

To: POLICY AND RESOURCES (FINANCE & CUSTOMER SERVICES) SUB-COMMITTEE	Subject: CUSTOMER SERVICES UPDATE	
From: HEAD OF E-GOVERNMENT & SERVICE DEVELOPMENT		
Date: 12 February 2014	Ref: IMcK/PT	

1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update Committee on progress in:
- Customer service provision through the primary customer contact channels; and
 - The ongoing development of key supporting initiatives.

2. Background

- 2.1 We want to make it easy, convenient and pleasant for our customers to interact and do business 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 The Customer Services team are developing a programme of work designed to deliver the vision of excellent customer service outlined in the Customer Services Strategy.
- 2.3 Progress on the implementation of the Strategy will be governed by the Customer Service Development Working Group (CSDWG).
- 2.4 The following sections detail progress across our key customer contact channels.

3. Customer Contact Centre

- 3.1 The telephone continues to be the most popular customer channel for requesting a service from the Council.
- 3.2 Total incoming calls from 1st April till 31st December are 435,343 with a customer call abandonment rate of 1.0%. In addition to handling incoming calls, the customer contact centre also made 185,810 outbound calls to our customers. These included calls to check on customer appointments, transfer to other services and to carry out customer surveys. The Contact Centre also processed 40,009 online requests for service in this period.
- 3.3 The Your Money Helpline received 5,210 calls and made 7,499 outbound calls to help engage customers and arrange appointments.
- 3.4 The procurement of a new Automatic Call Distribution (ACD) System is nearing completion. When fully implemented in quarter 2 of 2014/15 this will drive the development of the Customer Contact Centre and deliver new features which will improve the customer experience by increasing the use of email and text messaging and introducing web chat.

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

- 4.1 Total visits to our First Stop Shops from 1st April till 31st December was 197,043 with 86% of customers seen within 10 minutes.
- 4.2 Work is ongoing to improve the facilities offered and the capacities of our network of first stop shops. These improvements are based on the improved level of service delivered when we re-launched the Coatbridge FSS in the Buchanan Centre. The key highlights are:
- **Motherwell:** The new Motherwell FSS, based in Dalziel Building, will open to our customers on 17th February this year. A full communications plan has been developed in collaboration with corporate communications. This will ensure that our customers are aware of this change and it includes press releases in local newspapers and posters in the existing Motherwell First Stop Shop. The first customer at the new facility will be presented with a token gift (e.g. flowers). The official opening ceremony is currently being organised with a date still to be agreed. This facility will offer more interview rooms and additional services such as those provided by Skills Development Scotland who are now to be co-located in this facility.
 - **Cumbernauld:** The Cumbernauld FSS will be relocating from the current shopping centre site to the ground floor of Fleming House. Work is currently underway on the necessary structural changes. It is anticipated that this new facility will open to our customers in April/May of this year.
 - **Wishaw:** The Wishaw FSS is being relocated to a new 'Hub' facility being developed in collaboration with the NHS. It is scheduled to open in August 2015.
 - **Airdrie:** Consideration is being given to the creation of a new First Stop Shop in Coates House. Plans are at an early stage and dates are therefore not available.
- 4.3 The focus on staff training is continuing and the dedicated staff training time provided by late opening on Wednesdays has been highly successful. This training opportunity is now being linked to training with other services and partners and this includes Housing, Council Tax, Benefits and Fraud.
- 4.4 Following approval at committee in November 2013, additional staff are now been recruited. Two staff will be starting in February working at Coatbridge and Cumbernauld. The remaining four posts have been re-advertised and interviews are planned for March.

5. **Website**

- 5.1 Use of the council website continues to grow. Demand statistics from 1st April 2013 till 31st December 2013 indicate that there were 1,574,031 visits to the website and that in total 5,483,927 individual web pages were viewed.
- 5.2 The most popular pages were the Homepage, the search page, School term dates, Council vacancies, Pay a bill, Contact Us, Jobs at the council, Education and learning, Planning and the environment and Housing.
- 5.3 The new and improved website, which is now designed around the most popular requests, was successfully launched on the 16th January 2014.

6. **Blue Badges**

- 6.1 Of the 5,015 badges processed in the first three quarters of 2013, 295 applicants (5.8%) have been referred to Occupational Therapists for a decision.
- 6.2 As part of the approved savings options for 2014-15, a charge of £20 will be introduced in April 2014 to cover the cost of processing Blue Badge applications.

- 6.3 A communications plan has been agreed with Corporate Communications and, as part of this campaign, letters will be sent out to the addresses of people (not to named individuals) who are due to renew their blue badges just before and after April 2014. The website will also be updated to reflect the changes and press releases will be published.
- 6.4 It is anticipated that the communication campaign will result in a short term peak in telephone enquiries and work is currently underway to ensure that this temporary increase in demand is well managed through the use of pre-queue messaging on the telephones and detailed information on the website.

7. Key Supporting Initiatives

- 7.1 **Information Statistics Division (ISD):** NLC have been working closely with the Information Services Division of the National Statistical Service of the NHS. This work is focussing on improving the quality of our customer data and developing a more detailed customer record so that we can improve our service provision to our customers in a way that puts the customer at the centre of service delivery. This work will also potentially underpin any linkage to health information in a Social Care context.
- 7.2 **Life events notifications:** The national Citizen Account System (CAS) is scheduled to go live in April 2014. This system will provide the council with life event information on our customers such as births, deaths and address changes. In preparation, NLC are ensuring that our back office systems will be able to receive the life event information as it becomes available.
- 7.3 **Electronic Data Audit:** The first phase of this project will be to cleanse, consolidate and migrate our unstructured information to a common file plan. Unstructured information is information that is contained in word processing documents, e-mail messages, presentations etc. The migration to a common file plan is an essential step in the preparation for a corporate rollout of an Electronic Document and Records Management System (EDRMS).
- 7.4 **Authentication & Registration:** North Lanarkshire Council is working closely with the Improvement Service towards providing a local authority registration and authentication service based on a national federated approach. Adopting a federated approach means that our customers will be able to use the same username and password for specific on-line services both at North Lanarkshire Council, with other local authorities and also other public bodies.
- 7.5 **Tell Us Once:** TUO is a national Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) programme working in partnership with local authorities, Her Majesty's Revenue & Customs, the Identity and Passport Service, and the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. It is designed to allow citizens to inform central and local government just once of changes in their circumstances. NLC will engage with this programme during 2014/15 offering a bereavement service.

8. Recommendations

- 8.1 It is recommended that the committee:-
- Notes the progress made to date;



Head of E-Government & Service Development

Members seeking further information on the contents of this report are asked to contact Irene McKelvey, on tel. 01698 302532 or Peter Tolland, Customer Services Manager, on tel. 01698 274385