

Title: **Update on Customer Services and the Telephone System**

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### **Background**

Scrutiny Committee received an update report regarding Customer Services and the new telephone system in February 2008, and requested a further report in May 2008. This report provides an update on the telephone system and highlights improvement made in two departments specifically mentioned in the last meeting as being areas of concern.

### **Phone System Update**

#### **1. Planning Department Telephony Issues**

- A full and comprehensive investigation and testing of the Planning telephone set-up has been undertaken. No technical problems or faults were found and the system is operating as requested by the department.
- Planning services were subject to the Vanguard business process review project. As a result, a change was made to the way the department operates and to how the telephone system is set up to route calls within the department. This change occurred during October 2007.
- Since then, as staff become more familiar with the new telephone system and new ways of working, performance has improved.
- Additionally, since late October staff issues have impacted on the Planning department. However since late February the team has been operating with a single vacancy and hope to fill this soon.

The chart below shows the improvement in Planning's telephone performance from October 2007 to March 2008.

## Planning Call Performance October 2007 to March 2008

Month	Total Number of Calls Received	Number of Calls Answered	Number of Calls Lost	Percentage of Lost Calls
October	8,101	6,801	1,300	16
November	7,576	6,519	1,057	14
December	3,979	3,587	392	10
January	6,813	6,252	561	8
February	3,266	3,034	232	7
March	5,607	5,528	79	1

### 2. Commercial Services Telephony Issues

Commercial Services went through a period of change in the latter half of 2007 as staff transferred from the Council to various suppliers and new personnel were recruited. As the new team structure has become established, call performance has improved.

Furthermore the department was subject to particularly high call volumes during October and November 2007 where capacity issues affected call performance.

Although they would not show up in the call performance figures, there was an issue where certain key officers in the department were allocated extension numbers that could not be accessed via the automated switchboard. This issue was resolved last year.

There are further changes planned for Commercial Services to simplify the way in which calls are routed within the department. These changes will be made following some system changes to be made in the next few weeks.

The call performance for Commercial Services is highlighted below.

### Commercial Services Call Performance October 2007 to March 2008

Month	Total Number of Calls Received	Number of Calls Answered	Number of Calls Lost	Percentage of Calls Lost
October	5,895	4,726	1,169	20
November	6,879	5,359	1,520	22
December	4,570	3,823	747	16
January	4,639	4,113	526	11
February	1,578	1,394	184	12
March	3,924	3,737	187	5

### **3. System Reliability**

- The system has been re-configured to improve its reliability. This work has also reduced the complexity of managing the system and departmental hunt groups.
- Following an unplanned system reboot, the system switched to the fallback system without loss of service.

### **4. Operational Procedures**

- Communication has gone out to all staff to remind them of the standards for telephone use. This includes making sure that when transferring a call within the council, all calls are introduced and the customer's name and query is passed to the receiving officer.

### **Ongoing Work**

Work will continue to improve the way in which the Council provides service to its customers. To support this, there will continue to be changes made to the telephone system.

- The next pieces of work to be undertaken are in Revenues and Benefits, which will act upon recommendations coming out of the Vanguard project.
- An assessment of the Council's telephone menu system has been completed by Customer Services. The Corporate Management team will be considering a plan to streamline the menu during May.
- Customer Services continues to publish to Service Managers the call performance for every department, which includes the volume of calls which go unanswered and the average speed with which calls are answered. The Council continues to meet its targets for calls answered and speed of answer across the board.

### **Recommendation**

Customer Services will continue to monitor call performance across the Council and take remedial action where appropriate.