Customer Services VFM Review

Executive Summary

Cherwell District Council

Timetable	Papers Finalised	Meeting Date
CMT	29 October 2010	3 November 2010
Use of Resources	4 November 2010	10 November 2010
Executive	21 December 2010	10 January 2011

Cherwell

DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

Revision History		
Revision Date	**Previous Revision Date**	**Summary of Changes**
25 August 2010		Initial draft
2 September 2010	25 August 2010	Amended savings target
28 September 2010	2 September 2010	Combined report started
15 October 2010	28 September 2010	VFM only with PS amendments
20 October 2010	15 October 2010	Further PS amendments and additional savings options
28 October 2010	20 October 2010	Amended contractor reference, finalised savings options
16 November 2010	28 October 2010	Use of Resources Steering Group feedback on future direction of the service
19 November 2010	16 November 2010	Further PS amendments and 4 year savings plan
16 February 2011	19 November 2010	Savings plan amendments following CMT

Customer Services - Executive Summary

1   Introduction

Purpose of this report

1.1.   Given current financial circumstances, the nature of VFM reviews have changed significantly. Previously, savings identified would be through efficiencies found. This review, while focusing partly on efficiencies, seeks also to identify the full range of savings required of the service covered by the scope of this review.

1.2.   This report sets out the findings of the Customer Services VFM review with recommendations and options to achieve the current savings target of £140,000, with other options for savings above and beyond this target.

Background and context

1.3.   Executive in July 2006 endorsed a delivery model for establishing a single customer service function for all Cherwell's services, handling enquiries and service requests made in person, on the telephone and by electronic means. This was to roll-out over a three-year period. A service transfer plan was established to bring over the major service areas into the customer service centre by June 2008. Executive approval was given to move towards 'one stop shops' as an alternative to front-of-house service delivery through cash offices and to replace individual service face to face contact points (e.g. Planning reception). A pilot one stop shop was launched at Bodicote House in April 2008, with three others following by April 2009.

1.4.   The service is now fully established and continues to develop;

- Significant capital investment has been made to assist with better customer service and enable future change, and becoming a single service with IT has enabled this. More online services have been developed, and the Lagan portal has been implemented to enable better integration with service-based IT systems for true end-to-end transactions. The service is now at a 'jumping off' point in terms of integrated service delivery

- An outreach service was established in April 2010 to further develop the council's accessibility to residents, and includes a mobile information service launched in October 2010 using the Health Bus

- The replacement of the Paypoint payment collection system with self-service kiosks was agreed by Executive on 11 October 2010. This is expected to achieve savings of £144,000 in four years through reduced staffing, and improve levels of customer service

- A planned Access Strategy has had initial approval from members and is due to be refreshed in 2010/11.

VFM Conclusion

1.5.   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.

Staffing

1.6.   As at 30 September 2010 the staffing structure in Customer Service was as follows;

Established posts	Posts	Vacancies
	FTE	FTE
Head of Customer Service and Information Systems	1.00	0.00
Customer Services Manager	1.00	0.00
Customer Service Team Leaders	2.00	0.00
Customer Service Advisors	26.00	6.85
Customer Service Specialists	2.50	0.81
Customer Service Officers	3.00	0.00
Business Admin Apprentices	4.00	1.00
Total	**41.50**	**8.66**

1.7.   Points to highlight about the current establishment are set out below;

- The service currently has 5 customer service advisor vacancies (6.85 FTE) which can be shown to be impacting on service delivery. Three of these will be permanently deleted on the introduction of payment kiosks

- A minimum level of staffing (12.5 FTE) is required for Linkpoint offices to ensure adequate service delivery, cover for lunches, prevention of lone working etc. The consequence is that staffing for the contact centre is secondary to that of staffing front of house services.

- The service expanded to include three outreach worker posts on the transfer of Revenues and Benefits staff to Capita. These posts undertake the home visit work of the previous Revenues and Benefits staff, but have also expanded the accessibility of customer service as a whole to vulnerable groups through attendance at events (Job Clubs), visits to residential homes and more recently through the rural mobile service.

- The service has hosted 4 apprentices (now 3 + 1 vacancy) which rotate between customer service and the post/scanning team

Expenditure

1.8.   The budget and expenditure of the service is set out in the table below.

Customer Services	2007/2008	2008/2009	2009/2010	2010/2011
Description	Actual £'s	Actual £'s	Actual £'s	Budget £'s
Employee Costs	487,836	801,863	769,957	912,162
Premises Costs	11,471	101,535	(3,013)	153,278
Transport Costs	2,474	16,634	33,325	17,645
Supplies & Services	44,570	72,016	77,830	82,032
Third Party Payments	295	20,390	26,220	30,618
Support Services	123,216	235,696	334,796	352,543
Internal Support Services	7,117	168,361	26,711	14,388
Capital Charges	37,389	36,470	81,237	88,010
Gross Expenditure	**714,368**	**1,452,965**	**1,347,063**	**1,650,676**

Other Grants Reimbursements	0		(3,389)	0
Fees And Charges	(1)	(13,746)	(133)	0
Rent Income	0	(351)	(6,860)	0
Chgs To Other Mgt Centres	(153,142)	(1,253,375)	(1,295,133)	(1,650,676)
Total Income	**(153,143)**	**(1,267,472)**	**(1,305,515)**	**(1,650,676)**
Net Expenditure	**561,225**	**185,493**	**41,548**	**0**

1.9.   A summary of the 2010/11 budget is provided in the following table

Expenditure	Amount	Description
Employees	£912k	Includes current vacancies
Premises	£153k	Rents, service charges, utilities, NNDR, insurance, cleaning, office accommodation
Support	£367k	Recharges through support cost model
Supplies/3rd party	£113k	Mostly comms & computing costs, plus security, paypoint hire, materials, printing etc
Capital	£88k	Linkpoint construction (65%) and IT/telephone (35%).
Transport	£17k	e.g. staff travelling to LinkPoints

1.10.   Key issues to highlight are;

- The costs of the service have doubled since 2007/08, although a better comparison is with 2008/09 when the customer service team was established, which shows an increase of £197,900 (+13.6%). Costs increases since this date can be attributed to;

  - Inheriting the expenditure on cash offices from Finance when Linkpoint offices were launched in 2008/09

  - Inheriting revenues and benefits staff in 2009/10 on service externalisation

  - Increasing support service costs (+21.4%)

- The service is IT dependent so these costs are high (see list below) with licensing costs rising.

1.11.   The costs of the service are expected to reduce as follows;

- The introduction of payment kiosks is anticipated to reduce staffing by 3 posts, saving £72,000 per annum

- The deletion of a vacant customer service specialist post will release £17,000

- The deletion of vacant hours provision will save a further £20,000

- The apprentice posts will not be renewed in 2011/12

- Support service recharges are likely to reduce due to savings elsewhere in the council

- Rental costs of £23,000 will be saved when the LinkPoint office in Market Square, Bicester transfers into the proposed new civic building

- Current capital recharges will reduce by £70,000 by 2015 as the life of the current assets will have expired (although any additional capital spending will result in additional recharges)

Service Profile: Volumes, Functions and Transactions

1.12. The service deals with 172,000 calls, 104,500 visitors and 3,000 emails per annum (2009/10)

1.13. Support cost recharge calculations provide a breakdown of the transactions per council area (attached as Annex 1). The transaction monitoring for 2009/10 reveals;

- The majority of transactions (84.3%) dealt with by the service rest within three service areas; Revenues and Benefits (56.5%), Environmental Services (19.5%) and Housing (8.3%). The next largest service area was Urban & Rural (3.0%)

- A further 9% of transactions were non-specific to services, such as general enquiries, deliveries etc. Non-Cherwell related queries (e.g. OCC related or "directory enquiries") account for less than 1% of total transaction numbers.

- 54% of transactions were face-to-face at Linkpoint offices, 45% via telephone and less than 2% by email.

1.14. Working with customer service staff a 'master list' was created to capture each individual activity that the service undertakes. A full breakdown is attached as Annex 2. Given this large number it has not been practical to capture volumes or transaction times for each. However, analysis of this list reveals;

- There are 178 separate activities undertaken by the service; 20.7% are high volume/very frequent, 42.6% are seasonal/weekly frequency and 36.5% are occasional/infrequent.

- The majority of activities (75%) are as a result of planned migrations into Customer Service. Of the remainder 10% arise from being the main council contact point, and 5% are due to being a reception point at Bodicote House. 10% are activities that have been acquired or taken on as a result of a new or policy change within a service (e.g. energy saving grants for housing, residents parking) which can be regarded as 'uncontrolled'.

- 80% of the transactions can be classified into 6 main categories; Taking details/logging info (21%), providing information or explaining a process (20%), Forwarding info to other services to act on (15%), redirecting to other agencies (10%), taking payments/making sales (7%) and providing 'hands on' assistance with form completion (7%). The remaining 17% comprises filing, copying, putting documents on display and making judgements on eligibility.

Technology and tools used by the service

1.15. The service is technology dependent; alongside specific technology for call handling and monitoring it also needs access to the software used by other services in order to act on their behalf. A comprehensive list of these technologies is listed below;

- <u>Mitel telephone systems</u> - Mitel Internet Protocol (IP) phones are used for answering the phones. Mitel Software allows each advisor to be linked to service-specific phone lines that they answer, and also collects management information on call volumes and queues, wait times and answered/abandonment rates.

- <u>Lagan Frontline</u> – customer relations management software and interface with main service software systems (e.g. Uniform) used for amenities, environmental services, elections, businesses rates and housing. Offers scripting, help and links to websites,

FAQ's and forms. There is no integration between the CRM and the telephone system. Interfaces between Lagan and other systems can be unreliable.

- GovMetric/Telemetric – for customers to indicate how their experience was, and why, used for customer satisfaction evaluation and improvements

- Achieve forms - developed in-house, and used via Lagan CRM. To provide web forms for customers and in-house staff to use. These do not always integrate directly with service IT systems, requiring additional data input from staff.

- IWORLD - is the Revenues & Benefits transaction system for account administration.

- Northgate Iclipse – this is the document imaging system for Revenues and Benefits, with documents scanned and linked via indexing to the customer's folder.

- Paris – for taking payments from the public over the phone. A new hosted system is being procured to replace this in order to achieve compliance with security requirements

- Paypoint - for taking payments from public face to face

- Abritas – Housing management system (read-only access is provided by Housing)

- PUB REG & LREG - election services voters transaction system (read-only access is provided by Democratic Services)

- Internet & Intranet - heavily relied on by staff for up-to-date information provision when on switchboard & reception

- ASTRA - Concessionary travel transaction system

'Building Blocks' savings

1.16. Below is a list of the blocks covered by this review, together with their status and savings target which bring the savings target for the service to £140,000

Block No.	Description	Scenario/ Status	Total Saving
5	Reduce Linkpoint opening hours	Exec approved ('Worst case' only)	£10,000
6	Install 4 Autotellers (and reduce staffing accordingly)	Exec approved	£54,000
71	Withdraw facility to pay in all offices	*Exec declined*	*£25,000*
74	Review quality standards and service requirements	Exec approved	£50,000
102	Withdraw and reduce benefits visiting officers by 1 FTE	Exec approved	£26,000

1.17. Block 6 has already been agreed by the Executive at its 11 October 2010 meeting, and evidence from the business case is also used in this report.

2   Findings from the Review

2.1. A variety of information sources have been used to inform this report. Interviews with Heads of Service were carried out. Analysis of cost data for benchmarking has been calculated against SOCTIM data. Best practice has been identified through online conferences and case studies. The latest Cherwell public satisfaction data analysed, alongside historic call and face to face contact performance.

Internal Satisfaction Survey

2.2.   Interviews took place with a number of senior managers, focusing on their opinions on quality, value for money and the future direction of the service. In some cases this also involved consultation with their service managers. A summary of these interviews is set out below

- The service is not considered as offering value for money for its internal clients. The high level of internal recharges (particularly when compared to arrangements prior to the establishment of customer services) was the key factor in forming this view. One comment made was to question if the authority could continue to afford to provide an "all things to all men" facility as at present.

- Quality of service provision is seen as mixed. Lower-use clients found the service to be high quality, but those services with the highest usage identified it as average or poor. The exception here was Revenues and Benefits, which felt it was receiving an excellent service. Examples of positive service quality given were;

    - Support provided during the peak workloads, and working with the service to identify ways to minimise problems

    - The team being responsive to any issues identified and being keen to resolve them

    - (for Revenues and Benefits) A good working relationship with process improvement undertaken to resolve issues for customer services (e.g. batching mailouts to residents to better distribute call volumes)

- Examples of issues with service quality were;

    - Duplication of services provided by the outreach team (Housing)

    - Lack of performance data and of maintaining an ongoing liaison with the service

    - Losing touch with customers and not being aware of what key issues are arising

    - Poor integration of front office (Lagan) with back-office systems (e.g. Uniform), leading to double-handling of data or manual correction being necessary for its operational use

    - The need to follow-up with customers on forms they completed with help from the customer service team in order to obtain all the information required to process an application

    - Customers frustrated with difficulty in getting through to the contact centre, the high level of abandoned calls and incorrect routing of calls

    - Provision of poor quality or incorrect advice that reflects badly on the service

    - Delays in passing on information to services for them to take action on

- Areas identified where the team could take on additional services were limited and included bookings for shared sports facilities and offering front of house services for town and parish councils.

- A number of managers responded positively to the idea of bringing back customer services within their area, some stating they would require no extra resource to do so. The advantages were seen as being ensuring a higher quality of service, a 'right first time' solution and significantly lower costs for the service through reduced recharges.

- Managers felt that the size and public 'offer' of the service should be reduced, focusing on providing a responsive telephone service with either resolution at first point or swift signposting/passing onto service departments to resolve. Areas dealt with by customer service should focus on those that are straightforward to deal with and have an easily mapped pathway, leaving more specialist work to dedicated admin teams in Directorates

2.3.   There was a marked contrast between the experiences of Revenues and Benefits to the two other "big three" services (Housing and Environmental Services). Elements that appear to be in play to explain this are;

- A close working relationship with regular meetings to discuss service issues. During the outsourcing transition period this was on a weekly basis, and also involved ICT

- A formal Service Level Agreement being in place

- Use of regular performance information from customer service to help manage the service overall. This has lead to process improvement work and changes in working practice

- Greater access to the primary IT system used to update files with the outcome of conversations/advice from customer service (although not to update client information)

- A higher degree of online forms used

- The fact that there are no staff within the remainder of Revenues and Benefits to accept and deal with calls – the service *has* to be made to work

Cherwell Residents Survey 2010

2.4.   The 2010 headline findings for 'contacting the council' are set out below;

- Over three-quarters of respondents (78%) have contacted Cherwell District Council in the past, with contact via the telephone being by far the most popular option (56%), followed by face-to-face contact (11%).

- Email is now the third most popular method (10%) This proportion increases to 15% amongst 25-34 year olds and 20% for high income earners (£40,000+).

- Ratings for ten out of the eleven aspects measured have either remained the same as 2009 or increased slightly. The only aspect to have seen a slight decrease in satisfaction is the speed of response/ promptness, which has declined from 62% to 60%.

- As seen in previous years, ensuring that all questions are fully answered and enough information is provided is by far the most important priority for residents and stands alone in terms of relative importance. Explanation of process/ procedures and advice is ranked second in terms of importance to improve, indicating the value of clarity in the way the Council communicates with residents.

Mystery Shopping Survey 2010

2.5.   Cherwell participates in a national local government customer service benchmarking group for telephone calls which is undertaken by Mystery Shoppers Ltd, a market research agency. This compared the council's performance against other anonymous authorities in batches (called 'waves') and a rolling benchmark average. The findings for the latest performance on telephones for June 2010 are set out below

- Cherwell's performance on aborted calls was 19% below the wave average, and 20% below the rolling benchmark average, meaning that on average more calls are abandoned in Cherwell than elsewhere

- Performance in terms of the individual operators (greeting, courtesy, owning the problem, being helpful, being clear) all scored a maximum of 100%, putting the council above average in these areas. Listening skills and offering further help were areas just below the wave average, but significantly below the rolling benchmark average.

Benchmarking of Contact Channel Usage and Cost

2.6.   An analysis was carried out on 2009/10 financial data to ascertain how the service matches the SOCTIM benchmark costs for contact channels. This split the total service budget of £1.6m across each of the three channels, using direct costs but also attributing a proportion of overheads as accurately as possible.

- Of the contacts dealt with by Customer Service in 2009/10 the proportions for each channel were 15.6% face to face, 14.5% telephone and 69.9% online. This compares to Tameside (a best practice authority) with 2.9%, 7.8% and 89.3% respectively.

- In May 2010, according to GovMetric data for 57 councils, 71% of customer interactions came from the website; 19% came from telephone interactions and 10% from face-to-face interactions.

Channel	Cherwell Channel Split	Tameside Channel Split	GovMetric Channel Split
Face to face	15.6%	2.9%	10%
Telephone	14.5%	7.8%	19%
Online	69.9%	89.3%	71%

2.7.   An estimate of the costs for each channel, as measured against the SOCTIM benchmark cost, is set out below using 2009/10 budget and volumetric data

Channel	SOCTIM Benchmark unit cost	Cherwell unit cost (2009/10)	Cherwell actual cost (2009/10)
Face to face	£8.23	£7.81	£880,196
Telephone	£3.21	£5.70	£596,240
Online	£0.39	£0.17	£83,229

2.8.   There are a number of issues with using this model as a benchmark comparison. Firstly, there is no agreed method on how to allocate costs, or how to calculate online usage. Secondly, a high level of usage will produce a low unit cost, but this does not necessarily mean the channel is the most effective means of dealing with the customer contact.

2.9.   Cherwell's volume on face-to-face contact is clearly higher than the benchmarks, and consequently it has a high delivery cost for this channel, although a low unit cost given the high volumes it deals with.

Benchmarking the Customer Service function

2.10.   As part of the review, the council's 14 CIPFA comparator authorities were surveyed to establish their level of customer service provision and (where possible) service cost. Few direct responses were received so desktop research was used predominantly. The findings of the benchmarking were as follows;

- Most had moved to a contact centre model to deal with telephone enquiries, or were in the process of setting up such a service

- The number of service outlets providing face-to-face contact appears to be higher in Cherwell than in most other comparator councils. It is more usual for two or three offices to be open to the public, although Harrogate has six local offices.

- Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling have shared front of house services with Kent County Council as part of its Gateway programme (see above). Tonbridge and Malling also offer three 'enquiry surgeries'

2.11. In order to arrive at a broad comparison, authorities were asked to provide basic information about their provision and overall cost, which is set out of the following table. Although only a limited number of responses were received, and the comparison itself is a crude one, the indications are that Cherwell's costs are significantly above average.

Authority	Population	Contact Centre seats	Customer service FTE	Council RA Spend (net total cost)	Total CS budget	CS as % of council spend	Budget/ CSA	Budget/ pop
Braintree	142,100	9	8.5	£22,439,000	£419,410	1.9%	£49,342	£2.95
Colchester	181,000	17	28.5	£30,321,000	£1,042,200	3.4%	£36,568	£5.76
East Hertfordshire	135,500	5	13.94	£23,500,000	£847,000	3.6%	£60,760	£6.25
Maidstone	145,400	14	26	£29,228,000	£1,350,000	4.6%	£51,923	£9.28
Test Valley	115,400	17	17.2	£22,296,000	£730,000	3.3%	£42,442	£6.33
Cherwell	**138,200**		**29**	**£22,030,000**	**£1,650,676**	7.5%	**£56,920**	**£12**

	Average	20.5				4.0%	£49,659	£7
	Difference	29%				3.4%	13%	41%

2.12. Key issues to highlight are

- Customer Service spend as a proportion of net total council cost (as derived from RA 2010/11 data) shows that Cherwell is at 7.5% compared to a comparator average of 4.0%. This equates to a spend above average of £758,592

- The additional cost can be attributed to the high staffing requirement of running four LinkPoint offices (12.5 FTE) in addition to a contact centre rather than the assumed reason of it undertaking additional services; at least two other authorities (Maidstone and Colchester) provide Revenues and Benefits services, which are considered to be a high demand service, but spend considerably less

Benchmarking Revenues and Benefits calls

2.13. Enquiries were made with a Revenues and Benefits contractor to assess if call handling could be undertaken more efficiently by them compared to the cost of district council staff.

2.14. The contractor calculates that to handle the current volume of calls (44,500) they would require 4.74FTE, costing £122,000 per annum. By comparison a reduction of 4.74 customer service advisers would save £106,650, meaning that the current in-house provision actually costs less and so offers good value for money. In addition, retaining staff in-house maintains greater flexibility for the service.

Contact Centre and LinkPoint performance

2.15. An in-depth analysis was undertaken on the service's telephone performance since March 2008. Key findings from this are as follows;

- Trend analysis suggests that the overall level of calls may be lower in 2010/11 than in previous years. This is in contrast to an apparent rise in face-to-face contacts. The use of Paypoint has driven up traffic beyond original predictions, and a large proportion of this has been for non-council business.

- Since May 2010 call answering times have deteriorated, with the average call answer time now over one minute longer (at 3:37), and only 69% of calls being answered. There is a clear relationship with the level of abandoned calls increasing with increased call wait times; the longer people have to wait, the more will give up (and will usually call again later) increasing the overall level of calls. The 12 month average (Jan 2010 to Dec 2010) showed a marked improvement with a 2:27 call answer time and 78% of calls being answered.

- There is a wide variation between call volumes and the speed of answering calls; it doesn't necessarily follow that a greater level of calls means calls will be answered more slowly. However, the level of available staffing is a direct factor; a marked improvement in call answering speed and level of abandoned calls was observed between August 2009 and February 2010 when there was an increased level of staffing from Revenues and Benefits staff being seconded in to the service prior to contracting out. This is illustrated in Annex 3

- The difference between the average time to answer a call and the average time someone will wait before abandoning a call is growing closer. For 11 months of the study period the average wait time before abandoning a call was actually *shorter* than the average time to wait for a call to be answered.

- Call handling times have remained fairly consistent (average of 4:15)

2.16.   An in-depth analysis was undertaken for data for visits to Linkpoint offices since September 2008. Key findings from this are as follows;

- Trend analysis suggests that the overall level of visitors is increasing

- The average wait time for customers using LinkPoints is 1 min 47 seconds (Sept 2008 to Sept 2010), which is far better than contact centre performance

- There is significant variation of visitor volumes and performance between the four offices, with Bicester performing at a much higher level than the other offices. Banbury Town Centre deals with almost four times the volume of visitors than Kidlington. Kidlington has half the traffic of Bicester, yet consumes the same staffing provision

Linkpoint Office	Staffing provision (FTE)	Average monthly visitors		Average wait time
Banbury Town Centre	4	3521	(40.4%)	2:08
Bicester	2.5	2346	(26.9%)	0:58
Bodicote House	3	1959	(22.5%)	2:40
Kidlington	2.5	890	(10.2%)	0:37

- An analysis of the top ten transaction volumes undertaken at each office, attached as Annex 4, shows;

  - Payments currently account for 34% of all face to face transactions, with Housing Benefit accounting for 22%. These are the two largest transactions common to all

  - Bodicote House has a very different profile than other LinkPoint offices given it is located in the council's main offices; 13.6% of contacts are visitors, 10.2% relate to planning (particularly providing assistance with self-service terminals) and 8.5% relating to taxis/licensing, which can only be offered at Bodicote. Although its profile is different the delivery of the service is the same as other LinkPoints, leading to visitors queuing behind people with a lengthy transaction to undertake.

  - Aside from 'value added' work, such as assisting people to complete benefit application forms, much of the work carried out at Linkpoints has a low value (handing out bus timetables, selling dog waste bags)

Contact Centre and LinkPoint staff and premises costs

2.17. The staff and premises costs of operating the contact centre and LinkPoint offices are set out on the following table. Here, premises costs are expressed in terms of the savings that could be achieved should the offices be closed;

	Average transactions (monthly)	Customer Service Advisors (FTE)	Total salary cost	"Savable" premises costs
Kidlington	890	2.5	£59,135	£5,538
Bicester	2,346	3	£70,962	£35,960
Bodicote	1,959	3	£70,962	No saving
Castle Quay	3,521	4	£94,616	No saving
Total Front of House	**8,716**	**12.5**	**£295,675**	
Contact Centre	13,251	10.5	£248,367	Not feasible
Outreach	N/K	1.7	£58,001	None

2.18. Key issues to highlight are;

- More is tied up in staff costs in LinkPoints than in Contact Centre, and they deal with fewer contacts. Closing LinkPoint offices would release significant staff savings unless they are redeployed to other aspects of customer services (e.g. contact centre)

- Although total premises costs are high (£153k in 2010/11) it is not possible to reduce these significantly through closing LinkPoint offices. No premises savings are possible for Bodicote House and Castle Quay as the council would continue to retain the building and its costs

- The feasibility of achieving savings in premises is doubtful; if Kidlington were surplus we would have to seek to sub-let to another office user, or negotiate a surrender of our lease to the Parish Council. The surrender of Market Square, Bicester would likely give rise to costs of £30,000 to remove fittings and make good

- No comparative information exists for mobile/outreach service transactions as they have only recently started recording this data. The service is comparatively expensive given the higher salary grades of the staff used.

Observations from 'back to floor' sessions

2.19. The Project Manager undertook two 'back to the floor' sessions as part of the review; one to observe general enquiries and one to observe switchboard activity. Over these two sessions 42 calls to the switchboard were observed and 11 calls to the contact centre. The observations were that;

- All callers to the contact centre appeared to be satisfied with how their calls were dealt with. Calls were handled competently and politely, and often complex and across a number of areas, illustrating the added value of a centralised call handling facility.

- Calls to the switchboard were answered within 5 rings and transferred promptly. Only 4 (9.5%) of the calls required a named individual. The great majority were transferred on to the contact centre, demonstrating the need for the permanent transfer of the switchboard number.

- The measurement of non-value contact (the previous NI 14 indicator) was different from the indicator definition, with the result that performance here may not be as good as reported currently. Operators tend to judge the value of his/her performance rather than the need for the call in the first place.

- GovMetric monitoring arrangements, where calls are transferred through to an external number for customers to leave feedback, seemed complicated.

- Calls that needed to be referred to specialist services (e.g. Housing) were not as straightforward. Often an officer was asked for by name, and since the physical location of this officer was outside of customer services there were delays and issues with tracking down those individuals.

- A high number of calls concerning benefits appear to be generated by letters received from the service and confusion over next steps or the reason for decisions that had been made. This demonstrated the need for greater NI 14 recording and analysis, and to act on findings to reduce wasted contact.

Learning from Best Practice authorities

2.20.   Case studies for seven I&DeA best practice authorities were examined for learning points with regard to improving value for money at Cherwell. Common factors found with authorities that were able to drive down costs while improving customer service were around the effective use of customer intelligence, reducing avoidable contact and promoting channel shift towards greater use of online services. Key learning points from the case studies are set out below;

- Surrey County Council estimates that every unnecessary or preventable six minute telephone call handled by their a contact centre creates up to 20 minutes further work for staff in its back office. It estimates that for every one post's worth of phone calls that is removed from the contact centre, it can remove or redeploy up to four – five posts in the back office. Their work has reduced contact by 100,000 calls in one year, releasing £175,000 of contact centre staff savings, along with 35 people working in the back office being deployed on more effective work

- Poole reviewed the high-volume letters it sent to residents as it found that 10% of council tax calls were because residents did not understand them. As a result of improvements to these letters between 2004 and 2009 council tax calls to the contact centre have reduced by 25% in the peak period and there has been a marked improvement in customer satisfaction (56% to 70%)

- East Herts have used the GovMetric system to enable contact centre and service staff to record avoidable contact. Savings of £38,000 in the housing service were identified through improving error rates in completed housing applications forms and giving customers better information on the likely repair response times they could expect. East Herts has an ongoing Customer Service Improvement Programme with a dedicated improvement officer on an 'invest to save' basis.

- Southwark also used a combination of contact centre and back office information to get a clearer idea of avoidable contact in its housing service. Rather than it being at 22% the true figure was 76%, with up to 83% of the total cost of contact being avoidable. The average cost of each avoidable contact was estimated to be £3,224, meaning that savings of up to £2.4m were possible. Southwark have calculated that every 16% reduction in avoidable contact can save them £½m. A programme of avoidable contact reduction, branded 'Right First Time' has been instigated with dedicated improvement staff to action initiatives

- Colchester re-designed its revenues and benefits service around reducing customer contact by 40% overall (65,500 fewer contacts). It identified that the economic downturn

was increasing the number of calls but that 60% of calls did not result in a service request. Targets were set for eliminating visits, reducing phone contact (-70%) and reducing face to face contact (-87%) through enabling self service functions on their website with a view to dealing with up to 80% of benefit applications online. Anticipated net savings are £450,000.

- Tameside have combined their CRM and Mosaic data to gain real insight into their customers and contact patterns. They can track the effect of their channel shift activity more easily and target particular groups, which, since 2003/4, has reduced face to face contact by 22.5%, telephone contact by 30% and increased web activity by 435%.

- South Tyneside used customer feedback from GovMetric to revamp areas of their website and improve its functionality. Improvements for waste and recycling required a focused publicity campaign to increase usage, which resulted in a tenfold increase in online activity. This channel shift has reduced the average cost of a transaction in this areas from £2.97 to £1.25

2.21. The review also explored Chelmsford's mobile customer information service as an alternative delivery mechanism. This has operated since 2007, supplementing its two civic centres, and is used to deliver services to rural and deprived areas. Each of the 10 identified locations is visited at least once per month for sessions lasting up to 2 hours. Visits are timed to coincide with high traffic at the hosting facility, such as a club event, which also negates venue hire costs. The service provided is limited to issues such as providing information on receiving help with Housing Benefit or Council Tax, applying for a free bus pass, reporting environmental problems and commenting on local planning applications. Only one customer service adviser is used at any one time, but is supplemented by staff from partner organisations (e.g. Police, Fire & Rescue Service, Voluntary Services) as well as service departments. Positive feedback has been received, and there has been an increase of 44% in the level of enquiries taken by the service.

2.22. A similar but more comprehensive scheme in Kent is a front-office shared service between Kent County Council and the district councils in the region. They operate across agencies, including central and local government, the voluntary sector, and the private sector. A total of 8 gateway sites are in place in the main towns, together with two mobile units providing services to urban or rural areas where the needs are currently unmet. There is a full range of services offered including information and self help (including free internet access, service directory, and payment kiosks); routine advice and transactions (including bus passes, refuse, parking, and licensing); surgeries by agencies such as CAB and NHS; registrar services for births and deaths; cross-agency services (including council tax, benefits, planning, housing, library, adult education and occupational therapy). Thanet's Gateway Plus is estimated to be saving the council £250,000 a year through sharing its costs with partners.

2.23. The contrast between these authorities and Cherwell's strategy/performance is set out below;

- Our current access strategy is focused in providing contact channels to meet public preference rather than shifting to more efficient means. The provision of LinkPoint offices has generated more demand for face-to-face contact

- Although unnecessary contact is actively monitored this is only carried out at the customer service side and so does not identify unnecessary contact in service areas as well. In addition, the capacity of the service to act on the results of monitoring are limited, and there is no improvement support allocated to carry through improvements

- Although the service is actively monitoring the activity against each channel there is no coordinated approach to achieving a shift in channel usage. The current website does not compare well to higher performing authorities in encouraging residents to carry out their transactions online. There have been some initiatives to encourage greater online usage ('register to vote') but these are not part of a wider and sustained campaign to shift more people to using this channel.

- Further, the council's current capacity to transfer more activity online restricts any progress here. Some online forms result in email alerts to service departments rather than true integration with their own systems, which requires additional data entry. The first true integrated form for missed bins will be enabled by the end of the year, but this was dependent on the purchase of Bartec.

- Although we operate a CRM we have not utilised the customer intelligence this gathers to gain insight into how population groups could be targeted to shift channels.

3   Conclusions

3.1.   The conclusions that can be drawn from the evidence gathered are as follows;

- The cost of customer service is high at present and does not offer good value for money for its internal customers. Senior managers wish to see a scaled back service focusing on fewer things, particularly on a high quality telephone service.

- The quality of service offered to residents is very high and is reflected in high and improving external customer satisfaction levels. However this is not always matched by the quality of service offered to internal customers and their satisfaction with it. Problems can be linked to IT integration and the wide range of services covered leading to 'jack of all trades' comparisons.

- There is often no 'service specification' for the service to deliver against, as some activity is generated by policy change rather than a planned migration (e.g. handling ECN queries due to a policy of only considering these in writing). Some service areas could be 'handed back' to their original services to reduce customer service workload, but turning away customers from LinkPoints is impractical.

- The provision of a higher level of front of house service than other authorities leads to demands on staff resources which are expensive. This high level of available provision may actually promote the use of this more expensive channel over more efficient channels (i.e. phone and online services). In other words, our own policy is inhibiting us from promoting channel shift and saving money.

- Service speed at LinkPoint offices currently exceeds that of the contact centre; the August 2010 average for answering calls was 3 mins 37 seconds, compared to average wait times of 1 min 47 seconds at LinkPoints. This provides no incentive for Linkpoint customers to move to other channels.

- The staffing requirement for front of house services is fixed regardless of the volume of contacts dealt with and impacts on the number of customer advisers available to answer telephone calls. Where staffing levels drop it is always the contact centre that bears this reduction, leading to poorer performance on telephone contact. The higher performance in Linkpoint offices suggests there is additional capacity that could be used for call answering, prioritising phone calls over personal visits (all LinkPoints are equipped with contact centre extensions)

- Best practice in reducing costs in other authorities is focused on a combination of reducing avoidable contact and channel migration to less expensive channels (i.e. online). Although the service is actively monitoring the activity against each channel there is no coordinated approach to achieving a shift in channel usage, particularly in promoting greater take-up of online transactions. Promoting the ability for website users to complete their transactions online has been poorly promoted. A number of online forms have been completed, but there is not always integration with service IT systems, leading to the need to double-handle data.

- Although the service monitors NI 14 activity this is likely to be inaccurate, does not cover 'back office' contact in services and the data gathered does not always lead to action. There is insufficient capacity in the service at present to undertake the transformation programmes highlighted in best practice authorities to achieve real savings.

- The nature of contacts at Bodicote House is significantly different that other LinkPoint offices and this is likely to change further with plans to rent out office space in the building. A separate visitor reception would remove the pressure at the current reception and provide a better service to current and potential visitors.

4   Proposals for Improvements and Future Direction

4.1.   The service should adopt best practice in reducing waste to drive efficiencies, namely;

- Instigate a transformation programme based around reducing unnecessary contact and lowering the overall volume of contacts dealt with. This would comprise;

  a)   Unnecessary contact monitoring that focuses on one service at a time as part of an overall programme

  b)   Uses a shorter, more intense monitoring period and greater analysis/costing

  c)   Incorporates monitoring of service-based staff as well as customer service staff to identify potential for change across the whole process

  d)   Services being redesigned as end-to-end processes, minimising interventions by people and creating lean processes

  e)   A transformation programme reporting to a Board that can provide direction, and receive and act on recommendations for improvements

- Update the Access Strategy to have a greater emphasis on channel migration to more efficient channels. This would comprise;

  a)   a comprehensive communications strategy to encourage channel shift

  b)   an agreed methodology for measuring online channel usage to track improvements

  c)   regular reporting of performance against channel shift targets

4.2.   To improve its flexibility and adaptability the service should;

- Develop a "plug and play" customer service, where what is offered is clearly defined and understood and can be entered into and out of if necessary, according to service demand from the customer or delivery demand from a service (ours or someone else's)

- Develop more flexibility to cope with peaks and troughs in demand through moving to booked appointments, advisers working from home, as and when the service demand requires it

4.3.   To make best use of technology to drive improvements the service should;

- Adopt Lagan as the single 'engine' of customer service delivery, integrating with service's specific delivery systems such as Bartec, Uniform, Abritas, Northgate, and able to be so even if those systems are not housed at Bodicote House

- Develop a robust online service access and transaction channel offering end-to-end services, integrated through Lagan, to make online transactions an attractive choice for residents

- Improve intelligence about our customers to design the services they want online and then achieve channel shift through tightly targeted marketing. Focus on services that, when

online, will achieve the maximum savings for the council, and support other customer to adopt online transactions.

- Exploit mobile devices (e.g. mobile phones) as an access method by customers

5 Options for Savings

5.1. At its 10 November 2010 meeting the Use of Resources Steering Group considered the initial findings of the initial VFM report and that of the Customer Intelligence improvement project. Its view was that in moving forward the service should;

- Set itself a short to medium term cost reduction target to address the high cost of the service

- Instigate a transformation programme to drive out unnecessary contact, focusing on the higher volume services in the first instance, in order to produce savings

- Focus on channel migration to move customer traffic away from face to face and onto online services

- Move to implement appointment bookings for revenues and benefits customers to better manage peaks and troughs in Linkpoint Offices

- Retain LinkPoint offices with their current operating hours to maintain a common standard of service, but employ one member of staff in each office on telephone calls only to redress the balance of telephone and face to face performance

- Retain mobile services but review these after a suitable period of operation to evaluate their effectiveness

6 Recommendations

6.1. The Service adopt the Proposals for Improvements and Future Direction set out in Section 4 in full in order to set a vision for the future of Customer Service and establish a pathway to achieving real and ongoing efficiency savings in the medium to long term

6.2. To establish a two-year cost savings target of £257,462 for Customer Service that addresses the high cost of the service but in a sustainable way, with minimal impact on overall service to the public, as follows;

    a.   Include the elimination of all vacant posts by 2012/13, to allow time for the new payment kiosks to reduce current workload, and seek to reduce the establishment by an additional 1 FTE per annum as the transformation programme reduces overall levels of contact

    b.   Note savings of £135,654 built into the 2011/12 budget as follows;

        i.   Install payment kiosks (saving £65,000) as approved

        ii.   Remove a vacant customer service specialist post (saving £17,000)

        iii.   Remove vacant hours provision (saving £20,000)

        iv.   Reduce the establishment by 1FTE (saving £23,654)

    c.   Make savings of £131,808 in 2012/13 as follows;

        i.   Eliminating all remaining vacant posts (saving £85,154)

        ii.   Reducing the establishment by an additional 1 FTE as levels of contact decline through improved working (saving £23,654)

iii.　　Reducing accommodation costs through plans to move out of Bicester Market Square in 2012/13 (saving £23,000) as part of the town centre project, with the service being required to find this saving by other means should the scheme not progress by this date

Recorded transactions per council service area

Service name	Service	Face to Face	Phone	Email	Totals
Building Control	Building Control	404			404
CSIS	ICT	397			397
DC & MD	Planning	2,255			2,255
Environmental	Amenities Services	4,417	27,166	1,500	33,083
Environmental	Environmental Services	1,754	3,823		5,577
Environmental	Refuse Sacks	3			3
Estates	Estates	13			13
Exchequer	Business Rates	94	918		1,012
Exchequer	Cashier - Make a payment	36,333			36,333
Exchequer	Council Tax	6,064	27,805		33,869
Exchequer	Housing Benefit	22,479	16,707	1,500	40,686
Finance	Finance	261			261
General/Corporate	Sundry Incomes	4			
General/Corporate	Made Appointment	9			
General/Corporate	General Enquiries (concessionary travel, switchboard, grants…	10,797			
General/Corporate	Chief Executives Office	122			
General/Corporate	Delivery	157			
General/Corporate	Non CDC Enquiry	1,677			17,854
General/Corporate	Visitor	5,088			
Housing	Charter Housing	61			61
Housing	Housing Enquiry	6,648	9,709		16,357
Legal/Dem	Audit - Internal	10			10
Legal/Dem	Benefit Fraud Staff	134			134
Legal/Dem	Election Services	433	2,160		2,593
Legal/Dem	Land Charges	529			529
Legal/Dem	Legal	101			101
People & Imp	Human Resources	221			221
People & Improvement	Communications Team	50			50
Rec & Health	Sports & Leisure	295			295
Urb & Rural	Bus Pass	2,888			2,888
Urb & Rural	Licencing	584			584
Urb & Rural	Parking Permit/tickets/disc enquiries	1,182			1,182
Urb & Rural	Taxi	1,323			1,323
		106,787	88,288	3,000	198,075
		53.9%	44.6%	1.5%	

Master list of Customer Service activities

Directorate	Service	Team	Activity (main)	Activity (Detail	Type
All	All	All	Switchboard	Redirect calls to/from Departments	Redirect
All	All	All	Switchboard	Redirect calls to/from the public	Redirect
All	All	All	Switchboard	General advice on enquiries	Advise
All	All	All	Reception duties (Bod Ho only)	Book in visitors	Record
All	All	All	Reception duties (Bod Ho only)	Take/Book in deliveries	Record
All	All	All	Reception duties (Bod Ho only)	Control car park barrier (BH only)	
All	All	All	Reception duties (Bod Ho only)	Call first aiders	Notify
All	All	All	Reception duties (Bod Ho only)	Give out plans or documents on deposit	Access
All	All	All	Reception duties (Bod Ho only)	Maintain leaflet stock	File
All	All	All	Language line	Contact/arrange language line service	Notify
All	All	All	Directory Enquiries	Public asking for external phone numbers	Advise
All	All	All	Directory Enquiries	Staff contact details	Advise
All	All	All	Directory Enquiries	Redirect calls to council staff	Redirect
All	All	All	Complaints	Take details and log	Record
All	All	All	Complaints	Pass details to service	Notify
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Vulnerable youngsters	ID vulnerable youngsters	?
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Overpayments	Explain process on enquiry	Advise
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Overpayments	Take payments for overpayment	Payments
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Advice for targeted groups	visiting groups, events, third parties…	Advise
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Receive, scan and index documents/claim forms	File
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Assist in completing forms/checking	Advocate
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Copying documents	File
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Perform trial calculations	Assess
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Assess for entitlement to benefits	Assess
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Assess for likely benefits	Assess
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	New Benefit Claims	Chase progress	advocate
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	General Enquiries	potentially enquiries on all R&B	
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	External agencies	Deal with calls from Charter tenants	Redirect
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Existing benefit claims	change of circumstances	Record

Master list of Customer Service activities

Directorate	Service	Team	Activity (main)	Activity (Detail	Type
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Existing benefit claims	change of bank details	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Existing benefit claims	Explain Capita correspondence	Advise
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Existing benefit claims	Notify Capita of any errors	Notify
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	take payments	Payments
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	register new payee	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	assess discounts	Assess
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	change of circumstances	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	change of payment method	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	special payment arrangements	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	death of payee	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	advise on bailiffs attending	Advise
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	explain paperwork/forms	Advise
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	identify and action mistakes	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	refund charges	Payments
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	attachments of earnings	Record
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	arrange NNDR property inspections	Notify
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Council Tax & NNDR	notify special circumstances to Ec.Dev	Notify
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Cheque encashment cards	issue the card to enable non bank account holders to be able to cash benefit cheques at NatWest	
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Benefit payments	Chase for payments on behalf of recipients	Advocate
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Benefit payments	Landlords 8 weeks in arrears	Advocate
Corporate	Finance	Revenues and Benefits	Benefit payments	Check CIS system for benefits payments	Advocate
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	Voter registration	send registration form	Dispatch
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	Voter registration	send postal/proxy voting form	Dispatch
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	Voter registration	check or see electoral register	Access
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	Voter registration	Check eligibility	Advise
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	Voter registration	Help with canvass enquiries	Advise
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	Polling station staff	take in forms/photocopy ID for polling staff	Record
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	General Enquiries	identify local councillor	Advise
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Elections	General Enquiries	identify local polling station	Advise
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Fraud investigation	Identify fraud	Assess possible cases of fraud	Assess
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Fraud investigation	Identify fraud	Notify Fraud team of possible Fraud	Notify
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Land Charges	Reception duties	Take payments for land charges	Payments
Corporate	Legal and Democratic	Land Charges	Reception duties	Give out plans for land charge searches	Access
E&C	Environmental Services	Abandoned vehicles	Abandoned Vehicles	Take calls and records details	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Abandoned vehicles	Abandoned Vehicles	issue paperwork for unwanted/scrapped	Dispatch

Master list of Customer Service activities

Directorate	Service	Team	Activity (main)	Activity (Detail vehicles	Type
E&C	Environmental Services	Abandoned vehicles	Abandoned Vehicles	re-call as to status of vehicle	Assess
E&C	Environmental Services	Dog Warden	Dog matters	dog registration	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Dog Warden	Dog matters	complaints about dog noise	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Dog Warden	Dog matters	lost/found pets	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Dog Warden	Dog matters	dangerous dog reports	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Dog Warden	Dog matters	dog release payments	Payments
E&C	Environmental Services	Pest control	Pest control	General enquiries/advice	Advise
E&C	Environmental Services	Pest control	Pest control	signpost to other agencies (snakes etc)	Redirect
E&C	Environmental Services	Pest control	Pest control	Take bookings for treatments/ re-treatments	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Pest control	Pest control	take payments for treatments	Payments
E&C	Environmental Services	Pest control	Pest control	Notify officer for call back	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	sale of dog waste bags	Payments
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	Log reports of fly tipping	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	Log reports of dead animals	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	log reports of needles	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	report needle problems to depot	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	log reports of broken glass	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	log reports of graffiti	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	log reports of spillages	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	log reports of litter	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Street Cleansing	Refuse	log reports of messy neighbours	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Trade waste	Sell bags	Payments
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Trade waste	sell labels	Payments
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Refuse	bulky waste collection requests	notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Refuse	what goes in what bin etc	advise
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Recycling advice	Advise on how and where to recycle	Advise
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Recycling advice	Hand out bottle bags	Dispatch
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Ordering bins	Order replacement bins	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Ordering bins	Order larger bins	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Ordering bins	Order blue bins	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Missed bins	Log reports of missed bins	Record
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Missed bins	Order new collection	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	food waste	caddy enquiries	Advise
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Missed bins	report persistent problems	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Missed bins	Assess reason for missed bin	Assess

Master list of Customer Service activities

| Directorate	Service	Team	Activity (main)	Activity (Detail	Type
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Garden waste	sell sacks	Payments
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Clinical waste	Assess need for clinical waste collection	Assess
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Clinical waste	Arrange for clinical waste collection	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Assisted collections	Assess and suggest assisted collections	Assess
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	Assisted collections	Arrange for assisted collection	Notify
E&C	Environmental Services	Waste & Recycling	General Enquiries	potentially enquiries on all W & R	Advise
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Odour/Contaminated Land	Explain process on enquiry	Advise
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Odour/Contaminated Land	Log reports of noise complaints	Record
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Odour/Contaminated Land	Pass details to service	Notify
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Noise complaints	Explain process on enquiry	Advise
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Noise complaints	Log reports of noise complaints	Record
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Noise complaints	Pass details to service	Notify
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Health and Safety	Log reports of workplace accidents	Record
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Health and Safety	Arrange a callback for reports made	Notify
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Food Safety	Send out registration forms	Dispatch
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Food Safety	Log food hygiene reports called in	Record
E&C	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	Food Safety	Arrange a callback for reports made	Notify
	Recreation and Health	Environmental Health	General Enquiries	potentially all EH services	Advise
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Licensing	Taxi drivers	copy documents for renewals	File
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Licensing	General Enquiries	Tattoo venues	Advise
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Licensing	General Enquiries	food hygiene	Advise
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Residents parking	issue permits	Dispatch
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Residents parking	deal with enquiries	Advise
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Residents parking	replacement permits/refunds	Notify
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Residents parking	change of circumstances	Notify
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Residents parking	take payments for permits	Payments
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Excess Charge Notices	Deal with complaints	Record
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Excess Charge Notices	Take payments	Payments

Master list of Customer Service activities

Directorate	Service	Team	Activity (main)	Activity (Detail	Type
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Excess Charge Notices	explain appeal notice process	Advise
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Excess Charge Notices	issue appeal notice documents	Dispatch
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Excess Charge Notices	assist in completing appeal notices	Advocate
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Disabled parking	explain blue badge system	Advise
E&C	Urban, Rural and Safer Communities	Parking	Disabled parking	Give out forms	Dispatch
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	Report potholes	Record
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	enquiries on road gritting	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	enquiries on grass cutting	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	enquiries on RADAR keys	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	enquiries on registrar certificates	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	enquiries on blue bags	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	Adult learning	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	street lighting	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	schools admissions	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	trading standards	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	family information service	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	PEM team	Redirect
External	Oxfordshire County Council		Other agency functions	registrar service	Redirect
External	Pensions Service	Pensions service	General Enquiries	Refer to DWP	Redirect
External	Pensions Service	Pensions service	Alternative Office	Verify authenticity	Assess
External	Pensions Service	Pensions service	Alternative Office	Copying documents	Copy
External	Pensions Service	Pensions service	Alternative Office	Forward info to DWP	Notify
External	Pensions Service	Pensions service	Alternative Office	Assistance with paperwork/forms	Advocate
PH&E	Development Control and Major Developments	Development Control	General Enquiries	Take payments for planning	Payments
PH&E	Development Control and Major Developments	Development Control	General Enquiries	Assist with self-serve documents on iCLIPSE	Advise
PH&E	Development Control and Major Developments	Development Control	General Enquiries	assist with plotting sheets	Advise
PH&E	Development Control and Major Developments	Development Control	General Enquiries	assist with planning portal queries	Advocate
PH&E	Housing	All	General Enquiries	Deal with all first point of contact calls	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Concessionary Travel	Concessionary Travel	Advise on eligibility/ rules of use/which	Advise

Master list of Customer Service activities

Directorate	Service	Team	Activity (main)	Activity (Detail	Type
				buses	
PH&E	Housing	Concessionary Travel	Concessionary Travel	Notification of lost passes	Record
PH&E	Housing	Concessionary Travel	Concessionary Travel	Applications for pass/tokens	Record
PH&E	Housing	Concessionary Travel	Concessionary Travel	Distribute passes/tokens	Dispatch
PH&E	Housing	Concessionary Travel	Concessionary Travel	Exchange passes/tokens	Dispatch
PH&E	Housing	Concessionary Travel	Concessionary Travel	Taxi token reimbursement	Record
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Shared Ownership	Assist in completing shared ownership forms	Advocate
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	PALS	Assist in completing PALS forms	Advocate
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	Assist in completing housing application forms	Advocate
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	verify and photocopy documents	File
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	Assist in bidding process	Advocate
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	explain/take through bidding system	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	change of circumstances	Record
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	notify change of circumstances	Notify
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	issue medical forms	Dispatch
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Choice Based Lettings	Inform of bandings	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Housing Needs	Homelessness	mortgage rescue	?
PH&E	Housing	Private Sector Housing	HMOs	Identifying who lives in properties/landlords	Assess
PH&E	Housing	Private Sector Housing	Grants/Energy Saving	Advise on Warmfront scheme	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Private Sector Housing	Grants/Energy Saving	Advise on Cocoon scheme	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Private Sector Housing	Grants/Energy Saving	Advise on Small Repairs scheme	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Private Sector Housing	Grants/Energy Saving	Advise on Home Loans scheme	Advise
PH&E	Housing	Private Sector Housing	Grants/Energy Saving	Advise on Energy Efficiency matters	Advise

Performance in answering calls
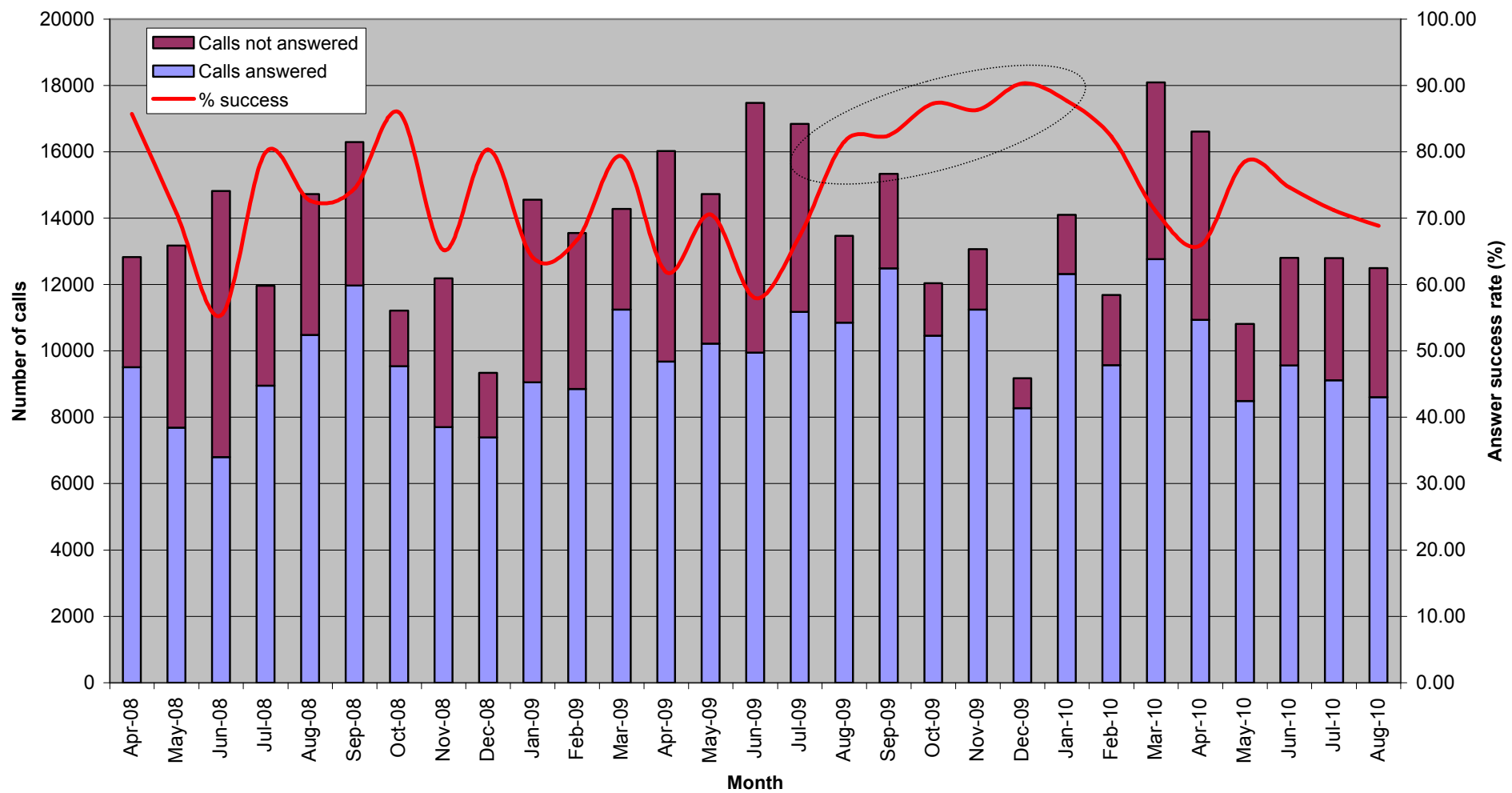
Highest volumes for individual transactions at LinkPoints (Sept 2010)

Bicester			2.5
Cashier - Make a payment	1120	45.0%	1
Housing Benefit	499	20.0%	2
Amenities Services	228	9.2%	3
Housing Enquiry	183	7.3%	4
Council Tax	141	5.7%	5
Environmental Services	80	3.2%	6
Bus Pass	73	2.9%	7
Non CDC Enquiry	66	2.7%	8
Parking Permit/tickets/disc enquiries	53	2.1%	9
Election Services	13	0.5%	10

Kidlington			2.5
Cashier - Make a payment	351	32.5%	1
Housing Benefit	243	22.5%	2
Amenities Services	142	13.2%	3
Housing Enquiry	97	9.0%	4
Council Tax	77	7.1%	5
Non CDC Enquiry	47	4.4%	6
Bus Pass	41	3.8%	7
Environmental Services	40	3.7%	8
Visitor	8	0.7%	9
Planning	8	0.7%	9
Election Services	8	0.7%	9

Bodicote House			3
Cashier - Make a payment	438	18.1%	1
Visitor	**330**	**13.6%**	**2**
Housing Benefit	308	12.7%	3
Planning	**247**	**10.2%**	**4**
Housing Enquiry	228	9.4%	5
Council Tax	121	5.0%	6
Taxi	**119**	**4.9%**	**7**
Licencing	**88**	**3.6%**	**8**
Environmental Services	85	3.5%	9
Non CDC Enquiry	61	2.5%	10

Town Centre Offices			4
Cashier - Make a payment	1869	48.2%	1
Housing Benefit	1127	29.1%	2
Housing Enquiry	269	6.9%	3
Council Tax	263	6.8%	4
Bus Pass	90	2.3%	5
Amenities Services	81	2.1%	6
Non CDC Enquiry	59	1.5%	7
Environmental Services	39	1.0%	8
Parking Permit/tickets/disc enquiries	29	0.7%	9
Visitor	24	0.6%	10