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# Customer Services Review

## **Caerphilly County Borough Council**

**Audit year:** 2011-12

**Issued:** August 2013

**Document reference:** 285A2013

# Status of report

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There is a significant amount of operational customer service activity but the Council's strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and its customer care strategic framework, while it has been reviewed, has not been updated since 2005.

Although the Council monitors and reports a limited number of performance measures, it is not able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its customer services.

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# Summary report

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## Summary

1. The channels through which public services are delivered and by which the public has contact with Caerphilly County Borough Council (the Council), (be that via telephone, online, in person, or via other means), are a critical part of public service provision. Given the current global financial constraints and the desire to improve services there is an ongoing need for these channels to be managed effectively and efficiently for everyone.
2. The Council has recognised the importance of improving its customer services and set Improvement Objectives directly related to this agenda over a number of years, as shown in [Exhibit 1](#).

### Exhibit 1: Customer Services related improvement priorities

Improvement Plan	Priorities
2010-11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase the levels of user satisfaction.</li><li>• Improve a range of actions to improve our complaints process and use this to understand what our customers need.</li><li>• Introduce and publish contact service standards so that the customer knows the service they can expect.</li><li>• Introduce the 'Customer Insight Project'. This project will help us to understand our customer's needs.</li><li>• Introduce the 'Tell Us Once'.</li><li>• Introduce a Nationality Checking Service.</li></ul>
2011-12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• We will improve the way we engage and feedback to citizens.</li></ul>
2012-13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Ensure the citizens of the Council understand why, when and how to engage with us, and the impact of their engagement will have in helping us to improve services.</li></ul>

Exhibit source: Caerphilly County Borough Council Improvement Plans and Improvement Objectives

3. In 2010-11 the Council set itself eight indicators to judge whether it had been successful in delivering its customer services improvement priorities. In our Annual Improvement Report (February 2012) we noted that: the Council did not report performance against a number of these indicators; progress on reviewing and implementing a new complaints policy had been slow; and a number of the actions identified for action during 2010-11 had not been delivered. In addition, a number of the actions to improve how the Council engages with the public had not been advanced. However, we acknowledged that the actions would be addressed as part of the Council's Citizen Engagement Strategy, which was adopted by Cabinet on 9 May 2013. In 2011-12 the Council developed a range of new indicators to enable it to better judge its customer services performance.

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4. Over the last few years the Council has looked to change the way in which it engages with its customers. The most notable change is the development of six Customer First Centres<sup>1</sup>. The Council also has a Customer Charter and has developed standards for dealing with customers over the phone or during face-to-face meetings.
  5. The Council has devolved arrangements for delivering its customer services. For example, Housing and Social Services manage their own customer interfaces and other interfaces are managed corporately. This review focussed on the corporate customer services arrangements across the whole Council.
  6. This review sought to answer the question: **Is the Council improving the way in which citizens access its services?** We focused on the following sub-questions:
    - Are existing customer service arrangements accessible and working efficiently and effectively to deliver improved services for citizens?
    - Does the Council have an appropriate strategic approach to customer services?
    - Does customer services have a clear performance management framework and is performance managed well?
  7. The review concluded that: **The Council provides citizens with a range of channels to access its services but its strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and in need of updating, and it does not effectively evaluate its customer services provision.**
  8. We came to this conclusion because:
    - the Council has accessible customer service arrangements across a range of channels but there is a need to understand and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these arrangements to improve services for citizens;
    - there is a significant amount of operational customer service activity but the Council's strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and its customer care strategic framework has not been updated since 2005; and
    - although the Council monitors and reports a limited number of performance measures, it is not able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its customer services.
  9. Our detailed findings are outlined below in [Appendix 1](#).
  10. In order to support improvement at the Council, we have included in [Appendix 4](#) examples drawn from good practice across the UK.

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<sup>1</sup> Service centre located in the community providing citizens with access to a range of council services

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## Proposals for improvement

### **Governance and performance management**

- P1 Develop a more co-ordinated strategic approach to customer services. This should include:
- developing and implementing a customer service strategy that supports the Council's strategic vision and improvement priorities;
  - establishing clear links between the customer service strategy document, Improvement Objectives and departmental service improvement plans;
  - ensuring the customer service strategy clearly sets out appropriate performance measures that enable the Council to manage, monitor, report and evaluate its strategy and other related strategies including its customer charter;
  - including customer services' performance measures in the Council's corporate performance reporting arrangements and ensuring they are subject to effective self-evaluation, challenge and scrutiny;
  - ensuring that the Council's equalities and Welsh language objectives are being delivered and reflected in the customer service strategy;
  - ensuring that the lead Cabinet Member for customer services has clearly documented responsibilities and is provided with regular performance information; and
  - ensuring business cases are developed for service improvements that clearly set out and analyses the costs and benefits of the service improvement, and the expected improvements and the outcomes to be delivered.

### **Information and data**

- P2 Strengthen the approach to evaluating and improving customer services in a proactive way. This should include:
- collecting and analysing customer views and satisfaction data for e-mail and telephone correspondence;
  - corporately collating and analysing customer complaints and compliments and regularly reporting findings to Members; and
  - considering re-instating the customer viewpoint panel or introduce another appropriate method of obtaining customer feedback.

# Appendix 1

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## Detailed Findings

Level 2 Question	Are existing customer service arrangements accessible and working efficiently and effectively to deliver improved services for citizens?
Conclusion and Findings	<p><b>The Council has accessible customer service arrangements across a range of channels but there is a need to understand and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of these arrangements to improve services for citizens.</b></p> <p>We concluded this because:</p> <p><b>The Council provides citizens with access to its services across a range of channels.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Council provides channel access through:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>– Face to face access to customers at the Customer First Centres<sup>2</sup> located in Bargoed (38,000 customer contacts per year as at August 2012), Blackwood (90,000), Caerphilly (82,000), Newbridge (18,000), Penallta House (92,000), Pontlottyn (32,000), and Risca (34,000). The Council collects data on the visit types but this is not regularly reported at directorate level.</li><li>– Telephone - The Council's customer contact centre<sup>3</sup> receives telephone calls from citizens (386,000 contacts per annum).</li><li>– E-mail contact (28,000 contacts per annum). The customer service team categorises and analyses the e-mails received as: information; self serve (Direct service requests via the Council website); and customer relationship manager (CRM).</li></ul></li><li>• During our fieldwork we visited the Customer First Centre in Blackwood and observed that there were a number of general information leaflets for customers on the various services provided by the Council. For example, guidance with regards to how to make a complaint.</li><li>• As part of the Welsh Government's Library and Cymru-ar-lein strategies the Council has provided internet access in local libraries such as Bargoed and Risca to provide additional access points for customers. However, a business case for this was not produced, and usage data to understand the effectiveness of the internet access is not recorded or monitored.</li></ul>

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<sup>2</sup> Service Centres are located in the community providing citizens with access to a range of council services.

<sup>3</sup> Council call centre for telephone and e-mail correspondence.

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**Level 2 Question****Are existing customer service arrangements accessible and working efficiently and effectively to deliver improved services for citizens?**

- The Council uses social media, such as Twitter, Facebook, and YouTube, to inform customers of its activities and has introduced a related performance measure in its Annual Service Improvement plan for 2012-13 and monitors the level of activity in this area.
- The Council produces a magazine, Newsliner, six times a year which is distributed to all households and businesses in the county. The September 2012 issue summarised the Council's improvement objectives and invited citizens to give feedback.
- The Council is developing a mobile customer service centre, which was a manifesto commitment, to enhance services offered to customers by providing a mobile access point to services. This is planned to enable the Council to take services into smaller communities, attend big events and to react in a crisis. This project is currently being reviewed and a savings analysis is being undertaken. Officers told us that the Council intends this service to be operational by the end of 2013-14 but as yet a business case has not been developed and it is unclear what the timescale is for its development.
- We have not been able to identify clear links between the performance outcomes and costs of the Council's customer services as part of this review. Although, we note that the July 2006 Customer First Programme report to the Cabinet identified, at a high-level, the capital and revenue costs associated with the establishment of the contact centre and the Customer First Centres. However, we have not seen an evaluation of how establishing these services have reduced costs, or improved performance of customer services across the Council.

**The Council collects and analyses data. However, a number of opportunities to obtain and analyse further useful data to improve services is missed.**

- The customer service channels are regularly monitored and managed by the customer services manager and his team with a range of activity measures recorded. However, as noted in [Appendix 2](#), few of these measures are regularly reported outside of the customer service team.
- The Council collects customer comment cards at Customer First Centres, although officers advise us that this approach is not well used by customers and there is no clear reporting on the findings of these comment cards. Therefore the Council is missing an opportunity to benefit from customer feedback to inform its evaluation of services and to redesign services to improve them.
- In addition, the Council has used a simple exit poll at customer contact centres to determine if customers are satisfied or dissatisfied with the service they have received. However, this has not been taken forward due to a prolonged staff absence. As such, the information has not been used to improve services.



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**Level 2 Question****Are existing customer service arrangements accessible and working efficiently and effectively to deliver improved services for citizens?**

- The Council has an integrated system that can measure performance using a number of metrics, as set out in [Appendix 2](#). For example it has customer relationship management (CRM) software that is integrated with other Council systems such as the waste management and the highways systems. This enables 'real time' management of issues that can arise, such as a waste collection matter or a broken street light. Customer contact centres are now linked into CRM so that customer service staff are able to help with telephone call volume if levels get too high and the contact centre struggles.
- The Council uses a Citronics system that uses a ticketing system and records the time taken to see the customer to effectively monitor the time taken to see customers face to face in the contact centre. This data is collected and reported back to the customer service manager to identify areas for service improvement.
- To understand the views of its citizens the Council has previously held a viewpoint panel. However, this has not been held during 2012-13 and is currently under review. As such, it is not clear how the Council currently engages directly with citizens.
- The Council does not currently collect customer satisfaction feedback in relation to its e-mail or phone service.

**Customer service is an improvement objective of the Council and within the customer services team there is evidence to suggest that it is a priority.**

- The Council's customer services team has six team leaders, each with 10 staff, all reporting to the customer service manager.
- The customer service team analyses call volume data to enable it to plan staffing as a single team across all eight sites to better respond to leave requests and unplanned absences and to better manage variations in customer demand profiles across sites. The Council has established call handling facilities in Customer First centres so that Advisors can be moved from the front desk to the phones for short periods without the loss of the resources that would be caused by staff travelling between sites.
- Staff resource planning is reviewed by the customer service manager each quarter. This is reviewed using staffing data and comparing against levels of activity. The planning enables the customer service manager to plan where customer service staff should be deployed across the Customer First Centres and the Contact Centre. Efficient use of staff through planning has resulted in Bargoed and Risca centres being opened without an increase in full time equivalent staff.
- The customer services team reviews data on the volume of calls received by contact centres per half hour during the working week. This information is used to work out the team's standard staffing plan for the contact centre.

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**Level 2 Question****Are existing customer service arrangements accessible and working efficiently and effectively to deliver improved services for citizens?**

- The weekly performance profile of the customer service team is compared to the customer service team staffing plan to identify mismatches. These mismatches are then analysed by the customer services manager to identify the reason and is revised as appropriate. In addition, we are advised by officers that the Council is part of a Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) pilot scheme to consider emerging issues resulting from welfare reform.
- The customer services team has also introduced a mechanism to establish error rates for under and over payments during payment handling for each advisor/cash handler. By using the error rates of the best performers a target error rate has been established. This is used to target training/supervision/monitoring for underperforming staff. It was also built into each advisor's quarterly 1-2-1 meeting and annual review.
- We understand that the customer services team is further developing a set of data tools that will allow the duty manager to have a clear overview of performance and staff availability across all eight sites. This information will make it easier to adjust staffing levels across sites/access channels if a staff member has to take unexpected leave, there is an unexpected increase in customer demand, or to deal with emergencies.
- Customer services officers advised us that the average call length of the different enquiry types were analysed and it was identified that payment calls were taking too long. The customer services team investigated this and made changes which nearly halved call handling times for one of the high volume call types.
- Staff at the customer contact centre and customer first centres undertake extensive training in relation to customer services and are encouraged to undertake a professional qualification in customer services. However, due to the lack of an up to date customer services strategy any training, workforce development or workforce planning happen in a vacuum.
- The customer service team exhibits the characteristics of a learning culture. As we visited the customer service centre we noted that staff are encouraged to take ownership and solve problems and matters themselves.

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**Level 2 Question****Are existing customer service arrangements accessible and working efficiently and effectively to deliver improved services for citizens?**

**The customer complaints process is not fully integrated across the Council. However, there are clear pathways available to citizens for making a complaint either via phone, e-mail, or in writing as demonstrated through the complaints documentation available either in contact centres or via the Council's website.**

- The Council's legal department has now taken ownership of the complaints process. At the time of our fieldwork, the Council's performance measures relating to complaints were not reported at Directorate or Committee level (See [Appendix 2](#)). Although clear complaints measures are included in the Council's improvement objectives, there is no consolidation of complaint data/intelligence across the Council or clear reporting. At a strategic level, the Council is missing opportunities to learn from the complaints received. We understand that since the time of our fieldwork, the Council has established a corporate Listening and Learning Group to look at the complaints received by the Council and analyse any emerging trends. The central Performance Management Unit is represented on this Group. Following our audit fieldwork, officers told us that, as part of the recently agreed complaints policy, the Council intends to analyse complaints and trends and report to the Audit Committee.
- Customer complaint data has not been collated over the last year. However, we note that there is a corporate complaints officer in each of the Council's directorates. The Council's complaints policy has been reviewed and updated to reflect the Local Government (Wales) Ombudsman good practice guidance. The revised policy was discussed by the Audit Committee in December 2012 and approved by Cabinet in February 2013. We note that the strategy does not make reference to vexatious complaints. However, the report to Cabinet accompanying the complaints policy outlines that: 'the position regarding vexatious complainants should be monitored following implementation of the policy and if necessary a Vexatious Complainants Policy should be implemented.'
- The Council has introduced a central complaints logging system to align with its new policy. This database is managed by the Legal service. The central Performance Management Unit populates the complaints data from the database into Ffynnon. From May 2013 quarterly reports will be provided to Corporate Management Team.
- The Council's website provides customers with clear guidance in relation to making a complaint. In addition, the Council produces a customer booklet, focusing on accessibility and equalities. It defines a complaint and sets out a straightforward process for making a complaint. The website address for complaints, a complaints telephone number and the address of the complaints officer are provided. Although the phone numbers are landlines, and so would be low cost, they are not free phone. Officers advised us that the Council has discussed the use of a free phone, but consider the cost for this facility to be prohibitive. The booklet also gives a timetable for a response from the Council (four working days for an acknowledgement, 28 working days for a full explanation). The address of an ombudsman is also given and the booklet is provided in English and Welsh. The Council is currently in the process of updating this booklet.

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**Level 2 Question****Does the Council have an appropriate strategic approach to customer services?**

## Conclusion and Findings

**There is a significant amount of operational customer service activity but the Council's strategic approach to customer services is fragmented and its customer care strategic framework, although it has been reviewed, has not been updated since 2005.**

We concluded this because:

- The Council has agreed the following documents in relation to customer services:
  - customer care strategic framework (2005);
  - annual Service Improvement Plan for ICT and Customer Services; and
  - a customer charter.
- The Council's existing customer care strategic framework has been in place since 2005. The Council's policy and resources scrutiny committee received an update report against the strategic framework in 2007 and proposals for the future of the customer services function in 2011.
- The Council has taken part in two external reviews of its customer service function. In 2008 the Improvement and Development Agency undertook a customer service peer review, which identified both strengths and areas for improvement for the customer service function. In addition, in 2011, the Council participated in a SOCITM channel value benchmarking study to compare channel value with seven English councils. At the time the Council did not provide a customer/access strategy as part of the benchmarking exercise. The Council adopted a new Citizen Engagement Strategy in May 2013 to co-ordinate, guide and manage the Council's approach to community engagement. This Strategy makes reference to the Council's Customer Service Strategy and therefore does not deal explicitly with customer care.
- Service Improvement Plans are produced each year for ICT and customer services (2012-13), which include two key outcomes in relation to customer service:
  - customer first efficiency savings have been delivered<sup>4</sup>; and
  - a plan will be developed to improve access to customer services within communities.
- While there are actions against these outcomes, there are no clear performance measures to enable the Council to evaluate whether the outcomes have been achieved.

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<sup>4</sup> The October 2010 Policy and Scrutiny Committee report on consultation on proposals to meet budget cuts - corporate services required £250,000 of savings to be made by March 2015 through the re-provision of customer first facilities.

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**Level 2 Question****Does the Council have an appropriate strategic approach to customer services?**

- The Council's strategic direction for customer services is fragmented. There is no clear link between the customer care strategic framework and the Service Improvement Plans.
- The Council's website publishes the Annual Improvement Objective reports and provides an opportunity for customers to provide feedback on the draft Improvement Objectives for 2013-14. However, we have not seen where this information is recorded or reported.
- The equality information in the ICT and Customer Services 2012-13 plan was sparse, with no details recorded of policies sent for consultation to relevant groups. However, we note that an equality impact assessment of the Customer Services programme has been undertaken in previous annual Service Improvement Plans. Furthermore, the Council has introduced a number of improvements, such as the mobile customer service centre and internet access in libraries, to provide a wider access to Council services.
- Furthermore, objective 4 in the Council's 'Equalities and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan' 2012–2016 (relating to communications access – to improve the way council services and activities are made accessible to those who need them, in terms of language and format) has five associated performance measures, such as the increase in take-up of service, and increased levels of customer satisfaction. However, there is no clear link between these performance measures and the wider customer services strategy and improvement objective.
- In addition, objective 3, in the Council's 'Equalities and Welsh Language Objectives and Action Plan', 2012–2016 (relating to physical access - to improve physical accessibility in terms of living in, working in, learning in, travelling around and visiting the county borough), has performance measures in relation to increases in visitor numbers according to age/disability, a reduction in complaints and the number of accessible buildings. Again, there is no clear link between these performance measures and the wider customer services strategy and improvement objective.
- The Customer Service Manager has a service development plan, which is used to develop planned operational improvement projects. These projects include customer service team leaders at the contact centre and Customer First Centres working on new areas of service development, such as improving the standardised scripting of standard matters.

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**Level 2 Question****Does customer services have a clear performance management framework and is performance managed well?**

## Conclusion and Findings

**Although the Council monitors and reports a limited number of performance measures it is not able to fully evaluate the effectiveness of its customer services.**

We concluded this because:

- The Council regularly collects performance management data on both its customer contact centre and Customer First Centre's activities. This information is regularly reported at Directorate and Committee level. However, there does not appear to be a clear link between the Council's strategic objectives, as set out in the 2005 framework, and the performance measurement data collected. As a result the Council is unable to clearly identify if it is meeting its strategic objectives as set out in the framework.
- Currently customer service performance measures do not include information in relation to social services or housing directorates.
- A key focus of the Council's Corporate Management Team is the monitoring performance of its Improvement Objectives. The improvement objective in relation to customer services is to 'Ensure the citizens of Caerphilly County Borough understand why, when and how to engage with us and the impact their engagement will have in helping us to improve services'. The Council has five outcomes in relation to this objective. These are:
  - we will improve the way we engage and feedback to citizens;
  - our citizens will have a better understanding of their engagement role with the Council and understand how they can influence and shape policy and services by their engagement;
  - in 2013 the Council's household survey will show an improvement customer perception of our services;
  - we will have a good representative mix of citizens that take part in our consultation/engagement activities which match the local population demographics; and
  - through our corporate complaints process, we gather intelligence and citizens understand this helps us improve the way we do things.
- A number of performance measures have been developed against the improvement objective. However, the performance measures are not clearly mapped against each of the five outcomes. This is demonstrated in [Appendix 2](#). We have previously raised this as an area for improvement with the Council in our Annual Improvement Report 2012 and our Improvement Assessment Letters issued in the autumn of 2012.

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**Level 2 Question****Does customer services have a clear performance management framework and is performance managed well?**

- Furthermore, while the annual Service Improvement Plan is reconciled to the Council's Improvement Objective, there is fragmentation as the performance measures in the Improvement Objective are not linked to the annual Service Improvement plan. As such, it is not clear how the Council ensures that the Improvement Objective performance measures are met.
- The Council's performance against the target measures is reported to the Policy and Resources (Performance Management) Scrutiny Committee using a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating system. Furthermore, a comparison is made against performance for the previous year. However, the measures reported are limited and, as they are not linked clearly to the strategic framework, it is not clear if they are appropriate. The five measures reported to the Scrutiny Committee are:
  - average ring time (in seconds);
  - abandonment rate;
  - percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds;
  - average waiting time; and
  - percentage of customers seen within 10 minutes.
- These measures are not comprehensive and do not provide information across all access channels.
- However, performance is closely monitored at an operational level within the customer service team. For example, staff telephone activity is monitored for the customer contact centre. A list of performance measures available to the customer service manager is set out in [Appendix 2](#). The Council's Customer First Ffynnon dashboard contains the high-level performance indicators for the Contact Centre (operating telephone and e-mail channels) and Customer First Centres (Face to Face).
- At an operational level, the customer service team regularly investigates methods to improve the service and performance of both the Customer First Centres and the Contact centre. For example, performance data has been used to make the following changes:
  - a review of how the Council could better use the detailed knowledge of service specialists which fed into the further development of Call coaching and script writing; providing greater clarity to the competency definitions within job descriptions; and
  - introduction of a team leader 'floor walker' within the customer Contact centre to help team members with any identified problems or potential complaints from customers.

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**Level 2 Question****Does customer services have a clear performance management framework and is performance managed well?**

- Participation Cymru has developed an evaluation toolkit around the national principles of Public Engagement as an online resource. The Council plans to use the tool, which was launched in October 2012, to evaluate its citizen engagement activity. The aim of the toolkit is to help build the skills and capacity of managers and deliverers of public services to achieve better public engagement in the design, development and delivery of citizen-centred services.
- As noted in the Council's 2012-13 Improvement Objectives plan, it is looking to promote engagement in a low cost way via use of social media sites such as YouTube, Twitter, and Facebook. We note that the annual Service Improvement Plan for 2012-13 included a performance indicator in relation to social media. However, there is no mention of a planned channel shift in relation to this media in the strategic documentation.
- Every two years the Council undertakes a household survey that asks citizens questions about their views on the Council, living environment, regeneration, health, social care and well being, and education. The survey also asks specific questions, such as if a house has internet access. The last survey was undertaken in 2011 and showed that 78 per cent of respondents were satisfied with the services provided by the Council (compared with 60 per cent, 2009). This was against a target of 65 per cent. We understand that the survey is used to identify citizen priorities. Officers have advised us that action has been taken against concerns raised in the household survey. For example, dog fouling was the main concern raised and, as a result, Public Protection Services took action through education and prosecutions to try and address this issue. However, due to the age of the customer care strategic framework it is not clear how this influences the Council's strategic thinking with regards to designing its customer services in relation to its customer profiles and priorities.
- Customer satisfaction data has recently been limited to the household survey as the viewpoint panel has not been active over the last year.
- Through our discussion with staff involved in the customer service process, we understand that the Information Management and Technology (IMT) and Customer Service Directorate has delivered its cost saving target as set in the Council's medium term financial plan as it is now operating within the reduced budget. However, we have not been able to see a direct link between customer service projects and cost savings.
- At an operational level there is evidence that the Council is monitoring and seeking to improve performance. This is demonstrated through the number of performance measures as shown in [Appendix 3](#). In addition, there are more indicators below this level with a more operational focus. The indicators automatically calculate year to date figures from data that is entered by the respective service on a weekly basis. Each Customer First Centre has its own performance scorecard from which the overall figure for Face to Face contact is calculated.



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**Level 2 Question****Does customer services have a clear performance management framework and is performance managed well?**

- Performance measures flow into the directorate information that is reported to the Director and Head of Service. This information is also reported to the Senior Management Team and is reported to the Policy and Resource Scrutiny Committee.
- The customer services team monitor access levels across different channels. The customer services team monitoring report indicates: the customer service enquiry types, such as transport or housing benefit; the volume and type of transactions; the number of customers seen in 10 minutes; and payments per site. However, this information is not regularly reported at a directorate level.
- However, while we acknowledge there is performance reporting to the Policy and Resource Scrutiny Committee the reporting does not appear to be comprehensive, with only five customer service measures reported each quarter (see [Appendix 2](#)). As noted in [Appendix 2](#) there are a number of measures not reported.
- There are nine customer service standards in relation to telephone calls, and eight in relation to correspondence. These evolved out of the viewpoint panel and are available on the Council website. However, these standards are not clearly linked to current performance measures.
- The standards that customers should expect include telling the public how the Council deals with customers who visit the offices and how it will respond to paper and electronic mail from customers. However, there is no clear link between the standards and the Council's regular reporting mechanism.
- In addition, the Council has a six-point customer service charter available on its website. The Council told us that the public's understanding of this 'Customer Service Charter' will be improved via a publicity campaign, although at the time of our fieldwork this had not happened.
- Through our interviews with staff and the lead Councillor for customer services it was evident that there is a commitment to provide and improve customer service. However, there did not appear to be a clearly documented role description that sets out the expectations of the lead Councillor for customer services.

## Appendix 2

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### Customer service performance measures available and where reported

Performance measure available	Target 2012/13	Available to Customer service manager	Reported to Directorate each quarter	Annual service improvement plan (ICT & Customer Services) 2012/13	CCBC Improvement objectives 2012/13
Average ring time (seconds)		X	X		
Abandonment rate		X	X		
Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds	80%	X	X		X
Total calls offered		X			
Environmental		X			
Telephone payments		X			
Housing Benefit new claims		X			
Highways		X			
Payment Card		X			
Job Applications		X			
Registrars		X			
Waste Management		X			
Santa Appeal		X			
Number of e-mails in CRM inbox		X			

Performance measure available	Target 2012/13	Available to Customer service manager	Reported to Directorate each quarter	Annual service improvement plan (ICT & Customer Services) 2012/13	CCBC Improvement objectives 2012/13
CCBC Info e-mails		X			
Self Serve e-mails – Service requests via CCBC website		X			
Switchboard Calls		X			
Total E-mails		X			
Total Demand		X			
Telephone Payments		X			
IVR Phone Payments		X			
Web Payments		X			
Total payments		X			
SW percentage of calls answered within 20s		X			
SW average speed of answer		X			
Percentage of SW unmet demand		X			
SW unmet demand		X			
Calls to Interactive Voice Response (IVR) Payment Line		X			

Performance measure available	Target 2012/13	Available to Customer service manager	Reported to Directorate each quarter	Annual service improvement plan (ICT & Customer Services) 2012/13	CCBC Improvement objectives 2012/13
Percentage of payments completed in IVR		X			
No of payment transactions [Caerphilly]		X			
No of payment transactions [Newbridge]		X			
No of payment transactions [Bargoed]		X			
No of payment transactions [Pontllanfraith]		X			
Total No of payment transactions		X			
Customers Seen [Advisor]		X			
Customers Seen [Triage]		X			
Customers Seen [Surgery]		X			
Customer Seen [Reception]		X			
Average Waiting Time		X	X		
Customers Seen within 10 minutes [%]		X	X		
No shows		X			
No of payment transactions [CF]		X			
Customer First Centres- Total contacts		X			
Cash Office Transactions		X			

Performance measure available	Target 2012/13	Available to Customer service manager	Reported to Directorate each quarter	Annual service improvement plan (ICT & Customer Services) 2012/13	CCBC Improvement objectives 2012/13
Total Face to Face Contacts		X			
Total payments all sites		X			
Total Customer Contact Demand		X			
Y.T.D. Customer Contact by Financial Years		X			
Face to Face Running Total Demand		X			
Social media followers and their interactions per annum:				X	X
Facebook	300				
New Facebook posts	250				
Tweets	420				
New twitter followers	200				
You tube uploads	25				
Services in operation	31/3/13			X	
Number of new consultations on the consultation database (central depository to be developed and implemented by Q3 2012/13)	80			X	X

Performance measure available	Target 2012/13	Available to Customer service manager	Reported to Directorate each quarter	Annual service improvement plan (ICT & Customer Services) 2012/13	CCBC Improvement objectives 2012/13
Improvement in the proportion of our citizens who feel that they are listened to and their opinions count. (Baseline summer 2012)	2.5% increase			X	X
Percentage of response rate to View Point panel engagement	60%			X	X
Tell us once service take up activity	95%				X
Establish revised corporate complaints process	100%				X
Caerphilly library/customer service centre	70%				X
Engagement is well received by public and partner organisations and recognised as good practice by those engaged in Council business	90%				X
Analysis of engagement activities of the Council as meeting good practice standards	60%				X
Number of engagement activities that influence Council decision making	180				X
Customer satisfaction of face to face contact at customer service centres	85%				X

Performance measure available	Target 2012/13	Available to Customer service manager	Reported to Directorate each quarter	Annual service improvement plan (ICT & Customer Services) 2012/13	CCBC Improvement objectives 2012/13
Analysis of the reasons of satisfaction/dissatisfaction linked to geographical	70%				X
Percentage of View Point panel who find the engagement process a positive experience	98%				X
Review of Customer Service Charter	100%				X
The revised complaints system improves the way the public can use it (users indicate it is simple to use)	70%				X
Percentage of complaints across the Council responded to and resolved within target times	80%				X
Intelligence gathered by complaints made and found to be correct will be used to influence change	20%				X
Percentage of people who feel satisfied with the level of service provided	78%				

## Appendix 3

### Comparison analysis – CCBC Improvement objectives 2012-13

Performance measure	Target 2012/13	Q2 2011/12	Q2 2012/13	Notes
Percentage of calls answered within 20 seconds	80%	74.68%	85.83%	This is industry best practice
Social media followers and their interactions per annum:				-
Facebook	300	N/A	225	
New Facebook posts	250	N/A	753	
Tweets	420	N/A	365	
New twitter followers	200	N/A	509	
You tube uploads	25	N/A	33	
Number of new consultations on the consultation database	80	Unknown	Unknown	Central depository to be developed and implemented by Q3 2012/13
Improvement in the proportion of our citizens who feel that they are listened to and their opinions count (Baseline summer 2012)	2.5% increase	-	-	To be completed as part of 2013 Household survey
Percentage of response rate to View Point panel engagement	60%	-	-	No View Point panel undertaken
Tell us once service take up activity	95%	N/A	94%	-
Establish revised corporate complaints process	100%	N/A	40%	In progress
Caerphilly library/customer service centre	70%	-	-	To be completed by November 2013
Engagement is well received by public and partner	90%	N/A	40%	Measure last updated in Q4



Performance measure	Target 2012/13	Q2 2011/12	Q2 2012/13	Notes
organisations and recognised as good practice by those engaged in Council business				2011/12
Analysis of engagement activities of the Council as meeting good practice standards	60%	-	-	No data
Number of engagement activities that influence Council decision making	180	-	-	No data
Customer satisfaction of face to face contact at customer service centres	85%	-	-	New measure
Analysis of the reasons of satisfaction/dissatisfaction linked to geographical	70%	-	-	Not done
Percentage of View Point panel who find the engagement process a positive experience	98%	-	-	No View Point panel undertaken
Review of Customer Service Charter	100%	-	-	New measure
The revised complaints system improves the way the public can use it (users indicate it is simple to use)	70%	-	-	New system to be in place by Spring 2013
Percentage of complaints across the Council responded to and resolved within target times	80%	91.90	-	To be updated
Intelligence gathered by complaints made and found to be correct will be used to influence change	20%	-	-	No data
Percentage of people who feel satisfied with the level of service provided	78%	77.40%	-	Reported in 2011 Household Survey

# Appendix 4

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## Good Practice – drawn from PwC work across the UK

### Initiatives that can be applied to improve customer service practice

The **Customer and Process Programme** should drive the following changes:

**Develop detailed customer insight** – to gain a better understanding of why the customer is contacting the Council and what services they may need, including customer personas, ‘cost to serve’ analysis and demand management approaches and cross-cutting life events (such as a family bereavement or a new child) that will support the re-design of services around specific customer groups.

Instil **proactive prevention** within the Front Office as a behaviour and demand management approach. Front Office staff consider the root cause of a contact and its potential implications and not just the transaction in isolation. For example, a customer requesting a dropped kerb could have other needs, not just the dropped kerb.

Investigation into the **root cause of customer contact** should be completed to build deep insight about customer demand.

Ensure Front Office staff are **empowered to escalate** customer enquiries to achieve a different response/outcome.

Delivery of a **‘single customer view’** supported by appropriate IT and data.

Combine contact centres and face to face channels into a **Universal Front Door**.

**Integration between systems** and improved performance of existing systems.

Review how far the Front Office can take a customer contact before it needs to be passed on to another staff member, through process re-design and empowerment of the first point of contact.

Improve relationships between the Front Office and Services and embed a **customer focused culture** throughout the end-to-end customer journey.

**Address capability concerns** within the Front Office through a programme of service awareness training and improved access to knowledge.

Embed **channel shift** through mediated support and ‘onboarding’ for the online channel as well as specific **alternatives for vulnerable groups** (eg, special line for vulnerable customers). For example, supermarkets commonly use self-serve check-outs with a staff member providing assistance to people across a number of checkouts. A similar practice could be applied, for example, with parking permits.

Deployment of **common processes** to increase efficiency and improve the customer experience (eg, pay for it, book it, report it, apply for it).

Conduct **geographic insight** work to inform the ‘Workplaces’ programme and provide the right face-to-face services where customers truly need them.

The use of **management information** (real time and historic) should be reviewed to make sure it is providing managers with ‘actionable insight’.

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Responsibility for the online channel should be moved to the Front Office. Customer insight should be used to drive the **re-design of the web channel** to support customers who are likely to channel shift, capturing business requirements for re-design from Services.

Fully **integrate online forms** into Service systems to achieve automated 'self serve'.

Scrutinise decision making to ensure it is **intelligence led** (ie, based upon robust insight and intelligence).

Coach Managers and Team Leaders in **effective performance management** to instil a more robust performance management culture.

Assess the impact on **staff behaviours** of existing 'quantity' measures and change or remove those which are undermining the customer experience.

### General good practice within customer services

#### Governance

Instilling a culture so that the end-to-end customer journey becomes the responsibility of everyone across the Council. With process ownership clearly assigned.

Services invest in making the point of contact a success for their customers through continuous support, coaching and training.

Shared learning sessions and issue resolution forums should be common place, putting the customer at the heart of continuous improvement. These should result in specific actions and improvement initiatives that are tracked until implemented and embedded.

Hand over points between the point of contact and services are clearly articulated and understood.

#### Performance management

Coaching managers and team leaders in effective performance management to instil a robust performance management culture.

Supporting staff to develop their skills and performance over a longer time period – don't conduct 'tick box' assessments once a month.

Make performance management and development a priority that is not undermined as soon as demand increases.

#### Information and data

Consolidate and rationalise data sources to create a single view of the customer and a single truth.

Share data across service boundaries so that the customer can 'tell us once'.

Implement a customer account where the customer can own and update their personal details through self serve.

Integrate systems where it makes sense so that we remove the need for the manual re-entering of data.

Make greater use of customer insight and data to inform strategy and decision making. Scrutinise decision making to ensure it is intelligence led (ie, based upon robust insight and intelligence).

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## General good practice within customer services

Re-design processes so that specific data and information triggers are recognised as escalation points to prevent escalating demand or cost.

### Channels - online

Create consistency around task headings by organising all tasks around life events or specific customer groups (eg, join up content for schools admissions, transport and free school meals).

Enable more transactions to be completed online.

Promote the use of a customer account through describing the benefits of using it.

Reduce amount of text content and use more pictures, diagrams and images/videos (eg, create stories for life events that customers can relate to).

Organise content through different customer lenses (eg, I live in Caerphilly, I work in Caerphilly, I run a business in Caerphilly, I am visiting Caerphilly etc).

Make social media more prominent on the homepage and use it to provoke engagement and resolve customer issues.

Create consistency around task headings by organising all tasks around life events or specific customer groups (eg, join up content for schools admissions, transport and free school meals).

### Channel - telephone

Combine contact centres from across the Council into a Universal Front Door. Organise resources and teams around customer types and complexity of enquiry. Cross skill advisors so that they can provide access to a range of different services that specific customer types are likely to require.

Introduce new ways of working across all front office environments and create a Universal Front Door that creates consistency for the customer.

Investigate potential to use these new technologies across all services and processes.

### People capabilities

Look at ways to increase the speed of recruitment and training but be careful not to put inexperienced staff in the position of handling complex calls. Train staff and organise teams so that they handle more complexity as they become more experienced.

Empower Front Office staff to 'own' the customer contact and enable them to make decisions that best suit individual customers where appropriate to do so (move away from transactional responses where it is clearly beneficial to do so).

### Customers

Simplify and standardise processes that can be web enabled and delivered in a consistent way across channels.

Increase depth of fulfilment through process re-design within the Front Office and empower advisors to own customer contact through to resolution.

Develop 'cost to serve' analysis and demand management approaches that will support the re-design of services.

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### **General good practice within customer services**

Develop customer personas and x-cutting 'life events' that can be used to package services at a single point of contact across access channels (this will also help inform the organisational design of each channel).



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