

# **BUDGET AND PERFORMANCE PANEL**

## **Mystery Shopper Exercise**

**25<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

### **Report of Head of Information & Customer Services**

#### **PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To report on the recent Mystery Shopping exercise which highlights changes since 2005.

**This report is public**

#### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**(1) That the report be noted.**

##### **1. Introduction**

The authority recently commissioned an exercise known as a mystery shop whereby an external company professionally assessed our customer facing offices across the Council. The exercise covered the face to face centres in the Town Halls in Lancaster and Morecambe, as well as other customer facing sites in Council Housing, Salt Ayre, and the tourism offices. The exercise also covered the telephone service and Council website using a number of researchers to see how well these channels dealt with certain common queries.

##### **2. Background**

The Council last undertook such a comprehensive exercise in 2005. The results of that survey were disappointing and an action plan was drawn up to improve many aspects of customer services based upon the results of that survey. Such items as uniforms, greeting, customer service training etc. were reviewed and changed.

##### **3. Key Results**

Some of the key results are summarised below – the exercise is purely based around the individual researcher's experience matched against their expectations of how an organisation should appear.

External appearance – the external appearance of most sites visited scored above expectation.

Internal appearance of sites visited all but one scored above expectation

The appearance of staff, compared to expectations, was above average with the exception of three sites – this was in relation to ‘no name badges being worn’, staff dressed too casually or without uniform.

The initial greeting exceeded expectations in all areas – particularly Salt Ayre who scored the highest in this area.

Enquiry handling exceeded expectations in all areas except one. This was because the customer did not feel that the interaction was friendly or helpful.

Telephone– 78% said that it met expectations. Planning, Council Tax exceeded expectations. The majority of callers felt that their enquiry was dealt with above their expectation.

Internet – 38% thought the website met their expectations. The main issues focussed around not being able to locate the information they needed

Further details of the findings will be presented at the meeting and fed back to staff via the corporate staff briefing process.

#### **4. Conclusion**

There has been a noticeable improvement in customer service across the Council since the last survey. There are still some areas for improvement and officers will draw up an action plan and ensure that actions are placed in appropriate business plans. Regular reviews of customer satisfaction in line with national standards will continue.

<b>SECTION 151 OFFICER’S COMMENTS</b>	
The Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.	
<b>MONITORING OFFICER’S COMMENTS</b>	
The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.	
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