
TITLE: **AVOIDABLE CONTACT MONITORING REPORT**

To: Regulatory & Support Services Committee

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[R272]

1.0 ISSUE

1.1 To provide members with a summary of Avoidable Contact monitored in February and March 2017 and the next steps going forward.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION (S)

2.1 That the committee notes the content of the information report.

3.0 BACKGROUND/OPTIONS

3.1 Contacting the Council costs the customer time, energy and money. It also costs the Council to deal with this contact; capture and log the information and set in motion the activities to deal with this request.

3.1 Avoidable contact, also known as failure demand or preventable contact is deemed avoidable where the customer would have no need to make contact had:

- Service delivery met the customer’s reasonable expectations, or the expectations of the nature and timescales of the service had been properly set.
- The original request or query had been fully addressed and fulfilled first time
- Information provided by the Council been user friendly, clear and comprehensible.

3.2 In the summer of 2008 a National Indicator was introduced to capture and measure avoidable contact and the intelligence gathered was used to reduce it and drive service improvements and efficiencies. Although the national indicator has now been withdrawn, the underlying problems that the measure sought to address have not gone away and the benefits in both illuminating and identifying efficiency savings and service improvements remain the same.

3.3 Understanding customer contact has become a fundamental element of the Council’s transformation programme and in line with the Council’s commitment to provide a financially sound well managed Council, Customer Services re – introduced the monitoring of avoidable contact in its 16/17 Service Plan.

4.0 AVOIDABLE CONTACT

4.1 A process was developed to measure avoidable contact handled by the Customer Services Team and contact submitted online. This was broken down into the following categories:

- Unnecessary clarification (I can't find, I don't understand etc)
- Progress chasing (following up of existing calls)
- Poor Signposting/call transfer (customer directed to the wrong Department/called the wrong number)
- Repeat contact for the same service (recurring issue, telling multiple departments about a change of address etc)
- Service failure (missed bin etc)

4.2 The process was implemented, tested and reports for February and March 2017 have been generated, the results are set out below:

FEBRUARY 17 - TOTAL CONTACTS 2720						
Clarification by Customer	Progress Chasing	Poor Signposting	Repeat Contact	Service Failure	Avoidable	Non Avoidable
226	110	10	145	263	754 (28%)	1966 (72%)
Avoidable contact by type						
30%	15%	1%	19%	35%		

MARCH 17 - TOTAL CONTACTS 3340						
Clarification by Customer	Progress Chasing	Poor Signposting	Repeat Contact	Service Failure	Avoidable	Non Avoidable
247	77	6	134	292	756 (23%)	2584 (77%)
Avoidable contact by type						
33%	10%	1%	18%	39%		

4.3 A summary of key findings are:

- That the majority of our customers are being directed to the right place at the first point of contact.
- There is some work to do ensuring the information we provide is clear and easy to understand and readily available. However, the departments that scored the highest in this area were Planning Building Control, and Licensing, all of which could potentially have serious consequences for the customer if the legislation is not applied properly, therefore there will always be a tendency to check understanding.

- Service failure also scored high however of the 263 recorded in Feb and 292 recorded in March, 137 and 170 respectively were relating to missed bin collections. To put that into context waste & recycling make separate collections each week, one black bag and one recycling bin, from 35, 511 residential properties in the district therefore the percentage of failure is extremely low.
- Progress chasing figures, although relatively low, will reduce further now that agreed service standards have been introduced. Avoidable contact will only be recorded once the service standard has been exceeded.

5.0 NEXT STEPS

5.1 The February and March 17 reports are the benchmark for avoidable contact going forward.

5.2 The Customer Services team will continue to monitor avoidable contact and use the intelligence gathered in conjunction with the work outlined in Phase 2 of the Transformation Programme and the Lean System Thinking projects soon to commence to:

- Identify opportunities for quick wins and provide an indication of where deeper, more fundamental issues in service delivery lie.
- Instigate dialogue and joined up thinking between the front and back office and Senior Management and ensure the Customer is at the heart of all that we do.
- Offer a win-win situation by improving the customer experience, raising staff productivity and morale and delivering efficiencies.
- Provide quantitative evidence for initial outline business cases, enabling officers to initiate and sustain improvements to their services without the need for expensive consultants.

Background Documents

Location

Contact Officer

None

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Ely

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