

Budget and Performance Panel

Customer Service Update 10th June 2008

Report of Jane Alder

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To report on the initial performance of new Customer Service Centres which opened in Oct 2007

This report is public

RECOMMENDATIONS

(1) That the report be noted.

1.0 Introduction

1.1 The face-to-face centres opened in Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls in October 2007 on schedule and in budget.

In November 2007, Lancaster Town Hall front doors were closed and all access for Customers and visitors was channelled via the Customer Service Centre.

2.0 Details

The tables below contain detailed about the operational performance in the Customer Service Centres in Lancaster and Morecambe Town Halls and the telephone centre since the 1st October 2007. The information comes from the new queue management system and the existing integrated telephony system.

2.1 Performance

Customer Service Generic Performance Report					
Areas: Telephony, MTH & LTH Customer Service Centres					
Period: 1/10/07 to 30/4/08					
		LTH	MTH	TOTAL	
Footfall	Total Number of visitors	15997	5798	21795	37%
	Highest user: Benefits & Revs visitors	5431	2621	8052	
		Switch	CCDS	TOTAL	
Telephone	Total Number of calls offered	44078	25427	69505	4%
	Total Number of calls answered	43190	23780	66970	
	Total Number of calls abandoned	906	1565	2471	
		LTH	MTH	TOTAL	
Sundry Sales	Total value of transactions taken	18,906	3615	22,521	66%
	Highest transaction type: cash	13,130	1807	14,937	

a. Footfall

The Customer Services Centres have seen a steady increase in footfall since opening, with a total of 21,795. However, MTH continues to be under utilised with only 5,798 visitors representing 27% of the total footfall across both sites. We have seen a steady increase in footfall to MTH though as customer awareness of the new facilities has improved. There will be further growth in customer visits to the CSC in MTH following the full integration of Parking and NoW cards at MTH and the proposed move of Strategic Housing staff from Euston Road into MTH.

b. Telephony

A total of 69,505 calls were received between October 07 and end April 08 of which 67% were for the switchboard.

There has been an increase in call volume of 28% compared to the same period last year, mainly attributable to on-going programme of roll out of three stream waste (wheelie bins and recycling) across the district . Despite the increase in calls we have managed to maintain a fairly static abandonment rate of 4%. This compares with the over 20% abandonment rate that CCDS were experiencing prior to their inclusion in the CSCs.

c. Sundry Sales

A total of £22,521 was receipted through the Customer Service Centres, with the highest volume of transactions taking place at Lancaster (which is commensurate with the volume of customers).

Chip & Pin devices are in operation, but as the majority of transactions are low value and relate to visitor parking and tradesmen permits, then the amount of cash taken is relatively high (66%). Officers are researching alternatives to reduce further the amount of cash that is transacted at the CSCs.

2.2 Resource

a. FTEs

FTEs	Team Leader	CSAs
Permanent	1	6
Temporary*	**2	2

* Temporary positions are funded until September 2008.

** 1 position vacant

b. Resource funding

A reserve sum was identified until September 2008 to adequately staff and resource the two Customer Service Centres.

Funds or staffing from Services transferring into Customer Services need to be made available from September 2008 to ensure the arrangements remain cost neutral.

2.3 Migration of services

The following identifies the Services that have already migrated to Customer Services and the dates for those that are on-line to do so during this business year.

	LTH	MTH
Parking Permits	✓ Oct 07	May 08
Concessionary Travel	✓ Oct 07	May 08
Visitor handling	✓ Oct 07	✓ Oct 07
Courier deliveries & tenders	✓ Oct 07	✓ Oct 07
Pension Service advice	✓ Oct 07	✓ Oct 07
CAB Worker	✓ April 08	✓ April 08
Promenade Permits	June 08	✓ May 08
Bowling permits	✓ May 08	✓ May 08
Strategic Housing & Homelessness services	Oct 08	July 08
Cultural – booking events & tickets	End Oct 08	End Oct 08
Electoral register viewing	Jan 09	Jan 09
Public access PC – for viewing Planning Applications etc.	Oct 08	Oct 08

2.4 Customer Feedback and Experience

Customer feedback to date has been positive. However, there are four recurring customer issues:

- i) front door at LTH – The outer doors being open continues to cause problems and confusion for some customers, particularly the elderly.
- ii) 'two queues' – one for Revenues and one for Customer Service. This results in people waiting for Revenues whilst Customer Service staff are perceived to be 'doing nothing'. This causes customer dissatisfaction and frustration and we have had a lot of criticism for not managing this appropriately.

In particular, the inability of Customer Services staff to receipt simple documents from customers causes the biggest frustration.

Customer Services are meeting regularly with the Revenues service to address this and other concerns

- iii) Disabled access at MTH – i.e. the entrance into the basement. The quality of both the exterior entrance and the lobby area for those with limited mobility is poor and customers have expressed their dissatisfaction. Property Service are aware of the issues and changes will form part of the Access to Services accommodation review
- iv) Telephones – there has been a degree of customer dissatisfaction in not being able to get through to specific published telephone numbers. In particular Euston Road is an issue, although the resource issues are attributable to this and the Head of Service is very aware of the situation. As a consequence, the transfer of Euston Road office staff into the MTH customer service centre will help to alleviate this problem.

Monthly customer exit surveys are due to commence with effect from June 08.

A mystery shopper study has been commissioned to provide further assessment of the services delivered across the Council from the customer's perspective. This exercise follows the initial mystery shop undertaken in 2005 and findings will be available at the end of June 08.

More recently representatives from the Citizens Advice Bureaux have been present one day a week in both CSCs to improve the service and advice offered to callers and visitors. Further plans are in hand to offer similar facilities to other organisations such as SAL's Place to bring further improvements to the services provided within the CSCs.

Other councils, in particularly the County Council, have visited the CSCs with a view to developing their own facilities using the benefits and experiences of our centres.

3.0 Conclusion

- 3.1 The two face to face Customer Service centres opened on time, within budget and have been well received. The continued programme of Customer Services is reliant on identification of funds/staffing from Services as further activities transfer to CS function.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer would highlight that this report contains no analysis of the financial costs of establishing or running the centres, or of any other financial implications. Without such analysis, the report doesn't provide sufficient information on which to give Members the opportunity to assess or challenge Value for Money - or even simply understand the scope of investment. The s151 Officer would therefore advise that a further more detailed report is presented to Members in due course, covering these aspects, so that any issues arising can then be considered in the future plans for the centres.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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