



GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

13th September 2005

GM3 PUBLIC CONTACT WITH STAFF
FILE: * AVB {Folio No. * }

SUMMARY:

To report on improvements introduced or to be introduced in communicating with customers.



DESCRIPTION:

At the Council meeting held on the 9 August 2005 it was resolved "That a report be submitted to the September meeting of Council detailing procedures introduced to address the results of the Community Survey concerning public contact with Council staff by face to face, phone or in writing".

The results of the survey in respect of the above was as follows:-

Face to face contact with Council staff

51% of respondents stated that they had face to face contact with Council staff over the last year.

Of the respondents who had face to face contact:

- 53% described staff as courteous
- 44% described staff as helpful
- 32% described staff as professional
- 4% described staff as unsatisfactory
- 1% described staff as uninterested

Suitability of Council office hours

92% of respondents stated that Council's normal office hours were suitable for their needs.

Of the 8% of respondents who stated that the hours were not suitable, the majority suggested that the office should be open on Saturday mornings or till 5pm weekdays.

Contact with Council staff by telephone

42% of respondents stated that they had telephone contact with Council staff over the last year.

Of the respondents who had telephone contact:

- 51% described staff as helpful
- 48% described staff as courteous
- 30% described staff as professional
- 3% described staff as unsatisfactory
- 3% described staff as uninterested

Suitability of Council's switchboard hours

95% of respondents stated that Council's normal switchboard hours were suitable for their needs.

Usage of Council's after hours 1300-phone number

7% (21) of respondents stated that they had needed to use Council's after hours 1300 phone number.

Of these respondents 67% (14) found the number satisfactory and 33% (7) did not.

Contact with Council staff by writing

12% of respondents stated that they had written contact with Council staff over the last year.

Of the respondents who had written contact:

- 9% were 'very satisfied' with the way the contact was handled
- 51% were 'satisfied'
- 20% were 'dissatisfied'
- 11% were 'very dissatisfied'

Council Website

93% of respondents who had accessed Council's website found that it provided useful information.

The results of the face to face and telephone contacts are pleasing with low dissatisfaction rates. However we are not relying on this in the future. With the establishment of the Customer First Centre staff have been given intense training in providing information to

our customers and in how to convey that information with first class customer service. The Customer First Centre will, in future, deal with the majority of counter enquiries and telephone enquiries through the call centre. One of the performance measures in the 2005/06 Management Plan is that the Customer First Centre resolved enquired in 60% of cases at first contact by 30 June 2006. The operating hours of the call centre will also be extended to 8.00am to 5.00pm.

There was a high level of dissatisfaction with customers who had written contact with Council. So some time ago, as a means of improving written responses we introduced an acknowledgement system. This system unfortunately has confused customers rather than assisted them as they did not understand its purpose and writers of numerous correspondence did not know to which item of correspondence the acknowledgement slip applied. From a staff perspective some staff were of the view that if an acknowledgement slip was sent the actual letter did not need to be given priority.

As from 1 September the acknowledgement system has been scrapped and replaced with an acknowledgement letter. There are different standard letters for different occasions. All correspondence received should be replied to within fourteen days. Acknowledgement letters will only be forwarded where an answer within fourteen days is not possible. The acknowledgement letter will provide details of the subject matter and will be signed by the person dealing with the enquiry and a telephone number will be supplied.

New monitoring procedures for the answering of correspondence have been developed. An outstanding correspondence report is made available to Directors on a daily basis. The report shows the number of letters outstanding, the average time for replies, and dissects the outstanding correspondence under staff names. It is the responsibility of each Director to follow up outstanding correspondence. The Director reports status to me on a monthly basis and the reasons for major delays.

Council's website is constantly being updated and reviewed. There are approximately 65 services on the Internet. The number of hits in the 2004 / 05 year was 64,315. During July 2005 there were 6,049 hits.

REPORT IMPLICATIONS:

- ***Environmental***

Nil

- ***Social***

Nil

- *Economic (Financial)*

Nil

- *Policy or Statutory*

Nil

RECOMMENDATION:

That the information be noted.

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A V Burgess
GENERAL MANAGER