

Further information on customer contact performance data (Supplementary Item)

Customer Access Charter:

In January 2023, the Council adopted a [Customer Access Charter](#). The Charter sets out how customers can contact the council, access its services and the standards of customer care that can be expected.

To achieve customer service excellence, our vision and priorities are to ensure that our services are up to date, easy to use and make the best use of technology to meet the needs of our customers which will continue to improve customer satisfaction levels.

When the Charter was approved new local performance indicators were established. These considered the many reasons that people calling the council may abandon their call part way. It was concluded that abandoned calls may not be an accurate reflection of calls performance. Members therefore agreed the following performance measures based largely on satisfaction and average wait times with an average threshold of 5 minutes wait:

Indicator	Target		
	23/24	24/25	25/26
% of customers satisfied with the service they received	60%	70%	80%
Average wait time <5 minutes	40%	55%	70%

Performance:

The table below shows a positive trend of improvements from quarter one in 2022/23 to quarter three 2023/24. Historic performance indicators which continue to be monitored locally and reported to the service director and portfolio holder are also included to provide comparable data:

	Total calls rec'd	Call ans'd	Calls ans'd < 20 seconds	Calls ans'd < 90 seconds	Calls ans'd < 5 minutes	Average wait time	Face to face contact	Email contact
Q1 22/23	33,977	20,932	Not available	11.43%	Not recorded	09:29	1,833	4,861
Q2 22/23	25,392	18,680	8.83%	21.35%	Not recorded	08:00	2,016	4,127
Q3 22/23	18,535	14,704	19.92%	36.97%	Not recorded	05:26	1,362	3,419
Q4 22/23	30,521	23,318	36.23%	54.35%	80.87%	02:31	1,979	3,906
Q1 23/24	26,731	20,933	36.67%	55.82%	82.05%	02:36	1,829	3,730
Q2 23/24	23,300	19,533	43.78%	61.61%	85.52%	02:10	1,583	3,334

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Call Centre performance has significantly improved during the last 12 months. This can be attributed to several measures which have been implemented, including:

Recruitment:

- The recruitment programme is almost complete with 86.7 full time equivalents (FTE) in post and only 2.5 vacancies across the service.
- Three new Customer Services Officer posts were created and appointed in September 2023 to provide additional capacity within the service to manage customer contacts successfully.

New telephony system:

- The new telephony system was implemented in January 2023 providing skills-based routing of calls to enable customer enquiries to be resolved at the first point of contact.
- In addition, the system increases resilience and enables virtual call handling.
- The new system provides improved visibility of calls waiting and better reporting to monitor corporate and individual performance levels along with call activity to enable future planning.

Automation:

- Further automation of council tax and housing benefits processes has been implemented improving processing times, aligning procedures, and reducing training time for new starters.
- A shared service desktop has been implemented allowing users to view records for both authorities within a single application. New automated modules have also been introduced for Housing Benefit reviews, Council Tax refunds and Council Tax Direct Debits to further align and speed up processes.
- In quarter three 2023/24, new technology to record and process changes of address will be implemented. An online form will bring significant efficiencies through automation freeing up staff time to focus on other service priorities.

Training and development:

- In March 2023, a Training and Development Officer was appointed to grow knowledge and skills across the service. The service-wide training is split into 3 key areas:
 - Apprentices,
 - Alignment training to enable staff to complete service-wide enquiries from both councils,
 - New skills and development for established staff following training needs analysis.

Year-Round Programme:

This programme provides an overview of historic council-wide activities which generated customer contact, the period of activity, the number of contacts and the resources required to manage demand.

This information is used to inform future planning alongside proactive contact with services to understand their upcoming activities. The resource required to manage demand is then forecasted and the required staff are trained on how to respond to enquiries so that service standards and response times are achieved.

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Revenues and Benefits processing:

A backlog of outstanding customer requests in the Revenues and Benefits service has the knock-on effect of residents calling the contact centre for an update on progress.

A combination of investment in recruitment, automation and training has contributed to the outstanding number of requests reducing significantly from over 1,000 Benefits and 600 Revenues items in August 2022 to the current position of less than 150 outstanding items in each service area.