

Commitments Survey

EXECUTIVE MEMBER: Councillor G Clements
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Summary and Recommendation:

To present the results of the Customer Commitments Survey exercise completed in June 2009

It is recommended that:

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

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In 2006 the OSC, Policy and Resources, commissioned a Commitments survey and mystery shopping exercise in order to measure the Council's performance against the Customer Service Commitments. This has become an annual survey and the results are disseminated through various forums such as Managers group and Team talk.
- 1.2 Unfortunately this year the number of possible contacts provided by Departments was 44% less than the last survey this means the number of responses are quite low.
- 1.3 The results of the surveys show that the Commitments are important to the Councils customers and therefore should be retained. 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 along with the responses by postcode as previously requested.
- 1.4 They also show that in most areas we are delivering to our customers' high levels of expectations.

2. FINDINGS

- 2.1 Telephone and face to face contact continue to be the most popular method of contact.
- 2.2 Telephone contact remains in the highest quartile 70% compared with 78% last year
- 2.3 The number of customers dialling the main number rather than a direct line number has decreased from 95% last year to 79% this year. We are continuing to improve and have increased the number of calls answered within our commitment of 15 seconds, from 72% last year to 79% this year.
- 2.4 Face to face contact has increased from 18% last year to 22% this year.
- 2.5 Other survey results are consistent with previous years with improvements in most areas.

96% of our customers felt they were dealt with politely, professionally and with respect an increase on last years 93%.

91% felt that the information we provide about our services is easy to understand. an increase on last years 89%.

85% felt that we make it easy for them to comment or complain about the services they receive an increase on last years 87%.

82% were satisfied with the way their enquiry was handled an increase on last years 79%.

- 2.6 However, the survey also continues to show that our response time to letters, e-mails and voice mails continues to be poor.

3. OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

- 3.1 Consideration needs to be given to the effectiveness of any future surveys given the low numbers of customer contact details that were made available to the project.
- 3.2 Consideration should be given to a title change relating to the Councils Commitments, from "Customer Service Commitments" to "Copeland Borough Councils Commitments to our Customers" this would help to ensure that all departments had ownership, and not perceived to relate to "Customer Services" department only.

4. CONCLUSIONS

- 4.1 As over 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.
- 4.2 Employees will be made aware of the results of the latest survey by way of an article in Team Talk. Managers will receive detailed reports specific to their departments.
- 4.3 Departments will be encouraged through Managers Group to provide customer contact details which will ensure the results are cross sectional throughout the whole Council and not just perceived Customer focussed Services.
- 4.4 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.

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

- 5.1 The Council needs to identify funding sources to cover the costs of future surveys.

6. PROJECT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 None

7. IMPACT ON CORPORATE PLAN

- 7.1 The recommendations will help the Council to become more customer focussed.
- 7.2 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
June 2009

List of Consultees: Corporate Team, Cllr G Clements

CHECKLIST FOR DEALING WITH KEY ISSUES

Please confirm against the issue if the key issues below have been addressed . This can be by either a short narrative or quoting the paragraph number in the report in which it has been covered.

Impact on Crime and Disorder	Allow timely response to reported issues
Impact on Sustainability	Allow timely response to reported issues
Impact on Rural Proofing	Allow timely response to reported issues
Health and Safety Implications	Allow timely response to reported issues
Impact on Equality and Diversity Issues	Allow timely response to reported issues
Children and Young Persons Implications	Allow timely response to reported issues
Human Rights Act Implications	Allow timely response to reported issues
Monitoring Officer Comments	Allow timely response to reported issues
S151 Officer Comments	

Please say if this report will require the making of a Key Decision NO

Appendix A



COMMITMENTS SURVEY

JUNE 2009

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 June 2009.

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 734 contacts, compared to 1296 last year. 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 207 (from a possible 495 contacts)
- Postal 13 (from 227 sent out)
- Email 0 (from 12 sent out).

This gives a total number of 220 responses, almost half the 428 responses received from the last survey.

CONFIDENCE INTERVAL

220 interviews would produce results with a confidence interval of + or – 6.6% 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 2008 survey are shown in brackets after this years 2009 results.

Telephone

This was the most popular method of contact, 70% (78 %) of those surveyed contacted the Council this way 79 % (95%) of these dialed the contact centre number and 22% (5%) dialed the Officer's number directly. This confirms the high number of people dialing the switchboard in the first instance.

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

- 79% (72%) 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

- 7% (9%) left a voice message and 30% (45%) of those were answered within the commitment

53% (55%) called in the morning, 11% (12%) called between 12 and 2.00pm, and 13% (7%) called in the afternoon.

Face to Face

This was the second most popular method of contact with 22% (18%) 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”

- 92% (90%) of people that visited Council offices in person were seen within the commitment

Email

5 % (3%) 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”

- 70 % (50%) of people who contacted Council by email received an acknowledgement within the commitment.
- 80% (50%) received a full response within the commitment.

Letters

Least popular was contact by letter, with only 3% (1%) (6 letters) of those surveyed contacting the Council by letter. 0 of these were letters of complaint sent directly to the department..

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, 3 within 5 days, 2 after more than 5 days and 2 never received an acknowledgement.
- 1 person received a full response within 5 working days, 4 said it took between 5 and 10 days and 1 said it took longer than 10 days
- Therefore, 83% (34%) received a full response to their letter within the commitment.

Satisfaction with handling of enquiries and queries

82 % (79%) of customers were satisfied with the way their enquiry was handled (around three fifths said 'very satisfied'). 12% (15%) were dissatisfied. Satisfaction is greatest when enquiring in person at the Council offices or using the website/email. 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”

- 97% (93%) of customers said they felt their enquiry or query was dealt with politely.
- 95% (89%) of customers felt that their enquiry or query was dealt with professionally.
- 95% (89%) 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”

- 85% (87%) 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

- 91% (89%) 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?

- Over 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 (9)
2. Ensure commitments are carried out(5)
3. There should be more people to deal with queries/complaints(3)
4. Information should be easier to understand (2)
5. Improve reception services(2)
6. Happy with the commitments(2)
7. Ensure peoples queries/complaints are acknowledged(2)
8. The Council should treat us with respect(1)
9. Website difficult to navigate(1)
10. Better communication between departments(1)
11. Do not think they are necessary(1)
12. Information should be more easily available(1)
13. More commitments on improving roads(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 (10)
2. Policy seems fine (8)
3. Everyone I have dealt with has been efficient (7)
4. Policy not always adhered to(5)
5. Ensure peoples queries/complaints are acknowledged(3)
6. Do not use email(3)
7. Some of the commitments could be more flexible (2)
8. I have not been dealt with efficiently by the Council (2)
9. There should be more people to deal with queries/complaints(2)
10. Should be able to speak to someone straight away when phoning(2)
11. Queries/complaints should be dealt with quicker(1)
12. Council should listen to the public more(1)
13. Some staff answering the phone should have more customer service training(1)
14. Your mission statement should be made clearer and more accessible(1)

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

162 responses as follows

1. Happy with Copeland Borough Council(74)
2. Slow in responding to queries/ complaints (9)
3. Switchboard/reception needs improved (8)
4. Need recycling bins/bags(7)
5. Recycling/rubbish/household items not collected(6)
6. Some houses need maintenance(5)
7. Litter is a problem (5)
8. Bins not collected directly outside our house(5)
9. Would like more information on council services(5)
10. Communication with the council could be easier(4)
11. Not happy with Copeland Borough Council(3)
12. Not happy with charges for removal of household waste (3)
13. Roads need maintenance (3)
14. Housing needs should be looked at(3)
15. Would prefer a weekly waste collection (2)
16. Dog fouling is a problem (2)
17. Information should be easier to understand(2)
18. Council Website difficult to navigate(2)
19. Would like information on what can be recycled(2)
20. Phone number should be changed(2)
21. Would like to recycle(1)
22. Council tax too high(1)
23. Would like a bin instead of bags(1)
24. Would like to put out as much recycling as we have (no restrictions on amounts)(1)
25. Would like a lid for green recycling box(1)
26. Council should listen to the public more(1)
27. Better communications between departments(1)
28. Council needs to have more proactive contact with local organizations(1)
29. Would like private area to discuss private details(1)
30. More people employed by the Council and less sub contractors(1)

Gender

41% (33%) of those who responded were male

59% (67%) of those who responded were female

Age

27% (19%) were aged between 46-55

21 % (20%) were aged between 35-45

19% (30%) of those who responded were over 65

17% (19%) were aged between 56-64

12% (11%) were aged between 25-34

4% (1%) were aged between 18-24

Ethnic origin

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

Of the remaining 1%, 1 was other white, 1 was Asian Indian, and 1 was Chinese.