



POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 21ST APRIL 2009

SUBJECT: CUSTOMER FIRST STRATEGY UPDATE REPORT

REPORT BY: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report informs members on progress in delivering the Customer First Strategy since the last update report to the Scrutiny Committee.

2. SUMMARY

- 2.1 In April 2008 a Customer First Centre opened in Penallta House.
- 2.2 The Customer First Telephone Contact Centre opened in October 2007 and has grown since then.
- 2.3 Work is in progress to develop integrated Library and Customer First Centres in Risca and Bargoed.
- 2.4 Responsibility for the management of the remaining Cash Offices has now transferred to Customer First.
- 2.5 A Customer Service Peer Review was undertaken during November 2008. The results of the review will be the subject of a separate report.

3. LINKS TO STRATEGY

- 3.1 The Customer First Strategy is a part of the Improving Services theme and is an identified priority in the Corporate Improvement Plan. The Customer First strategy is also linked to a number of equality strategies, including the Linguistic Skills Strategy, and the Consultation Strategy. The Customer First Strategy is a key part of the council's response to the WAG "Making the Connections" strategy particularly in relation to developing citizen centred services.

4. CUSTOMER FIRST CENTRES

- 4.1 The Customer First Centre in Penallta House is now full operational. The average waiting time to be seen at the service desks is about 4½ minutes with longest waits being about 20 minutes during peak periods. During peak times the average waiting time rises to 8 minutes. The agreed corporate standard is that visitors arriving without an appointment will be seen within 15 minutes (10 minutes for those with an appointment).
- 4.2 Typical footfall figures for Penallta House Customer First is about 4,600 per month, of which 1,400 are enquiries at the service desks and the remainder are payments.

4.3 Customer Footfall at Blackwood in a typical month is about 2,200 enquiries and 5,000 transactions per month giving a total footfall of about 7,000 visits per month.

4.4 We are currently delivering 3 additional weekly surgeries at Blackwood:

- Shelter Cymru
- Pensions Service
- Drama (Debt advice service funded by the Coalfield Regeneration fund)

The footfall for these surgeries is not included in the centre's footfall.

4.5 Customer Footfall at Pontllytyn in a typical month is about 500 enquiries and 2,000 payments per month giving a total footfall of about 2,500 visits per month. There is also a weekly Shelter Cymru surgery.

4.6 Waiting times are not yet available for Blackwood and Pontllytyn but systems are being put in place to measure this.

4.7 Plans for Customer First Centres in Caerphilly and Risca are on-hold until appropriate properties have been secured.

4.8 Plans for an integrated Customer First Centre, Library, Family records centre, and café in the Hanbury Road Baptist Chapel are progressing well. Detailed architectural plans are currently being evaluated.

5. CONTACT CENTRE

5.1 The Contact Centre opened in October 2007 and a number of services transferred to the centre over the following months.

5.2 The transfer of this first tranche of services is now complete (Public Services, Highways, Street Lighting, Environmental Health and Recruitment). Work on the next tranche (Housing Benefits and Council Tax) is underway.

5.3 Typical contact volumes per month are as follows:

- Highways 1,593
- Public Services 7,157
- Environmental Health 1,732
- Job Applications 1,021
- Switchboard 36,663
- Total 48,166
- E-mails 923
- Faxes 147

This gives a total of nearly 50,000 customer contacts per month.

77% of service calls are answered within 20s, average waiting time is 15s. Our service standard is to answer 80% of calls within 20s.

92% of switchboard calls are answered within 15s.

5.4 Work on developing a common Performance Management Framework for Public Service Contact Centres in Wales is coming to completion with a set of Performance Indicators now agreed. Work to implement this framework in the contact centre is in progress and the data

will be available on the Performance Indicator Management System.

6. CORPORATE WORK

- 6.1 As well as developing the Customer First access points, the Strategy includes a number of areas of work aimed at improving customer service standards more widely across the authority. During the last 12 to 18 months the focus of the Customer First team has been the opening of Penallta House and the Contact Centre. This has meant that work on wider customer service issues has taken a lower priority. However, work in these areas is now gathering pace.
- 6.2 A contract for the provision of short customer service courses has been tendered. This will provide at least 400 places on 1-day customer service courses per year.
- 6.3 The use of the Institute of Customer Service Awards within Customer First is progressing well. This is a staff development tool aimed at developing customer service competencies and abilities. An ICS Award takes 6 to 18 months to complete depending on the level being studied. Six staff in Customer First have successfully completed their awards in the last few months and there are currently a further 22 staff in Customer First undertaking ICS awards. Our target is to complete 30 during 2008/09. The next phase of this project is to widen the programme out to other service areas.
- 6.4 A draft Customer Service Standard for correspondence has been prepared. Further standards for "Visiting Customers in their homes" and "Emergency and Out of Hours Services" will be developed over the coming months.
- 6.5 Work on monitoring and reporting customer service standards has now started. Resources and systems for measuring how well service areas meet the agreed standards are in place and have been tested.
- 6.6 Work on developing systems and processes to monitor customer satisfaction levels is underway. This will provide critical information on how customers perceive our services.
- 6.7 Early work to update the corporate complaints policy and processes has been completed and will be the subject of a future report.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 None directly from this report

8. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. CONSULTATIONS

- 10.1 The views of consultees have been incorporated into the report.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1 That the content of the update report be noted.

12. STATUTORY POWER

12.1 Local Government Acts 1972 and 2000. This is a Cabinet function

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Background Papers: None, other than those already published.