



NORTHAMPTON
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 3 – CUSTOMER SERVICES

21ST MARCH 2012

BRIEFING NOTE: COUNCILLORS VIEWS ON CUSTOMER SERVICES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Panel, at its initial scoping meeting, agreed that Councillors of Northampton Borough Council (NBC) would be asked to provide details of their experiences of customer services at NBC.

2 Councillors Comments

- 2.1 A number of Councillors provided the following comments:

On the occasions that the Councillor has used the Customer Contact Centre he found staff to be more than helpful and very efficient, transferring him to the correct department.

There is often frustration where a problem is the responsibility of a number of Agencies and there is difficulty in locating the correct contact.

A Councillor reported that every time he has a query or problem from residents within his ward he has always had a prompt response from either the Customer Contact Centre or the One Stop Shop. Staff have either given him a satisfactory answer to his query or told him who to go to to obtain the information; or contact has been made upon his behalf. He added that the residents may not always receive the response that they are looking for but they are quick to offer praise on the speed that the Councillor has got back to them which he highlights is down to the staff. His only concern is that staff appear very vulnerable in the One Stop Shop.

A Councillor advised that he personally preferred direct contact with Officers and overtime builds up personal relationships with them, rather than making contact through a Contact Centre. He gave examples of situations where officers had asked him to contact the Contact Centre in future and that he should ask the constituent to go through the normal channel. He queried whether the normal channel was the Customer Contact Centre and was concerned in asking a frustrated constituent to contact the Customer Contact Centre rather than himself direct. He emphasised the need for Contact Centres to work efficiently and effectively. The Councillor added that there has been a vast improvement in response to queries through the centre.

3 Conclusion

- 3.1 Comments received from Councillors centred around the efficiency of staff in the One Stop Shop and Contact Centre, particularly noting the speed of responses provided. A Councillor advised that he preferred making direct contact with individual officers and departments rather than making contact through a Customer Contact Centre. It was commented that the telephone system was rather slow when the caller needed to contact a particular officer or service area.

- 3.2 The comments received from Councillors will inform the evidence base of the Panel's Review.

Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer, on behalf of Councillor Mike Hallam, Chair, Scrutiny Panel 3 – Customer Services

Date: 29th February 2012