



People, Performance and Development Committee
29 September 2015

**Ensuring our Services are accessible and responsive:
telephone and voicemail policy**

Purpose of the report: Policy development and review

To improve resident experience by introducing a new telephone and voicemail policy for officers.

Recommendation

It is recommended that the committee:

- Endorse the new telephone and voicemail policy, and the approach to embedding this in the organisation.

Introduction

1. The Council is committed to delivering an excellent resident experience, as stated in the Corporate Strategy and defined by the Customer Promise.
2. The Customer Promise commits to 'Making it Easy' for residents to contact the Council and ensuring services are accessible and responsive. The Council has undertaken a review of its telephone and voicemail practices in order to ensure that they support this commitment.

Telephone and voicemail – current practice

3. Customers primarily contact the Council through the public-facing numbers available on the Council website and elsewhere. The majority of these calls are handled by the Council's Contact Centre. The Contact Centre's Service Level Agreement (SLA) requires 75-85% of customer calls to be answered within 20 seconds.
4. Individual officers also take calls. Whilst it would not be possible to meet the same SLAs that apply to the main Council lines, it is essential that these calls are also responded to professionally and promptly.

5. The following policy has therefore been designed to ensure a responsive service to our customers.

Telephone and voicemail policy

6. The performance of the Contact Centre and other customer-facing teams should continue to be measured against the established service level agreements. These are to be reviewed to ensure that they are responsive and continue to meet customer need.
7. Individual officers are to follow the new telephone and voicemail policy:
- When available, calls must be answered promptly (within 20 seconds)
 - When unavailable, calls must be diverted as appropriate to:
 - a mobile, or
 - to a colleague, either directly or by using a hunt or pickup group, or
 - to voicemail
 - Voicemail should only used by exception and must not be used as a barrier to contact. Where it is used, it must:
 - be up-to-date
 - indicate availability (e.g. in/out of the office, on leave)
 - offer an alternative contact name if the individual is on leave
 - be responded to promptly

Embedding the telephone and voicemail policy

8. The Council is committed to developing a culture in which staff “think customer”. To embed this culture in the organisation, the Council has developed the Engagement Strategy "Leading with Confidence" which includes promoting the principles in the Customer Promise. The strategy rolls out to the wider workforce in the New Year.
9. This work will reinforce the importance of simple changes which put the customer first, such as the new telephone and voicemail policy. In order to embed this policy:
- 9.1 Leaders throughout the Council will be briefed on, and asked to role-model and cascade, the new telephone and voicemail policy.
- 9.2 The telephone and voicemail policy will be promoted on s-net.
- 9.3 The telephone and voicemail policy will be built into the induction process.

Conclusion

10. In order to improve resident experience, the Customer Promise commits the Council to ensuring that services are responsive and accessible. This review concludes that the Contact Centre and other customer-facing teams should continue to meet their SLAs regarding telephone contact, which should be regularly reviewed to ensure that they deliver an excellent resident experience. All other officers within the Council should observe the new telephone and voicemail policy, helping to embed the Customer Promise principle of 'Making it Easy' into the organisation's culture.

Financial and value for money implications

11. Delivering excellent resident experience both improves customer satisfaction and increases efficiency. There is no additional cost for this work.

Equalities and diversity implications

12. Ensuring services are accessible, responsive and easy to use benefits all of the Council's customers.

Risk management implications

13. Failure to provide accessible and responsive services will have a detrimental effect on resident experience and will damage the Council's reputation.

Next steps:

14. To complete the programme of work to embed the telephone and voicemail policy.
15. New telephony is soon being introduced to the Council, and it is proposed that the policy is reviewed in approximately six months.

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Sources/background papers:

- Customer Promise

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