

Item 23

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL – CONTACT CENTRE

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL’S LOCAL COMMITTEE IN SURREY HEATH

29th April 2004

KEY ISSUE:

This report sets out the future direction of telephone call handling by Surrey County Council, with particular relevance to the Local Transportation Service office at Bagshot.

SUMMARY:

Surrey County Council has developed a Contact Centre (previously known as the Call Centre), to enable a single standard telephone number approach which can be advertised to the public as the direct contact number for all County Council business.

Surrey County Council’s Transportation Service was rated by the Audit Commission as “good with excellent prospects for improvement” (the highest rating by any Transportation Service in the UK). Clear guidance was however given as to how Customer Care could be improved.

One specific area of Customer Care which has been given a high priority, is to ensure public telephone access to the service is through a single contact number.

Following a pilot which included the LTSs of Woking, Guildford, Waverley and Tandridge, it has been decided to roll out the system to all the district LTS offices. The Surrey Heath District LTS office will be included as from early May.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

This report is for information only

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1. A Call Centre (now known as the Contact Centre) was set up some years ago at County Hall which initially was used to deal with contacts relating to education and school choice. The Transportation Service (then known as Highways and Transportation), also started to use the Call Centre number to deal with contacts made by the public regarding specific road work schemes. This proved to be an effective procedure, and saved the highway engineers a great deal of time in not having to deal with routine queries.

2. When the Audit Commission reviewed the Transportation Service in 2002, the rating achieved was defined as “good with excellent prospects for improvement”. Clear guidance was given as to how the service could be improved, and Customer Care was particularly identified. This was then referred to in the Transportation Service Plan, which responded to the inspection comments.
3. A specific area which has been given a high priority, is that of the use of a Contact Centre through a single contact telephone number. This number is being and will be given wide publicity in Surrey – 08456 009 009.
4. Following the initial pilot of the use of the Contact Centre, it has been decided that all LTS offices will now be included in this procedure. This will mean that all public callers will be automatically re-routed to the Contact Centre. This does not mean that known direct dial numbers at Surrey Heath LTS will be subject to this process. However, due to the current line links, there are some technical difficulties which will have to be overcome to ensure a seamless contact system is in place for the early May change.

ANALYSIS AND COMMENTARY

5. The protocols of the Transportation/Contact Centre are set out below.
 - pick up calls within 5 rings once delivered to an agent by the ACD.
 - be impartial and objective in delivering information.
 - be courteous and positive in all dealings with callers.
 - despatch all requested information within 24 hours of receiving a call.
 - capture comprehensive details from customer reports, enquiries and requests to minimise the need to call them back for further information.
 - clearly identify issues which need local or technical expertise and forward such calls to the appropriate extension.
 - immediately notify the LTS of suspected insurance claims by telephone as well as logging on to CONFIRM.
 - immediately notify the Constructor Call Centre of spillages as well as by CONFIRM.
 - immediately notify the Constructor Call Centre of any perceived emergency as well as logging on CONFIRM.
 - identify unfulfilled promises and complaints about service, log the details and forward the call to the LTS or other service provider as appropriate.
 - where possible, provide contact information when the call does not concern the LTS.
 - redirect calls requesting named officers.
 - advise each caller of the Call Reference Number.
 - maintain a log of all calls and provide weekly reports on volume, type and destination.
6. The Local Transportation Service commitments are set out below.
 - ensure adequate staffing and telephone hunt groups to ensure that at all times, during LTS opening hours, the Contact Centre can transfer calls to a Transportation officer.

- ensure that the Contact Centre is never put through to an ansaphone, but always is able to speak with an officer/constructor.
 - be courteous, polite and supportive in all dealings with Contact Centre operators.
 - supply extra full, timely information to the SCC website when requested by the Contact Centre, within one hour if an emergency, or 24 hours otherwise. In an emergency, if information is required almost immediately, it must be e-mailed to the Contact Centre Supervisors/a named operator.
 - inform the Contact Centre immediately of all changes/updates to standards of service/procedures, information, leaflets and any other documentation.
 - ensure all information on the website, used by the Contact Centre and public is updated regularly and is accurate.
 - inform the Contact Centre of updates/changes to information on website, as they happen, by e-mail.
 - meet with the Contact Centre Manager quarterly to review service and identify/rectify any non-urgent issues. Urgent issues to be reported to Contact Centre Manager as they arise.
7. What success will look like.
- the LTS office will receive fewer calls.
 - a good feeling within each LTS that the diversion of calls is having an enabling effect.
 - there is a high level of customer satisfaction with the call-handling process.
 - Processes and databases are accurate and enable efficient call-handling.
8. It is essential to appreciate that whilst the County Council provides monthly statistics on call volumes, the Transportation Service holds quarterly review meetings with the LTSs and County Council managers to review quality and information issues, because the Transportation Service maintains ultimate responsibility for quality of performance. A core group of Transportation officers and County agencies are working continuously on improvement, and the quality of the system will be tested shortly by a process of mystery “shopping” by telephone.

CONSULTATION

9. The extended use of the Contact Centre has been approved by Members and the Executive, following the piloting process with 4 district LTS offices.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

10. There are no direct financial implications to the Surrey Heath LTS office. However, there will be efficiency savings where information is passed directly to the constructor for immediate attention and action.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IMPLICATIONS

11. None.

CRIME & DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

12. None.

EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

13. None.

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: none

Number of Annexes: none