



Hinckley & Bosworth
Borough Council

A Borough to be proud of

FORWARD TIMETABLE OF CONSULTATION AND DECISION MAKING

FINANCE & PERFORMANCE SCRUTINY

22 MAY 2017

WARDS AFFECTED: 'ALL WARDS'

CUSTOMER SERVICES – 12 MONTH PROGRESS UPDATE

Report of Director of Corporate Services

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report provides the Committee with an update on the performance of the Customer Services front line operation over the last twelve months, in particular focussing on target times for answering calls and dealing with face to face enquiries.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Committee note the content of the report.

3. BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT

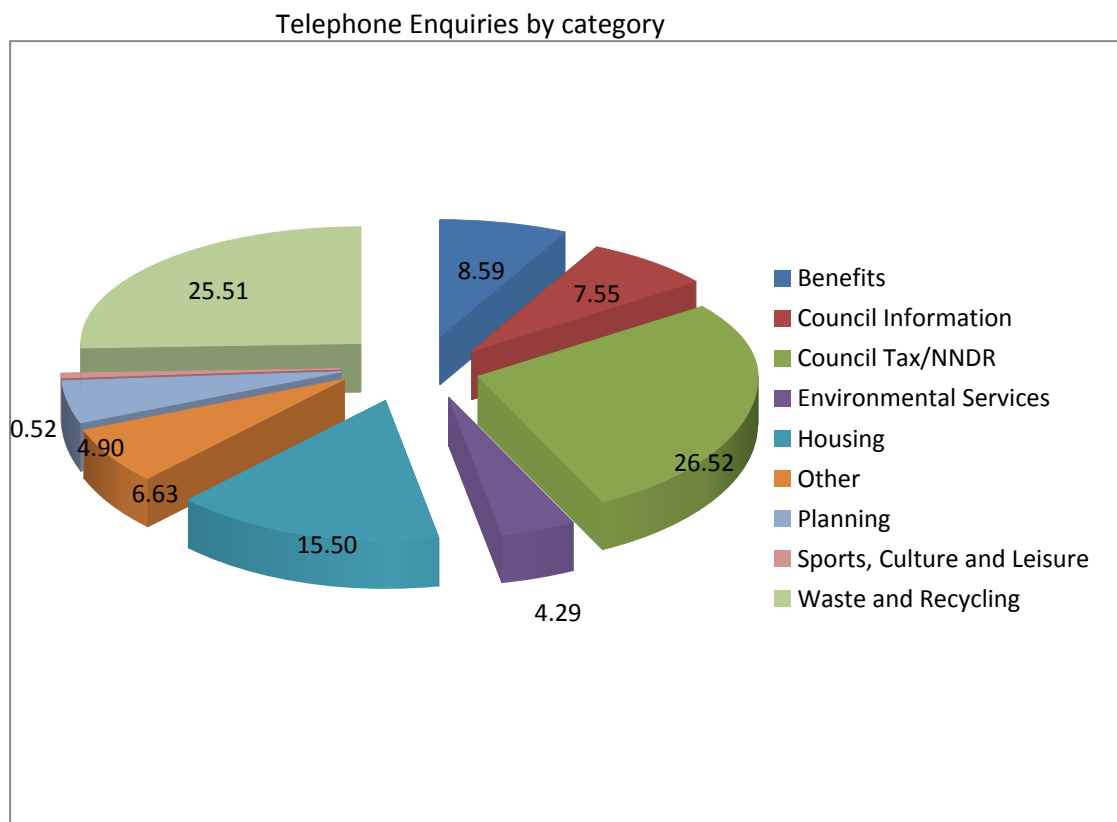
- 3.1 Whilst the Committee requested a 6 month progress report at its meeting on 19 September 2016, for completeness, this report provides a 12 month overview of the Customer Services function for 2016/17 including final outturn.
- 3.2 The Customer Services team handles all telephone enquiries as well as serving customers on the Meet and Greet counter and on the front desks. From April 2016 to March 2017 the team answered 121,739 calls and dealt with 18,245 customers face to face. This equates to an average of over 10,000 calls per month, with a peak of 15,000 calls in March when council tax and garden waste enquiries are at their maximum due to annual billing.
- 3.3 Service delivery is supported by the Customer Relationship Management system (CRM). This system provides the council with a consistent method of capturing customer enquiries and the ability to resolve the majority of those requests at the first point of contact without referring to the back office. The CRM system allows the adviser to capture customer data and send requests, via workflow, to back office systems which then integrate into the back office system. For example, if a customer requires the garden waste service, the customer adviser will complete that request including taking the payment, through the CRM by completing a web based form.

The web based form, via workflow, directly integrates into the back office system, which in turn will be updated.

3.4 Performance – Contact Centre

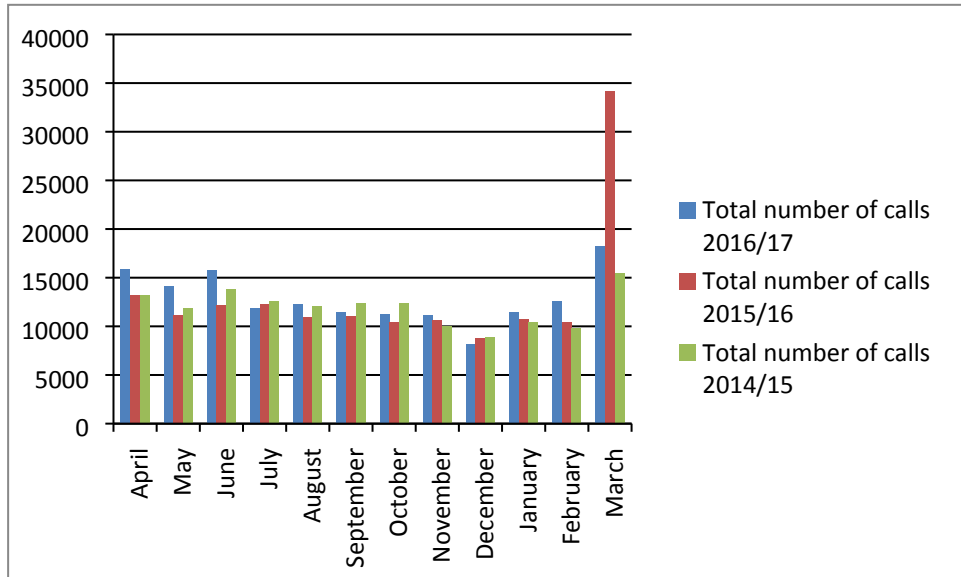
The customer services team works to key performance indicators that have been developed and agreed by the Strategic Leadership Team and monitored as part of the corporate performance framework. Monthly meetings are held with the Customer Services Manager to understand the variety of short term and long term factors that may impact upon service delivery. Customer satisfaction levels are also reviewed.

The following chart shows a breakdown of the most popular telephone transaction types handled by the contact centre.

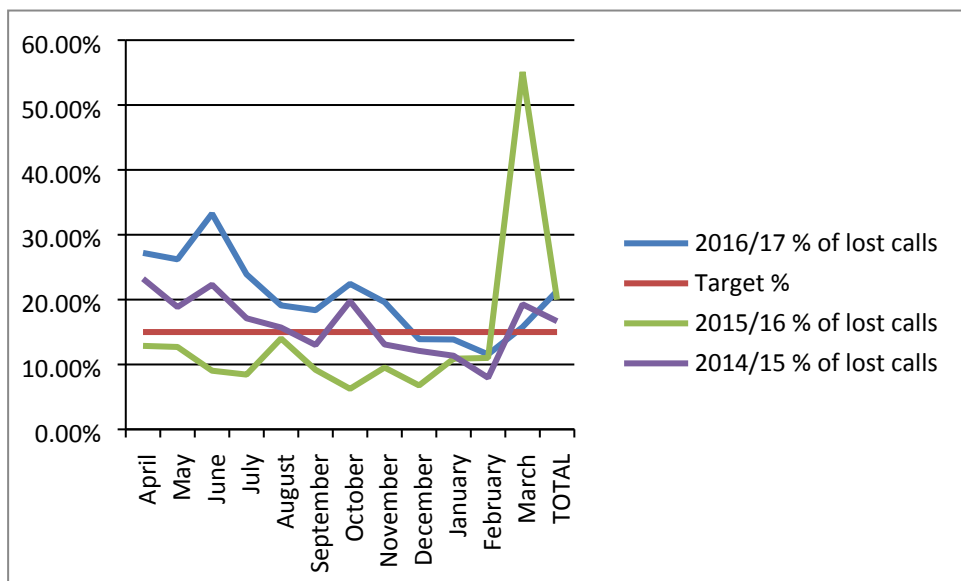


Council Tax and NNDR enquires account for 26.52% of all calls which create the highest call traffic throughout the year, peaking at its maximum during the annual billing period (March – April). Annual billing enquiries are often complex and can only be dealt with by skilled and fully trained advisers. The second highest category is Waste and Refuse enquiries (25.51%). These requests generally relate to the subscription or renewal of the garden waste service, reporting bin collection issues, requesting a new bin/larger bin/additional bin and requesting the removal of bulky items.

Call volumes for the last three years are represented within the chart below. Call volumes have been higher during 2016/17 particularly April – June 2016, as a result of the launch of the Garden Waste scheme. During the remaining months of 2016 calls levelled, however increased again during January – March 2017. This was due to early enquiries in regard to the renewal of the Garden Waste scheme.



Increase in call volumes for 2016/17 and the average length of calls has resulted in a dip in performance in regard to lost calls. The chart below shows the percentage of lost calls for the financial the last three years 2014/15 2015/16 and 2016/17 shown against the target indicator of 15%.



Historically, peak periods for telephone enquiries occur at annual billing, which starts in March and ends in May and this is reflected each year within the graph (full data is set out for telephone and face to face enquiries at Appendix 1). Throughout the eleven month period in 2015/16 lost calls was consistently lower compared to the previous year 2014/15. However there was a sharp rise in calls lost in March 2016 due to the introduction of the garden waste service and this negatively impacted the final outturn for 2015/16 for lost calls, which was above target at 19.99% due to the indicator being reported on a cumulative basis. Performance did not recover as lost calls continued into the first quarter 2016/17 due to repeat contact by customers enquiring about the service and whether their payment had been made, and general enquiries about the garden waste service. As previously reported to this Committee, this was due to the e-payment system which was in place last year, which needed

upgrading as it was not fully integrating into the back office. The payment system has now been upgraded and performance has since then vastly improved for those customers signing up to the service and renewing the service.

During the second quarter of 2016/17 lost calls started to decrease but were still above target. During this period two new members of staff started their six month training period and this factor, coupled with continuing enquiries regarding the garden waste and the European Referendum, led to an increase in average call length per call and ultimately impacted on the lost calls. During the third and fourth quarter lost calls reduced and December through to March lost calls were actually below target. Despite this, the final outturn for 2016/17 was 21.33%. The Customer Services Manager has put in place numerous initiatives to minimise the impact of increased customer contact such as:

- Limiting the holiday rota during peak periods
- The use of additional temporary staff to deal with Garden Waste enquiries
- Specialised agency staff for Council Tax enquiries
- Offering call backs to customers after 5pm for customers who do not want to wait
- During quiet periods on the front desk, customer service advisers log into the phone system to support the telephone queue

Whilst the target has not been met it is important to note that Customer Satisfaction remains extremely high. Customer feedback states that our customers are prepared to wait as they recognise the complexity of their enquiries and our aim to resolve them. This is exemplified by the Govmetric survey, which we conduct to measure customer satisfaction. Over 10% of our customers both telephone and face to face, are surveyed using this method and the Customers Services team in comparison to other local authorities, regularly achieve high level of satisfaction. In January this year we were top of the league table shown below:

Telephone					Jan-2017	
Position	Council	Type	Population	Total Feedback Responses	Net Satisfaction	
↑	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	District	105078	539	0.99	
↓	Devon County Council	County	746399	312	0.98	
↑	Oxford City Council	District	151906	1636	0.96	
↑	Hambleton District Council	District	85382	953	0.96	
↑	Hertfordshire County Council	County	1116062	1232	0.95	
↑	Norfolk County Council	County	796728	2664	0.95	
↓	East Ayrshire Council	Unitary	120235	129	0.95	
↓	South Tyneside Metropolitan Borough Council	Unitary	148127	976	0.94	
↓	Stevenage Borough Council	District	83957	803	0.94	
↑	The Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea	Unitary	158649	4941	0.94	

3.5 Performance – Meet and Greet/Front Desks

All face to face enquiries are dealt with, in the first instance, at the Meet and Greet counter with staff dealing with a variety of basic enquiries including signposting to other partners located within the Hub, such as Adult and Children’s services (LCC) and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The counter deals with on average, over 1600 enquires per month (annually 19,466). Should the customer need specific advice they are then allocated a Customer Service Adviser (served at the front desks) with over 68% of enquiries relating to Housing Benefits, 13% Council Tax, Rents 8%. The advisers deal with, on average, 1440 customers per month (annually 17,313) which has steadily increased over the last two years.

The corporate target which measures customer face to face waiting times is ‘80% of our customers are seen within 10 minutes’. The final outturn for 2016/17 was 74.97% (2015/16 77.83%). Increase in waiting times in the spring and summer months of 2016 were mainly attributable to an increase in enquiries that have been received by the Contact Centre (i.e. Council Tax and Garden Waste enquiries). Performance did start to improve in the Autumn/Winter months peaking at 79.6% in February.

Customer satisfaction levels are also high for face to face enquiries and this is shown through Govmetric feedback.

Face To Face				Jan-2017	
Position	Council	Type	Population	Total Feedback Responses	Net Satisfaction
↔	Hinckley and Bosworth Borough Council	District	105078	234	0.99
↑	London Borough of Barnet	Unitary	356386	2170	0.92
↓	East Ayrshire Council	Unitary	120235	1628	0.91
↓	Charnwood Borough Council	District	166100	399	0.85
↑	Hambleton District Council	District	85382	139	0.81
↓	London Borough of Sutton	Unitary	190146	1227	0.80
↑	East Hertfordshire District Council	District	137687	234	0.79
↔	Southwark Council	Unitary	288283	690	0.75
↑	Stevenage Borough Council	District	83957	422	0.69
↑	North Somerset Council	Unitary	202566	406	0.67

3.6 Service Development – Channel Shift

In order to improve the way we deliver front line services, a number of developments are under way centred around customer self service to encourage customers to interact with the council online. At the heart of this is work is the integration of existing online forms within our CRM system. A new CRM system is currently being implemented as part of the first phase of the ‘MyAccount’ project (the second phase being the launch of a web based Customer Portal for customers to self-serve requesting services such as council tax changes, viewing rent balances and reporting a missed bin). Ongoing improvements to the way we work are resulting in more and more services being made increasing accessible to customers whilst at the same

time still providing excellent services to customers who prefer to contact us via phone or face to face. It is essential therefore, that we use similar methods for data capture for both customer services and our external self- serving customers and the new CRM system will allow for this.

The new CRM system will go live in June 2017 and the launch of the customer web portal going live late 2017. Whilst customers can already request online services via our website, the portal will allow customers to open up personal account with the council and request multiple services and view recent transactions. The portal will not only show customers what requests have been made but also keep customers up to date with the status of that request.

A further report to this committee in regard to the launch of MyAccount and its impact upon the customer services footfall and call traffic will be presented following the launch in early 2018.

3.7 **Summary**

Whilst the council is working towards moving customers to request services online, it is acknowledged that many customers still want to deal with the council either face to face or over the telephone. The key role of the Customer Service team is to ensure that customer service levels are maintained and the team work hard to ensure that customers continue to be placed at the heart of the organisation.

4. EXEMPTIONS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION PROCEDURE RULES

4.1 Report to be taken in open session.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [FMC]

5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [AR]

6.1 None.

7. CORPORATE PLAN IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The provision of excellent customer service ensures that the council meets the following Corporate Values:

- FAIR – ensuring that our services are available to everyone.
- EFFICIENT – provide quality services that represent good value for money

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 Customers are surveyed in regard to the quality of our service using Govmetric and annual surveys.

9. RISK IMPLICATIONS

9.1 It is the Council's policy to proactively identify and manage significant risks which may prevent delivery of business objectives.

9.2 It is not possible to eliminate or manage all risks all of the time and risks will remain which have not been identified. However, it is the officer's opinion based on the information available, that the significant risks associated with this decision / project have been identified, assessed and that controls are in place to manage them effectively.

9.3 The following significant risks associated with this report / decisions were identified from this assessment:

None.

10. KNOWING YOUR COMMUNITY – EQUALITY AND RURAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Customer services regular carries out surveys of its customer base via Govmetric. The service also seeks feedback through an annual summer survey to ensure the service provided meets the needs of council customers. This year, the summer survey is focussing particularly upon accessing services online in the future. The automation of services may negatively impact upon the council's customers, such as the roll out of applying for housing benefit online, who are vulnerable and it is therefore essential that the council must maintain the continuation of face to face services for its most vulnerable residents.

11. CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

11.1 By submitting this report, the report author has taken the following into account:

- Community Safety implications
- Environmental implications
- ICT implications
- Asset Management implications
- Procurement implications
- Human Resources implications
- Planning implications
- Data Protection implications
- Voluntary Sector

Background papers: None.

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