

<b>Scrutiny</b>	<b>Agenda Item: 5</b>
-----------------	-----------------------

<b>Meeting Date</b>	29 <sup>th</sup> July 2010
<b>Report Title</b>	Customer Service performance indicators
<b>Portfolio Holder</b>	Executive Member for Performance and Finance
<b>SMT Lead</b>	Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact
<b>Head of Service</b>	Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Carol Sargeant, Customer Service Manager

## **Background**

1. The CSC currently delivers over 100 services at first point of contact, including switchboard services. Services are designed to be streamlined processes and they include enquiries, payments, service requests (for back office and contractor delivery) and appointments and bookings for example for school holiday activities and pest control. Services are subject to constant review to ensure maximum efficiency and early resolution from the customers' perspective. As well as telephone and face to face customers at Swale House and Sheerness and Faversham receptions, the CSC also deals with incoming emails from the public, contractors and members of staff relating to work requests.
2. Since the inception of the CSC, more and more services have been introduced. Furthermore, the depth of service provision has increased to ensure that as many enquires as possible are concluded for the customer by CSC staff at the first point of contact. The increase in service numbers and their complexity has impacted on the time demands on the CSC staff, but this has not been met by a corresponding increase in staff (or transfer of back office staff) to support the front line service provision.
3. Currently, when calls are made to the CSC (417850), they are met with a recorded voice greeting. If they are waiting for an adviser, they will be given the opportunity to leave a message and request a call back. Also, publicity is given to our automated payments service and website services, so it is reasonable to assume that a number of callers might terminate the call and use other means of contacting the Council instead. Unfortunately however, these are recorded as abandoned calls and we cannot measure these more accurately.

4. Currently the team comprises 18.5 full time equivalent (FTE) advisors which includes 1.5 FTE senior advisors, plus the Customer Services Manager. These staff work on a rota basis across the five areas of the CSC (telephones, customer service face to face booth, reception at Swale House, Faversham and Sheerness).

5. Wherever possible, staff are deployed to cover the known peak demand times for CSC services. In quieter periods of the day and where there are two members of staff on reception, one from each reception will log on and become part of the telephone team, if the advisor in the booth (at Sittingbourne) is quiet then they also take phone enquiries.

6. Whilst staffing levels within the team are reduced for annual leave, currently only three members of the team are authorised leave at the same time. A number of staff work part time and their hours of work include covering between 12 noon and 2pm when lunches are being taken, though staffing levels are often reduced during this period.

#### **Factors contributing to the under achievement of performance indicators**

7. New staff require training and ongoing support from colleagues which can impact on service delivery during busy periods.

8. Long term sickness has been a major contributing factor during the last eighteen months. Two members of staff have been on long term sickness leave; both of which have been progressed with the assistance of HR; and one of these members of staff has recently resigned.

9. Unplanned periods of peak levels of demand occasionally occur when specific departments experience high volumes of calls, sometime influenced by external factors such as inclement weather impacting on refuse collection. Also, if customers experience long wait times when calling back office services, they often hang up and call back to the switchboard/CSC, thus adding to call volumes.

10. Like all departments, corporate briefings and training sessions of which all staff are required to attend inevitably impact on front line service provision, including for example, all staff briefings, equality and diversity and terrorism training.

11. There have been occasional and intermittent ICT and telephone systems issues, which on occasions impact on service delivery.

12. There have been examples whereby back office don't answer phones or leave phones on voicemail or callers are kept waiting on the line trying to be transferred to an officer rather than leave a voicemail message. There are also instances where calls are transferred from switchboard but unanswered and

divert back to switchboard which invariably callers then hang up and call back at a later stage. This is being monitored (including a review of the use of voicemail) and dealt with accordingly.

### **Measures in place to improve service standards**

13. A robust service improvement project was undertaken in the CSC during 2009/10. This saw a review of a number of high demand services to ensure that maximum efficiencies were introduced from the customers' perspective.

14. Following the service improvement project during 2009/10, the Council invested in further resource in the CSC to implement an automated payments facility, which has taken some call traffic away from staff to enable them to deal with other enquiries.

15. As part of the 2010/11 budget round, the Council invested in budget for two additional FTE members of staff in the CSC, and these members of staff were appointed in late May. Therefore as the new staff are being trained, it is too early to see an immediate improvement in response rates, though they are already able to handle a number of lower level enquiries without supervision.

16. The expansion of the automated payments system to incorporate all payments (not just Council Tax and Business Rates as at present), which will enable payments to be made at any time and without the intervention of a member of staff.

17. Initial investigations have taken place into improved uses of technology; for example voice recognition to take callers through the specific officers or departments.

18. More services are being made available online through our website, which will save customers able to use this facility from having to speak with an adviser, and have access to services at any time.

19. A customer feedback survey is currently in progress, and whilst it is too early to provide an informed summary of feedback, customers have largely indicated that despite the wait times, the level of service that they ultimately receive is excellent.

**Carol Sargeant, Customer Service Manager, Extn. 7055**

**Dave Thomas, Head of Commissioning & Customer Contact, Extn. 7263**

## Annex A - Current performance levels

<b>LI/C/CSC/0001 AVERAGE CALL WAIT TIME</b> (The average time the caller waits to get through and speak to an advisor)		
<b>TARGET</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>	
	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>2010/11 (April – June)</b>
20 seconds	49 seconds	50 seconds
% of calls answered within 20 second target	68.4%	72%

<b>LI/IC/CSC/0002 PERCENTAGE OF ABANDONED CALLS</b> (Where the caller hangs up before speaking to an advisor)		
<b>TARGET</b>	<b>ACTUAL</b>	
	<b>2009/2010</b>	<b>2010/11 (April – June)</b>
5% of abandoned calls	10.6%	9.9%
Calls abandoned within 20 second call answer time target	6.5%	11%
% of calls abandoned in under 2 minutes	56%	66%

**Annex B - Customer Service Centre (CSC) opening times and staffing levels**

Opening times:

8.45am – 5pm Monday to Thursday

8.45am – 4.30pm Friday

<b>Staffing levels, areas and periods worked as of 26 May 2010</b> <b>Please note – this excludes annual leave, sickness, training and lunch periods</b>						
	<b>CSC phones</b>	<b>Swale House main reception</b>	<b>Swale House CSC booth</b>	<b>Faversham reception</b>	<b>Sheerness reception</b>	<b>Senior advisors</b>
Monday	8 all day 1 x 6 hours 3 x 5 hours	1	1	2 morning 1 afternoon	2	1 all day 1 half day
Tuesday	8 x all day 1 x 6 hours 4 x 5 hours	1	1	2 morning 1 afternoon	2	2
Wednesday	5 x all day 4 x 5 hours 1 x 5.5 hours 1 x 3.5 hours	1	1	1 morning 2 afternoon	2	1
Thursday	8 x all day 4 x 5 hours 1 x 5.5 hours	1	1	1 morning 2 afternoon	2	1
Friday	10 x all day 3 x 5 hours 1 x 4.75 hours	1	1	2 morning 1 afternoon	2	2