



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Scrutiny Panel 3 - Customer Services

Core Questions - Head of Strategic Housing and Head of Landlord Services

- 1 Please supply details how you evaluate whether customer services is providing value for money around:

The quality of the Service and Service delivery
Customer Satisfaction across the whole organisation
Cost and efficiency
Staff satisfaction of the process
- 2 Please explain how you use current technology and social networking to drive services forward? Housing Solutions have used facebook, texting services, the web site and on line questionnaires and various on line applications to drive services forward
- 3 How do you encourage customers to access the Internet to make contact with the Council? Through the Choice Based Lettings scheme all 9,000 customers on the Housing Register access the Housing Solutions services via the web site. All services that the Housing Solutions service provides are available on line through the web site
- 4 Please explain the advice and services that you provide to customers who are unable to access the Internet. The Housing Solutions service provides access to service at 7 surgeries across the geographical locations across the Borough of Northampton. All customers can request home visits and or visit the Guildhall to access the Housing Solutions service.
- 5 In particular, in relation to those customers who have the most need for services please explain how the services that the organisation offers are advertised. The Housing Solutions service is advertised through BCC Northampton, local written press, visits to community organisations, posters in all public buildings advertising our services, leaflets that are available in libraries, and on the web site

6 Do you feel that the One Stop Shop at the Council makes best use of the space available, and how would you rate comfort and accessibility? The rating would be poor to adequate as the layout is confusing, inadequate signs, the information desks at the tightest part of the layout were overcrowding occurs and the initial first impression from this is poor.

6(a) What do you feel are the best features of the One Stop Shop and why? The staff, they manage to do a very difficult job with some very testing customers. Generic roles mean that staff may not be able to answer all questions in detail, which may lead to frustration for customers.

6(b) Please provide suggestions of where you feel improvements could be made? Move the entrance for customers, include a desk/area specifically for Housing customers, which could be near the interview rooms. This may alleviate the frustration of staff that do not have the knowledge and would assist customers who need specialist advice, but may have to come back on a different day to get it.

7 Do you feel that customers are comfortable entering the One Stop Shop, if not, please provide examples of why you feel this is the case. The entrance is at the tightest part of the service were overcrowding occurs. The first impressions are long queues and over crowding and inadequately staffed. Customer may not want to wait or may find this intimidating in such a small area.

8 Please supply details of how the customer can access the customer services facilities Through the one stop shop, the contact centre and directly with the service via letter, telephone, web, text, interview, and through the local MP's and Councillors

9 Is the organisation successfully identifying the levels of the service that the customer requires? If not please explain why. The Customer Service Excellence assessment report (section 5) highlights some failings of the contact centre service and mystery shopping has also highlighted the lack of in-depth knowledge at first contact with customers

Please advise which is the most frequently used method of contacting customer services In person at the One Stop Shop, email and telephone

11 How does the organisation prioritise emergency situations? The One stop shop has generic officers who may only be able to give basic advice,

any housing emergencies are passed directly to the Housing Solutions team to resolve. A solution for this could be to have an area/desk specifically for Housing which could be staffed by specialist staff.

- 12 Please provide details of the training given to officers to help them to deal with distressed customers? Full range of training courses, shadowing, best practice written material, peer support, reflect learning in partnership with Human Resources
- 13 How are staff supported in cases where dealing with distressed customers have caused them levels of distress? Through reflective learning in partnership with Human Resources and Peer Support
- 14 Please supply details of a `Lessons Learnt Process' that is in place following contact with difficult customers? All customer satisfaction questionnaires are assessed and lessons learnt approach from each completed questionnaire undertaken.
- 15 Please supply details of how you analyse complaints received and how complaints are dealt with? All complaints are considered by the Housing Solutions Manager. The Housing Solutions Manager contacts all customers that complain to ensure they are satisfied with the outcome to their complaint
- 16 Please provide your views on the benefits of a shared customer services facility. I believe that there are limited benefits, as the lack of in-depth knowledge at the first point of contact can be misleading, incorrect and detrimental to customers and the reputation of the council. Housing customers would benefit from Housing Solutions requires its own customer service facility in the One Stop Shop area
- 17 Please supply details of both allocated and unallocated reserves for customer services for your area?
- 18 Any other comments