

Commitments Survey

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Summary and Recommendation:

To present the results of the Customer Commitments Survey exercise completed in April 2008

It is recommended that:

1. the results are publicised accordingly
2. regular surveys be undertaken
3. further reports to OSC as solutions are being developed

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In November 2006 the OSC, Policy and Resources, commissioned a survey and mystery shopping exercise in order to measure the Council's performance against the Customer Service Commitments. A summary of the results was reported to that Committee in August 2007.
- 1.2 The results of the survey showed that the Commitments were important to the Council's customers and therefore should be retained. The Committee considered that further surveys should be undertaken to ensure that the Council's performance against the Commitments was being measured and reported on.
- 1.3 A summary of the results is attached and a copy of the full CN Research report in pdf format is available on the intranet and a hard copy has been placed in the members' room.
- 1.4 The results show that the Commitments continue to be important to our customers and that in most areas we are delivering services to the high levels of our customers expectations.

2. FINDINGS

- 2.1 Telephone and face to face contact continue to be the most popular method of contact.
- 2.2 Telephone contact has increased significantly from 52% last year to 78% this year.
- 2.3 The number of customers contacting the Contact Centre rather than a direct number has increased from 65% last year to 95% this year. This has resulted in a significant increase in the number of calls answered within our commitment of 15 seconds, from 55% last year to 72% this year.
- 2.4 Face to face contact has halved from 36% last year to 18% this year.
- 2.5 Other survey results were comparable to last year:
93% of our customers felt they were dealt with politely, professionally and with respect.
89% felt that the information we provide about our services is easy to understand.
87% felt that we make it easy for them to comment or complain about the services they receive.
79% were satisfied with the way their enquiry was handled.
- 2.6 However, the survey also established that our response time to letters, e-mails and voice mails continues to be poor.

3. CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 As 80% of responses rated our Commitments at 8, 9 or 10 on a scale of 1-10 of importance that the commitments remain as they are. They should continue to be publicised in customer areas and on the website. All sections should adopt an approach that will allow the measurement of them.
- 3.2 Employees will be made aware of the results of the latest survey by way of an article in Team Talk. Managers will receive reports specific to their departments.
- 3.3. The successful introduction of the new CRM will mean that we will be able to have a system available for centrally monitoring complaints. Each department will then be able to record incoming correspondence and the system will automatically confirm receipt of e-mails, issue reminders when responses are due and allow us to do quality checks on correspondence.

- 3.4. As telephone and face to face are the most popular methods of contact and score the highest, there is a need to further extend the services delivered through the single point of contact.
- 3.5 Further reports to OSC as these developments are progressed.
- 3.6 Future surveys should be carried out at regular intervals in order to continue to measure our achievements of these commitments.

4. FINANCIAL AND HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS (INCLUDING SOURCES OF FINANCE)

- 4.1 Costs of developing the CRM and Telephony system will be within the existing T-enabling budget.
- 4.2 The Council needs to find funds to cover the costs of future surveys.

5. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 5.1 None

6. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 6.1 The recommendations will help the Council to become more customer focussed.
- 6.2 In particular it will help achieve objectives 2.5.1 and 2.5.5

List of Appendices

Appendix A - Commitments Survey summary

List of Background Documents: CN Research Commitments Survey
April 2008

List of Consultees: Cllr N Williams



COMMITMENTS SURVEY

APRIL 2008

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Copeland Borough Council appointed CN Research to carry out an independent assessment of the Council's Customer Service Commitment Policy to determine whether the Council departments are fulfilling the Council's Customer Service Commitment policy. This report shows the analysis from the survey which was carried out between March and April 2008.

METHODOLOGY

CN Research requested a sampling frame of 100 of the most recent contacts to each of the six departments (Legal & Democratic, Leisure & Environment, Policy & Performance, Regeneration, Customer Services, and Finance & Business). Departments varied in the number of customer contacts they could provide as some departments have fewer enquiries from the public than others. The sampling frame provided 1296 contacts. Telephone interviews were attempted for all the contacts with a telephone number, contacts without a phone number were sent either a postal or e-mail questionnaire.

RESPONSE RATES

The total number of interviews achieved was:

- Telephone interviews 383 (from a possible 864 contacts)
- Postal 44 (from 428 sent out)
- Email 1 (from 4 sent out).

This gives a total number of 428 responses, nearly double the 226 responses received from the last survey.

CONFIDENCE INTERVAL

428 interviews would produce results with a confidence interval of + or – 4.7% at the 95% level. Weighting was used in order to compare between departments and by age groups.

RESULTS

For comparison purposes, the results from the 2007/08 survey are shown in brackets after this years 2008/09 results.

Telephone

This was the most popular method of contact, 78 % (52%) of those surveyed contacted the Council this way. 95% of these (65%) dialed the contact centre number and only 5% (35%) dialed the Officer's number directly. This is a considerable increase in the number of people dialing the switchboard in the first instance.

Our Commitment states “We will answer telephone calls within 15 seconds during office hours”

- 72% (55%) of those that called were answered within the commitment

Our Commitment states “we will respond to voice messages left by customers within one working day

- 9% (20%) left a voice message and 45 % (63%) of those were answered within the commitment

55% (55%) called in the morning, 12% (6%) called between 12 and 2.00pm, and 7% (11%) called in the afternoon.

Face to Face

This was the second most popular method of contact with 18% (36%) of those surveyed choosing to contact the offices in person.

Our Commitment states “We will attend to customers who visit our reception within 5 minutes of their arrival”

- 90 (88%) of people that visited Council offices in person were seen within the commitment

Email

3% (6%) of those surveyed had contacted the Council by e-mail.

Our Commitment states “We will acknowledge external customers e-mails within one working day and respond fully to all e-mail enquiries within 3 working days”

- 50% (50%) of people who contacted Council by email received an acknowledgement within the commitment.
- 50 % (50%) received a full response within the commitment.

Letters

Least popular was contact by letter, with only 1% (6 letters) of those surveyed contacting the Council by letter. 4 of these were letters of complaint sent directly to the department, 1 to Customer Services and 3 to Leisure and Environment.

Our Commitment states “We will acknowledge letters of complaint within 3 working days of receipt and respond fully to all letters within 10 working days”

- 1 person received an acknowledgement within 3 days, 1 within 5 days, 2 after more than 5 days and 2 never received an acknowledgement.
- 2 people received and acknowledgement within 10 working days, 1 said it took longer than 10 days and 3 said they never received a response.
- Therefore, 34% (40%) received a full response to their letter within the commitment.

Satisfaction with handling of enquiries and queries

79 % (78%) of customers were satisfied with the way their enquiry was handled (just over half of these said ‘very satisfied’). 15% (16%) were dissatisfied. Satisfaction is greatest when enquiring in person at the Council offices or on the telephone. There is no difference with satisfaction levels across departments, or by customers’ age or gender.

Our Commitment Policy states “We will ensure that our Customers feel that they have been dealt with politely, professionally and with respect”

- 93% (94%) of customers said they felt their enquiry or query was dealt with politely.
- 89% (92%) of customers felt that their enquiry or query was dealt with professionally.
- 89% (93%) of customers felt their enquiry or query was dealt with respect

Our Commitment Policy states “We will ensure that all of our customers feel that we make it easy for them to make comments or complaints about the service they receive”

- 87% (85%) of customers feel it is easy to make comments, enquiries or complaints about Copeland Borough Council.

Our Commitment states “We will ensure that all of our customers feel that the information provided about services is easy to understand

- 89% (87%) of the customers feel that the information provided about services by Copeland Borough Council is easy to understand.

Further Questions asked

How important on a scale of 1-10, 10 being the highest, are the Commitments to you?

- 80% of the sample rated each of the commitments as an 8, 9 or 10 level of importance, the same as last year.

Are there any changes you would like to see to any of the Commitments?

85 responses as follows

1. Queries/complaints should be dealt with quicker (27)
2. Information should be easier to understand (11)
3. Improve reception services(10)
4. Ensure commitments are carried out(9)
5. Happy with the commitments(9)
6. More commitments on recycling/refuse(4)
7. Everyone should be treated equally(3)

8. More commitments on improving roads(2)
9. More commitment on planning(2)
10. A commitment to looking after personal documents(1)
11. A commitment to reduce Council Tax (1)
12. Stricter policies on dog fouling(1)
13. More receipts being sent out and given(1)
14. More commitment from dog warden(1)
15. More commitment in involving younger people(1)
16. The Council should give priority to small business (1)
17. Council should have more effective management (1)

Are there any other comments you would like to say about the Commitments Policy at Copeland Borough Council?

52 responses as follows

1. Good policy, as long as it is carried out (16)
2. Policy not always adhered to (10)
3. Policy fine as it is (4)
4. Everyone I have dealt with has been efficient (3)
5. Some of the commitments could be more flexible (3)
6. I have not had very pleasant dealings with the Council (3)
7. Need better communication between staff (2)
8. The Waste and Recycling service should be reviewed (2)
9. Everyone should be treated equally (1)
10. Some questions were irrelevant (1)
11. In favour of commitments policy (1)
12. Businesses should be able to contact the Council quicker (1)
13. Have not contacted the Council much (1)
14. There is room for improvement (1)
15. They could provide a free phone number for enquiries (1)
16. More facilities for people with learning disabilities to help them with form filling etc (1)
17. It is a lot easier to get a repair done (1)

Are there any other general comments about Copeland Borough Council and the services it provides?

225 responses as follows

1. Slow in responding to queries/ complaints (37)
2. Happy with Copeland Borough Council (34)
3. Need recycling bins/bags (24)
4. Recycling/rubbish/household items not collected (22)
5. Switchboard/reception needs improved (16)
6. Communication with the Council could be easier (15)

7. Would prefer a weekly waste collection (12)
8. Improved recycling/refuse system (9)
9. Dog fouling is a problem (9)
10. Not happy with Copeland Borough Council (8)
11. Information should be easier to understand (8)
12. Rural areas in Copeland get forgotten about (5)
13. Some houses need maintenance (5)
14. Litter is a problem (4)
15. Council Tax too high (4)
16. Not happy with charges for removal of household waste (3)
17. Roads need maintenance (3)
18. Council website difficult to navigate (2)
19. Council are unhelpful with vermin problems (2)
20. Some questions are irrelevant to me (1)
21. Need a more comfortable waiting area (1)
22. Need more for young children in the area (1)

Gender

33% (43%) of those who responded were male

67 (57%) of those who responded were female

Age

30% (20%) of those who responded were over 65

20 % (24%) were aged between 35-45

19% (23%) were aged between 56-64

19% (17%) were aged between 46-55

11% (13%) were aged between 25-34

1% (3%) were aged between 18-24

Ethnic origin

99% (95%) of those who responded were White British

Of the remaining 1%, 3 were white Irish, 1 was Asian/Asian British, and 1 was Chinese.