

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder's meeting

20 July 2010

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Corporate Manager for Community and Customer Services

CUSTOMER SERVICE STANDARDS PERFORMANCE MONITORING

Purpose

1. To review the first quarter (1 April – 30 June 2010) performance against the Council's Customer Service Standards.
2. To highlight any areas of poor performance and incorporate corrective measures through the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) programme.
3. This is not a key decision.

Recommendations and Reasons

4. That the performance against the customer service standards is noted.

Executive Summary

5. Telephone and contact centre performance still remains strong throughout the first quarter of 2010/11 and continues to meet service level agreement.
6. Within the first quarter of 2010/11 the Council has registered 60 complaints, this is an increase on same period 2009/10 of 38 and 25 in 2008/09.
7. In 2010/11, all registered complaints were acknowledged within three working days, as in 2009/10, but an improvement on the 2008/09 figure of 86%.
8. In 2010/11, 81% of registered complaints were responded to within 10 working days, representing an improvement on the same periods in 2009/10 of 79% and 72% in 2008/09.
9. The Affordable Homes service achieved an impressive 95% response rate to complaints within target.
10. As in previous years, the majority of complaints have been concerned with service delivery and processes and/or procedures.
11. Our first quarter of 2010/11 shows our average response time to Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) complaints is 22 days, well within the target of 28 days.
12. Performance monitoring at the beginning of the first quarter of 2010/11 has shown an improvement in the completion rate for Learning from Complaints forms. Maintaining a high completion rate relies upon proactive progress chasing by the Customer Service Coordinator (CSC); where the pressure of other priorities means the CSC is unable to fulfil this proactive role, the completion rate has reduced.

13. 28 compliments were received within the first quarter of 2010/11.
14. During 2009-10 the Council engaged consultants to undertake customer satisfaction surveys of relevant front-line service. Delay in the new CSC taking up post, and the workload associated with the Customer Service Excellence project, has resulted in similar surveys not being undertaken during Quarter One; however, the CSC will be looking to put in place appropriate arrangements as a priority area of work during the second quarter.
15. The NI14 performance indicator, requiring the Council to monitor avoidable contact, has been abolished. Information gathered through this process in 2009/10 will be analysed by the officer Performance Improvement Group in order to identify specific areas in which unnecessary contacts can be reduced.

Background

16. Analysis of the first quarter shows the Council has consistently met its agreed service standards in respect of call handling and responding to complaints. In particular the Council has made a marked improvement in the number of days taken to respond to LGO complaints. Whilst performing well, areas for improvement include the need to communicate corrective measures made as a result of customer feedback to our customers. This topic will be discussed within the Customer Service Excellence Project Assurance Group.

Considerations

Telephone Performance

17. Telephone performance at South Cambridgeshire Hall has remained strong throughout the quarter as shown in Table A below.

Table A – Cambourne telephone performance

Measure	SLA Target	April-June 2010 (Qtr 1)
Calls abandoned	<5%	1%
Average wait time	<30 secs	3 secs
Call Answered <20	80%	99%

Total no. of answered calls = 61186 plus, total no. of missed calls = 603, making an overall total of 61789 calls.

18. Table B details Contact Centre performance including calls abandoned, average call waiting time, calls answered within 20 seconds and switchboard calls answered within 10 seconds. The table shows that the Contact Centre continues to meet the targets set out in the service level agreement.

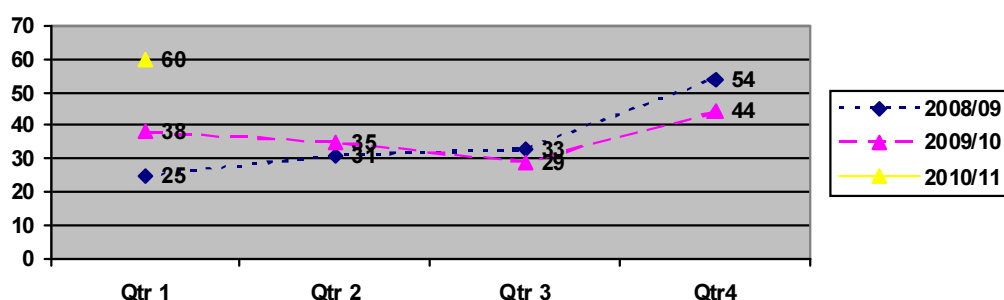
Table B – Contact Centre Performance

Measure	SLA Target	April-June 2010 (Qtr 1)
Calls abandoned	<5%	2%
Average wait time	<30 secs	10 secs
Calls Answered <20	80%	86%
Switchboard Calls Answered <10	80%	92%

Complaints Performance

19. The following tables and charts set out the number of stage one and two complaints and our performance in meeting the acknowledgement and response targets.
20. In the first quarter the Council registered a total of 60 complaints, 54 at stage one, 3 at stage two and 3 at stage three. Chart one details the number of complaints (stage one, two and three combined) per quarter in comparison to previous financial years 2008/09 and 2009/10. The increase in the number of complaints registered, when compared to 38 in 2009-10, is largely due to amended procedures under which complaints to the Contact Centre are now treated as corporate complaints, whereas previously they were dealt with informally by the service area concerned.

Chart 1 - No. complaints (stage one, two and three combined) per quarter



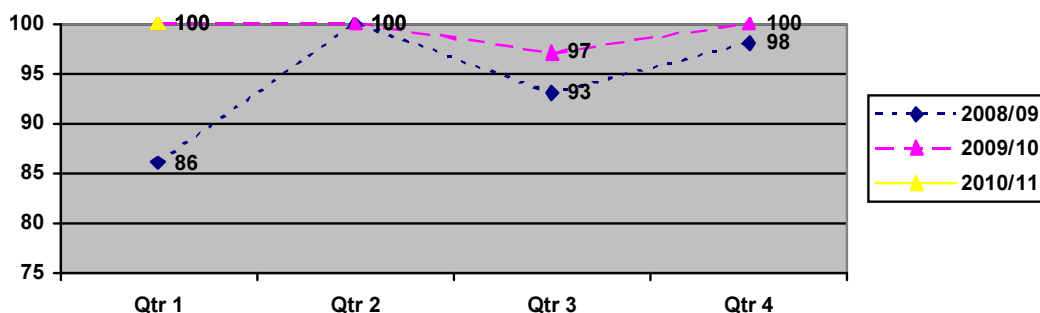
21. Table C shows details of the number and percentage of complaints received by each corporate area. You will note that Affordable Homes continue to generate the highest percentage of complaints followed by Planning & New Communities and Health & Environmental Services.

Table C - % complaints (stage one, two & three combined) per corporate area

	Qtr 1	
Planning & Sustainable Communities	15	25%
Health & Environmental Services	13	22%
Affordable Homes	27	45%
Corporate Services	5	8%
New Communities	0	0%
Community & Customer Services	0	0%

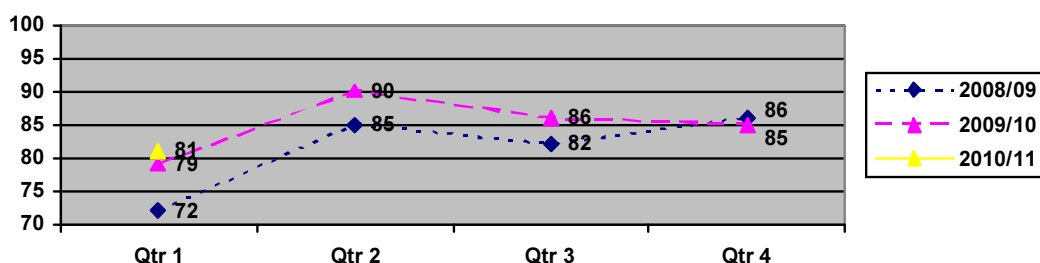
22. During the first quarter, all registered complaints were acknowledged within three working days. This performance target has been sustained and maintained during the same period in 2009/10 and is an improvement on the 2008/09 figure of 86%.

Chart 2 - % complaints (stage one, two & three combined) acknowledged within target



23. During the first quarter, 81% of registered complaints were responded to within 10 working days for stage one, and 20 days for stage two. This represents a year on year improvement on the same periods in 2009/10 (79%) and 2008/09 (72%).

Chart 3 - % complaints (stage one, two & three combined) responded to within target



24. Table D details the percentage of responses meeting target by corporate area. An impressive first quarter for Affordable Homes achieved a 95% response, whilst other services are notably behind. The Planning & New Communities achieved an improvement from the same period in 2009/10 (63%).

Table D - Corporate area performance - Complaints responded to within target

Quarter 1	Total No. received	Total responded to within target	Response within target
Planning & New Communities	14	10	71%
Health & Environmental Services	9	7	78%
Affordable Homes	19	18	95%
Corporate Services	5	3	60%
Community & Customer Services	N/A		N/A

25. Table E details the broad theme of complaints by both total number and percentage. The predominant themes recorded in the first quarter, as in previous years, were service delivery and processes and/or procedures.

Table E - Complaint breakdown by broad theme

Theme	Qtr 1 No.	Qtr 1 %
Failure to communicate	5	8%
Failure to act	7	12%
Misinformation	0	0%
Council Charges	0	0%
Service Delivery	25	42%
Staff Issues	8	13%
Processes and/or procedures	15	25%

Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) Complaints

26. South Cambridgeshire District Council has received three complaints submitted by the LGO during the first quarter. Table F breaks down the complaints by corporate area.

Table F - Breakdown of LGO contacts by service area

	Qtr 1
Planning & New Communities	0
Health & Environmental Services	1
Affordable Homes	1
Corporate Services	1
New Communities	0
Community & Customer Services	0

27. The LGO continues to investigate the three complaints and has not communicated any decisions.
28. Table G shows the Council continues to meet the 28 days average response time set by the LGO.

Table G - Average response time for LGO complaints

	Qtr 1
Average Response Time	22 days

Learning from complaints

29. Learning from complaints forms continue to accompany complaints when forwarded to officers to respond. A number of forms have been completed but significant improvement is needed to increase the number completed and returned.
30. To resolve this issue in 2010/11 the Senior Management Team has agreed that complaints will remain open until a completed learning from complaints form has been submitted. Performance monitoring in the first quarter of 2010/11 has shown an improvement in the completion rate.

31. Performance monitoring at the beginning of the first quarter of 2010/11 has shown an improvement in the completion rate for Learning from Complaints forms. Maintaining a high completion rate relies upon proactive progress chasing by the Customer Service Coordinator (CSC); where the pressure of other priorities means the CSC is unable to fulfil this proactive role, the completion rate has reduced.
32. Completed forms will be analysed, with a view to identifying specific improvement actions, and publicised via the Council's website.

Table H - Learning From Complaints

Quarter 1	Total no. of complaints	Forms returned	Response within target
Planning & New Communities	15	7	47%
Health & Environmental Services	13	3	23%
Affordable Homes	27	12	44%
Corporate Services	5	4	80%
New Communities	N/A	N/A	N/A
Community & Customer Services	N/A	N/A	N/A

Compliments

33. The Customer Service Coordinator registered 28 Compliments during the first quarter. Notable comments included:
- “Many thanks. You are wonderful”
 “Quite possibly the best response I could have received. Thank you so much for your assistance”
 “The work carried out is now complete and I should like to say how delighted my Husband and I are with the finished work and with the attitude and competence of all your team and with the long hours they worked”
 “Thank you very much indeed for your helpful and speedy assistance”
34. Table I shows the number and percentage of compliments registered in the first quarter. The table shows that whilst Planning & New Communities and Affordable Homes generate a significant proportion of complaints, they continue to register the majority of compliments.

Table I - Compliments (Qtr 1) by Corporate Area

	Qtr 3	
Planning & New Communities	9	32%
Health & Environmental Services	5	18%
Affordable Homes	6	21%
Corporate Services	3	11%
New Communities	1	4%

Community & Customer Services	4	14%
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Customer Satisfaction

35. Within the last financial year, The Council commissioned CELLO MRUK Research, an independent market research organisation, to conduct a survey with visitors to the Council offices in Cambourne. The main aim of the survey was to establish how satisfied visitors were with the reception and other front line services.
36. During the first quarter of this financial year 2010/11, it has not been possible to consider ways of monitoring this process due to considerable delay in filling the vacant post of Customer Service Coordinator, and the workload associated with progressing the Customer Service Excellence project.
37. The Customer Service Coordinator is to consider and implement appropriate monitoring measures for customers visiting the Cambridgeshire Hall, the results and any actions arising from which will be reported to the Portfolio Holder in due course.

National Indicator 14 (NI14)

38. During financial year 2009/10, The Council monitored NI14: Reducing avoidable contact. This was to identify customer contact that is 'avoidable', and to be better placed to redesign the way services are delivered and information communicated. Due to the coalition government, this performance indicator has been abolished.
39. The NI14 performance indicator, requiring the Council to monitor avoidable contact, has been abolished. Information gathered through this process in 2009/10 will be analysed by the officer Performance Improvement Group in order to identify specific areas in which unnecessary contacts can be reduced.

Implications

40. Financial	None
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Risk Management	Failure to maintain high standards of complaint handling exposes the Council to the risk of more recourse to the Ombudsman. This brings a reputational risk.
Equal Opportunities	An Equality Impact Assessment of the Complaints, Comments and Compliments Procedure was completed 28 October 2009. No adverse impacts were identified.
Climate Change	None

Effect on Strategic Aims

41.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.
	The complaints and compliment process provides a vital channel for customers to feedback information relating to their experience of our services. This information should inform service planning and reviews and identify improvements to service delivery that will contribute to proving first class services accessible to all.
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.
	Improving service design and delivery will result in increased customer satisfaction and further improve the Council's reputation.
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Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None.

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