

# Corporate Improvement Plan

## Using Customer Intelligence to Drive Improvement

### Report & Executive Summary:

#### Cherwell District Council

<b>Timetable</b>	<b>Papers Finalised</b>	<b>Meeting Date</b>
CMT	29 Oct 2010	3 Nov 2010
Presentation of findings to UoR		10 Nov 2010
Final Version (Exec Report) to UoR		16 Dec 2010
Executive		January 2011

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## 1. Introduction

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### Purpose of this report

- 1.1. This improvement project forms part of the Council's Corporate Improvement Plan and Value for Money Programme of Reviews for 2010/11.
- 1.2. Working concurrently with the development of this report during quarter two of 2010/11, has been a value for money review of Customer Service. This report should be read in conjunction with that review.
- 1.3. This report also draws on the findings and recommendations of an externally-commissioned customer services data quality review which took place during the development of this improvement plan. This has added to the understanding of what customer intelligence exists, how it is used and how it translates into action on a service level.
- 1.4. The overall aim of the project is:  
  
*To ensure we use customer and community information to identify emerging issues for individual services, within localities and for particular groups and (with partners as appropriate) respond promptly to these issues.*
- 1.5. This project has been split into two phases, phase 1 focusing on intelligence available through the Customer Service Centre and phase 2 which broadens the project scope to include other sources of customer intelligence available to the Council. This report covers phase 1; phase 2 will be covered by the proposed recommendations for further work contained in this report.
- 1.6. Project Deliverables:
  - Proposals to change current service delivery tangibly to improve outcomes for customers for immediate implementation or for resource consideration as part of service planning for 2011/12
  - Recommendations for a framework for reporting, sharing and responding to both customer and community intelligence to drive improvements across services, and associated corporate performance measures
  - Recommendations regarding the extent to which Cherwell and its service units use all the information at their disposal and how to nurture a culture of using the data gathered corporately or by customer service to drive action within services
  - General recommendations regarding the strengths, gaps and overlaps of the Council's existing approach to customer data and the quality and control of that data
  - The intelligence available and future role of the Community Intelligence Hub (residing in Community Safety).
- 1.7. Further, this report also identifies processes/procedures to facilitate:
  - A response process/procedure for urgent and non-urgent customer issues
  - A mechanism for collecting customer-response performance measures for the Council's corporate performance scorecard

## 2. Executive Summary and Recommendations

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### 2.1 Introduction

This report sets out to understand how customer intelligence at Cherwell can drive improvements to the services that the Council offers. It considers what intelligence is currently available and proposes a range of improvements. Moving forward, this report sets out a framework for bringing customer intelligence to the heart of service improvement.

### 2.2 Summary of Findings

Key findings from this improvement project are:

- The Council's Customer Service is highly regarded by Cherwell's residents. The most important thing to customers is that Customer Service answers questions fully and provide enough information
- The Value for Money Review has found that the service is costly, but residents like it, even if demand means we can't answer the phone quickly:

- > High customer satisfaction 73% – Cherwell residents love it!
- > Expenditure high @ £1.6m (2010/11 budget)
- > 55% of budget is staffing costs
- > Average of 3mins 37secs to answer calls (Aug '10)
- > 31% abandoned calls in Aug 2010 (28% 6 month average) – now improving
- > Faster service face-to-face: average 1 min 47 seconds waiting time
- > We have lots of data but no useful information

- Internally, working relationships between Customer Service and departments need developing. Managers are not familiar with the customer journey and often see customer data as problems and complaints, and not as a source of intelligence
- Urgent customer issues are responded to well and have been used as opportunities to learn and improve services
- Limited, customer intelligence is gathered at present but is not routinely extracted and used to improve services, except for some incidences of good working practices in Revenues and Benefits
- There is limited capacity and expertise within Customer Service to undertake any regular provision and assessment of customer intelligence
- There is a lack of clarity and ownership of content within the Council's website and the contribution good content can make to drive improvement
- The Vision for Customer Service established in 2006 has been delivered and no longer provides the service with direction
- A new vision is required to put driving improvement from customer intelligence at the heart of the service aiming for the transformation needed for major channel migration that will drive down costs (as described in the below table), increase performance and maintaining customer satisfaction:

	Transactions 2009/10	2010/11 Direction	2009/10 costs (actuals)
<b>Face to Face</b>	112,650	Down 3% to 11% on last year	£880k @ £7.82/visit
<b>Telephone</b>	104,530	Up 4% in the year to 56%	£596k @ £5.70/call
<b>Online</b>	3,000 emails 500,410 web hits	Web use up 10%, email up 4% (15% for young) on last year	£83k @ £0.17/unit

- The trend is for Cherwell’s customer to move away from face to face and towards telephone and online services. Research shows us that:

- Access by phone is fairly static
- Face to face access dropping slightly
- Website on the up 10% overall
  - Up 35% for young
  - Up 33% rural
  - Up 18% for low income
- Email up 4%, 15% among the young
- 75% in SE Region use the internet daily
- Cherwell residents demonstrate high propensity for online service
- “surely providing more information and advice online would save the council money?” (budget consultation participant)
- Comparatively, at 70% Cherwell is conducting near average volumes of business online, but at 16% face to face volumes are much more than average

### 2.3 Recommendations

- Adopt a new Vision for Customer Services to 2013/4 and Future State as outlined in Section 3. Note the importance of migrating demand by developing our on-line service and encouraging customers to access it
- Adopt the improvements set out in Section 4 driven from customer intelligence. Note the importance of the management of demand, such as through introducing appointments at our LinkPoints
- Use customer intelligence to drive further improvements: introduce a corporate Right First Time programme for 2011/12 and monthly reporting framework as set out in Section 5
- Adopt two key performance measures for the Council’s Corporate Score Card: Speed of response and abandonment rate as set out in Section 5, and new Customer Promise.

### **3. Adopting a new Vision 2013/14 and Future State for Customer Service**

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#### **3.1 Vision context**

Findings from the Customer Intelligence and the Value for Money Review conducted in 2010/11 demonstrate that customer service is very much liked by Cherwell's customers, but is too expensive, not giving good performance. Equally the Council is not moving sufficiently rapidly to capture customer's appetite for online services and is not benefitting from customer intelligence to improve services and strip out waste.

In delivering the vision, it is recognised that the current high levels of satisfaction may suffer in the short-term, to be regained by 2014, arising from the transformational nature of the proposed programme.

#### **3.2 Vision**

In 2013/14 we are a robust customer service organisation managing demand rather than being driven by it. We routinely design out avoidable activity in our services using information gathered from customers, and we are recognised by our internal customers as offering a good quality service, at reasonable cost. Our customer satisfaction levels are no lower than they were in 2010/11.

#### **3.3 By 2013/14 we will have:**

- reduced the gross expenditure of the customer service team significantly
- retained or improved on satisfaction levels of 73% in 2010/11
- maintained or improved performance levels. No more than 10% of callers abandon their call while waiting to get through; average wait times for telephone calls to the contact centre are not longer than 2 minutes
- migrated to 80% of our contact being online, reduced our contact centre volumes by a quarter, and will have halved our face to face contact.

#### **3.4 By:**

- Adopting an access strategy that prioritises development of "value" contact to cheaper channels (such as online) while, *at the same time*, reducing face to face and telephone contact
- Reducing wasteful, avoidable contact
- Managing demand – smoothing the peaks and troughs, encouraging online self-service
- Reducing down demand: communications campaigns, FAQs, informative how-to guides
- Considering opportunities for shared premises/service hubs, as they arise
- Exploiting new approaches to service delivery that offer value for money, such as outreach/mobile face to face

#### **3.5 Criteria against which success should be measured**

- Annual Customer Service Revenue Estimates and by individual service budgets
- Annual Satisfaction levels
- Performance levels: Telephone & face to face wait times and abandoned rates
- Migration achievement rate: Proportions of contact made face to face, by telephone and online (requires defining and baselining) requiring volumes of online service requests face-to-face and telephone contact to be collated.

### **3.6 How Customer Services will look in 2013/14: Future State**

In 2013/14, Cherwell District Council's LinkPoints are operating in all three urban centres and from the Council's headquarters at Bodicote House.

#### **The service at LinkPoints:**

There is a reception service at each LinkPoint providing information and making appointments for casual callers, where necessary. None of these transactions takes more than a couple of minutes. A third member of staff at each LinkPoint (necessary to allow the office to be open 8.45 – 5.15 and over lunch) is logged into the contact centre system, taking calls, and does not deal with customers face to face.

A vending machine is available to dispense dog waste bags, food caddy bags and other environmental sundries. Customers wishing to pay a bill are using the payment kiosk located in the LinkPoint; the receptionist can help customers if necessary, but these machines are considered a reliable alternative to paying manually and regular customers have no problem using them.

The number of customers visiting LinkPoints is around half what it was three years ago.

#### **For Benefit customers:**

Most customers are bringing documents in connection with their Benefits applications, and have made appointments by phone, online, or earlier in the day or week at the LinkPoint. Their appointment is to go through their application with a customer service adviser, who will check through their application and make sure it is complete, before sending it for action. Originals are scanned there and then returned to the customer.

#### **At the Call Centre:**

Back in the contact centre, wait times for customers are never more than two minutes, and fewer than 10% of callers abandon their call before getting through. Customer satisfaction, recorded by the telemetric systems after each call, is consistently positive and national benchmarking places CDC in the top quartile.

The number of calls has fallen by over a quarter in the past three years even though more services are now delivered through this team, as more and more customers choose to request services online as it is more convenient, saving them time and money.

#### **Online:**

Properly functional online service is available via the Council's website, taking customer requests through structured forms and delivering the information right into the service systems which generate the work request or action. Customers receive receipts and acknowledgement and an increasing number of customers can track the progress of their request. This system is used by customer service advisers in the contact centre, as well as by customers in their homes or using self service terminals in LinkPoints and partner buildings. The outreach team find it invaluable to be able to access services on behalf of vulnerable customers they visit in their homes.

The proportion of customer transactions online has grown to 80%.

**Internally: *Being a cross-Council, collaborative enterprise***

Each month the customer service manager meets with other service managers to discuss performance. They look over the tailored performance report which includes phone answering times and abandoned rates for individual services; number of enquiries dealt with at the LinkPoints; details of the main causes of avoidable contact during the month, summaries of customer feedback and complaints, progress reports on service change activities agreed last month, and information on plans the service has to make changes or contact customers in the next period.

The service managers fully understand the service that Customer Service provides and work collaboratively with the Customer Service management team. They value the regular contact and take pride in making changes that improve the customer experience. In turn, the customer service team understand the needs of the service and are better placed to adapt to suit their needs as necessary.

Senior management receive summaries of these reports quarterly via the corporate performance system and are confident that the measures in place ensure the right balance between cost and quality is being achieved.

**Externally: *Being a cross-partner leader for change***

Cherwell works collaboratively with other agencies to improve the service to residents, such as co-ordinating "Tell it Once" initiatives.



## 4. Drive improvement from existing customer intelligence

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### 4.1 Context

There is limited customer intelligence available at present. However, working with what information is available and drawing on the experience of the Customer Service Team, a wealth of improvements have been identified which will have a significant impact on improving the customer experience and, over time enable the Council to drive down the cost of customer service.

The actions have been prioritised by the degree of impact on the customer journey and the ease of implementation to form a comprehensive Customer Service Improvement Action Plan.

Some of the key improvements proposed for implementation by March 2011 include:

### 4.2 Smarter working - reduce avoidable contact and transactions into the Customer Service Centre:

- Improve clarity of letters and bills to customers (“you pay this, we pay that”)
- Improve the timing of Council Tax bills and benefit entitlement letters
- Make it possible for a customer to inform us of a change – such as a death – just once and for that information to be shared across everyone
- When considering fees and charges, be mindful of online service delivery (for example the difficulties in proving, online, an entitlement to an age concession, or being in any specific “class” of customer)
- Simplify pricing policies so they are easier to explain both on-line and by Customer Service staff. For example, connect charging for blue bins @ £15 to charging for blue boxes at £7.50 for each of the 3rd and 4th boxes
- Incentivise online access – make it cheaper to buy services online, for example introduce free delivery on blue bins purchased online
- Respond to direct customer feedback, such as
  - Introduce more bulky waste collection days in Bicester to meet the customer demand
  - Introduce labelling to explain why a bin has not been emptied (too heavy, contaminated,...) to reduce the number of customers calling for an explanation.

### 4.3 Manage demand – reduced peaks and troughs into the Customer Service Centre:

- Improve scheduling of Council mail outs across all services
- Introduce a new policy: if a missed bin isn’t emptied the same day, it will be collected the next working day. A much easier policy for Customer Service to explain
- Introduce a new policy: allow residents to report a missed bin at any time during the day (this is possible as Cherwell goes over to real-time with Bartech Technology) to stop the current 3pm call surge
- Introduce appointments at the Council’s LinkPoints: reduce face to face contact to 5 minutes per Benefit customer and introduce 45 minute pre-booked appointments for Benefit claimants
- Use lessons learnt from handling events like extreme snow, such as use of automated telephone messages and FAQs (frequently asked questions), to manage customers away from contacting during peak time, provide useful information and take the opportunity to promote benefits of going online.

## **5. How do we routinely find future improvements?**

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### **5.1 Right First Time Corporate Programme 2011/12**

Introduce a Right First Time Programme for 2011/12, involving all Council service areas, focusing on using customer intelligence to help deliver the new Vision Statement. It is proposed that this Programme be incorporated into the Council's Corporate Plan from April 2011 and the Council's Corporate Management Team be asked to consider resource allocation to this Programme.

The Right First Time Programme will:

- Involve all Council service areas, service by service, focusing first on the high user areas: Revenues and Benefits, Environmental and Housing Services
- For each service, collect useful information and stop collecting useless data, and analyse this information for trends and intelligence, across all access channels.
- Develop the Council's use of reporting and analysing tools to support the presentation and understanding of customer intelligence (such as the Community Intelligence Hub and Lagan Reporting tools)
- Research public sector and private sector best practice and exemplar authorities such as Beacon Councils
- Bring forward proposals for service improvements and new transformational ways of working, with accompanying business cases, for each service area to achieve the Vision Statement of increasing migration online while reducing the service cost base. Proposals to include :
  - Service delivery (and if appropriate pricing) changes
  - Online migration options
  - Cost reductions and invest to save initiatives.
- Be underpinned by collaborative working between the services and Customer Service Team and provide a platform for on-going, continuous improvement to augment the Customer Service Improvement Plan.
- Be managed as a Corporate Programme.

### **5.2 Introduce regular reporting of customer intelligence**

Introduce two-way reporting on a monthly basis between the Customer Service Centre and Heads of Services. Monthly report to cover:

- Available customer intelligence data and analysis
- Transactions by access channel: usage and cost
- Progress towards channel migration targets and Improvement Plan actions
- Feedback from Head of Service on target and action progress
- Forecast for customer activity in coming months to enable customer services to schedule activity to minimise peaks and troughs.

### **5.3 Adopt performance monitoring measures**

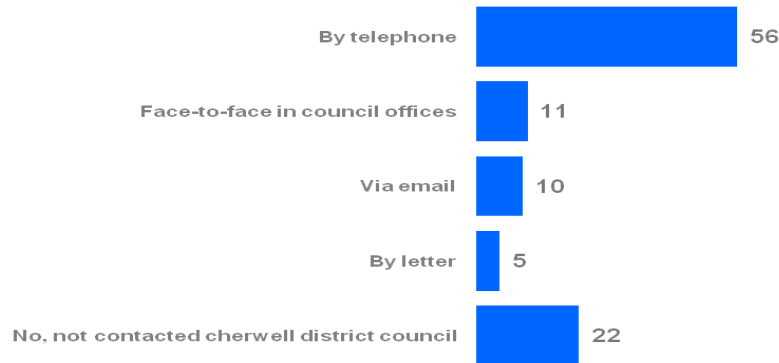
Adopt two performance measures initially for the Council's Performance Scorecard and incorporate the new service standards into the Council's published documentation, including the new Customer Promise at Annex 2:

- Speed of response: a new standard of within two and a half minutes for phone calls (this is setting the standard at the level of last year's performance, current performance 3 mins 37 secs)
- abandonment rate: an improvement target of 25% for 2011/12 (performance at 31% in August 2010).

**(i) External Assessments**

**a) Customer Satisfaction Survey 2010: *Very well respected service by the Customers***

Most of the Council’s customers make contact by telephone. Email is beginning to gain ground, particularly among high earners (20%) and those aged 25-34 (15%), at the expense of letters and face-to-face visits. The 2010 percentage split for contact by all residents is below:



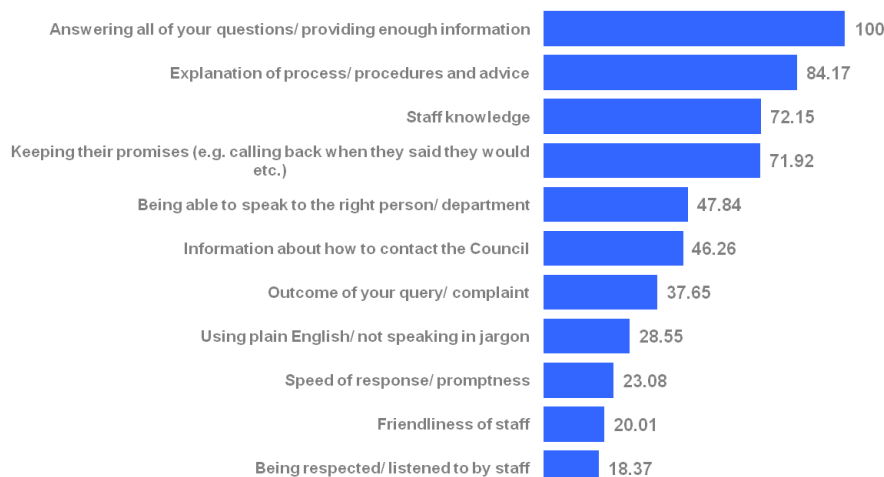
Overall satisfaction with the Council has risen to 73% from 60% in 2006. Individual aspects, such as staff speaking in plain English and being friendly scoring particularly highly at 79 % and 77% respectively.

Greatest dissatisfaction is from:

- query/complaint outcome (14%)
- not keeping promises – such as calling back (14%)
- Speed of response (12%).

Further analysis (see below diagram) gives a hierarchy of factors to improve, ranked by importance:

- answering questions fully and providing enough information is by far the most important priority for residents
- explanation of process/ procedures and advice, indicating the value of clarity in the way the Council communicates with residents
- staff knowledge, emphasising the value to customers of getting it right first time
- keeping promises (e.g. calling back when they said they would).



## **b) Tribal Report: customer data check**

Cherwell commissioned Tribal to undertake a customer data health check during August, reporting findings during September 2010. In summary, they found:

- Customer Service, not departments, decide what information to collect and what to report
- There appears to be no collaborative working between Customer Service and departments around customer data
- Customer Service and services do not appear to work together around the website content
- Services do not know how customers use their web pages
- Customer Service data is not currently being used to design services
- Services are aware of, but lack an understanding of the data and analysis tools available (such as GIS, Google Analytics & MOSAIC segmentation)
- The exception is Revenues and Benefits, where good working relationships exist and both sides benefit from the two way approach.

The Data Quality Review recommends:

- Service managers (heads of service and service managers) should be encouraged to identify the information they need to understand and improve their service
- A formal, regular interaction would help service managers feel more in control of customer information and issues can be tackled, such as changes to processes
- Senior managers and customer service should agree type and content of regular reporting
- Senior managers need training to help them use data to change/re-design services, rather than seeing customer data and intelligence simply as complaints and problems
- Senior managers need to understand the customer journey from end to end as customer service is only the initial step on many occasions. Training and support to emphasis the value of customer insight at senior level would help embed acting on customer data
- There is scope to drive down call volumes using customer intelligence
- The website content can be much better configured to support customer services and also intelligence gathering
- Community Intelligence Hub (CIH), used by the Community Safety Team as an analysis and reporting tool, needs to be assessed against other systems in the Council
- A number of customer metrics should be introduced and reported through the Council's Performance Management Framework, such as: Speed of answering calls and call abandonment rate. For the web, the following metrics are recommended: "query resolution" rate (ie the number of people responding through Govmetric that the page was useful) and "search success" rate (ie the number of failed attempts by the customer to find what they are looking for using the search box).

## **(ii) Internal Assessments**

### **a) Value for Money Conclusion 2010 Summary: Costly, but residents like it, even if demand means we can't always answer the phone quickly**

The overall conclusion of the review is that the service is **high cost** for its overall operation in comparison with others, although it offers good value for money for Revenues and Benefits calls. It has poor performance in terms of long and increasing time to answer calls, high and increasing call abandonment rates. It is high quality in terms of good and improving levels of customer satisfaction for residents using the service, although its internal satisfaction levels are poor in parts.

Customer Service is the first point of contact for all face-to-face enquiries and visitors and around 80% of all telephone contact. Currently, telephone callers wait over 2 mins 30 seconds for an answer and will abandon a call within 3 mins of waiting. A caller who abandons will call again if they are not called back by an advisor first, increasing even further the pressure on an already stretched resource.

Currently the service is costly and lacks capacity to deliver often overwhelming amounts of contact. The service is highly regarded by residents, but less highly regarded by some of the services it serves. Further, There is insufficient capacity in the service at present to undertake the transformation programmes highlighted in best practice authorities to achieve real savings.

### **b) Customer Intelligence issues**

Lagan is the Council's Customer Relationship Management system and is the "front-end" where customer intelligence should be input and collated/analysed. It is being applied on a limited basis for telephone contact for a resident who has:

- called to complain
- called on an environmental service issue
- or emailed into the Council.

There is no capacity within the customer service team to undertake regular reporting or analysis/assessment of customer intelligence – neither time capacity nor expertise.

Limited customer intelligence is collated currently from a number of different sources:

- An advisor's assessment of "avoidable contact" (previously NI. 14) across all Council services. This is undertaken for all telephone calls (electronically captured) and face-to-face (manually captured). This provides a very high-level indication of where to focus effort to avoid unnecessary contact but gives no detail of the background to the avoidable contact upon which to respond. The quality of data captured through this process is also variable
- Customer complaints (via Lagan) averaging around 20 a month
- Govmetric for web and phone usage – this captures a user's view on the helpfulness of a web page and call content which can therefore flag problem areas
- environmental services enquiries (via Lagan downloaded overnight into Uniform where it is exported into the Community Intelligence Hub for further analysis)
- Customer Service Team weekly meetings
- Mystery shopping and the Annual Satisfaction Survey, etc.

Some examples of Revenues and Benefits customer intelligence reporting and learning to improve services exist.

### **c) System issues**

- Up to a dozen proprietary software systems are used by customer advisors (eg Lagan, Bartec, Uniform, Abritas, Iworld, Uniform, Northgate,...).
- Using Lagan to collate customer intelligence for a customer service supported by a proprietary system represents double keying of data for a customer advisor (the introduction of the citizen portal for email correspondence will go some way to address this issue).
- The different proprietary software systems have varying degrees of ease of use, access barriers and speed.
- Customer e-mails and on-line forms are re-keyed into back office systems; email handling has yet to become a formalised access channel and no customer intelligence is yet derived from this source.
- Where customer intelligence exists, no automated reporting analysis or tools are in place (the Council has not invested in the Lagan reporting tool).

### **d) Community Intelligence Hub (CIH)**

- CIH offers a highly-visual, in-depth analysis tool offering a dashboard-style reporting platform, with GIS mapping features. It currently receives external input from Community Safety, Police and Fire data sources as well as daily data for Amenities and Environmental Health Services (from Lagan via Uniform).
- It provides intelligence that has been useful in planning operational activity (such as targeting ASB, identifying Arson trends, incidences/locations of vehicle damage and incidences/locations of needle finds relating to drug activity). The analysis and the support for officers is provided in-house within the Community Safety Team.
- CIH as a system has already been procured by the Council with a multi-licence for Council-wide use. It has already been configured to provide a Cherwell-orientated data reporting framework. For example, it knows all Cherwell's parishes and their boundaries, Wards and Super Output Areas and can therefore report at any of these levels, ie abandoned vehicles or missed bins by Ward.
- CIH (or other reporting tools, such as Lagan Reporting) provide a window onto what the future for Cherwell's customer intelligence reporting could look like. Unfortunately, we are not in a position to consider investing in expanding CIH, or any other, automated tool. First, we need to know what customer intelligence we want to capture and how we want it analysed, before we can specify how we want to expand.
- Currently, Corporate Information Systems do not have the relevant skills to reduce the need for consultancy support for CIH development and changes. It is very roughly estimated that development of the CIH to automate and present general customer intelligence of the type identified in the sources above (and used to create the report see Annex 3 for the proposed regular report to Heads of Service) would incur development costs of around £20k. Requests for these funds are contained in the Capital Programme bid for 2011/12.

### **e) Reporting urgent customer issues**

There are occasions when something unexpected happens causing a surge of calls into customer services, recent examples include:

- "Public panic" issues: such as the announcement of the general election, the budget, when it mentioned changes to benefits, road closures and accidents, risk of flooding/snow,... These happen when people hear something on the news, put two and two together to make about 12 and call us.....
- Ambiguous communications: including letters which tell people they don't have to do anything!

- New services: the introduction of Ringo caused a big increase in face-to-face visits from people asking how to do it, which Customer Service was unable to offer advice
- Out-of-synch scheduling: bulk distribution of letters posted in Blackburn (where Capita are based providing a Benefits Service on behalf of the Council) taking longer to arrive than letters posted at Bodicote and so both arrive at once and cause confusion, despite scheduling efforts.

Arrangements such as the snow plan, flooding plan and emergency plan are in place for handling extreme conditions where the Council expects to be involved. People tend to panic and call us long before the Council needs to invoke these plans. This provides an early warning system which enables customer service and departments to be on standby and put in response measures, while monitoring build up in caller numbers and associated issues.

These plans represent good practice in handling urgent events, such as the extreme snow in January 2010. On this occasion, the responses contained in the Snow Plan, such as automated telephone messages, proved invaluable in providing good information (FAQs) to customers unable to get through due to the high call volume. In turn, the volume of customer contact has been managed downwards within hours through implementing the plan, returning a crisis situation into a manageable event.

This good practice now needs to be introduced more widely across the Council and plans put in place for responding positively to surges in customer contact across a range of services. Development of these plans will be incorporated into the Right First Time Programme.

#### **f) Customer-response performance measures: corporate performance scorecard**

The Tribal report commissioned for the Council has recommended a set of metrics, some of which the Council can introduce immediately onto the scorecard, such as:

- Speed to answer – at 3 mins 37 secs in August 10, a new standard of within two and a half minutes for phone calls (last year's performance) is being introduced
- Abandon rate –31% abandonment rate (May 2010 to Sept 2010) with an improvement target of 25% for 2011/12.

The speed of answering targets has been incorporated in to the revised Customer Promise set out at Annex 2 and the Council's current General Service Standards and Charter for all services will be updated also.

#### **g) Other service issues**

- There is a belief among managers that the customer journey (ie end-to-end process experience) rests with customer service. The customer journey starts in customer service, but often ends in specific departments. There needs to be a much greater sense of integration towards a common good.
- There is a lack of clarity and ownership around the direction of the website and the contribution it can make to the drive to improve.
- The website is as much of a working tool for the customer service team as it is to our customers. The customer service team rely on the website is a major source of information for Council customers. It needs to be the main, consistent and accurate source for both customers and customer service staff. It has the potential to be the major channel of transformation that will drive down costs, increase performance and maintaining customer satisfaction.
- The absence of a refreshed customer service Vision and accompanying access strategy that would put channel migration at the heart of the customer service improvement, means little importance is placed by services on developing, with IS, their online offering.

- Service improvement therefore lacks prioritisation and tends to be focused on what is implementable rather than what is needed to drive improvement.
- To improve on-line it needs to be made easy to use. A good example is DVLA road-fund licence model. Cherwell is equipped to develop an online, integrated service. Clearly, there needs to be a strategy of “attack” developed in partnership with services needing to reduce their costs, most clearly achieved through enhancing the on-line offer.
- There is no active communication plan in place to publicise/promote new channels of delivery. However, at its recent Development Day the winning “Dragon’s Den” service improvement idea was exactly that – focusing on high volume services used by currently on-line customers.
- Bodicote House is now a Linkpoint with no separate/discrete reception service. Therefore all Council customers, business-to-business visitors and deliveries queue together for a customer advisor to see them limiting capacity to capture face-to-face customer intelligence through Bodicote House. Recent relocation of Customer Service to the area behind reception means that this has begun to be addressed.



The draft new Customer Promise below reflects that the need to implement an interim target of answering calls in 2 mins 30 seconds as the service moves towards achieving its vision of all calls being answered within 2 minutes.

## **Customer Promise**

### **Contacting the Council by Phone: When you need to request a service**

Our telephone contact centre is open Monday to Friday, 8.45 to 5.15. Outside of those times you can find information, apply and if necessary pay for services, or send an email from our website at [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk)

You can expect your call to be answered by an adviser *within two and a half minutes*. This is the average queue length; it will often be much quicker, although at some times of the year the wait may be longer. In 2009 the average time customers waited to speak to a customer adviser was just over two and a half minutes.

If you have to wait we will provide information relevant to the service you are calling about, through recorded messages.

Outside the normal opening hours an emergency contact number is available for reporting homelessness, nuisance and pollution problems.

Here are the main numbers to call for council services:

227000 Council Tax and Business Rates	227004	Housing
227001 General Enquiries	227005	Elections
227002 Benefits	227006	Planning
227003 Environmental Services	227007	Environmental Protection

### **Contacting the Council by phone: When you have ongoing business with the Council**

If you have already contacted us about something that is ongoing, or we have contacted you already, we will provide you with phone and email contact details for a specific person or team. This will be on the letter or the email we have sent you.

You can phone Monday to Friday, 8.45 to 5.15 and expect a personal response. We will try to answer calls to those numbers within five rings. Outside of those times you can find information, apply for services, or send an email from our website at [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk).

If the person you need to speak to is not there you may be invited to leave a message (voicemail). Where this is the case we will tell you when you can expect us to call you back – wherever possible this will be by the end of the next working day. To help us do that we will ask you to leave a clear message that includes your name, a contact number, and a brief summary of the reason for the call.

If the person you need to speak to is going to be away for more than two days, we will provide an alternative contact.

Outside the normal opening hours, you can find information, apply for services, or send an email from our website at [www.cherwell.gov.uk](http://www.cherwell.gov.uk)

The current Standards for General Service Delivery & current Customer Charter will need to be brought into line with the above changes.

**Customer Service Monthly Report: Example Service** (some data is fictitious)

**Section 1: Channel use - Example Service**

Channel	April	May	June	July	August	Sept	Total
Telephone	1879	1979	1567	1360	1234	2079	<b>10098</b>
Cost @ £3.21	£6,032	£6,353	£5,030	£4,366	£3,961	£6,674	<b>£32,415</b>
Face to Face	239	201	157	198	212	244	<b>1251</b>
Cost @ £8.23	£1,967	£1,654	£1,292	£1630	£1,745	£2,008	<b>£10,296</b>
Website	1150	991	1089	1123	1069	1264	<b>6686</b>
Cost @ £0.39	£448	£386	£425	£438	£417	£493	<b>£2607</b>
<b>September Avoidable Contact Calls = 47 = £151</b>				<b>September Value Calls = 1823 = £5852</b>			

**Progress against channel shift target**

Channel	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Telephone	1911	1743	1575	1407	1239	1071
Face to Face	1176	1101	1026	951	876	801
Website	1277	1304	1344	1397	1464	1544

**Section 2: Customer Intelligence**

**Complaints** (these are real examples from the corporate complaints system)

Case Reference	Title	Service	Date Received	Reply	Stage	Upheld	Lessons learnt
101000261078	Treatment by Staff Member	U & R S	01/10/2010	01/10/2010	1	Yes	Ensure staff are polite in all circumstances
101000261099	Direct Debit	Council Tax	29/09/2010	06/10/2010	-	No	-
101000261517	Paid but received final demand	Council Tax	04/10/2010	06/10/2010	1	Yes - CAPITA	Have corrected parameters.
101000262194	Telephone ans times	Customer Svc	04/10/2010	06/10/2010	1	Yes	refresher training
101000262196	Bin Collection	Amenities	04/10/2010	-	1	-	-
101000262214	CTax Summons	Council Tax	05/10/2010	13/10/2010	1	Yes	-
101000262219	Election On Line process	Elections	04/10/2010	-	1	-	-

**Avoidable Contact \***

September	Value	AC1	AC2	AC3	AC4	AC5	Total All Contact	Total Avoidable Contact	% of AC
No. of Ex. Svc. Calls	1823	39	4	55	148	2	2079	248	11.9%
All Calls	2746	220	9	143	281	2	3433	687	20%

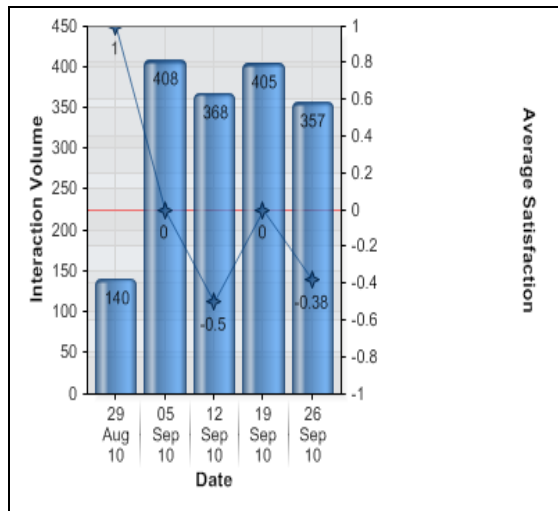
**Customer feedback from Webmetric**

- A better way of doing the form saves on paper work and we feel better knowing that it's done and dusted.
- I can't get a large item to the tip, it's a freezer which is broken, neither can I afford to have it collected, I'm a single parent on housing benefit...So now pretty stuck with a dead freezer....
- Recycling is working well in our area.
- Didn't really understand why the list of shops was a PDF download rather than simply another page on the site. Could do with making 'Where to get the bags' a bit more prominent too... Ta!
- Excellent website all round
- No collection days for new residents
- It's great to be able to contact your services at the touch of a button. I am a pensioner and have found your page great to use:) Thank you all for all the hard work you do

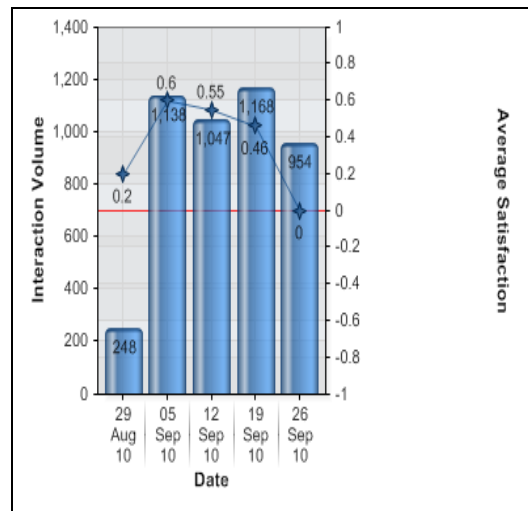
**Customer feedback from Telemetric**

Trend Analysis of Interaction Volume and Average Satisfaction levels

**Figure 1. Example Services A**



**Figure 2. Example Services B**



**Customer Requests by service element (from Lagan) – September Total = 1995**

Major Categories	No. of Requests	Top Requests	No. of Top Requests
Dogs	101	Request for Service	38
Pest	90	Wasps	39
Waste and Recycling	1804	Missed – Green Bin or Sack	168
		Missed – Brown Bin or Sack	163
		Order – 240L Brown Bin	154

**Customer Service Team noted issues in the month**

Operational Issues Top 3	Impact	Lessons learned
Customers kept bringing a letter they'd had from example service and asking what it was about, but we hadn't seen it	Longer wait times at LinkPoints	Need a copy of all letters going to more than 1000
General number (252535) published in an article about example service – lots of calls had to be transferred	Customers waited twice	Need to ensure Comms have a clear list of which numbers

**Other Sources: Mystery shopping, Annual Satisfaction, in-service surveys etc..**

Face to Face mystery shopping conducted during November: nothing specific for Example Service but overall shows marked improvement in all eight attributes (being listened to, being clear, friendly, understanding the issue, giving next steps, checking info was understood, signposting and dealing with the customer efficiently), with 100% shoppers reporting "They spoke clearly using simple language and no jargon".

**Section 3: Information Exchange (discussion agenda)**

**1. Progress on with Improvement Plan Actions and Targets for Example Service**

**2. Forward plans for Example Service and forecast of impacts on Customer Service**

*What is happening next 2 months across all services? What happened last year to be repeated in same two month period?*

**3. Info from Customer Service on scheduled activity from other services which may impact Example Service**

*What have other services already organised with CS that may impact on your plans*