

To: POLICY AND RESOURCES (FINANCE & CUSTOMER SERVICES) SUB-COMMITTEE		Subject: CUSTOMER SERVICE UPDATE
From: HEAD OF E-GOVERNMENT & SERVICE DEVELOPMENT		
Date: 23 July 2012	Ref: IMcK/PT	

1. Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on:

- The creation of the Customer Services Strategy for 2013 to 2017;
- Our corporate Customer Care Standards and associated performance measures;
- Customer service provision through the primary customer contact channels;
- Progress being made towards channel shift; and
- The ongoing development of key supporting initiatives.

2. Background

2.1 A fundamental requirement of customer service provision is to make it easy, convenient and pleasant for our customers to interact with us. This means making it straightforward for our customers to: find us; obtain accurate information from us; contact the right person; get the required services; and provide or receive appropriate feedback and support.

2.2 To achieve this, Customer Services is taking forward a development program designed to achieve a vision of excellent customer service. The program will develop in line with ongoing improvements planned by individual Services and also as additional customer improvement initiatives are identified.

2.3 To monitor our progress systems and applications are being put in place to provide comprehensive management information on customer contact and customer service requests. Examples of these are from the customer relationship management system (for telephone calls), from the queue management system (for face to face contact) and from our social media feeds (for web based contact).

2.4 Progress on the overall program of work is governed by the Customer Service Development Working Group (CSDWG).

3. Customer Services Strategy

3.1 The current Customer Services Strategy runs from 2008 till 2012. This strategy has set the direction for customer service provision over the last 4 years and has resulted in a significant improvement in customer service provision at North Lanarkshire underpinned by a number of projects and initiatives such as:

- **Local Citizen Account:** This now has over 170,000 customer records and is being used to support customer enquiries received through the customer relationship management system. In addition, NLC is the first council in Scotland to begin

populating our customer data with not only unique property reference numbers (UPRNs) but also unique customer reference numbers (UCRNs) so that national life event notifications (e.g. births, deaths, address changes etc) can be processed.

- **School Transport Qualification System:** Developed for Learning and Leisure Services, this allows schools based staff and parents to assess whether or not an address qualifies for free school transport. It is also used by schools at the registration process to inform parents as to school transport entitlement and parents can use it to quickly identify school catchment areas.
- **Web Site:** The 2011 Socitm Better Connected Review awarded our website a third star, placing it firmly amongst Scotland's strongest sites.
- **Local View Fusion:** This enhances the presentation of geographical information to our customers and is used to good effect to provide winter gritting route information.
- **Public Information Notices (PINs):** The www.tellmescotland.gov.uk portal enables councils to provide local information regarding services - such as road closures or construction work, planning or property developments, licensing and all other types of approved and proposed projects – in a clear and easy to use format.
- **Blue Badges:** The launch of the new national Blue Badges scheme took place on the 1st January 2012. Customer Services is responsible for handling all Blue Badge applications. These are accepted and checked at First Stop Shops and then processed by a centralised administration team who carry out telephone based assessments. When detailed assessments are required these are carried out by Occupational Therapists based in Social Work Services.
- **Accredited Training Qualification for Customer Services Professionals:** To date over 90 NLC staff have taken up this SQA accredited qualification. The qualification was recently honoured with a COSLA excellence award in the 'securing a workforce for the future' category.
- **Deaf Connections:** There are approximately 20,000 deaf people living in North Lanarkshire. The introduction of this on-line interpreting service for deaf customers has helped NLC to build significant bridges between the deaf community and the council and feedback from the deaf community has been very positive.
- **Electronic Document & Records Management System (EDRMS):** The EDRMS application provides staff with improved control over documents and records (e.g. version control, retention scheduling, automatic workflow) and is helping to support a significant reduction in the volume of paper based documentation.
- **Qmatic queue management system:** This is producing management information from our FSSs allowing us to measure customer waiting times from the point at which a request for service is made until the point when the service is delivered. This allows the efficient matching of staff capacity to customer demand.

3.2 To build on this success, work has already begun on the next Customer Services Strategy for 2013/17. The themes for this strategy will focus on Customer Problem Resolution; Business Intelligence; Staff optimisation; and Service Delivery

3.3 Development of the strategy is now well underway and internal consultation with stakeholders on the first draft is scheduled to begin during September 2012. There will be a need to undertake public consultation on the draft strategy before it can be implemented however, given that a wide-ranging consultation on the Council's draft corporate and community plans is to take place in October, it is considered that it would be more appropriate to carry out the customer services strategy consultation at a later date to ensure as high a response rate as possible.

3.4 Given those circumstances, it is proposed to carry out the public consultation early in 2013, with the result of the consultation and any proposed changes reported to

committee for consideration in May 2013. In the meantime, approval is sought for the extension of the current customer services strategy until that time.

4. **Customer Care Standards**

- 4.1 The customer care standards originally formed part of the Customer Services Strategy 2008/2012. However, as part of the formulation of the new Customer Services strategy, the customer care standards are being developed separately and will comprise two standalone documents:
- **Customer Care Standards & Staff Guidance:** An internal council document designed to offer staff consistent guidance when dealing with our customers; and
 - **Customer Care Standards & Performance Monitoring:** An external document designed for our customers. This details our standards and also provides the performance measures with targets against which success will be measured.
- 4.2 The reported measures will cover performance in terms of telephone contact; face to face contact; home visits; responding to customer enquiries; complaints; and questions taken from the national Customer Satisfaction Measurement Toolkit.
- 4.3 Reporting will include actual performance, target performance and trend information over the previous three reporting periods. The standards are currently at draft stage and will be agreed by the Customer Services Development Working Group. Thereafter they will be presented to committee for approval on the 28th November.

5. **Customer Contact Centre**

- 5.1 The telephone continues to be the most popular customer channel for requesting a service from the Council. Demand statistics for the first quarter of this financial year can be found in Appendix A.
- 5.2 Total incoming calls for the first quarter of this financial year is 143,374 with a customer call abandonment rate of 1.12%. In addition to incoming calls, the customer contact centre also made 42,673 outbound calls to our customers. These included calls to check on customer appointments and to carry out customer surveys.
- 5.3 It has now been over four years since the installation of the MacFarlane Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) System to support the Customer Contact Centre and this system has now reached its functional limit in terms of supporting the introduction of multi-media (e.g. eForms, eMail, Text Messaging). It is intended to replace this system next year to provide the additional functionality and flexibility required, this requirement will be included in the 5 year capital plan currently being prepared by the Service.

6. **First Stop Shops & Municipal Bank**

- 6.1 Additional services have been introduced to our First Stop Shops over the last year – these include Blue Badges, Free School Meals and Clothing Grants. Demand information for the ten First Stop Shops for the first quarter of this financial can be found in Appendix A.
- 6.2 Total customer visits to our First Stop Shops for the first quarter of this financial year have totalled 54,743.
- 6.3 Control of the First Stop Shops and Municipal Bank transferred from Revenue Services to Customer Services on 21st May 2012. The focus since then has been on staff training and Performance Management.

7. Blue Badges

- 7.1 Processing of Blue Badges under the revised national Scheme has now been underway at NLC for just over 6 months. Badges fall within two categories, Automatic or Discretionary. The number of badges issued for both categories together with the number of badges re-issued when lost by customers can be found in Appendix B.
- 7.2 Of the 3897 badges processed to date, 175 applicants (4.5%) have been referred to Occupational Therapists for a decision.
- 7.3 Over 98.3% of all applicants have been successful and have been issued with a blue badge with 68 applications being refused. On several occasions applicants have requested a follow up meeting to understand why their applications were unsuccessful and all of these requests have been accommodated. The success of these meetings from a customer point of view has led to their inclusion in the overall process.

8. Channel Shift

- 8.1 NLC chairs the national channel shift programme seeking to meet customers' on-line needs by working to achieve a shift in the volume of customer transactions currently being handled through face to face and telephone towards cheaper more cost effective communications channels such as our web site, digital television and smart-phones.
- 8.2 Experience to date in our own Council indicates that the demand for on-line service provision is growing. For example web requests for service provision in 2011 were 30,658. However, for the first 6 months of this year that total has already been surpassed with requests now totalling over 32,600.
- 8.3 At present the majority of our on-line service provision is limited to the use of electronic forms (e.g. reporting graffiti) on our main council website. However, it is our intention to move to mobile devices and digital television with the introduction of 'Looking Local' (see below). It is anticipated that the introduction of this service will begin to move demand away from our existing face to face and telephone channels.

9. Key Supporting Initiatives

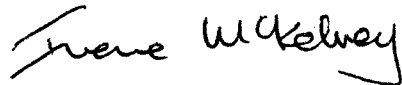
- 9.1 **Authentication & Registration:** The next step towards providing on-line transactional services for our customers is to provide them with the capability to authenticate and thereafter to register for specific on-line services in the same way that you would authenticate to undertake on line banking for example. NLC are working with the Improvement Service to develop a process to allow this to happen.
- 9.2 **Looking Local:** Looking Local is owned and run by Kirklees Council and is operated as a not-for-profit organisation for all of the public sector. It is a service that displays selected content from an organisations website across a range of devices and platforms that include mobile phones, tablets and digital television. It is currently used by over 130 public sector organisations to deliver information, services and real-time transactions. Recent user research on the Looking Local service highlights that: 25% of Looking Local's usage takes place at the weekends; 45% of the usage of Looking Local occurs outside of traditional business hours (9am–6pm); and 45% of users do not have home internet access. It is anticipated that the user profile will be replicated by our customers and that this will lead to channel shift away from face to face and telephony channels at NLC. LookingLocal will be live later this year.
- 9.3 **Life Events Notification System (LENS):** This system will provide updates received from the Scottish Government (e.g. death notifications, change of address, change of name etc) to our back office systems that hold customer information so that customer

information can be kept up to date and accurate in an efficient and effective way. LENS will be live later this year.

- 9.4 **Move to the use of 0300 numbers:** 0300 is the new recommended number for use by the public sector and Councils are being encouraged to adopt it. NLC has purchased a block of 0300 numbers and is preparing to move to this numbering system.
- 9.5 **Customer Relationship Management (Map Application):** This allows maps to be displayed within the customer relationship management system. From here, staff can make use of the Map Application to assist with customer enquiries and help pinpoint exact street and house locations within the map precisely identifying where a specific service request is located.

10. Recommendations

- 10.1 It is recommended that the committee:-
- Notes the progress made to date; and
 - Approves the extension of the current Customer Services Strategy until May 2013 as outlined in para 3.4 above; and



Head of E-Government & Service Development

For further information please contact Irene McKelvey, on tel. 01698 302532 or Peter Tolland, Customer Services Manager, on tel. 01698 274385

Appendix A

Contact Centre Demand Analysis April 2012 – June 2012

1st April 2012 - 30th June 2012							
Queue	Total Incoming Calls	Incoming Calls Answered	Incoming Calls Abandoned	Abandon Rate (%)	Average Queue Time (Answered)	Average Call Handling Time	Within SLA (Target 90%)
Housing Area Repairs	1666	1627	39	2.34%	15	03:08	84.82%
Housing Fss Red Phone	4351	4280	71	1.63%	15	04:06	85.79%
Housing Repairs	30437	29960	477	1.57%	15	04:05	84.45%
Northline	94421	93611	810	0.86%	9	03:01	92.80%
Repairs OOH	8153	8025	128	1.57%	15	02:47	88.42%
Property Queue	4346	4265	81	1.86%	14	04:07	84.85%
	143,274	141,769	1,505	1.05%	11	03:14	89.23%

FSS Demand Analysis April 2012 – June 2012

Q1 April to June 2012	Tickets printed	Cust served	No shows	%no shows	No of enquiries	Average wait	% served within 10 mins	Average transaction
Wishaw	7584	7215	369	5	7854	4:21	85	4:21
Moodiesburn	1943	1898	45	2	2079	3:24	88	6:29
Viewpark	2507	2473	34	1	2852	3:37	89	5:44
Shotts	2683	2469	214	8	2746	3:26	89	5:23
Bellshill	6392	6224	168	3	7567	2:40	94	4:36
Cumbernauld	6962	6762	200	3	7053	3:29	90	5:17
Motherwell	8610	8000	610	7	9549	4:28	86	5:08
Kilsyth	2570	2403	167	7	2740	3:41	88	5:19
Airdrie	8841	8110	731	8	9858	8:46	67	6:22
Coatbridge	10215	9189	1026	10	11285	5:08	84	4:39
Total	58,307	54,743	3,564	6	63,583	4:45	84	5:26

Appendix B

Breakdown of Blue Badge Applications from introduction in January 2012

	Dec/Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Totals
New Applications - Automatics								
Received							8	8
Issued	55	56	64	37	49	43	48	352
Refused	1							1
Query	1	3	3	1	2	2	5	17
Deceased Notification		1						1
Other		1						1
Total	57	61	67	38	51	45	61	380

Renewal Applications - Automatics

Received						3	39	42
Issued	237	233	251	232	312	277	262	1804
Query		2	4		6	10	14	36
Deceased Notification	1		1					2
Other		1	1					2
Total	238	236	257	232	318	290	315	1886

New Applications - Discretionary

Received						2	14	16
Issued	57	71	73	70	72	54	46	443
Refused	8	11	7	1	4	6	4	41
Referred to OT	3	2		1	2	2	16	26
Deceased Notification	1	1		1				3
Query	1	1	3	5	3	2	4	19
Total	70	86	83	78	81	66	84	548

Renewals - Discretionary

Received						1	26	27
Issued	104	122	101	105	150	129	127	838
Refused	4	9	4	4		2	4	27
Referred to OT		3		2	2	4	10	21
Query	2	1	3	3	2	3	6	20
Total	110	135	108	114	154	139	173	933

Lost Badges

Received							1	1
Issued	32	18	21	10	23	13	22	139
Query	1					5	3	9
Deceased Notification			1					1
Total	33	18	22	10	23	18	26	150

Grand Total	508	536	537	472	627	558	659	3897
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