

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET – 15th SEPTEMBER 2008

CUSTOMER CONTACT PERFORMANCE ANNUAL MONITORING 07/08

REPORT OF HEAD OF CUSTOMER SERVICES & BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

1.0 PURPOSE

- 1.1.** To report on how the authority is performing against the customer service standards and targets set out in the Customer Charter and the wider Customer Service Performance Information (PI) Framework.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That the content of this report is noted;

2.2 That Cabinet Members note the performance of their portfolio and work with the respective Corporate Director to identify areas for improvement and take the appropriate action to seek redress and to meet targets for response deadlines;

2.3 To note the introduction of quarterly management reports for each Portfolio identifying performance on complaint, compliment, telephone and enquiry handling processes, including both quantitative and qualitative data prepared and presented by the Customer Quality Team from September onwards.

3.0 SUMMARY

- 3.1** During 2007/08 there was a 3.5% increase in compliments from 766 to 793.
- 3.2** During 2007/08 there was a 4% reduction in complaints from 681 to 656.
- 3.3** 87% of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days, against a target of 88%.
- 3.4** Resources responded to 96% of corporate complaints within 20 working days, Community Services 86%, Environment and Regeneration 84%, Adult and Consumer Care 79%, and Children & Young People achieved 67%.
- 3.5** Statutory Complaints: Adult & Consumer Care and Children & Young People responded to 68% and 63% of statutory complaints within the target timescale.
- 3.6** There were 17 Stage 3 complaints in 2007/08 and only three of these resulted in a negotiated resolution or remedial action.
- 3.7** The Local Government Ombudsman reported no findings of maladministration against the council in 2007/08 and there were no recommendations to make a local

settlement.

- 3.8 There has been a 9.5% increase in the number of FOI/Data Protection requests for information in 2007/08.
- 3.9 Overall, we responded to 88% of FOI/DP requests for information within target. Chief Executive's Office achieved 100%, Adult & Consumer Care 98%, Community Services 93%, Resources 90%, Environment and Regeneration 83% Children & Young People 76%, and Cross Portfolio 94%.
- 3.10 The council, excluding the call centres, answered 74.29% of telephone calls within a target of 10 seconds. This equates to over 1 million calls answered within 10 seconds.

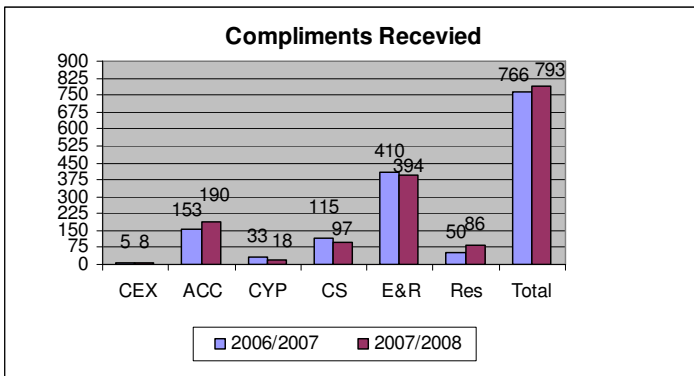
4.0 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 The Customer Charter was originally launched in 2004 and revised and re-launched during National Customer Service Week in October 2007.
- 4.2 In addition the corporate Customer Services Team developed a basket of new local indicators to support the Council's approach to putting customers at the heart of the organisation, in line with the customer services strategy.
- 4.3 These standards are measured through a variety of methods including the VOIP telephone system, mystery customer exercises, customer exit Survey's and the interrogation of a number of customer databases which help to monitor complaints, compliments, FOI and Data Protection requests.
- 4.4 A summary of key performance information for 2007/08 on complaints (Appendix 1), Freedom of Information requests (Appendix 2) and Exit Survey's (Appendix 3) are set out in the attached dashboards - with more detailed information in the body of this report.
- 4.5 With the implementation of the new 'Respond' database estimated to go live in September 2008 we will be able to provide far more detailed customer feedback reports thereafter and will be meeting with each portfolio to tailor these reports to meet their individual requirements.

5.0 OVERVIEW OF PERFORMANCE (COMPLIMENTS/COMPLAINTS)

Compliments

- 5.1 During 2007/08 the council received 793 compliments, a 3.5% increase on last year's total of 766.



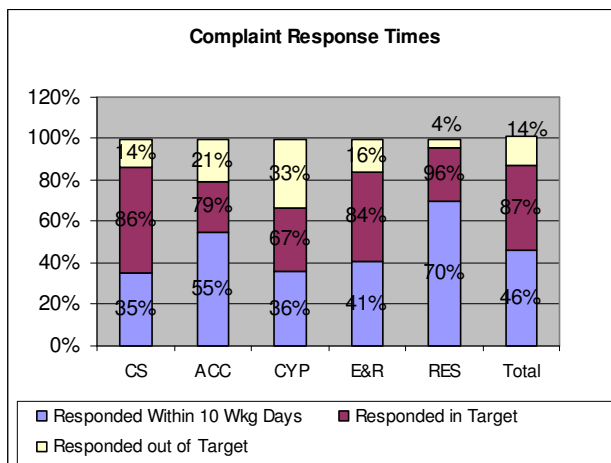
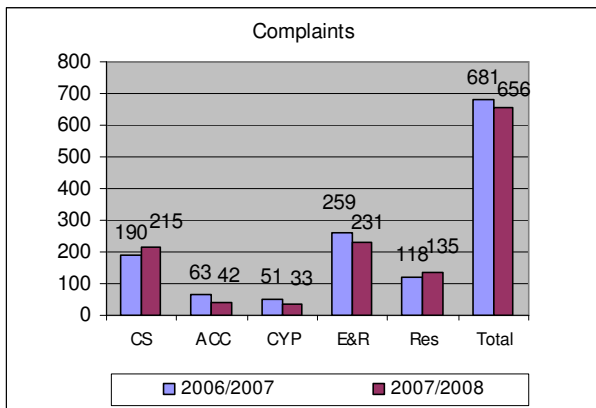
5.2 Below is an outline of the top three areas that received the most compliments and the trends that are apparent.

Compliments	Reason
Environmental Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many compliments for TWS for their fast response to collections and cleanliness and improved service. • Bulk collection service • Graffiti busters rapid clearance • Recycling centres received high praise for being helpful, lots of praise also for the recycling collections. • Praise for the Chelsea flower show success. • Pull out service
Adult Social Services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lots of praise for Social work teams in the following sections, Disability, Finance team and older people. • Services provided by the Rapid response team. • Occupational therapy teams received many compliments for their work.
Leisure Centres and Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude of staff – professional, helpful, courteous, friendly • Nrgize sessions • Quality of swimming lessons • Online references. • Storytelling session

5.4 Compliments

5.4.1 During 07/08 the council received **656** corporate complaints which is a 4% decrease on the **681** received in 06/07.

5.4.2 Whilst as a council we have responded to **87%** of complaints within 20 working days there is still room for improvement to reach our 08/09 target of **88%**. We will be supporting this with the implementation of a robust escalation procedure in line with the outcome of the recent review of complaint handling and the 19 recommendations for change. The introduction of the new 'Respond' database will ensure reminders are sent to those responsible for complaint responses including an escalation to senior officers at the point of service failure.



5.4.3 With the approval of trialling a 10 day response time to Stage 1 complaints, albeit it not planned to go live until September 08, we have provided information of current performance in achieving this.

5.4.4 With the implementation of the new database we will, in future, be able to provide more detailed reports broken down by service area within each Portfolio. This will allow for more in-depth interrogation of where services need to improve as well as celebrating those that are providing excellent customer service.

5.4.5 Below is an outline of the top three areas that received the most complaints.

Area	Reason
Environment & Regeneration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refuse collection • State of roads, potholes and footpaths • Drainage and flooding issues • Trees and hedges. • Street lights not being repaired. • Planning applications being challenged
Leisure Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilities not up to expected standard/cleanliness • Changes to timetables and not being able to use the gym due to it being used by schools. • Cancellation of classes • Problems with the online library service.
Resources (Revenues & Benefits)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being issued with summons which complainants feel are not justified • Time taken to process claims

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time spent waiting on the phone to speak to someone • Tone of some reminders.
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5.5 Improvements as a result of complaints

5.5.1 Community Services

5.5.2 In response to complaints about exercise classes being cancelled the session is now only cancelled when it is not possible to provide an alternative instructor. Leisure centres now endeavour to offer an alternative class when a substitute instructor is not available.

5.5.3 Oakengates Leisure Centre has secured funding approved for an NRGIZE (children's gym) facility and this is due to open in September 2008. School children will be able to use this facility and the public will have full use of Aspirations fitness suite.

5.5.4 Bins have been provided in the cemetery to try and prevent the dropping of litter which was then drifting into neighbouring gardens.

5.5.5 The Code of Practice and the Rules and Regulations for the Burial Service, were updated following a complaint about an internment. A policy for removing headstones was incorporated and the inclusion of the burial officer checking the location of grave before internment was included in the working practices.

5.5.6 Revenues & Benefits

5.5.7 Performance has improved regarding processing benefit claims with a reduction of an average of 3 working days from last year to 26.97 days for 07/08. The Department of Works and Pensions target is 30 days so we are exceeding this.

5.5.8 More claims are now being processed via mobile working which means that an assessor can go into a customer's home and calculate benefit for them instantly, on the day of the visit. The overall target for processing benefit claims was 29 days and performance is well above target as currently claims are taking 22 days to assess. This should help reduce queries regarding time taken.

5.5.9 Environment and Regeneration

5.5.10 During the last budget setting exercise over 6.5 million has been targeted towards the Highways service to improve the state of the roads which will include our response to pot holes etc.

5.5.11 Historically Environmental Maintenance has been the Business Unit who receives the most complaints (and compliments) within E&R. This predominantly relates to Refuse & Recycling Services, but this also needs to be put into context i.e. each year a bin or box will be collected circa 5.2 million occasions across the Borough.

5.5.12 In response to formal complaints and service requests, several initiatives have been put in place including: a marketing and promotions plan for a range of environmental/street scene services, doorstep delivery of refuse & recycling calendars & stickers, easy to follow information leaflets encouraging recycling (including a

pictorial leaflet for residents who experience language barriers and in particular eastern Europeans) Officers visit/telephone complainants to develop 'complaint ownership' and make changes to maintenance programmes/operations to meet local needs for example litter collection, grass cutting and hedge maintenance. The table below shows a clear downward trend of formal complaints since 2004. This is not say that Environmental Maintenance only makes service improvements due to formal complaints, each year the Business Unit receives and records tens of thousands of customer enquiries. This is in turn used as intelligent management information and helps to shape service delivery through the contract.

Complaints for:	2004/05	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Environmental Maintenance	162	152	112	52

E&R are responsible for the development and delivery of 'Our Promises' these relate to key frontline services which have previously attracted formal complaints. The near perfect performance has helped reduce complaints relating to these service areas and have been awarded a nationally recognised Green Apple Award."

5.6 Complaints and Customer Feedback Review

- 5.6.1 Following on from Directors Board approval in March to make changes to current procedures resulting from a review of all customer feedback processes, the following actions have taken place:
- 5.6.2 Purchase of a new database, CDC Respond, to capture, monitor and learn lessons from customer feedback. Planned to go live in September 08.
- 5.6.3 The Environment and Regeneration Customer Service Officer will be co-locating within the Corporate Customer Quality Team from September for 6 months to progress the aspiration to have a single point of contact for the reporting customer feedback eg complaints, FOI requests, etc.
- 5.6.4 Customer Quality Team will be responsible for the Resources Portfolio feedback channels for a trial period from August – October 08 in line with the single point of contact plans
- 5.6.5 A complainants exit Satisfaction Survey was introduced on 1st January 2008 and this means that all complainants are contacted within 3 weeks of their concerns being responded to ensure we continuously improve our service
- 5.6.6 Introduction of a trial to respond to Stage 1 complaints within 10 working days will commence from September 08.
- 5.6.7 The recent Mori Survey highlighted the substantial improvement in customer satisfaction with complaint handling of over 14 percentage points.

5.7 Statutory Adult Consumer Care Stage 1 Complaints

- 5.7.1 **59** Stage 1 Adult Statutory complaints were received and **73%** responded to in timescale. ****

Community Care Services	Older People	ALD	Mental Health	Substance Misuse	IC/RR/PT	Physical Disability	Commissioning	TOTAL
Number of Complaints	23***	10**	10*	4	6	5	1	59

Response Times								
Within 10 days	11***	3	0	2	6	3	0	25
Within 20 days	5	2	4	1	0	2	1	15
Outside Timescale	3	4	4	1	0	0	0	12
Withdrawn	4	0	0	0	0	0	0	4
Stage 2	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
Suspended	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1

(1) Intermediate Care, Rapid Response, Occupational Therapy

* 2 complaints are outstanding, but still within the timescale.

** 1 complaint is outstanding, but still within the timescale.

*** 1 complaint was joint with OT, so has been included in those figures.

**** Calculated from the total received, less those withdrawn

5.8 Statutory Children & Young People Complaints

5.8.1 29 Stage 1 Children Statutory Complaints were received of which 63% were responded to in timescale.

Business Unit	Children with Disabilities	Placements	Safeguarding and Children in Care	Corp Parenting & 16+	Total
No. of Complaints	2	9	16	2	29
Response in 10 days	2	6	1	2	11
Response in 20 days	n/a	1	5	n/a	6
Response outside 20 days	n/a	2	8	n/a	10
Withdrawn	n/a	n/a	2	n/a	2

5.9 Stage 3 Investigations 2007/08

5.9.1 The number of stage 3 investigations remained constant at 17 although two FOI appeals were investigated at stage 3 of the corporate complaints procedure bringing the total number of stage 3 investigations to 19.

Stage 3 Corporate complaints

Portfolio	No.
Children & Young People	1
Community Services	2
Environment & Regeneration (2 from the same person)	9
Resources (2 were for a service that has transferred to E&R)	5
Total	17

5.9.2 Of these 17 investigations the following decisions were made:

- 11 not upheld
- 1 did not warrant a stage 3 investigation and other action was taken by the complainant
- 1 was closed without a stage 3 investigation due to non-response from the complainant
- 1 was withdrawn
- 3 were subject to a negotiated resolution.

5.10 Local Government Ombudsman

5.10.1 For the period of this report 1.4.2007 to 31.03.2008 the Local Government Ombudsman received 29 complaints about Telford & Wrekin Council. Some of these complaints will be determined in the year 2008/09.

Complaints received by the LGO for the year by service area

Year	Adult care services	Benefits	Children & Family svs	Education	Housing	Other	Planning & Build Control	Public Finance	Social Services other	Transport & highways	Total
2007/08	3	3	1	2	-	11	6	1	-	2	29
2006/07	1	1	-	-	2	7	11	2	-	1	25

5.10.2 The decisions fell into the following four categories:

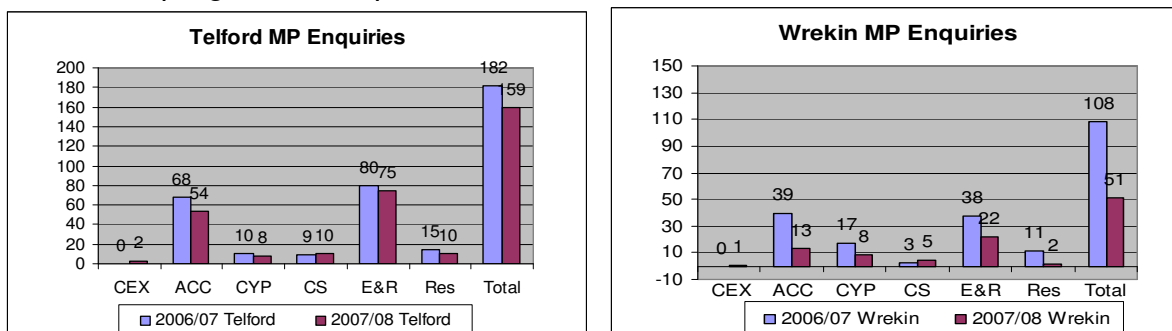
- **10** – No or insufficient evidence of maladministration
- **5** – Ombudsman's discretion
- **7** – Outside jurisdiction
- **4** – Premature complaints
- **3** – Complaints where Local Government Ombudsman did not make a decision within the year.

5.10.3 Once again it is pleasing to see that there we no findings of maladministration against the council and no recommendations to make a local settlement.

5.10.4 The response times to the Ombudsman's enquiries have also dramatically improved this year (2007/08) to 28.7 days from the high of 47.9 days for the previous reporting period 2006/07.

6. MP ENQUIRIES

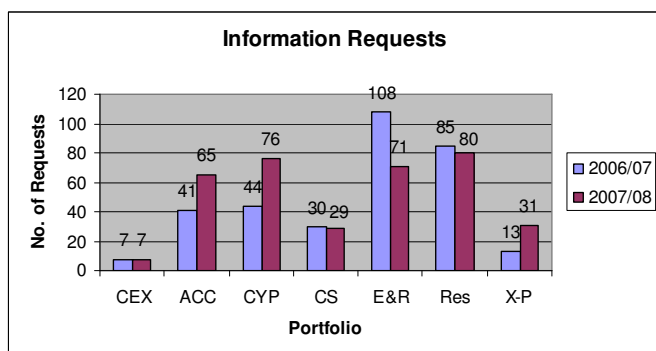
- 6.1 The Chief Executive's Unit continued to receive MP enquiries during the year and monitor the progress of responses



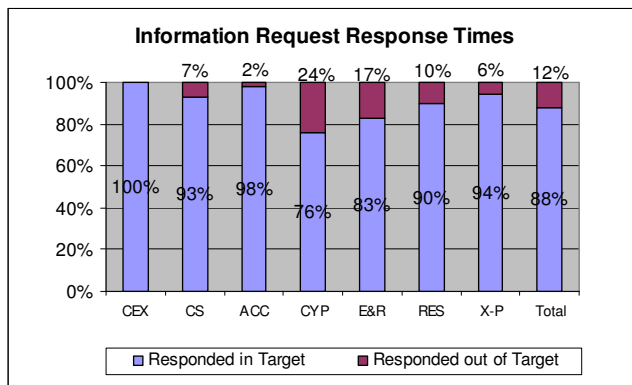
- 6.2 290 MP Enquiries were received in 06/07 compared to 210 in 07/08 which is a 27% decrease compared to the previous year.

7. FREEDOM OF INFORMATION AND DATA PROTECTION REQUESTS

- 7.1. During 2007/08 the council received a total of **359** requests for information which were dealt with under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and/or Data Protection Act 1998 compared with **328** requests received during 2006/07.
- 7.2. For this year it should be noted that requests under Data Protection have increased by **97%** from **32** in 06/07 to **63** in 07/08. The reason for this may be increased awareness of the right generally to access information and raised awareness within the council which has led to enhanced reporting and tracking of such requests specifically within ACC whose requests increased by 58% from 41 to 65 and CYP by 73%, from 44 to 76 requests.



- 7.3. We responded to **88%** of FOI requests within target and the chart below reflects all information requests such as FOI, Data Protection and Environmental Information Regulations requests for information.



8. COMPLAINANTS EXIT SATISFACTION SURVEY

8.1. The Customer Quality Team have recently introduced this survey and the results below are from customers who had complained in January, 38 Surveys were distributed with 13 (34%) being completed and returned. Head line results include;

- 69% stated it was easy to make a complaint
- 46% of people were satisfied with the way the council processed their complaint
- 30% stated it was easy to speak to the investigating officer
- 38% stated they were happy with the time it took to receive a response
- 38% stated they were happy with the outcome of their complaint
- 31% stated that they thought the service had improved as a result of their complaint

The exit survey will continue throughout the year with results presented in the quarterly reports to Portfolio's and also to the Customer Focus Board at which a number of Heads of Service are present. See Appendix 3 for further information.

9. MYSTERY CUSTOMER EXERCISE

9.1. The Customer Quality Team have appointed M-E-L (Measurement, Evaluation Learning), based in Birmingham, who have a wealth of experience in working with Local authorities to deliver mystery customer exercises.

9.2. Mystery customer or mystery shopping as it is often referred to is a highly useful tool in providing objective individual feedback on the way our organisation deals with customers on a day to day basis. The results will compliment the customer focus boards work around gathering customer intelligence.

9.3. We will be using our own Telford and Wrekin citizens as part of the mystery customer exercise giving a sense of ownership to the project. Currently no decision has been made as to the service areas to be included as this will be determined following consultation with the Customer Focus Board who will be using the results from the recent Citizen's Panel, annual Mori Survey and the data in this report to advise on the service areas to be included. However it is likely that a maximum of 3 service areas will be involved allowing for more indepth analysis of performance to be obtained and a confidence level built in from which recommendations can be made.

10. **CUSTOMER CONTACT INFORMATION (Telephone Answering Performance)**

Following the implementation of the new VOIP telephony system in December 2006, we now have our first 12 months telephone answering performance outturn for the whole authority (excluding schools) and for our six mini call centres.

Recruitment to the new customer contact team was completed in December 2007 with a key appointment being the Corporate Contact Manager who is overseeing the plans to develop the council's first corporate contact centre in line with the customer services strategy and the objective of dealing with as many enquiries at the first port of call regardless of the access channel chosen by our customers.

10.1. **Overall Telephone Extension Performance Outturn (The phones on each employees desk)**

% of telephone extensions answered within 10 seconds - Target 85% (Not including call centres)	All portfolios	74.29%
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10.1.1. Outside of the Contact Centre's, the Council answered just short of 1.5 million telephone calls, with over 1 million of those were answered in less than 10 seconds.

10.1.2. It should be noted that the target of 85% was set without any baseline information. The target for 2008/09 has been set at 80% and benchmarking partners are being explored.

10.1.3. The VOIP infrastructure has provided a level of performance information in relation to call handling that has not previously been available and unlikely to be found in many other councils across the country. Each Business Manager receives a monthly report on performance of their service area. Work is being progressed with ICT colleagues to provide Heads of Service and Directors with performance reports covering wider service areas to allow for an enhanced level of scrutiny.

10.2. **Overall Call Centre Telephone Answering Performance**

10.2.1. There are two key corporate indicators used to measure our call centres performance:

- Average answer delay in call centres to be less than 1 minute. The target for 07/08 was set at 90%
- The target % of abandoned calls in our call centres to be less than 5% in line with the general industry target.

10.2.2. Our results for 2007/08 are as follows:

Year End 31/03/2008

Average answer delay in call centres to be less than 1 minute - Target 75%

	Calls Handled	Calls answered < 1 min	Percentage answered within 1 minute (average) %
Switchboard	87,545	78,907	90.13
Childrens Services	6871	6102	88.81
Environment Services	85,358	75,394	88.33
Highways Services	22,995	19,063	82.90
Planning Services	36,079	34,775	96.39
Revenues & Benefits	89,119	36,582	41.05

Total	327,967	250,823	76.48
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- 10.2.3. Revenues and Benefit Services are looking at ways of remodelling their call centre to ensure the most efficient set up and are making visits to other call centres across the country to share best practice and look at alternative ways of working. Other Revenues and Benefits call centres experience similar high demands for service. However in line with the customer service strategy the Revenues and Benefits Call Centre will be moving to be part of the first phase development of the Corporate Contact Centre along with the switchboard service. The planned moves will be taking place towards the end of July with responsibility for the Revenues and Benefits Call Centre transferring to the Head of Customer Services and Business Transformation. It is anticipated that more generic working and skills based routing will ensure that performance in the Revenues and Benefits Call Centre will improve over the coming 12 months. However a separate report on planned improvements and options is being prepared by the Corporate Contact Manager and will be available for Directors Board as required.

% of abandoned calls in our call centres to be below Target of 5%			
	Total Calls made	Abandoned Calls	Percentage Abandoned
Switchboard	90,930	3385	3.72
Childrens Services	7352	481	6.54
Environment Services	88,827	3469	3.91
Highways Services	24,852	1857	7.47
Planning Services	37,328	1249	3.35
Revenues & Benefits	112,456	23,337	20.75

Overall	361,745	33,778	9.34
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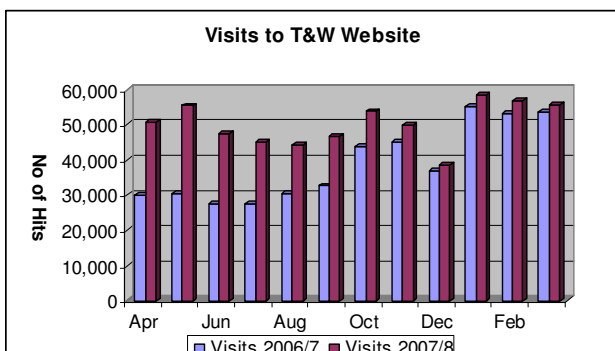
- 10.2.4. Unfortunately, Highways services experienced a very high abandoned rate during the summer floods, making it difficult to recover to an annual performance figure of 5% or below. Highways did endeavour to enact part of their Business Continuity Plan to enable a pre-recorded message explaining to customer what action to take depending on the severity of the call but technical difficulties prevented this from working. Since then work has been completed by Synetrix's (the telephone provider)

to prevent this from occurring in future. The Business Transformation Team working alongside Highways has identified some improvements by introducing electronic processing to replace some paper based systems previously in operation to help enhance performance.

- 10.2.5. Revenues and Benefit Services results mirror the waiting time performance. Clearly, increased waiting time will result in customers abandoning their calls in the first instance.
- 10.2.6. In addition the issue of internal callers is a problem that significantly affects the statistics for most call centres. External facing call centres should only be required to deal with external customer phone calls and not those of internal staff who in reality are 'blocking' the service for customers. The Call Centre Managers Meeting chaired by the Contact Manager is addressing these concerns and developing guidelines of best practice for the mini call centres to adopt to ensure we achieve maximum performance.
- 10.2.7. The customer contact management team are working with the 6 call centre teams to provide assistance with development of more in depth reporting. They are also working with ICT and Synextrix to further enhance our call centre technology solution to bring about service improvements.

11. WEBSITE INFORMATION

PI	Target 07/08	Actual 07/08
To increase the number of unique users of the councils website each year	8.00%	29.35% This equates to an increase of 137,000 users to 603,000 users
Increase user satisfaction of the corporate website	68.00%	79%



12. GENERAL INFORMATION

12.1. Equality & Diversity

12.1.1. Every effort is made to assist customers when making requests to ensure that wherever possible we are able to provide them with the information they need in a format that is useful to them.

12.1.2. An equality impact assessment will be undertaken on the new customer enquiries procedure following the completion of the review of the Corporate Complaints Procedure to ensure we are addressing all equality and diversity needs and capturing vital performance management information within this process.

12.2. **Environmental Impact**

12.2.1. The move to a higher proportion of requests for information being received via electronic means reduces the paper and printing required to receive, distribute and respond to requests overall. Additionally a change in working practices has resulted in requests for information and complaints being scanned which has reduced the need to distribute paper copies when collating the information.

12.2.2. The outcome of the feedback review will see the purchase of a new improved database which allows scanning and attachments of documents thus removing the need for paper files, which are often duplicated, being held in a number of offices across the council.

12.3. **Legal Comment**

12.3.1. There are no legal requirements in terms of the corporate complaints procedure, however, compliance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 , the Data Protection Act 1998 and the Statutory complaints procedure are legal requirements.

12.3.2. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

12.4. **Links with Corporate Priorities**

12.4.1. Modern, effective Council

12.5. **Financial Implications**

12.5.1. The costs associated with administering the complaints process is in the form of officer time. This is met from within existing budgets across the Council with a large element being within Community Services budgets.

12.6. **Ward Implications**

12.6.1. Borough wide implications.

12.7. **Background Papers.**

12.7.1. None

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Appendix 1 – Complaints Dashboard

Appendix 2 – Freedom of Information Dashboard (inc. FOI, Environmental Information Regulations & DP)

Appendix 3 – Exit Survey Dashboard