

CUSTOMER SERVICES MONITORING REPORT
REPORT BY HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This is the monitoring report for the Customer Services team for July 2012 to December 2012. The latest quarterly report is at Appendix A.

2 Significant highlights and issues since last report

- 2.1 Michelle Greet is currently on maternity leave and Kathryn Sexton (from IMD) is covering her role until September 2013.
- 2.2 The Call Centre service level was not met each month between April and September 2012. There are a few reasons for this, but the main one is the sickness levels the Call Centre has experienced since April this year. 297 days have been lost to sickness between April and November (inclusive) with 4 staff members having long term sickness absences. For comparison, during the whole financial year 2011/12, there were 134 days lost to sickness, and in the year 2010/11, there were 161 days lost.
- 2.3 South Cambs and Cambs City Councils have been recruiting for staff in the last six months with starting salaries between £17-19K. We know at least 3 members of staff attended interviews and two very strong members of staff from the Call Centre were recruited by South Cambs. Another very strong member of the Customer Service Centre team has recently resigned stating the salary as the reason for leaving on her resignation letter. Losing strong members of the team has a major impact in customer services as advisors provide such a wide range of services. It takes 6 months to fully train new members of staff.
- 2.4 Due to the length of time it takes to train new staff, forecasting and planning future workload is essential to Customer Services. We do this well - using historical data as well as intelligence from elsewhere in the organisation. Customer Services will always need to have some ability to deal with peaks that cannot be predicted. Peaks in customer numbers have been caused recently by the November elections, flooding and frozen bins. It is important to have enough staff to deal with these peaks

but due to the complexity of the job, it is not possible to have zero hour contract staff on standby that we can call in to help cover busy periods.

- 2.5 The CRM project has slipped due to two unforeseen circumstances (system now due to go live on the 1st March 2013).
- a) The first is that there is an ongoing issue with the Call Centre moving onto CPSN and the HDC network, as infrastructure issues and the CPSN project have delayed this, which directly impacts the installation and implementation of the new CRM system.
 - b) The second is that CCC has asked the Call Centre to vacate Speke House so that it can be put to use by the Cambridgeshire Education IT department. It has been proposed that we move to Amundsen House (which is on the same business park) and we are currently working out the specifics so that this can happen in the New Year.

We are working with IMD to try to coordinate this move with the move to the HDC network, hopefully in time to go live with the new CRM system before the bin round changes in February 2013. The original plan was to have the new CRM in place at the Call Centre and at the Operations Division well in advance of the Route Optimisation project go live due to the projected increase in demand for our service at this time.

- 2.6 The Call Centre manager and others have been working closely with IMD to improve and streamline processes that will be available within the new CRM system for advisors to use. 40 processes have been rationalised to 11 and the system should be much more user-friendly, intuitive and offer a lot more functionality and scope for improving the service we provide to customers and enable us to be more proactive with our dealings with them.
- 2.7 The Customer Service Centre Manager manages the payments processes for HDC and as a result, we are involved in every project that involves a change to a payment or a new charge. Recent examples include CILs, BID, car parking etc. We are currently also working on a project to replace our payments system as it is soon to become unsupported by the supplier.
- 2.8 30% of all payments received by the Council are now being taken by the Automated Telephone Payment system. ATP has successfully reduced the amount of payment calls we receive in the call centre, but there have been months where call volumes have reached pre-ATP volumes. For example, May-July were especially busy months as the Operations division enforced recycling rules due to high volumes of contaminated waste. The Call Centre experienced a high volume of calls and as customers were particularly irate, call lengths were increased. There are also, on average, 133 voicemails left each month from customers that have experienced problems with ATP and need to be called back by an

advisor, which the statistics don't account for. £14k of budget savings in light of the introduction of ATP in March has been achieved.

- 2.9 Customer Service Strategy has been developed and is currently in draft form. This is going to be continued to be worked on over the next few months to include more content about channel migration, reducing avoidable contact and offering more proactive customer service across the whole council.

3 Forthcoming issues and risks

- 3.1 Benefit reforms in April 2013 will have a significant impact on customer services from Jan 2013 onwards. This is due to training of staff on the new regulations and criteria, all HomeLink customers being asked to reapply to the housing register from January and then the further changes that will be communicated to customers via letters. The planned benefits reforms and council tax support scheme will collectively affect many of our customers from April 2013, which will lead to an increase in footfall at our CSC's and more calls to the Call Centre. It is likely that the extra customers utilising our services at this time will be unhappy with the changes, which will impact our staff dealing with them and also the length of call/ visit. Two temporary members of staff have been recruited – one to help the Call Centre and one to help the CSC during this time.
- 3.2 The route optimisation project for bin rounds will impact on the service level at the Call Centre due to the high call volumes that are expected. Ideally, the new CRM system will be in place before this happens as Operations will also be using the new system, which will simplify the processes and help us deal with the higher volume of calls expected.
- 3.3 The outcome from the pay review project may impact on staff recruitment, retention and morale.
- 3.4 The delay to the Call Centre going on to the HDC network means that the CRM project may slip further.

4 Statistics

- 4.1 Customer numbers for April 2012 to September 2012

The Call Centre was offered 70,833 calls and 7,491 emails.
The Customer Service Centres processed 31,405 enquiries.

- 4.2 Customer satisfaction levels

Call Centre Customer Satisfaction was 96.2%.
Customer Service Centre satisfaction was 99%.

4.3 The average length of call/ visit:

Call centre has increased from 130 seconds in 2010 to 158 seconds in 2012 so far.

Customer Service Centre has increased from 10.4 minutes in 2010 to 12.44 minutes in 2012 so far.

4.4 The Call Centre received 24% more Operations calls in May and June this year compared to the same months in 2011.

4.5 On average, 33% of all calls received at the Call Centre in 2012 so far have been considered 'avoidable' compared to 25% in 2011.

Recommendation

The Panel is asked to note the contents of this report

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