out corporately 3) Seek to adopt a nationally recognised qualification in the area of customer care	
	CC-05-ENV-05	Display Area	1) Redesign the public area for displaying notices and announcements. 2) New standards for displaying material to be created and implemented – to include all mediums including voice and electronic 3) Controls to be put in place to maintain those standards	
	CC-06-ENV-06	Reception Area	1) Visitors with appointments to see officers are not to be directed unescorted to Departments. 2) 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
	CC-07-ENV-07	Nominated staff	1) Nominated staff to work full time on customer contact as their primary and only function.	Specialist will produce a better service than staff who only do it as part of another job.
	CC-08-ENV-08	Environment beyond Civic	1) Better presentation of services across all mediums including voice and electronic before customers makes contact. 2) A budget to be set aside to promote access to services.	
	CC-09-ENV-09	Staff Facilities	1) Tea/staff room available to customer service staff	Well motivated staff equals a better service
	CC-10-ENV-10	Extended opening hours	1) Market test extended opening hours particularly late night Thursday night opening and Saturday morning.	Foyer services only in order to test demand
	CC-11-ENV-11	Customer Identification	1) A separation in entrance design to distinguish between customer and staff traffic flows 2) Deliveries to be regulated to minimise disruption of drop's, collections and associated storage problems in the main foyer.	The redesign of the foyer will determine what is possible in terms of separation
	CC-12-ENV-12	Porters & Telephonists	1) Porters need to be relocated from main entrance but close enough to provide security function. 2) Telephonists will form part of the customer contact service but station will need relocating	
	CC-13-ENV-	Meeting and Greeting	1)All customers to be acknowledged when making	

	13		contact. Met and greeted at reception points and acknowledged through other access channels.	
	CC-14-ENV-14	Customer contact restricted to ground floor only	1)Customers should be attended to at a main floor reception with officers coming to them if necessary. 2)Eliminate non ground floor reception points.	Expert advice needs to be taken on this point
	CC-15-ENV-15	Customer Contact Location	1) Property Manager to advise on utilising alternative locations for customer contact (Assembly Rooms, "Thrupenny bit" town centre retail premises) or plan to redesign existing reception area.	
	CC-16-ENV-16	Electronic Signposting	1) Replacement of current keepers board and the introduction of an electronic information and messaging board.	
	CC-17-ENV-17	Extend access through electronic access points	1) Use of kiosks, phones and video conferencing	Particularly in the use of phone technology for transactional type queries
	CC-18-ENV-18	Pictorial coding of services	1) Similar idea to that used in train stations and airports:- Blue for Council Tax, Green for Cashiers etc.	
	CC-19-ENV-19	Improve reception area furniture for customers	1) Review and provide suitable tables, chairs, supermarket queuing/ticketing system, pens etc.	
	CC-20-ENV-20	First Hit Enquiries	1)Provide an iterative method to improve the ratio of enquiries that are answered at the first asking 2)Front office staff to be empowered to make decisions on services	Process to commence in APR/03 with the commencement of the voice/electronic service
	CC-21-ENV-21	Utilise existing resources	1) Extend/Incorporate the Careline, CCTV operations and/or other existing resources as part of out of hours customer contact	
	CC-22-ENV-22	New working methods	1) Generic working to become standard practice for customer contact staff 2) Customer contact home working to be trialed to provided out of hours by home workers and test of IC	
	CC-23-ENV-23	Extend opening hours	1) Hours of customer contact voice service to be extended to 24/365.	
	CC-24-ENV-24	Extend electronic access to services	1) Promote electronic access as the primary route to services 2) Services delivered 24x7 through electronic service delivery aimed at meeting Governments 2005 targets.	Strong feeling there must always be the option to make physical contact – but balanced with the growing demand for these services and their cost effectiveness
	CC-25-ENV-25	Cashiers	1) Investigate retail and banking sectors to learn best practice on the physical aspects of receipting cash. 2) Implement any best practice that might be applicable in this area.	Expert advice needs to be sought on this point
	CC-26-ENV-26	Counter Screens	1) Implement different types of staff/customer screen solutions at reception areas.	As above
	CC-27-ENV-27	Joint service provision	1) Utilisation of a physical, open environment, in conjunction with partners and other agencies to deliver services.	Partnership working
	CC-28-ENV-28	Filter desk	1) Establish an early filter desk to fast track some customer requests	Some customers requests can be dealt with easily and quickly
Ownership	CC-29-OWN-01	I.T. improvements	1) Implement a problem management/tracking/reporting (CRM) system	Initial Specification can be worked upon

	CC-30-OWN-02	Underpinned by Service Level Agreements	1) Implement a two way service level agreement between the front office staff and the supporting Departments	Staff and customers to be involved in setting SLA's
	CC-31-OWN-03	Cross departmental approach	1) Consistent corporate approach to be developed to deal with customer requests	
	CC-32-OWN-04	Request targeting	1) Establish efficient filtering of requests, to direct request to the person/place best able to help	
	CC-33-OWN-05	Awareness Raising	1) Arrange customer care awareness training courses for staff/management/members	
	CC-34-OWN-06	Comment and suggestion sheets	1) Institute formal arrangement for considering suggestions and comments	Responding to these will also encourage ownership
	CC-35-OWN-07	Back office to create & retain ownership	1) Develop procedure so that scripts, flowcharts, decision tree's for the front office originate and be maintained by specialist back office staff.	
	CC-36-OWN-08	Joint Back/Front office ownership	1) Develop a series of joint front/back office performance indicators	
	CC-37-OWN-09	SLA Database	1) Develop an SLA database to control and monitor the interaction between front and back office – connected to any CRM solution implemented	
	CC-38-OWN-10	Cross department approach	1) Joint Team Improvement Reviews (TIR's), SLA's and Service Improvement Plans to be developed between front office and back office staff.	
	CC-39-OWN-11	Training of back office staff on customer contact	1) Agree a regime where back office staff are trained and exposed to customer contact situations.	It is an importance principal that back office staff should not lose sight of the importance of customer contact. Perhaps mentoring or using a buddy system
Performance Managemnt	CC-40-PERF-01	Best practice dissemination	1) Agree PI's for Customer Service 2) New mechanism needed to review and implement any best practices that are identified	
	CC-41-PERF-02	Publish PI's	1) Publish PI's for staff and customers.	These should be at frequent intervals to enable positive feedback for any improvements implemented to be visible
	CC-42-PERF-03	Quality to be measured	1) Include quality measurements in agreed PI's s	PI's should not be entirely a quantitative measure
	CC-43-PERF-04	Multi-channel PI's	1) Agree PI's which take account of all customer channels including voice,mail and electronic channels	
	CC-44-PERF-05	Customer satisfaction surveys	1) Perform survey's on a regular basis, feeding TIR's as a method of improving performance	Initially – and then every six months thereafter
	CC-45-PERF-06	Staff satisfaction surveys	1) Staff survey's driving TIR's, leading to service improvements	Initially – and then every six months thereafter
	CC-46-PERF-07	Customers satisfied at first contact	1) Arrange to measure this vital statistic on a frequent basis.	This is a key measurement to drive and improve customer contact and should be measured on a daily basis.
	CC-47-PERF-08	Formal external measurement of customer service	1) Aim to be an IDeA Level 5 Authority. 2) Check if any other external verification of customer service that are applicable. E.g. Chartermark, ECQFM	
	CC-48-	IT System required	1) Automate PI recording and measurement.	A system, preferably digital and

	PERF-09			automatic, is required for resource planning and performance measurement of any and all customer contact channels.
	CC-49-PERF-10	Quality responses tailored to customer need	1) Design customer contact procedures to be flexible enough to meet the differing needs of the customer base.	If some customers require more time to be dealt with than others, then this needs to be allowed for. E.g. NHS Direct
Communication	CC-50-COM-01	Electronic communication	1) Procure and implement an intranet system to be a knowledge repository for all service information	Both front and back office will require access.
	CC-51-COM-02	Published material	1) Create a centralised digital library containing all published material	
	CC-52-COM-03	Immediacy	1) All communication channels to be immediate and real time where possible	Aim to minimise the reliance on any type of queuing system
	CC-53-COM-04	Customer surveys & market research	1) Establish closer links between the results of such exercises and service improvement plans	
	CC-54-COM-05	Access channels to be customisable	1) Establish the capability of access channels to be customisable in specific circumstances	To allow for short term campaigning, promotions, service specific messages etc.
	CC-55-COM-06	Consistent consultation	1) Consistent levels for all consultation exercises to be established.	
Organisation-i) Central point of contact	CC-56-ORG-01	Central Service Desk	1) Creation of a central service desk in the foyer area manned with generic Customer Service Staff 2) All enquiries to be routed through this facility 3) Customer Service Staff to also deal with initial voice, mail and electronic contact.	
	CC-57-ORG-02	Customer Service Manager	1) Appoint a Customer Service Manager with specific customer contact and customer service information	
	CC-58-ORG-03	Interim Arrangements	1) Customer Service Manager to assume control of existing customer contact arrangements during the transition to the new service structure	Will ensure that reception points are not consolidated into any new Unit structure arising from the Organisational Review
	CC-59-ORG-04	Staff	1) Appoint to the Service desk staff who are orientated towards customer contact	
	CC-60-ORG-05	Common contact point	1) Employ a common phone number, e-mail address, mail address, reception for all customer contact for the Authority	
	CC-61-ORG-06	Focused staff	1) Ensure customer service staff are separated from other non-core duties	
	CC-62-ORG-07	Identity required	1) Adopt a separate identity or branding, themed within any corporate branding, so customers can immediately identify locations and sources of help	
	CC-63-ORG-08	Secure environment	1) Contact Centre to be secure – covered by CCTV and visible people/security presence	
ii) Silo Working	CC-64-ORG-09	Knowledge dissemination	1) Create a knowledge customer service data base / hub intranet	
	CC-65-ORG-10	80% threshold	1) 80% of calls to be answerable directly 2) Answers to common service requests should be available to all council staff via an intranet who should be encouraged field queries	This links to the Corporate Plan which projects 40% by the AUG/03 and 65% by MAR/04

	CC-66-ORG-11	Transferred calls PI	1) Create a Transferred Call's PI as an alternative measurable to "Calls answered on first contact".	A high level of transfers might indicate a back office silo mentality
	CC-67-ORG-12	CRM	1) CRM system to be available as a corporate resource throughout whole organisation	Breaks down any Customer Service Unit silo mentality that could develop
	CC-68-ORG-13	Consistent decisions	1) Employ rules based decision making especially in discretionary situations to ensure consistency	
iii)Links to partner organisations	CC-69-ORG-14	Exposure to external influences	1) Network with similar operations to gain exposure to best practice	
	CC-70-ORG-15	Identify benefits	1) Identify and quantify the benefits to customers of such links to enable prioritisation	
	CC-71-ORG-16	Training	1) Consider joint training with other organisations	
	CC-72-ORG-17	Joint policy formulation	1) Establish joint customer care policies and strategies	
	CC-73-ORG-18	Common channels	1) Create common access channels and interfaces to be established with partner organisations	
	CC-74-ORG-19	SLA	1) Establish SLA's with partner organisations	
iv)Corporate Approach	CC-75-ORG-20	Handbook and induction training	1) Customer contact to be included in induction training and training to be extended to include existing staff	
	CC-76-ORG-21	Customer contact policy	1) Establish a working party to generate and maintain customer contact policy.	Possible representatives include Portfolio Holder, Customer Service Manager, staff rep, Department Head, rotating head of service, customer rep
	CC-77-ORG-22	Global PI's	1) Identify and introduce of global PI's	.
	CC-78-ORG-23	CMT Involvement	1) Establish Customer contact/care as a standing item at CMT	
	CC-79-ORG-24	Reporting	1) Institute a reporting regime on customer contact to portfolio holder, Overview and Scrutiny and Executive	
v)Customer Orientation	CC-80-ORG-25	Customer suggested improvements	1)Investigate methods to encourage customer improvements to service 2)Respond proactively to any such suggestions	E.g. Suggestion books, boxes etc. routed thro' to "Standing Committee".
	CC-81-ORG-26	Service flexibility	1) Service to be reviewed on a regular basis to check whether the basis for the service has changed and to adapt to changing customer needs	First of a series of annual reviews
	CC-82-ORG-27	Service statement	1) Customer Service Manager to produce an annual "state of the service" statement	First of a series of annual reviews
	CC-83-ORG-28	Disability Access	1) Conduct a complete review of disability access to the customer contact service in conjunction with the Disability Action Group	
	CC-84-ORG-29	BV Disability Review	1) Consideration to be given to including Disability Access to all services into the BV Plan as a thematic review	
vi)Customer Care Culture	CC-85-ORG-30	Implement customer care culture	1) Create a customer care culture 2) Maintain a programme to maintain that culture	

	CC-86-ORG-31	Link to TIR's	1)Customer care to become a standing item on TIR's. 2)Mandatory TNA customer care entry for all staff.	
	CC-87-ORG-32	External service verification	1) Externally driven, inspected and tested care standard. Examining body yet to be identified:- Chartermark, ISO, BSI etc.	

The following table lists the Action Plan Recommendations by date order. The overall plan is to

- a) Set up the Customer Services Unit - Dec 02
- b) Commence Voice and Electronic Service – Apr 03
- c) Arrange the out of hours service – Jun 03
- d) Set up mail contact service – Jul 03
- e) Commence face to face service - Aug 03
- f) Initial partnership working – Jan 04

- This will be overlaid by the phased migration, in 13 stages, of current front office services.
See the migration plan outlined elsewhere in this document

Target End date	Ref-Id	Detail	Measured Output
AUG/02 AUG/02 AUG/02	CC-02-ENV-02	Toilets	1) Improve SLA to increase frequency of cleaning 2) Clearer signposting 3) Cosmetic "makeover"
AUG/02	CC-05-ENV-05	Display Area	1) Redesign the public area for displaying notices and announcements.
AUG/02	CC-15-ENV-15	Customer Contact Location	1) Property Manager to advise on utilising alternative locations for customer contact (Assembly Rooms, "Thrupenny bit" town centre retail premises) or plan to redesign existing reception area.
OCT/02	CC-04-ENV-04	Corporate standardisation of Customer Care	1) Create quality customer care standards for the Authority
NOV/02	CC-57-ORG-02	Customer Service Manager	1) Appoint a Customer Service Manager with specific customer contact and customer service information
DEC/02	CC-04-ENV-04	Corporate standardisation of Customer Care	2) Arrange standard to be adopted and rolled out corporately
DEC/02	CC-07-ENV-07	Nominated staff	1) Nominated staff to work full time on customer contact as their primary and only function.
DEC/02	CC-58-ORG-03	Interim Arrangements	1) Customer Service Manager to assume control of existing customer contact arrangements during the transition to the new service structure
JAN/03	CC-01-ENV-01	External Location Directors	1) Location of Civic Centre to be included on road signs leading into the City. 2) Civic Centre location to be included on finger posts 3) A prominent external sign to be commissioned signifying the location of the Civic Centre.
JAN/03	CC-03-ENV-03	Effective Internal Signposting	2) Utilise staff to direct customers

			3) Signs to relate to services required rather than Council structure
JAN/03	CC-05-ENV-05	Display Area	2) New standards for displaying material to be created and implemented – to include all mediums including voice and electronic 3) Controls to be put in place to maintain those standards
JAN/03	CC-22-ENV-22	New working methods	1) Generic working to become standard practice for customer contact staff
JAN/03	CC-50-COM-01	Electronic communication	1) Procure and implement an intranet system to be a knowledge repository for all service information
JAN/03	CC-59-ORG-04	Staff	1) Appoint to the Service desk staff who are orientated towards customer contact
JAN/03	CC-61-ORG-06	Focused staff	1) Ensure customer service staff are separated from other non-core duties
JAN/03	CC-78-ORG-23	CMT Involvement	1) Establish Customer contact/care as a standing item at CMT
JAN/03	CC-79-ORG-24	Reporting	1) Institute a reporting regime on customer contact to portfolio holder, Overview and Scrutiny and Executive
APR/03	CC-08-ENV-08	Environment beyond Civic	1) Better presentation of services across all mediums including voice and electronic before customers makes contact. 2) A budget to be set aside to promote access to services.
APR/03	CC-20-ENV-20	First Hit Enquiries	1) Provide an iterative method to improve the ratio of enquiries that are answered at the first asking 2) Front office staff to be empowered to make decisions on services
APR/03	CC-24-ENV-24	Extend electronic access to services	1) Promote electronic access as the primary route to services
APR/03	CC-29-OWN-01	I.T. improvements	1) Implement a problem management/tracking/reporting (CRM) system
APR/03	CC-30-OWN-02	Underpinned by Service Level Agreements	1) Implement a two way service level agreement between the front office staff and the supporting Departments
APR/03	CC-31-OWN-03	Cross departmental approach	1) Consistent corporate approach to be developed to deal with customer requests
APR/03	CC-32-OWN-04	Request targeting	1) Establish efficient filtering of requests, to direct request to the person/place best able to help
APR/03	CC-33-OWN-05	Awareness Raising	1) Arrange customer care awareness training courses for staff/management/members
APR/03	CC-35-OWN-07	Back office to create & retain ownership	1) Develop procedure so that scripts, flowcharts, decision tree's for the front office originate and be maintained by specialist back office staff.
APR/03	CC-36-OWN-08	Joint Back/Front office ownership	1) Develop a series of joint front/back office performance indicators
APR/03	CC-40-PERF-01	Best practice dissemination	1) Agree PI's for Customer Service
APR/03	CC-41-PERF-02	Publish PI's	1) Publish PI's for staff and customers.
APR/03	CC-42-PERF-03	Quality to be measured	1) Include quality measurements in agreed PI's s
APR/03	CC-43-PERF-04	Multi-channel PI's	1) Agree PI's which take account of all customer channels including voice, mail and electronic channels

APR/03	CC-46-PERF-07	Customers satisfied at first contact	1) Arrange to measure this vital statistic on a frequent basis.
APR/03	CC-51-COM-02	Published material	1) Create a centralised digital library containing all published material
APR/03	CC-52-COM-03	Immediacy	1) All communication channels to be immediate and real time where possible
APR/03	CC-53-COM-04	Customer surveys & market research	1) Establish closer links between the results of such exercises and service improvement plans
APR/03	CC-54-COM-05	Access channels to be customisable	1) Establish the capability of access channels to be customisable in specific circumstances
APR/03	CC-55-COM-06	Consistent consultation	1) Consistent levels for all consultation exercises to be established.
APR/03	CC-56-ORG-01	Central Service Desk	3)Customer Service Staff to also deal with initial voice, mail and electronic contact.
APR/03	CC-60-ORG-05	Common contact point	1) Employ a common phone number, e-mail address, mail address, reception for all customer contact for the Authority
APR/03	CC-62-ORG-07	Identity required	1) Adopt a separate identity or branding, themed within any corporate branding, so customers can immediately identify locations and sources of help
APR/03	CC-64-ORG-09	Knowledge dissemination	1) Create a knowledge customer service data base / hub intranet
APR/03	CC-66-ORG-11	Transferred calls PI	1) Create a Transferred Call's PI as an alternative measurable to "Calls answered on first contact".
APR/03	CC-77-ORG-22	Global PI's	1) Identify and introduce of global PI's
JUN/03	CC-03-ENV-03	Effective Internal Signposting	4) Consistent signposting across all mediums including voice and electronic
JUN/03	CC-18-ENV-18	Pictorial coding of services	1) Similar idea to that used in train stations and airports:- Blue for Council Tax, Green for Cashiers etc.
JUN/03	CC-21-ENV-21	Utilise existing resources	1) Extend/Incorporate the Careline, CCTV operations and/or other existing resources as part of out of hours customer contact
JUN/03	CC-23-ENV-23	Extend opening hours	1) Hours of customer contact voice service to be extended to 24/365.
JUN/03	CC-25-ENV-25	Cashiers	1) Investigate retail and banking sectors to learn best practice on the physical aspects of receipting cash.
JUN/03	CC-34-OWN-06	Comment and suggestion sheets	1) Institute formal arrangement for considering suggestions and comments
JUN/03	CC-37-OWN-09	SLA Database	1) Develop an SLA database to control and monitor the interaction between front and back office – connected to any CRM solution implemented
JUN/03	CC-38-OWN-10	Cross department approach	1) Joint Team Improvement Reviews (TIR's), SLA's and Service Improvement Plans to be developed between front office and back office staff.
JUN/03	CC-44-PERF-05	Customer satisfaction surveys	1) Perform survey's on a regular basis, feeding TIR's as a method of improving performance
JUN/03	CC-45-PERF-06	Staff satisfaction surveys	1) Staff survey's driving TIR's, leading to service improvements
JUN/03	CC-67-ORG-12	CRM	1) CRM system to be available as a corporate resource throughout whole organisation

JUN/03	CC-68-ORG-13	Consistent decisions	1) Employ rules based decision making especially in discretionary situations to ensure consistency
JUN/03	CC-71-ORG-16	Training	1) Consider joint training with other organisations
JUN/03	CC-75-ORG-20	Handbook and induction training	1) Customer contact to be included in induction training and training to be extended to include existing staff
JUN/03	CC-76-ORG-21	Customer contact policy	1) Establish a working party to generate and maintain customer contact policy.
JUN/03	CC-80-ORG-25	Customer suggested improvements	1) Investigate methods to encourage customer improvements to service 2) Respond proactively to any such suggestions
JUN/03	CC-84-ORG-29	Implement customer care culture	1) Create a customer care culture 2) Maintain a programme to maintain that culture
JUN/03	CC-85-ORG-30	Link to TIR's	1) Customer care to become a standing item on TIR's. 2) Mandatory TNA customer care entry for all staff.
JUL/03	CC-83-ORG-28	Disability Access	1) Conduct a complete review of disability access to the customer contact service in conjunction with the Disability Action Group
AUG/03	CC-02-ENV-02	Toilets	4) Eventual re-location to a better site
AUG/03	CC-03-ENV-03	Effective Internal Signposting	1) Employ signs that use graphical/pictorial elements
AUG/03	CC-06-ENV-06	Reception Area	1) Visitors with appointments to see officers are not to be directed unescorted to Departments. 2) 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.
AUG/03	CC-09-ENV-09	Staff Facilities	1) Tea/staff room available to customer service staff
AUG/03	CC-11-ENV-11	Customer Identification	1) A separation in entrance design to distinguish between customer and staff traffic flows 2) Deliveries to be regulated to minimise disruption of drop's, collections and associated storage problems in the main foyer.
AUG/03	CC-12-ENV-12	Porters & Telephonists	1) Porters need to be relocated from main entrance but close enough to provide security function. 2) Telephonists will form part of the customer contact service but station will need relocating
AUG/03	CC-13-ENV-13	Meeting and Greeting	1)All customers to be acknowledged when making contact. Met and greeted at reception points and acknowledged through other access channels.
AUG/03	CC-14-ENV-14	Customer contact restricted to ground floor only	1)Customers should be attended to at a main floor reception with officers coming to them if necessary. 2)Eliminate non ground floor reception points.
AUG/03	CC-16-ENV-16	Electronic Signposting	1) Replacement of current keepers board and the introduction of an electronic information and messaging board.
AUG/03	CC-19-ENV-19	Improve reception area furniture for customers	1) Review and provide suitable tables, chairs, supermarket queuing/ticketing system, pens etc.
AUG/03	CC-26-ENV-26	Counter Screens	1) Implement different types of staff/customer screen solutions at reception areas.

AUG/03	CC-28-ENV-28	Filter desk	1) Establish an early filter desk to fast track some customer requests
AUG/03	CC-48-PERF-09	IT System required	1) Automate PI recording and measurement.
AUG/03	CC-49-PERF-10	Quality responses tailored to customer need	1) Design customer contact procedures to be flexible enough to meet the differing needs of the customer base.
AUG/03	CC-56-ORG-01	Central Service Desk	1) Creation of a central service desk in the foyer area manned with generic Customer Service Staff 2) All enquiries to be routed through this facility
AUG/03	CC-63-ORG-08	Secure environment	1) Contact Centre to be secure – covered by CCTV and visible people/security presence
AUG/03	CC-65-ORG-10	80% threshold	2) Answers to common service requests should be available to all council staff via an intranet who should be encouraged field queries
OCT/03	CC-10-ENV-10	Extended opening hours	1) Market test extended opening hours particularly late night Thursday night opening and Saturday morning.
OCT/03	CC-25-ENV-25	Cashiers	2) Implement any best practice that might be applicable in this area.
DEC/03	CC-17-ENV-17	Extend access through electronic access points	1) Use of kiosks, phones and video conferencing
DEC/03	CC-22-ENV-22	New working methods	2) Customer contact home working to be trialed to provided out of hours by home workers and test of IC
DEC/03	CC-39-OWN-11	Training of back office staff on customer contact	1) Agree a regime where back office staff are trained and exposed to customer contact situations.
DEC/03	CC-40-PERF-01	Best practice dissemination	2) New mechanism needed to review and implement any best practices that are identified
DEC/03	CC-47-PERF-08	Formal external measurement of customer service	1) Aim to be an IDeA Level 5 Authority. 2) Check if any other external verification of customer service that are applicable. E.g. Chartermark, ECQFM
DEC/03	CC-81-ORG-26	Service flexibility	1) Service to be reviewed on a regular basis to check whether the basis for the service has changed and to adapt to changing customer needs
DEC/03	CC-84-ORG-29	BV Disability Review	1) Consideration to be given to including Disability Access to all services into the BV Plan as a thematic review
JAN/04	CC-27-ENV-27	Joint service provision	1) Utilisation of a physical, open environment, in conjunction with partners and other agencies to deliver services.
JAN/04	CC-69-ORG-14	Exposure to external influences	1) Network with similar operations to gain exposure to best practice
JAN/04	CC-70-ORG-15	Identify benefits	1) Identify and quantify the benefits to customers of such links to enable prioritisation
JAN/04	CC-72-ORG-17	Joint policy formulation	1) Establish joint customer care policies and strategies
APR/04	CC-04-ENV-04	Corporate standardisation of Customer Care	3) Seek to adopt a nationally recognised qualification in the area of customer care
APR/04	CC-73-ORG-18	Common channels	1) Create common access channels and interfaces to be established with partner organisations
APR/04	CC-74-ORG-19	SLA	1) Establish SLA's with partner organisations
APR/04	CC-82-ORG-27	Service statement	1) Customer Service Manager to produce an annual "state of the service" statement

JUN/04	CC-86-ORG-31	External service verification	1) Externally driven, inspected and tested care standard. Examining body yet to be identified:- Chartermark, ISO, BSI etc.
JAN/05	CC-24-ENV-24	Extend electronic access to services	2) Services delivered 24x7 through electronic service delivery aimed at meeting Governments 2005 targets.
JAN/05	CC-65-ORG-10	80% threshold	1)80% of calls to be answerable directly

Lead Responsibility	Ref-Id	Detail	Measured Output	Target End date
BU	CC-14-ENV-14	Customer contact restricted to ground floor only	1)Customers should be attended to at a main floor reception with officers coming to them if necessary.	8/03
BU			2)Eliminate non ground floor reception points.	1/03
CATS	CC-02-ENV-02	Toilets	1) Improve SLA to increase frequency of cleaning	8/02
CATS			2) Clearer signposting	8/02
CATS			3) Cosmetic "makeover"	8/02
CATS	CC-01-ENV-01	External Location Directors	1) Location of Civic Centre to be included on road signs leading into the City.	1/03
CATS			2) Civic Centre location to be included on finger posts	1/03
CATS			3) A prominent external sign to be commissioned signifying the location of the Civic Centre.	1/03
CATS	CC-09-ENV-09	Staff Facilities	1) Tea/staff room available to customer service staff	8/03
CATS	CC-11-ENV-11	Customer Identification	1) A separation in entrance design to distinguish between customer and staff traffic flows	8/03
CATS			2) Deliveries to be regulated to minimise disruption of drop's, collections and associated storage problems in the main foyer.	8/03
CATS	CC-12-ENV-12	Porters & Telephonists	1) Porters need to be relocated from main entrance but close enough to provide security function.	8/03
CATS			2) Telephonists will form part of the customer contact service but station will need relocating	8/03
CCC	CC-57-ORG-02	Customer Service Manager	1) Appoint a Customer Service Manager with specific customer contact and customer service information	11/02
CCC	CC-08-ENV-08	Environment beyond Civic	2) A budget to be set aside to promote access to services	4/03
CCC	CC-02-ENV-02	Toilets	4) Eventual re-location to a better site	8/03
CCC	CC-56-ORG-01	Central Service Desk	1) Creation of a central service desk in the foyer area staffed with generic Customer Service Staff	8/03
CISM	CC-07-ENV-07	Nominated staff	1) Nominated staff to work full time on customer contact as their primary and only function.	12/02
CISM	CC-78-ORG-23	CMT Involvement	1) Establish Customer contact/care as a standing item at CMT	1/03
CISM	CC-79-ORG-24	Reporting	1) Institute a reporting regime on customer contact to portfolio holder, Overview and Scrutiny and Executive	1/03

CISM	CC-50-COM-01	Electronic communication	1) Procure and implement an intranet system to be a knowledge repository for all service information	1/03
CISM	CC-52-COM-03	Immediacy	1) All communication channels to be immediate and real time where possible	4/03
CISM	CC-29-OWN-01	I.T. improvements	1) Implement a problem management/tracking/reporting (CRM) system	4/03
CISM	CC-35-OWN-07	Back office to create & retain ownership	1) Develop procedure so that scripts, flowcharts, decision tree's for the front office originate and be maintained by specialist back office staff.	4/03
CISM	CC-64-ORG-09	Knowledge dissemination	1) Create a knowledge customer service data base / hub intranet	4/03
CISM CSIM	CC-24-ENV-24	Extend electronic access to services	1) Promote electronic access as the primary route to services 2) Services delivered 24x7 through electronic service delivery aimed at meeting Governments 2005 targets.	4/03 1/05
CISM	CC-37-OWN-09	SLA Database	1) Develop an SLA database to control and monitor the interaction between front and back office – connected to any CRM solution implemented	6/03
CISM	CC-17-ENV-17	Extend access through electronic access points	1) Use of kiosks, phones and video conferencing	12/03
CSIM	CC-48-PERF-09	IT System required	1) Automate PI recording and measurement.	8/03
CSM CSM CSM	CC-04-ENV-04	Corporate standardisation of Customer Care	1) Create quality customer care standards for the Authority 2) Arrange standard to be adopted and rolled out corporately 3) Seek to adopt a nationally recognised qualification in the area of customer care	10/02 12/02 4/04
CSM	CC-58-ORG-03	Interim Arrangements	1) Customer Service Manager to assume control of existing customer contact arrangements during the transition to the new service structure	12/02
CSM CSM	CC-22-ENV-22	New working methods	1) Generic working to become standard practice for customer contact staff 2) Customer contact home working to be trialed to provided out of hours by home workers and test of IC	1/03 12/03
CSM	CC-59-ORG-04	Staff	1) Appoint to the Service desk staff who are orientated towards customer contact	1/03
CSM	CC-61-ORG-06	Focused staff	1) Ensure customer service staff are separated from other non-core duties	1/03
CSM	CC-03-ENV-03	Effective Internal Signposting	2) Utilise staff to direct customers	1/03
CSM	CC-32-OWN-04	Request targeting	1) Establish efficient filtering of requests, to direct request to the person/place best able to help	4/03
CSM	CC-36-OWN-08	Joint Back/Front office ownership	1) Develop a series of joint front/back office performance indicators	4/03
CSM	CC-41-PERF-02	Publish PI's	1) Publish PI's for staff and customers.	4/03
CSM	CC-42-PERF-03	Quality to be measured	1) Include quality measurements in agreed PI's s	4/03
CSM	CC-43-PERF-04	Multi-channel PI's	1) Agree PI's which take account of all customer channels including voice,mail and electronic channels	4/03

CSM	CC-46-PERF-07	Customers satisfied at first contact	1) Arrange to measure this vital statistic on a frequent basis.	4/03
CSM	CC-66-ORG-11	Transferred calls PI	1) Create a Transferred Call's PI as an alternative measurable to "Calls answered on first contact".	4/03
CSM	CC-20-ENV-20	First Hit Enquiries	1)Provide an iterative method to improve the ratio of enquiries that are answered at the first asking 2)Front office staff to be empowered to make decisions on services	4/03
CSM	CC-30-OWN-02	Underpinned by Service Level Agreements	1) Implement a two way service level agreement between the front office staff and the supporting Departments	4/03
CSM	CC-31-OWN-03	Cross departmental approach	1) Consistent corporate approach to be developed to deal with customer requests	4/03
CSM CSM	CC-40-PERF-01	Best practice dissemination	1) Agree PI's for Customer Service 2) New mechanism needed to review and implement any best practices that are identified	4/03 12/03
CSM	CC-77-ORG-22	Global PI's	1) Identify and introduce of global PI's	4/03
CSM	CC-54-COM-05	Access channels to be customisable	1) Establish the capability of access channels to be customisable in specific circumstances	4/03
CSM	CC-60-ORG-05	Common contact point	1) Employ a common phone number, e-mail address, mail address, reception for all customer contact for the Authority	4/03
CSM	CC-53-COM-04	Customer surveys & market research	1) Establish closer links between the results of such exercises and service improvement plans	4/03
CSM	CC-21-ENV-21	Utilise existing resources	1) Extend/Incorporate the Careline, CCTV operations and/or other existing resources as part of out of hours customer contact	6/03
CSM	CC-23-ENV-23	Extend opening hours	1) Hours of customer contact voice service to be extended to 24/365.	6/03
CSM CSM	CC-25-ENV-25	Cashiers	1) Investigate retail and banking sectors to learn best practice on the physical aspects of receipting cash. 2) Implement any best practice that might be applicable in this area.	6/03 10/03
CSM	CC-44-PERF-05	Customer satisfaction surveys	1) Perform survey's on a regular basis, feeding TIR's as a method of improving performance	6/03
CSM	CC-45-PERF-06	Staff satisfaction surveys	1) Staff survey's driving TIR's, leading to service improvements	6/03
CSM	CC-67-ORG-12	CRM	1) CRM system to be available as a corporate resource throughout whole organisation	6/03
CSM	CC-68-ORG-13	Consistent decisions	1) Employ rules based decision making especially in discretionary situations to ensure consistency	6/03
CSM CSM	CC-80-ORG-25	Customer suggested improvements	1)Investigate methods to encourage customer improvements to service 2)Respond proactively to any such suggestions	6/03 6/03
CSM	CC-34-OWN-06	Comment and suggestion sheets	1) Institute formal arrangement for considering suggestions and comments	6/03
CSM	CC-38-OWN-10	Cross department approach	1) Joint Team Improvement Reviews (TIR's), SLA's and Service Improvement Plans to be developed between front office and back office staff.	6/03

CSM	CC-76-ORG-21	Customer contact policy	1) Establish a working party to generate and maintain customer contact policy.	6/03
CSM	CC-83-ORG-28	Disability Access	1) Conduct a complete review of disability access to the customer contact service in conjunction with the Disability Action Group	7/03
CSM	CC-16-ENV-16	Electronic Signposting	1) Replacement of current keepers board and the introduction of an electronic information and messaging board.	8/03
CSM	CC-56-ORG-01	Central Service Desk	2) All enquiries to be routed though this facility	8/03
CSM			3) Customer Service Staff to also deal with initial voice, mail and electronic contact.	4/03
CSM	CC-06-ENV-06	Reception Area	1) Visitors with appointments to see officers are not to be directed unescorted to Departments.	8/03
CSM			2) 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.	8/03
CSM	CC-13-ENV-13	Meeting and Greeting	1)All customers to be acknowledged when making contact. Met and greeted at reception points and acknowledged through other access channels.	8/03
CSM	CC-19-ENV-19	Improve reception area furniture for customers	1) Review and provide suitable tables, chairs, supermarket queuing/ticketing system, pens etc.	8/03
CSM	CC-28-ENV-28	Filter desk	1) Establish an early filter desk to fast track some customer requests	8/03
CSM	CC-49-PERF-10	Quality responses tailored to customer need	1) Design customer contact procedures to be flexible enough to meet the differing needs of the customer base.	8/03
CSM	CC-26-ENV-26	Counter Screens	1) Implement different types of staff/customer screen solutions at reception areas.	8/03
CSM	CC-63-ORG-08	Secure environment	1) Contact Centre to be secure – covered by CCTV and visible people/security presence	8/03
CSM	CC-10-ENV-10	Extended opening hours	1) Market test extended opening hours particularly late night Thursday night opening and Saturday morning.	10/03
CSM	CC-47-PERF-08	Formal external measurement of customer service	1) Aim to be an IDeA Level 5 Authority.	12/03
CSM			2) Check if any other external verification of customer service that are applicable. E.g. Chartermark, ECQFM	12/03
CSM	CC-39-OWN-11	Training of back office staff on customer contact	1) Agree a regime where back office staff are trained and exposed to customer contact situations.	12/03
CSM	CC-81-ORG-26	Service flexibility	1) Service to be reviewed on a regular basis to check whether the basis for the service has changed and to adapt to changing customer needs	12/03
CSM	CC-70-ORG-15	Identify benefits	1) Identify and quantify the benefits to customers of such links to enable prioritisation	1/04
CSM	CC-72-ORG-17	Joint policy formulation	1) Establish joint customer care policies and strategies	1/04
CSM	CC-27-ENV-27	Joint service provision	1) Utilisation of a physical, open environment, in conjunction with partners and other agencies to deliver services.	1/04
CSM	CC-69-ORG-14	Exposure to external influences	1) Network with similar operations to gain exposure to best practice	1/04
CSM	CC-73-ORG-18	Common channels	1) Create common access channels and interfaces to be established with partner organisations	4/04

CSM	CC-74-ORG-19	SLA	1) Establish SLA's with partner organisations	4/04
CSM	CC-82-ORG-27	Service statement	1) Customer Service Manager to produce an annual "state of the service" statement	4/04
CSM	CC-87-ORG-32	External service verification	1) Externally driven, inspected and tested care standard. Examining body yet to be identified:- Chartermark, ISO, BSI etc.	6/04
CSM	CC-65-ORG-10	80% threshold	1)80% of calls to be answerable directly	1/05
CSM			2)Answers to common service requests should be available to all council staff via an intranet who should be encouraged field queries	8/03
CU	CC-05-ENV-05	Display Area	1) Redesign the public area for displaying notices and announcements.	8/02
CU			2) New standards for displaying material to be created and implemented – to include all mediums including voice and electronic	1/03
CU			3) Controls to be put in place to maintain those standards	1/03
CU	CC-08-ENV-08	Environment beyond Civic	1) Better presentation of services across all mediums including voice and electronic before customers makes contact.	4/03
CU	CC-62-ORG-07	Identity required	1) Adopt a separate identity or branding, themed within any corporate branding, so customers can immediately identify locations and sources of help	4/03
CU	CC-51-COM-02	Published material	1) Create a centralised digital library containing all published material	4/03
CU	CC-18-ENV-18	Pictorial coding of services	1) Similar idea to that used in train stations and airports:- Blue for Council Tax, Green for Cashiers etc.	6/03
CU	CC-03-ENV-03	Effective Internal Signposting	1) Employ signs that use graphical/pictorial elements	8/03
CU			3) Signs to relate to services required rather than Council structure	1/03
CU			4) Consistent signposting across all mediums including voice and electronic	6/03
MSES	CC-33-OWN-05	Awareness Raising	1) Arrange customer care awareness training courses for staff/management/members	4/03
MSES	CC-71-ORG-16	Training	1) Consider joint training with other organisations	6/03
MSES	CC-75-ORG-20	Handbook and induction training	1) Customer contact to be included in induction training and training to be extended to include existing staff	6/03
MSES	CC-85-ORG-30	Implement customer care culture	1) Create a customer care culture	6/03
MSES			2) Maintain a programme to maintain that culture	6/03
MSES	CC-86-ORG-31	Link to TIR's	1)Customer care to become a standing item on TIR's.	6/03
MSES			2)Mandatory TNA customer care entry for all staff.	6/03
PS	CC-15-ENV-15	Customer Contact Location	1) Property Manager to advise on utilising alternative locations for customer contact (Assembly Rooms, "Thrupenny bit" town centre retail premises) or plan to redesign existing reception area.	8/02
SPS	CC-55-COM-06	Consistent consultation	1) Consistent levels for all consultation exercises to be established.	4/03

SPS	CC-84-ORG-29	BV Disability Review	1) Consideration to be given to including Disability Access to all services into the BV Plan as a thematic review	12/03
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Service Migration

The review team are recommending a phased changeover from the current service to the new one.

The table below shows how the services could be migrated over a period of time and the rationale behind the decisions the selecting and sequencing of the phases.

Allowing two months for the changeover of each service the whole process would take some two years to complete.

Phase	Business Area	Comment
1	Reception, Main switch, keepers desk etc.	Look to establish the unit, put in place and settle procedures and staff
2	Personnel	1. Test out re-engineering and transfer skills and create written procedures for further service take-on's 2. Low volume 3. Varied access channel 4. Closure of second floor reception area and exclusion to the public
3	Licensing	1. Tests officers required to come to desk 2. Moves towards closing first floor reception desk
4	Electoral Registration & Committee & Admin	1. Tests big incoming mailbag traffic procedures 2. Close first floor reception desk
5	Design – Highways + Land & Drainage + Car Parking	1. Move towards closing the 7 th . floor reception
6	Planning	1. Move towards closing the 7 th . floor reception 2. Major service with continuing strong "expert" element
7	Environmental Services	1) Move towards closing the 7 th . floor reception
8	Community Supp,Parks&Countryside, Sport&Rec	1. Close fifth floor reception 2. First multiple service transfer
9	Shopmobility	1. Re-locate to the Civic Centre 2. Low volume – but volunteers integrated into service

10	Revenues – Council Tax & Benefits	1) Large service but contact centre should now be up and running with service handovers a routine matter
11	DSO	1) First Routing/directing service – contact likely to be minimal
12	Property Services, Corporate Policy & Strategy, Land Charges, Legal Services, Economic Dev	1) Low/No face to face – high number of non standard enquiries
13	Partner Access Channels	Tullie, TIC's Community Centres; Volumes are unpredictable