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21 February 2013

## **SUPPORT SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

Monday 4 March 2013

3.30 pm

Council House, Plymouth (Next to the Civic Centre)

**Members:**

Councillor Murphy, Chair

Councillor Bowyer, Vice Chair

Councillors Casey, Churchill, Gordon, James, Martin Leaves, Parker, Rennie, Stark and Stevens.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

**Tracey Lee**  
Chief Executive

# **SUPPORT SERVICES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL**

## **AGENDA**

### **PART I – PUBLIC MEETING**

#### **1. APOLOGIES AND SUBSTITUTIONS**

To receive apologies for non-attendance by panel members and to note the attendance of substitutes in accordance with the Constitution.

#### **2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Members will be asked to make declarations of interest in respect of items on this agenda.

#### **3. MINUTES (Pages 1 - 6)**

To confirm the minutes of the Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel held on 19 November 2012.

#### **4. CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

To receive reports on business which, in the opinion of the Chair, should be brought forward for urgent consideration.

#### **5. WORK PROGRAMME (Pages 7 - 8)**

To receive and consider the panel's work programme for 2012/2013 – please note that at the request of the Chair, the work programme will be re-drafted during the meeting and so members of the panel may like to give thought in relation to new items.

#### **6. 'THE VIEW FROM YOU' EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS (Pages 9 - 24)**

To receive a report on the headline findings of 'the view from you' employee survey 2012.

#### **7. SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE (Pages 25 - 34)**

To receive a report on the use of Social Media within the Council.

#### **8. ICT SHARED SERVICES (Pages 35 - 36)**

The Programme Director for ICT shared services will present a report on ICT shared services.

**9. REVENUES AND BENEFITS PERFORMANCE UPDATE (Pages 37 - 42)**

To receive for information a copy of the Revenues and Benefits Performance Update sent to Cabinet.

**10. REVENUES AND BENEFITS CUSTOMER SERVICE AT THE CIVIC CENTRE (Pages 43 - 88)**

To receive a report on the results of the customer survey carried out in relation to Revenues and Benefits Customer Service.

**11. TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD (Pages 89 - 90)**

To receive a copy of the panel's tracking resolutions and any feedback from the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board on issues which concern this panel.

**12. EXEMPT BUSINESS**

To consider passing a resolution under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 to exclude the press and public from the meeting for the following item(s) of business on the grounds that it (they) involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraphs 3 of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Act, as amended by the Freedom of Information Act 2000.

(Members of the Public to note that if agreed you will be asked to leave the meeting).

**PART II (PRIVATE MEETING)**

**13. DISCRETIONARY RATE RELIEF (E3) (Pages 91 - 112)**

To receive details of the discretionary rate relief process and a list of those businesses in receipt of discretionary rate relief.

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**Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel****Monday 19 November 2012****PRESENT:**

Councillor Murphy, in the Chair.

Councillor Bowyer, Vice Chair.

Councillors Casey, Churchill, Gordon, James, Rennie, Stark and Stevens.

Apologies for absence: Councillors Martin Leaves and Parker

Also in attendance: Tim Howes (Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance), Richard Woodfield (Corporate Information Manager), Mike Hocking (Risk and Insurance Manager), Dave Saunders (Lead Officer), Gemma Pearce (Team Leader – Democratic Support).

The meeting started at 3.30 pm and finished at 5.30 pm.

*Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.*

**36. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

**37. MINUTES**

Agreed the minutes of the meeting held 1 October 2012.

**CHAIRS URGENT BUSINESS****38. Lead Officer**

The Chair welcomed Dave Saunders, Strategic Manager (Customer Services) as Lead Officer to the Panel and expressed thanks to Simon Arthurs for his work with the panel during his time as Lead Officer.

**39. Discretionary Rate Relief Paper**

The Chair advised members that the paper on discretionary rate relief circulated to panel members by email would be submitted to the next meeting for discussion under part II.

40. **GOVERNMENT POLICY CHANGES**

Tim Howes, Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance briefed the panel on the impact of the 'Localism Act' and of the 'Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access and Access to information) England Regulations 2012' on service provision.

With regard to the Localism Act –

- (a) under the general power of competence, a council could do anything that isn't unlawful, this had little effect on this Council as current powers could generally be found to do anything;
- (b) the main change affecting this Council was the abolition of the Standards Committee and Standards Board for England. This change meant that the worst that could happen to a member who had acted contrary to the code of conduct was a letter from the monitoring officer and attendant publicity;
- (c) an independent person would need to be appointed to review complaints. Officers were looking at the best way to appoint an independent person;
- (d) a new type of interest – 'disclosable pecuniary interests' had come in to effect and a completed form for all members had been published on the Councils website;
- (e) 'Community Right to Challenge', where members of the public could bid to run Council services had created additional work for the Legal and Procurement teams however this work had been absorbed into the existing workload. Any successful bids would create a large amount of unplanned work that had not been budgeted for;
- (f) work around 'Assets of community value', a process which offers greater protection to community infrastructure which is considered to be of community value, had been absorbed by the Legal Services Team;
- (g) any referendum on excessive council tax increase would be managed by the Council and then recharged to the precept authority;
- (h) the act had also seen changes to the planning process however these had not impacted on Democracy and Governance.

In response to questions the Monitoring Officer advised that -

- (i) at present members of this council were only required to declare the statutory minimum information on their register of interests however, this would be looked at as part of the code of conduct review and there was potential to include a requirement to declare membership of closed societies such as freemasons;

- (j) there had been no requirement to use the general powers of competence as of yet;
- (k) officers proposals on the new code of conduct would be reviewed by the constitution working group, the Leader and Shadow Leader before submission to Council for final approval.

With regard to the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access and Access to information) England Regulations 2012 -

- (l) the regulations had come into effect with little warning having been laid before parliament on 8 June 2012 and coming into effect on 1 July 2012. It was felt across the country that this new legislation was an answer to a problem that hadn't existed;
- (m) there had been concerns about the need to publish all officer decisions, which could run into hundreds of thousands. Guidance was sought from the Department for Communities and Local Government who advised that only decisions specifically delegated by the Cabinet to officers would need to be published;
- (n) changes had been absorbed by existing staff within the Democratic Support Team;
- (o) the law only affected Cabinet meetings and did not apply to other committees such as scrutiny;
- (p) due to the requirement to give 30 days' notice of items which would be considered by the Cabinet under part II, officers have found themselves in the position where they need to make a best guess about whether an item may or may not need consideration under part II.

Agreed -

- (1) to request an update on the effects of the Localism Act on the Planning Service;
- (2) to request that the monitoring officer email advice to all members on how the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access and Access to information) England Regulations 2012 affected committees.

#### 41. **SHARED SERVICES PROGRAMME REVIEW**

The Panel received a briefing note which updated them on progress with the Shared Services programme review.

Agreed to request clarification on when the programme would come to the panel for pre-decision scrutiny.

42. **GOVERNANCE OF THE CAPITAL PROGRAMME**

The Lead Officer took the panel through the flow chart in the agenda pack which outlined the process for putting a project onto the Capital Programme.

Members commented that there was very little opportunity to

Agreed to request that Councillor Lowry provide further evidence on how Member involvement could be built into the process.

43. **SCHOOL ACADEMY TRANSFER**

The panel received a copy of the Cabinet report on traded services with schools and welcomed the recognition there will be services that Plymouth City Council cannot continue to support. With regard to services that would be traded the panel stressed the importance of taking a proactive approach to ensure that Plymouth City Council was not overtaken by competitors.

Councillor Rennie advised the panel that Children and Young People overview and Scrutiny Panel had given this issue consideration and that to avoid cross over it would be advisable to raise concerns with the Chair of this panel so that they could be raised with the Chair of the Children and Young Peoples Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

Agreed -

- (1) to request information on which services are being offered to schools from outside City. Reassurance that a proactive approach is being taken to ensure that business is not lost;
- (2) that the Democratic Support officer circulate (by email) the minutes of the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel meeting at which this matter was considered.

44. **REVENUES AND BENEFITS MONTHLY POSITION STATEMENT**

The Panel received the Revenues and Benefits monthly position statement for information.

The Chair informed the panel that she had recently undertaken some observation at first stop and in the Revenues and Benefits customer area at the Civic Centre. She had been concerned at what she had witnessed and the feedback received from customer in relation to wait times with some people commenting that they had to wait up to two hours. The Chair had also learnt that customers could be prevented from joining the queue to be seen at 3pm if the queue was too long to clear before 5pm.



The panel were concerned that this could get worse with the upcoming changes brought on by the welfare reform.

Agreed to request a report on wait times and customers satisfaction levels in relation to revenues and benefits customers at the Civic Centre.

45. **FREEDOM OF INFORMATION TARGETS**

The Corporate Information Manager and the Head of Corporate Risk and Insurance presented a report on Freedom of information (FOI) targets. Members were informed that the Council was not meeting targets and whilst there were plans in place to rectify this situation the Council could come under the scrutiny of the Information Commissioners Office.

In response to questions raised by panel members the officer informed the panel that -

- (a) many of the questions submitting under the Freedom of Information Act were complicated and had to be picked apart before the information needed could be collated
- (b) FOI requests were not chargeable until the total time to respond was 18 hours or more. Time was charged at £25 per hour and there was an upper charge limit of £450;
- (c) vexatious or repeated requests could be rejected by the Information Manager in consultation with the relevant Assistant Director;
- (d) the definition of a freedom of information request was any request which made reference to the act;
- (e) There were a number of specific exemptions under which requests for information could be refused;
- (f) Work was underway to transfer documents from a physical to an electronic format and this would assist with the retrieval of information in the future

Members suggested that more detailed records could be kept in relation to requests and that this could help to assess the impact of responding on resources and help to improve response times.

Agreed to request that the officers return to the panel in around six months time with a progress report on the ongoing work to improve response times.

46. **TRACKING RESOLUTIONS AND FEEDBACK FROM OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD**

Members received the tracking resolutions document which contained information previously requested.

Following a vote by show of hands it was agreed to keep the issue of the legal advice on the listing of the civic centre on the tracking document. All other completed items should be removed.

47. **WORK PROGRAMME**

The panel considered its work programme.

Agreed to request that the Team Leader (Democratic Support) advise members as the extent to which they could consider election costs without crossing the boundaries of propriety.

48. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.

**Work Programme 2012 - 2013**

Proposed work programme	J	J	A	S	O	N	D	J	F	M	A
<b>Finance, Efficiencies, Technology and Assets</b>											
Shared Services Programme Review			6			19					
Carbon Management update					1						
<b>Customer Services</b>											
Revenues and Benefits Monthly Position Statement					1					4	
Revenues and Benefits Customer Interaction										4	
Discretionary rate relief										4	
<b>Human Resources and Organisational Development</b>											
Review other authorities' occupational health services and sickness (referred by Audit Committee on 16.12.11)		2									
Human Resources Workforce Update											
Sickness Policy Review			6								
Interim Staff Survey										4	
<b>Democracy and Governance</b>											
Election Costs											
<b>Corporate Communications</b>											
Social Media Strategy										4	
<b>Policy, Performance and Partnerships</b>											
Community Engagement update											
<b>Other Issues</b>											
Government Policy Changes					1	19				4	8

<b>City and Council Priorities</b>											
Value for Communities											
<b>Task and Finish Groups</b>											
Council Tax Scheme review (Welfare Reform)											

**Key**

\* **New item**

**N.B – items will be automatically deleted from the work programme once they have been considered by the Panel.**

**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

<b>Subject:</b>	“View from You” Employee Survey 2012
<b>Committee:</b>	Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel
<b>Date:</b>	4 March 2012
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Smith
<b>CMT Member:</b>	Adam Broome (Director for Corporate Services)
<b>Author:</b>	Eve Skuse, Head Organisational Development
<b>Contact details</b>	Tel: 01752 307565 email: eve.skuse@plymouth.gov.uk
<b>Ref:</b>	
<b>Key Decision:</b>	No
<b>Part:</b>	I

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**Purpose of the report:**

Staff engagement influences council performance and productivity, and a commitment was made to share employee survey findings with Support Services Overview Scrutiny Panel at the earliest opportunity. This report summarises findings from the latest employee survey conducted November 2012 and highlights strengths and perceptions around gaps in performance.

These findings are being shared and explored with staff, and, together with managers, action plans are being developed and implemented and will be published on staffroom at the half-year point. Some findings are mirrored across the council whilst others are specific to service areas. This year we have been able to report down to service area level which has provided real insight into, amongst other things, levels of engagement across the council and the workforce’s view of their work and commitment to the council’s priorities and commitment, managers, communications and pay and benefits.

Council, directorate, department and service area reports are now available on staffroom together with overviews of engagement similar to the one provided, which illustrates overall findings for departments. As most findings varied considerably by departments, Scrutiny panel members may find department and service area findings of interest.

In addition to staffroom, team brief and payslip communications, findings have been shared at Departmental Management Meetings and are being cascaded to staff.

The Council is considering how best to address those areas of the survey where findings are consistently low or dropping –e.g. opportunities to improve my skills or early contribution to change, and dedicated support from the Organisational Development (OD) team is being offered to those larger service areas with poor levels of engagement – particularly front-line services.

Management Teams are being asked to involve staff in identifying and implementing areas for improvement and action planning tools and support is being offered to managers.

As one of the areas for improvement was around “belief action will be taken as a result of the survey” staff will be updated on progress and Assistant Directors will share their action plans with

OD by the end March 2013 and they will be published on staffroom and progress will be tracked and updated and shared with staff.

The Organisational Development team will liaise with Assistant Directors to ensure plans align with corporate actions.

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**Corporate Plan 2012-2015:**

The section Change Management and Organisational Culture on page 42 of the Corporate Plan makes specific reference to the importance of building an engaged and motivated workforce that is committed to its customers and priorities. An inclusive and cooperative approach action planning will hopefully build commitment to ensuring those action plans are delivered and engagement is built.

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**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:  
Including finance, human, IT and land**

Not applicable

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**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

Not applicable

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**Equality and Diversity**

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken to safeguard against unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimization and ensure equality of access across different groups. The employee survey is anonymous however careful consideration is always given to reporting, especially around gender, ethnicity, disability and sexuality. It is critical that individuals are not identifiable from reports. Access to the survey was also considered.

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**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

Not applicable – information only

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**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

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**Published work / information:**

**Background papers:**

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**Sign off:**

# THE VIEW FROM YOU 2012

Plymouth City Council



## I. Overview Take-Up

The response rate for the council was 53%, slightly down on the 2011 survey. It was initially thought this could be due to the fact that we asked for “service areas” and there were concerns around protection of anonymity. Further analysis reveals that whilst the online response rate for office based staff remained virtually unchanged from 2011 (67%), the “paper” response rate for non-office based staff fell from 36% in 2011 to 30% this year.

Directorate	%
Corporate Services	63
Executive Office	90
People	49
Place	49

### I.1 Breakdown Take-Up

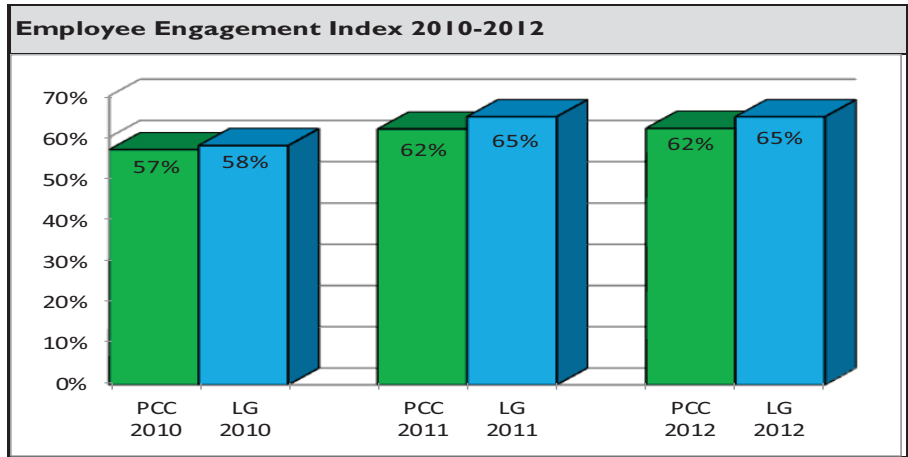
Rank	Directorat	Department	2012 % Score	2011 % Score	Difference %	Assistant Director	
1	PLACE	Planning Services	100	83	17	Paul Barnard	↑
2	CORP	HR & OD	93	100	-7	Mark Grimley	↓
3	CORP	Customer Services	91	100	-9	Andrew Stevens	↓
4	EXEC	Executive Office	90	100	-10	Giles Perritt / Richard Longford	↓
5	CORP	Democracy & Governance	77	77	0	Tim Howes	↔
6	PEOPLE	Homes & Communities	69	NA	-	Stuart Palmer	-
7	PLACE	Economic Development	66	100	-34	David Draffan	↓
8	PEOPLE	Adult Social Care	54	50	4	Pam Marsden	↑
9	PLACE	Transport	52	80	-28	Clive Perkin	↓
10	PEOPLE	Children's Social Care	49	64	-15	Dave Simpkins / Alison Botham	↓
11	CORP	FETA	49	47	2	Malcolm Coe	↑
12	PEOPLE	Education, Learner & Family	40	NA	-	Judith Harwood	-
13	PLACE	Environmental Services	35	30	5	Jayne Donovan	↑

## 2. Overview Council Engagement

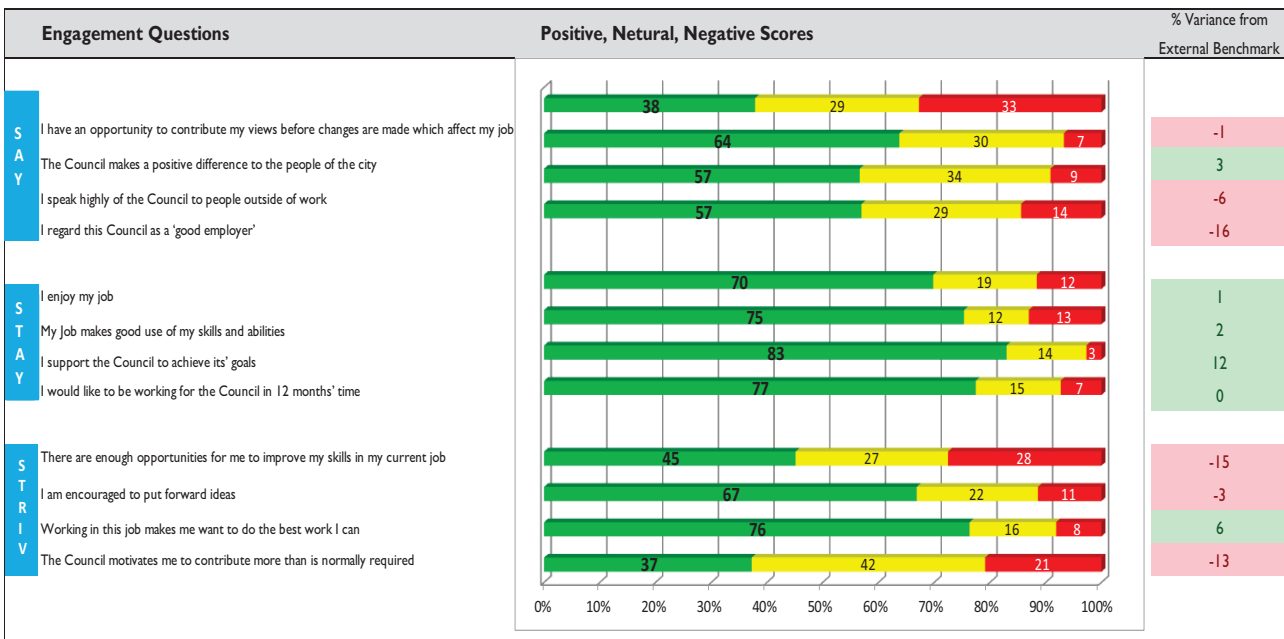
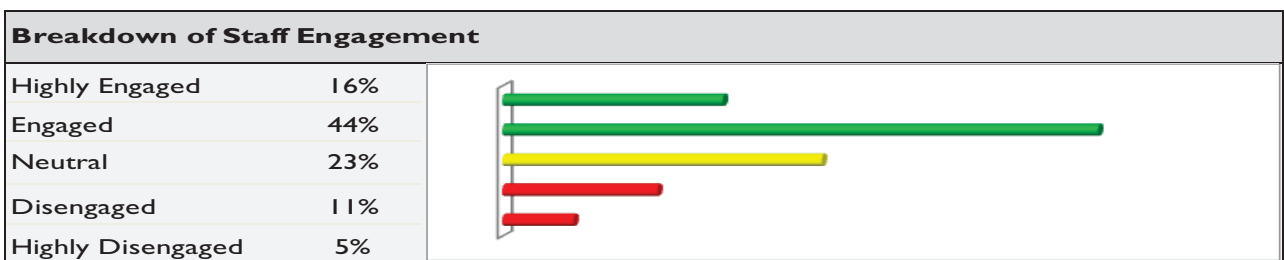
The overall engagement index for the council (utilising the industry standard ‘Say, Stay, Strive’ model) remained the same as 2011 at 62%, however, the local government benchmark was 65%.

Your Employee Engagement Index is:
<b>62%</b>

Your Return Rate is:
<b>53%</b>

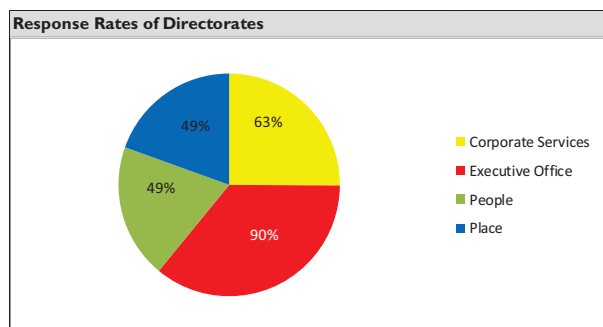


## 2.1 Breakdown Engagement



## 2.2 Directorate Engagement

Directorate Engagement Scores	2012	2011	Change
Corporate Services	63	62	1
Executive Office	66	67	-1
People	63	65	-2
Place	59	57	2





**2.3 Department Engagement**

Department		2012	2011	Change
CORP	HR & OD	73	70	3
PEOPLE	Homes & Communities	72	69	3
PLACE	Economic Development	71	70	1
CORP	Democracy & Governance	67	70	-3
PLACE	Transport	66	52	14
PEOPLE	Education, Learner & Family	66	68	-2
PLACE	Planning Services	66	68	-2
EXEC	Policy & Performance	66	-	-
CORP	Finance, Technologies, Efficiencies & Assets	61	59	2
PEOPLE	Children's Social Care	61	61	0
CORP	Customer Services	59	58	1
EXEC	Corporate Communications	57	-	-
PEOPLE	Adult Social Care	54	61	-7
PLACE	Environmental Services	46	51	-5

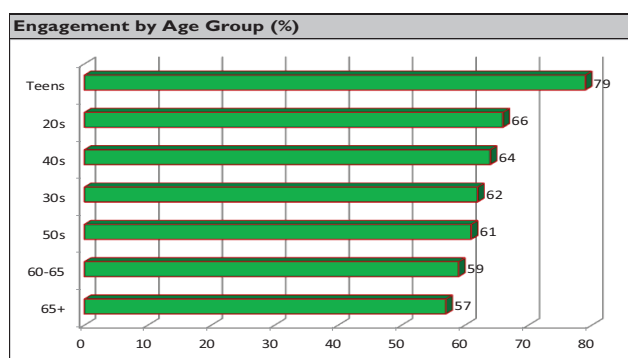
**2.4 Additional Analysis Engagement**

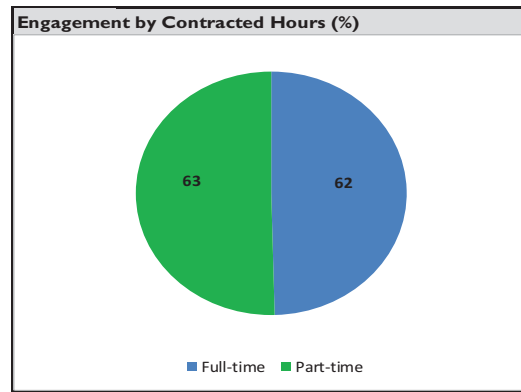
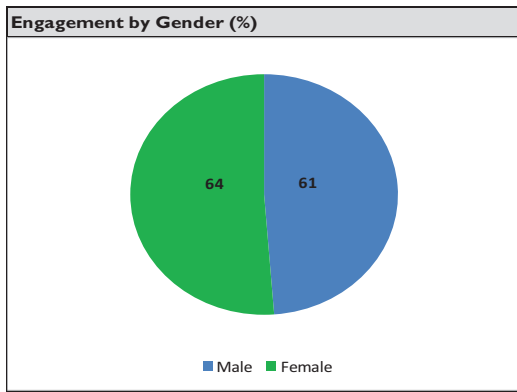
Further analysis has been conducted on staff engagement levels by these various sub categories. There is little variation in terms of gender (64%:61% female/male) or contracted hours (63%:62% part-time/full-time).

When looking at engagement levels and age group, the most engaged employees are in their teens followed by those in their twenties. The least engaged employees are in their fifties and sixties, with a gradual decline visible in the older age groups.

When analysing engagement levels by job type, as is usual the higher the job type the higher the engagement level. In terms of change from 2011 there have been rises in the engagement levels of Customer Facing Workers, Technical Managers and Semi-Professionals. However, there has been a noticeable decline in engagement levels of frontline workers and professionals and four categories of manager; Supervisors, Managers, Operational and Strategic Leaders (ranging from 1-5%).

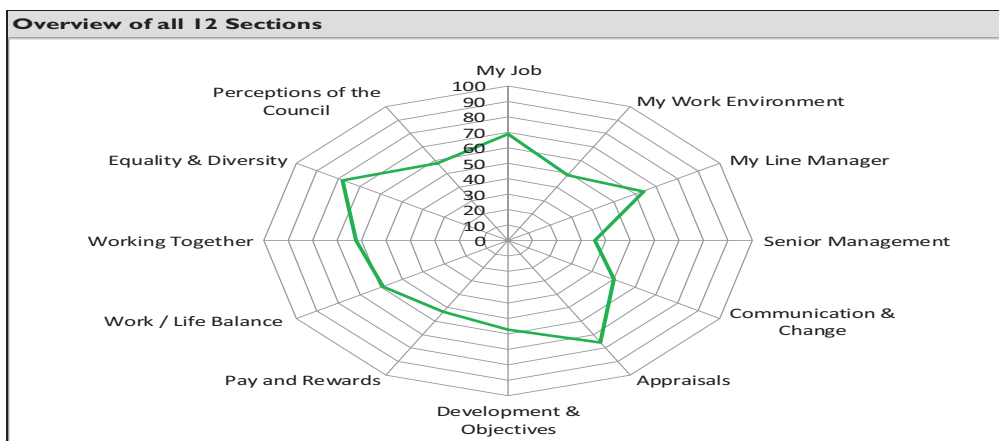
Engagement by Job Type	2012	2011	Difference
Strategic Leader	81	83	-2
Operational Leader	78	83	-5
Manager	73	74	-1
Technical Manager	70	68	2
Professional	63	66	-3
Semi - Professional	61	60	1
Customer Facing Worker	60	59	1
Supervisor	58	62	-4
Frontline Worker	54	56	-2





**3. Overview findings for each category**

Looking at the overview of the twelve sections, the highest scoring section was that of equality and diversity, followed by appraisals. Sections on job, line manager, team work and work life balance scored well. The lowest scoring sections related to pay and rewards, communication and change, working environment and senior management. Once again these low scoring sections correlate to the largest number of comments received on how to improve working life at the council.



**4. Top/Bottom 10 scoring questions**

An analysis of the top ten questions for each category (positive, neutral, negative) the top two highest scores were for the competency framework and appraisal meetings.

Support for the council’s goals and departmental objectives also scored highly, supported by the question on staff’s understanding on how their work links to these goals and objectives.

In terms of negative scoring questions, the highest score (one in two staff) relates to the belief that senior management are unaware of what the staff have to deal with on a day-to-day basis. Other high scoring questions relate to job security, lack of staff and resources, pay and the ability to speak up and challenge the way things are done.

	<b>Top 10 Positive Scores</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>P O S I T I V E</b>	40. I understand from the competency framework and my job type the behaviours expected of me	<b>89</b>
	43. I contributed to discussions at my appraisal meeting	<b>88</b>
	32. I am committed to my department's objectives and priorities	<b>84</b>
	31. I support the Council to achieve its' goals	<b>83</b>
	56. I participate in team discussions and make suggestions on how we can improve things	<b>82</b>
	4. I understand how my work links to the objectives of my department and council	<b>82</b>
	66. This Council respects individual differences (e.g. cultures, backgrounds, ethnicity)	<b>81</b>
	60. My team willingly works with other departments and partners to deliver better services	<b>80</b>
	45. During my appraisal my manager acknowledged my successes and helped me to understand what good performance is	<b>78</b>
	46. I feel that my appraisal was accurate and fair	<b>78</b>
	<b>Top 10 Negative Scores</b>	<b>2012</b>
<b>N E G A T I V E</b>	27. Senior Management are aware of what I have to deal with on a day-to-day basis	<b>50</b>
	8. I feel my job security is good	<b>49</b>
	64. My team has enough staff to get the job done	<b>41</b>
	37. I feel able to speak up and challenge the way things are done in the Council	<b>37</b>
	65. My team has enough resources (equipment, space, etc) to get the job done	<b>34</b>
	50. I feel my pay is fair	<b>33</b>
	57. Team Morale is good where I work	<b>33</b>
	36. I have an opportunity to contribute my views before changes are made which affect my job	<b>33</b>
	28. Senior Management manage change well	<b>30</b>
	39. I believe that action will be taken on problems identified in this survey	<b>30</b>

## 5. Comparison Information

Analysing changes from the **previous survey**; the highest increases in question scores relate to senior management visibility, support for the council's goals, inter-departmental co-operation and appraisals. The greatest decrease in question scores relate to pay and benefits (both falling by 13%), action on previous staff surveys and enjoyment of jobs.

When comparing the council scores to the **local government benchmarks** the council exceeds the benchmark in questions relating to appraisals, supporting the council in its goals and understanding of its vision, and inter-departmental co-operation.

The council falls below the benchmarks in questions relating to job security, receiving the right amount of information about council business and the challenges it faces, belief in action resulting from the staff survey and their working environment.

## 5.1 Tables

Change from Previous Survey more than 5 points (2010 / 2011)		2012	2010/11	Variance
POSITIVE	24. Senior Management are visible to me	50	34	16
	31. I support the Council to achieve its' goals	83	68	15
	60. My team willingly works with other departments and partners to deliver better services	80	66	14
	45. During my appraisal my manager acknowledged my successes and helped me to understand what good practice I should continue	78	68	10
	6. Working in this job makes me want to do the best work I can	76	70	6
NEGATIVE	57. Team Morale is good where I work	42	36	6
	2. I make decisions appropriate to my level	77	71	6
	37. I feel able to speak up and challenge the way things are done in the Council	31	26	5
	26. Senior Management are open and honest in their communications with staff	35	30	5
	47. There are enough opportunities for me to improve my skills in my current job	45	50	-5
	3. I am clear about what I am expected to achieve	76	81	-5
	64. My team has enough staff to get the job done	35	40	-5
	63. My team acts on feedback on how happy customers are with the service they receive	64	69	-5
	17. My Line Manager passes on my feelings and thoughts on important issues to the relevant staff	53	58	-5
	4. I understand how my work links to the objectives of my department and council	82	87	-5
	36. I have an opportunity to contribute my views before changes are made which affect my job	38	44	-6
	58. My team works well together	73	80	-7
	65. My team has enough resources (equipment, space, etc) to get the job done	40	47	-7
	9. I am happy with my working environment	49	57	-8
	7. I enjoy my job	70	80	-10
38. I feel that issues identified in previous Staff Surveys are being acted upon	20	31	-11	
51. I am satisfied with my total benefits package (e.g. pension, annual leave)	54	67	-13	
50. I feel my pay is fair	47	60	-13	

LG Benchmark Comparison		PCC	LG Benchmark	Variance
POSITIVE	45. During my appraisal my manager acknowledged my successes and helped me to understand what good practice I should continue	78	64	14
	30. I am aware of the Council's vision and priorities	75	62	13
	60. My team willingly works with other departments and partners to deliver better services	80	68	12
	31. I support the Council to achieve its' goals	83	71	12
	2. I make decisions appropriate to my level	77	67	10
	46. I feel that my appraisal was accurate and fair	78	71	7
	6. Working in this job makes me want to do the best work I can	76	70	6
	13. My Line Manager is able to answer my questions about senior management decisions	57	51	6
	24. Senior Management are visible to me	50	44	6
	68. I feel able to report bullying, harassment or discrimination	76	71	5
NEGATIVE	67. I am treated with fairness and respect	77	72	5
	54. I am comfortable with the pressure placed upon me in my job	56	61	-5
	51. I am satisfied with my total benefits package (e.g. pension, annual leave)	54	59	-5
	63. My team acts on feedback on how happy customers are with the service they receive	64	69	-5
	3. I am clear about what I am expected to achieve	76	82	-6
	72. I speak highly of the Council to people outside of work	57	63	-6
	37. I feel able to speak up and challenge the way things are done in the Council	31	39	-8
	4. I understand how my work links to the objectives of my department and council	82	90	-8
	58. My team works well together	73	82	-9
	5. I understand how my work contributes to the vision for the city	73	83	-10
	70. The Council motivates me to contribute more than is normally required	37	50	-13
	39. I believe that action will be taken on problems identified in this survey	24	37	-13
	47. There are enough opportunities for me to improve my skills in my current job	45	60	-15
	9. I am happy with my working environment	49	64	-15
	65. My team has enough resources (equipment, space, etc) to get the job done	40	56	-16
	52. I regard this Council as a 'good employer'	57	73	-16
	38. I feel that issues identified in previous Staff Surveys are being acted upon	20	37	-17
	33. I receive the right amount of information in the right way at the right time about what is going on	45	62	-17
25. Senior Management provide opportunities for me to find out from them about the challenges	39	57	-18	
8. I feel my job security is good	23	46	-23	

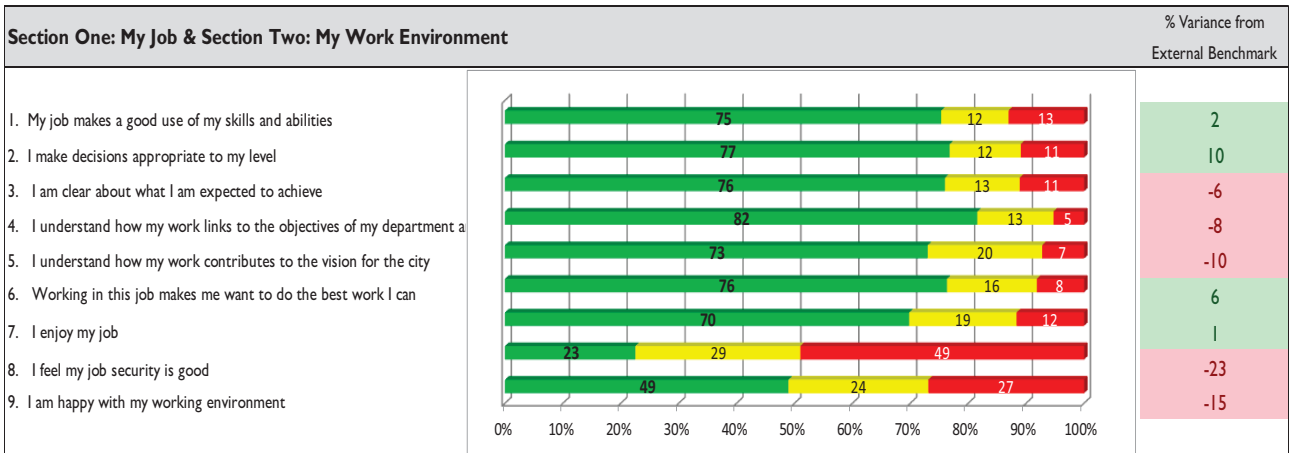
**6. Comments**

The two highest categories of comments related to a desire for increased pay (both in terms of national standard of living increase and job evaluation), and a better working relationship between staff and management (at all levels).

Other topics which received a large volume of responses related to working environment, staffing levels, job security, restructures and communication (the latter two of which staff believe are in need of great improvement).

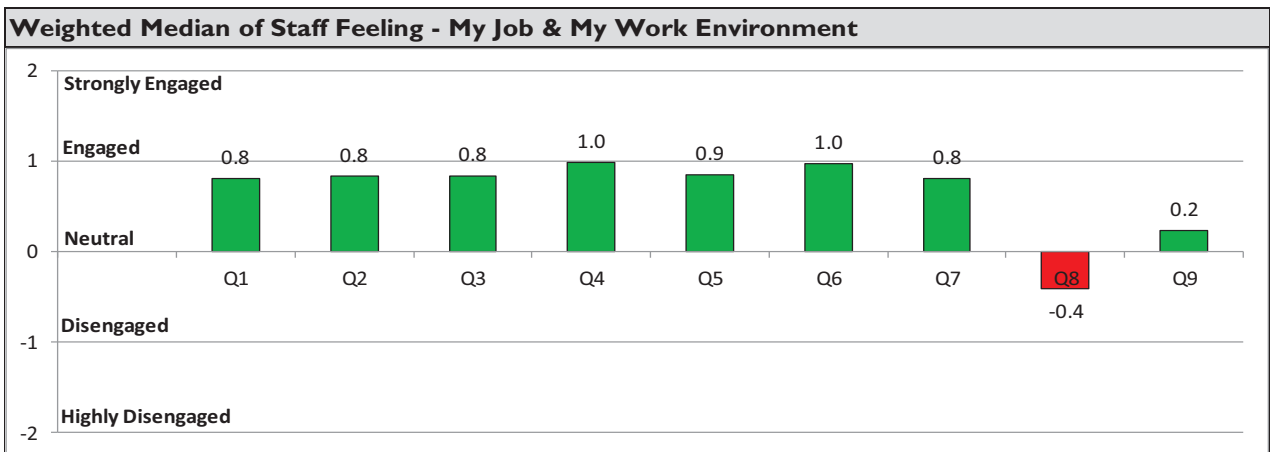
An additional question was asked eliciting comments on improvement to staff working environment. The two areas which garnered the most comments related to temperature in the workplace and a dislike of the new hot-desking practice.

**Appendix I - Section One & Two: My Job & My Work Environment**

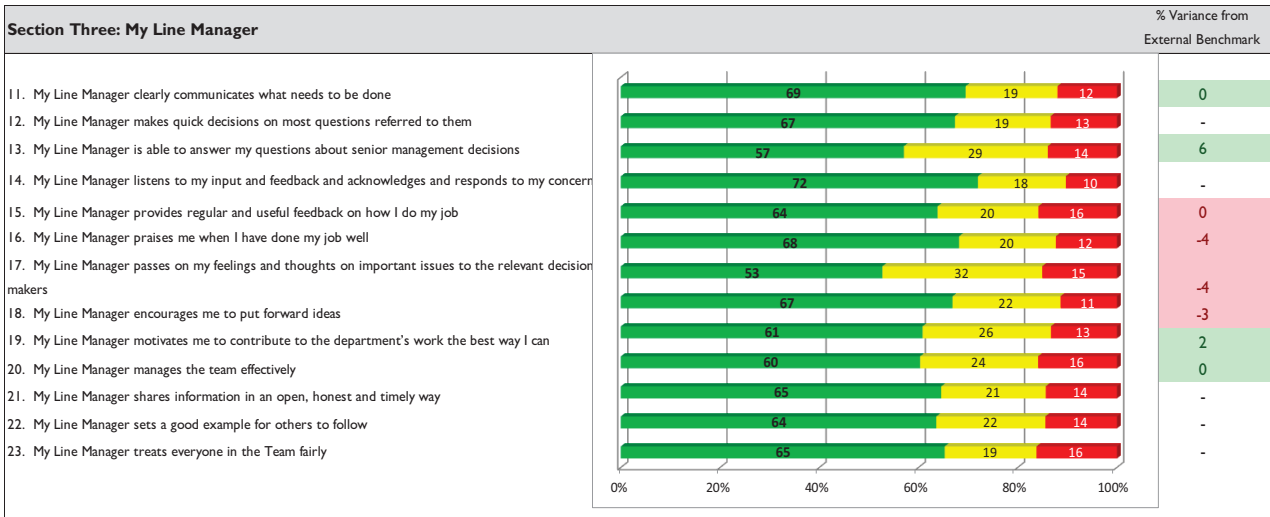


The Weighted Median Score shows the strength of feeling (positive or negative) for each question. All answers will fall within the range -2 to +2 and the best overall score for each question would be +2, the worst would be -2.

A score over +1 is considered to show an area of strength.  
A score below -1 is a sign of a serious problem.



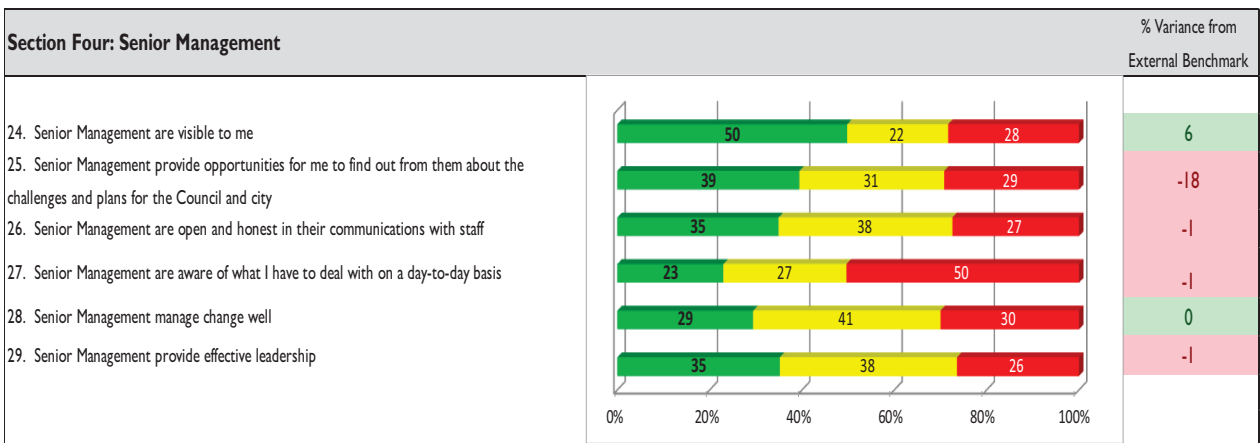
### Appendix 2: Section Three: My Line Manager



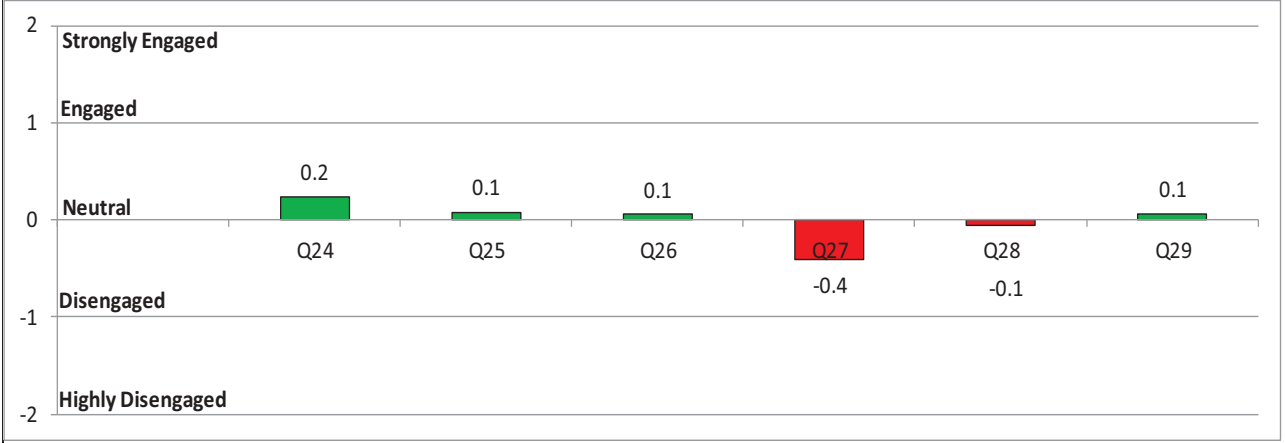
### Weighted Median of Staff Feeling - My Line Manager



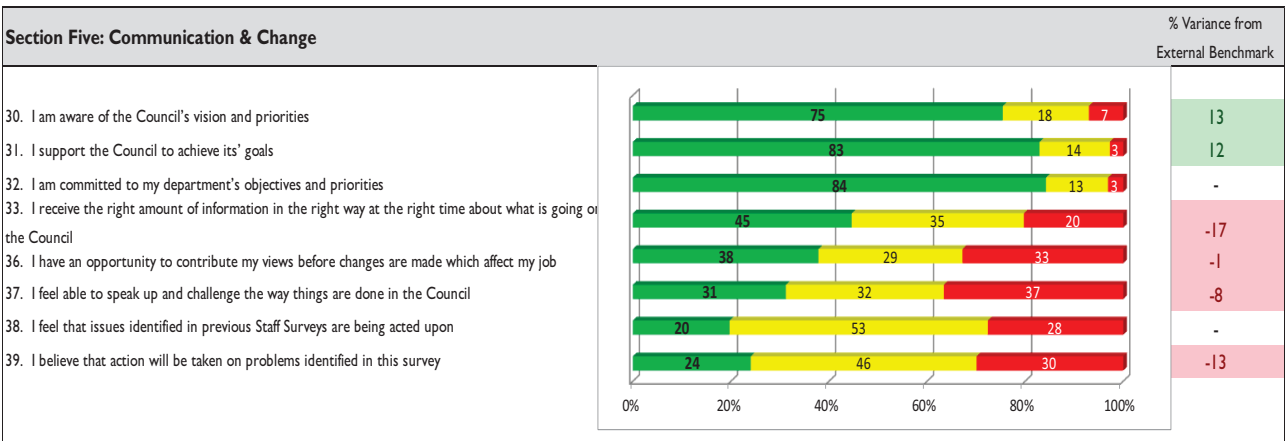
### Appendix 3: Section Four: Senior Management



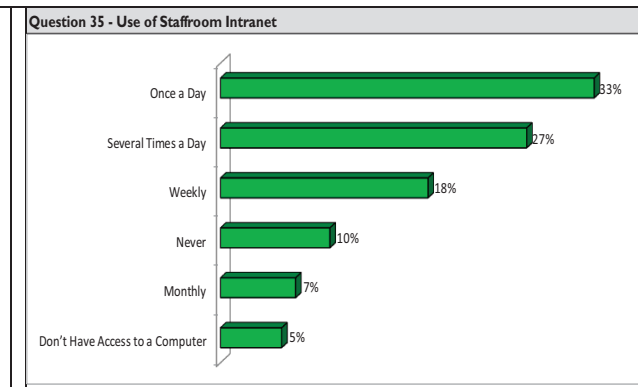
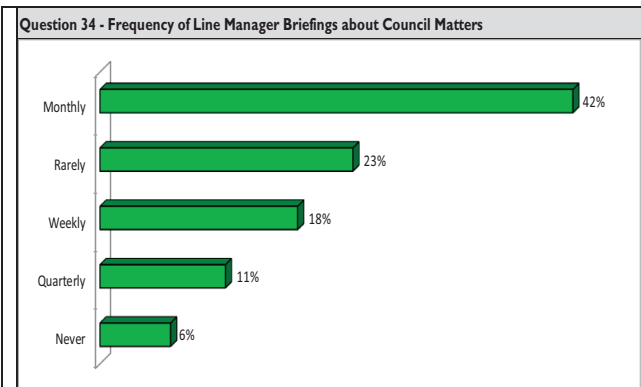
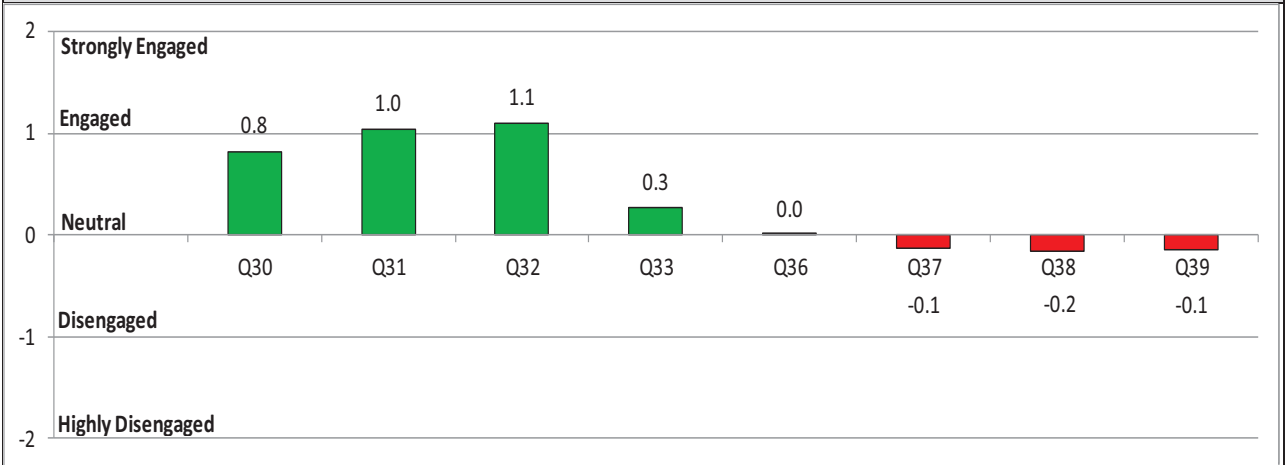
**Weighted Median of Staff Feeling - Senior Management**



**Appendix 4: Section Five: Communication & Change**

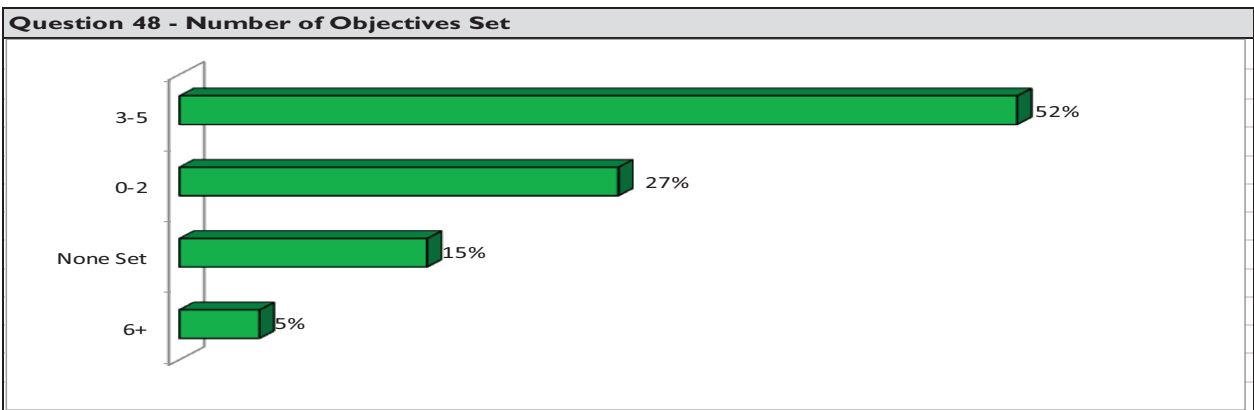
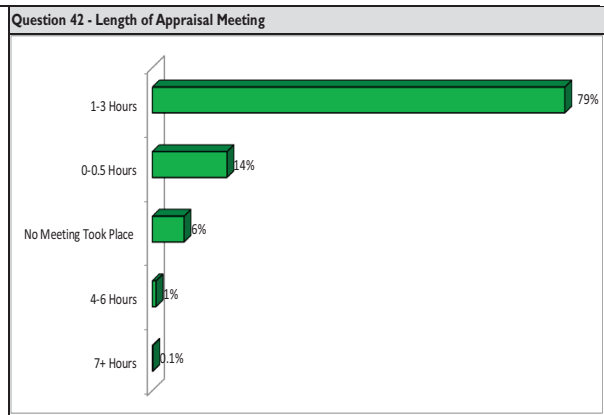
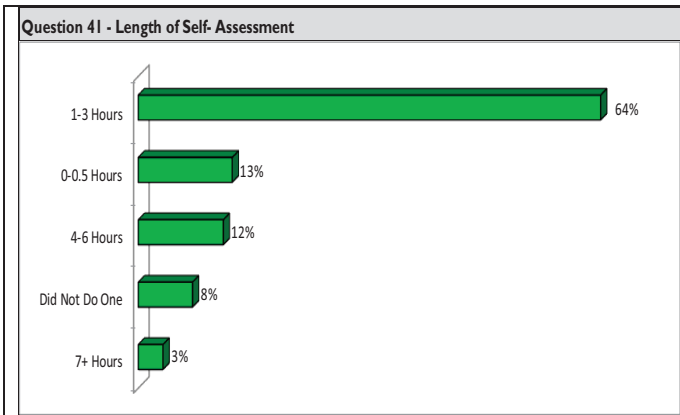
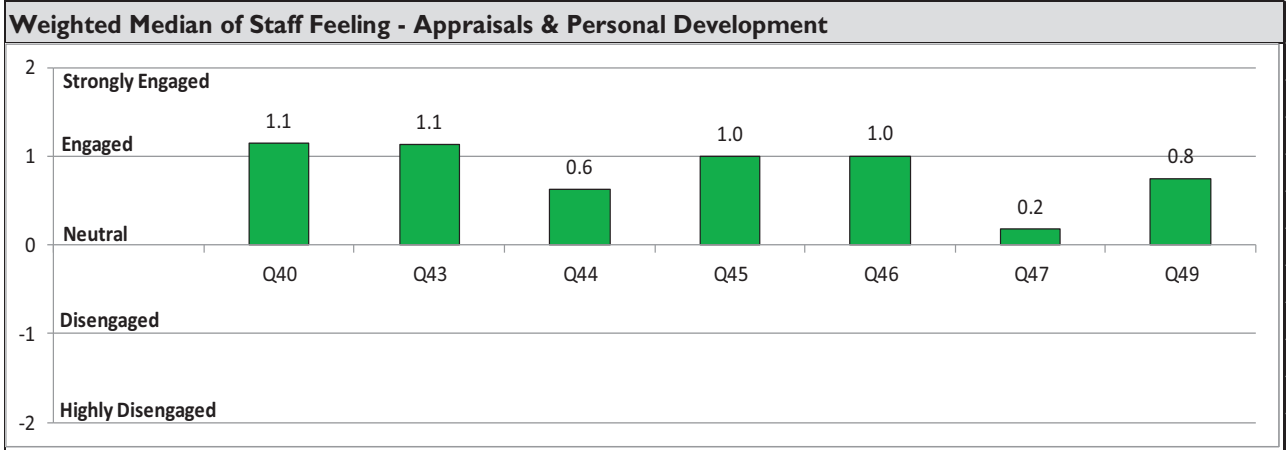
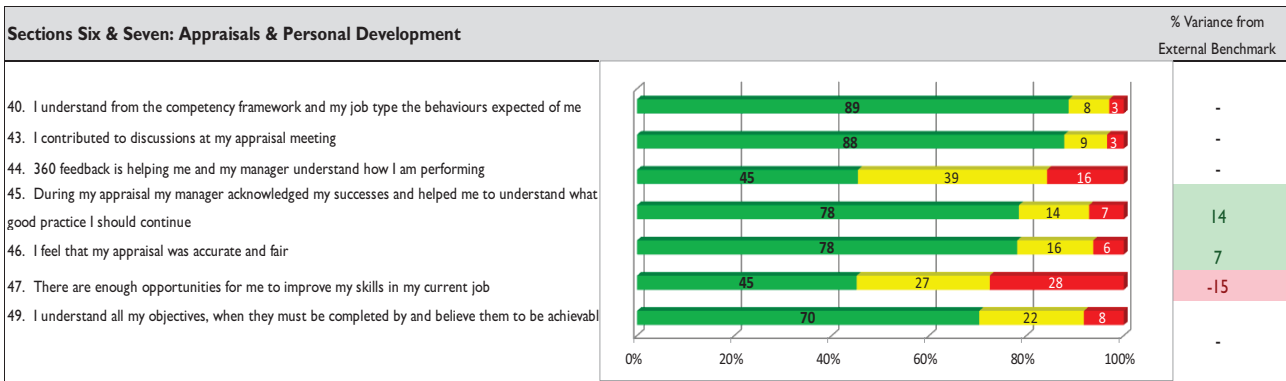


**Weighted Median of Staff Feeling - Communication & Change**

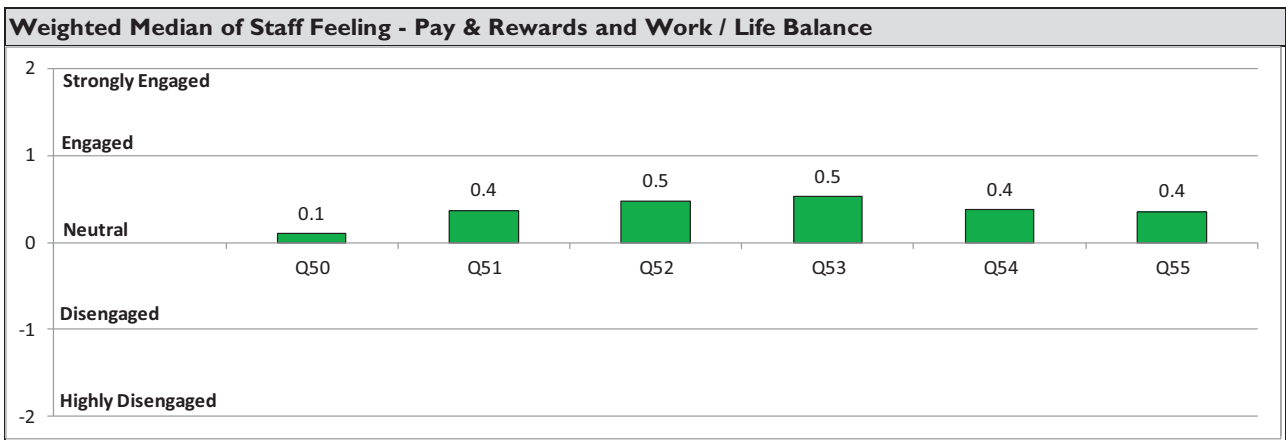
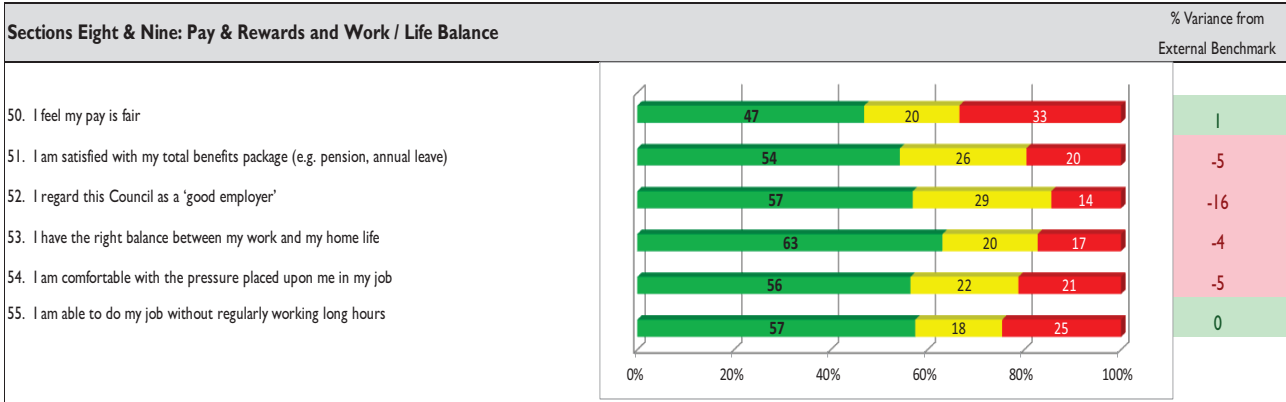




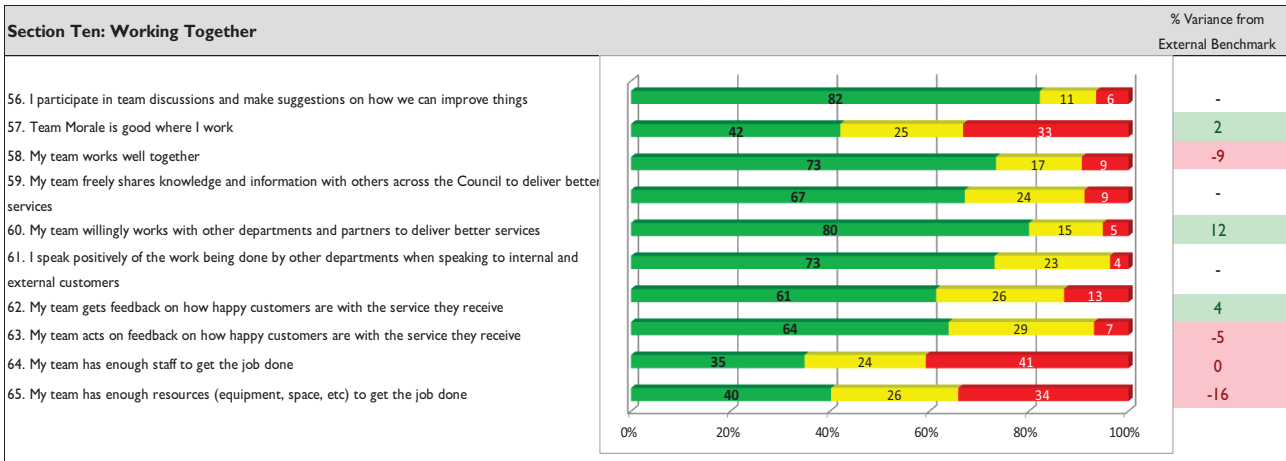
**Appendix 5: Sections Six & Seven: Appraisals & Personal Development**

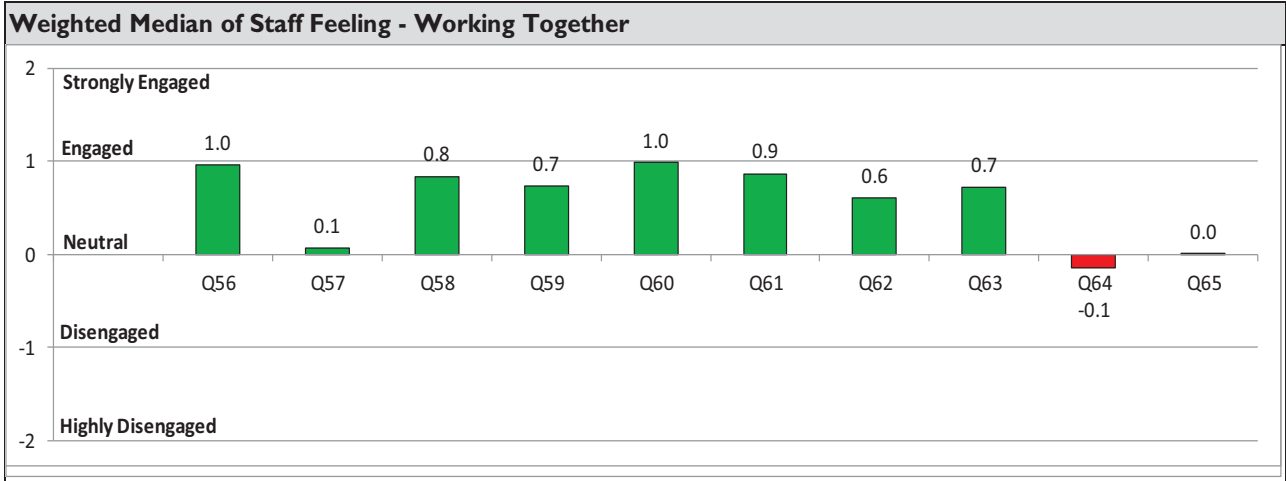


**Appendix 6: Sections Eight & Nine: Pay & Rewards and Work / Life Balance**

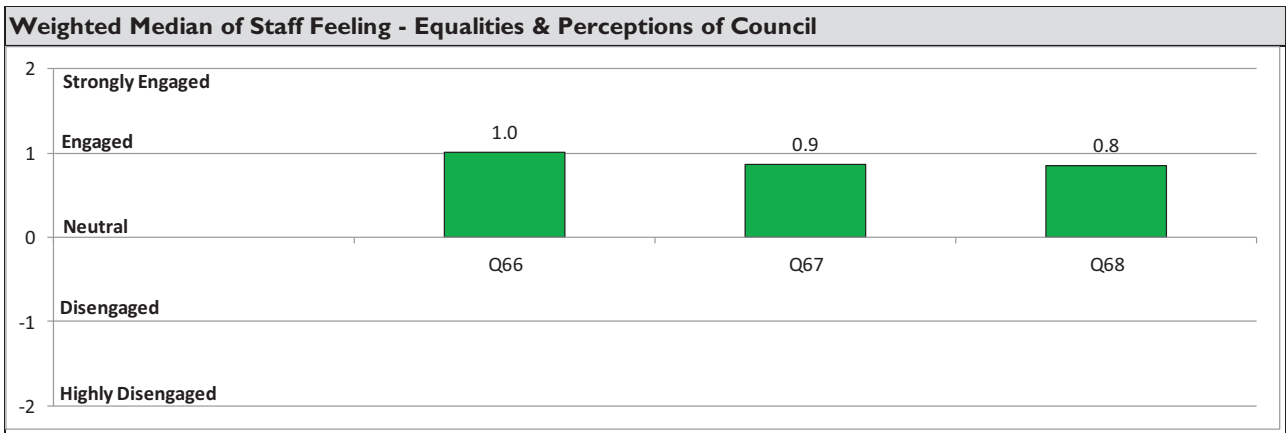
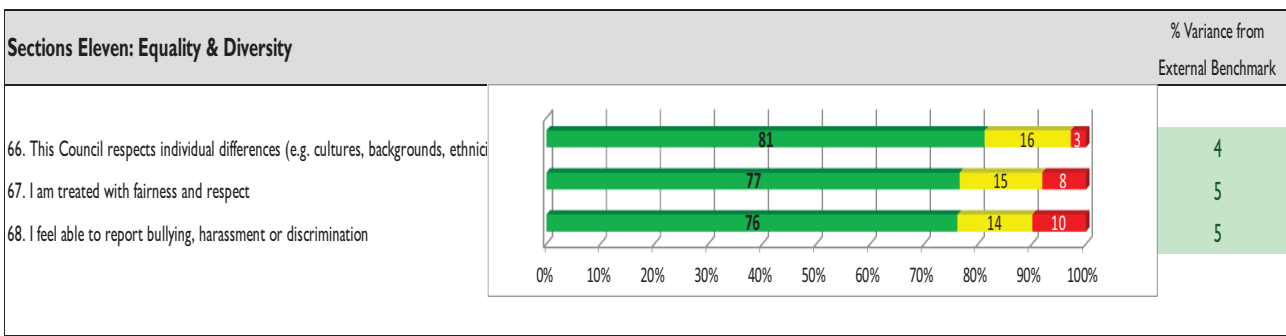


**Appendix 7: Working Together to Provide a Good Service**

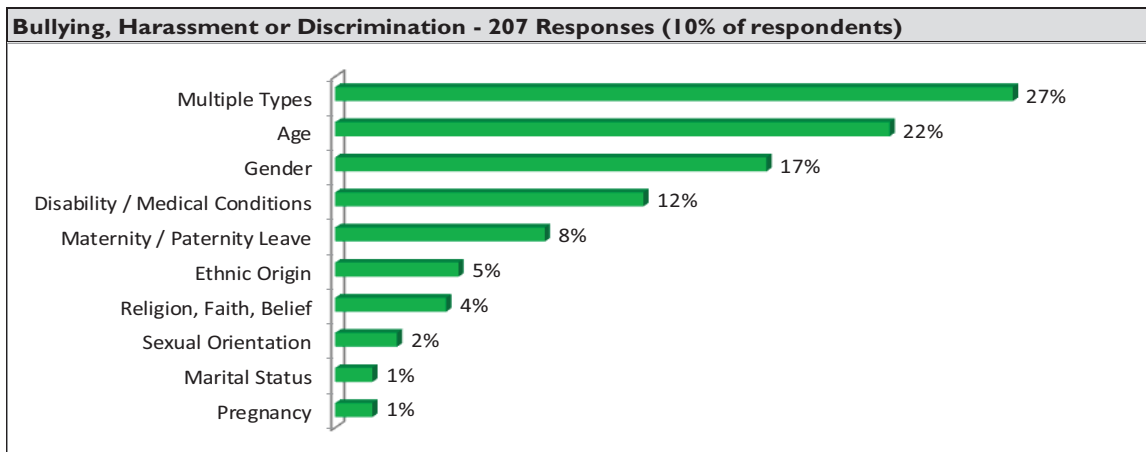




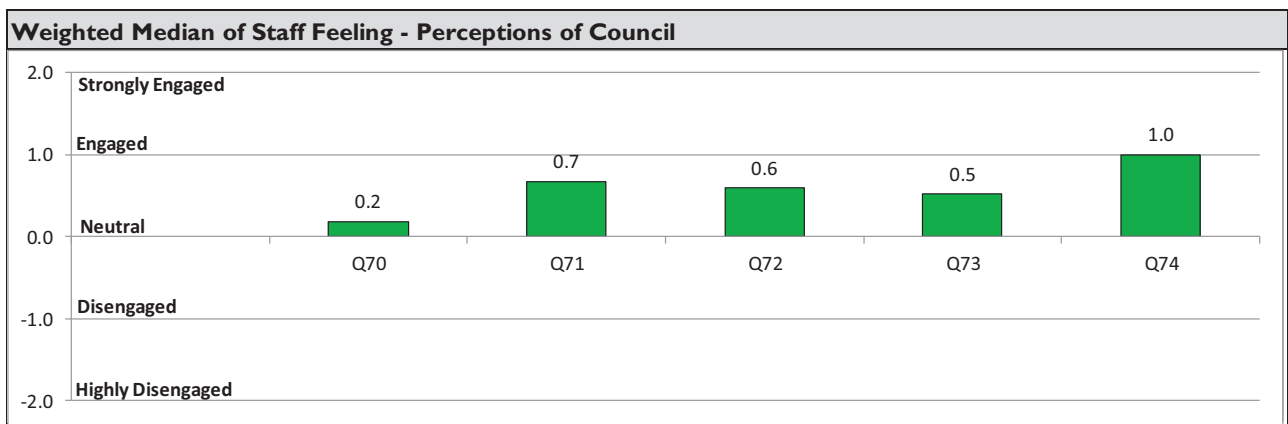
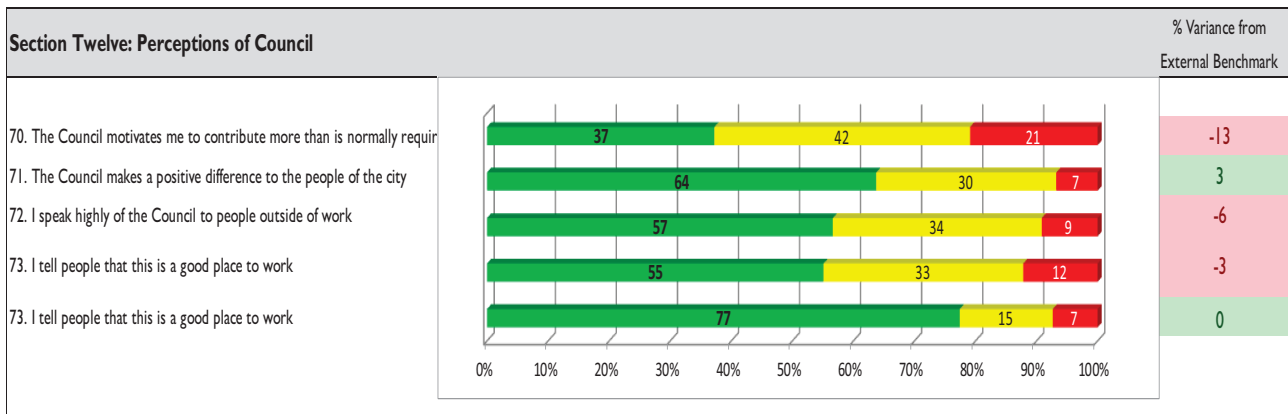
## Appendix 8: Section Eleven: Equality & Diversity



**Question 69:** Have you been subjected to behaviour you would describe as bullying, harassment or discrimination as a result of any of the following?



**Appendix 9: Section Twelve: Perceptions of the Council**



# SOCIAL MEDIA UPDATE

Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

4 March 2013



## INTRODUCTION

Social networks provide extraordinary opportunities to communicate in ways that were impossible a few years ago. They are developing rapidly and are now part of everyday life for millions of people. In the UK there are 41 million Facebook users and 10 million using Twitter.

50 per cent of UK adults use social networking sites at home, according to Ofcom, and over half the population are now using smartphones.

This provides huge potential for organisations to use social networks to engage in two-way conversations with individuals and groups on subjects that matter most to them.

Rather than waiting for individuals or groups to approach the Council, social media offers the opportunity of being able to connect to the community, listen to what people are saying and engage with them. It enables local residents to speak up about their needs and influence decision-making.

There are also big reputational implications for organisations as social networks provide a platform for networks and groups to air issues and grievances. People are using these networks to talk about us whether we want them to or not.

Successful organisations use social media as part of the overall communications mix and to complement traditional methods of speaking to the public. Used appropriately – to a targeted audience, with clear messages, and as part of a planned campaign – social media can be a powerful, cost-effective tool.

Social media channels are generally free but using them properly can be time consuming and resource intensive. Social media is two-way and using it raises customer expectations about how they can contact you. Failing to allocate resources or to manage expectations is likely to have a negative impact on your reputation.

## OUR SOCIAL MEDIA OBJECTIVES

We need to be clear about why we are using social media. Our key reasons are to:

- Keep residents and partners informed about the Council's services and how to access them
- Develop awareness of the Council's and city's priorities
- Encourage feedback about our services and what residents want
- Drive traffic to the Council's website and promote online transactions to help deliver financial savings
- Encourage reuse and wider spreading of Council news and information through blogs, re-tweets, Facebook likes etc
- Encourage support for Council and city campaigns
- Help manage the Council's reputation by correcting misinformation or inaccuracies on social media networks and by providing an authoritative voice on Council related issues in online discussions.

## **WHAT WE USE SOCIAL MEDIA FOR**

### **Listening**

Social media can help us be more responsive to, and engaged with, the local community.

If we listen to what is being said through online communities and forums we can better reflect the needs of our customers.

In many cases we can prompt discussions and comment on issues as part of a wider consultation exercise. The ease of using social media means people can quickly provide ideas, information and comments.

Conversations are taking place about us on social media whether we like it or not and we need to be aware of what is being said. Otherwise we have no way of influencing what is being said or reacting to local concerns that are increasingly being aired first on social networks.

Not monitoring – and acting on – what is being said about us on social media is as irresponsible as it once would have been to not read what was written about us in local newspapers.

### **Engaging**

Social networks are built for two-way communication and if you use them you need to be prepared to engage with people who want to talk to you.

Social media offers huge potential for us to have conversations with people who were previously difficult to reach. However, this requires a significant resource to do properly and we need to be prepared to make this a priority if we are to succeed.

While it is possible to reach large numbers of people through social media, it is vital that it is used as part of a wider communications strategy that also gives people not using social media an opportunity to be heard.

### **Managing our reputation**

A tweet or Facebook post can be shared instantly with thousands of people and, as many organisations have found to their cost, shared grievances can quickly become a powerful online campaign. Journalists are increasingly picking up stories on social media, often much more quickly than they would have done previously.

If we are not aware of these conversations about us or engaging in them at an early stage, we have no chance to correct misleading or inaccurate information and our reputation will suffer.

### **Customer transactions**

Having a presence on social networks raises expectations. While once it was acceptable to send a written response within five working days, now customers posting queries on Twitter or Facebook often expect a response within hours, regardless of the time of day. Unless we manage these expectations by spelling out what level of response to expect, social media could damage our reputation rather than enhance it.

We are currently not ready to use social networks as a full customer access channel though we do aim to respond quickly to issues raised through social media.

Our official social media channels will clearly set out when the sites are monitored and when we are likely to be able to reply.

## **HOW WE ARE CURRENTLY USING SOCIAL MEDIA**

Effective use of social media is now a priority for the Council and since May 2012 the use of the existing corporate channels has been expanded and new ones have been set up.

The official corporate channels now include:

### **TWITTER**

We have the following official Plymouth City Council Twitter accounts –

- @plymouthcc
- @plymleader
- @plymccplanning
- @plymoutharchive
- @PlymouthMuseum
- @plymlibraries

The Council has more than doubled the number of Twitter followers on its main @plymouthcc account since May 2012.

This has been through taking a more proactive approach to tweeting information rather than simply tweeting links to press releases. The 2012 election results were the first to have been tweeted officially by the Council as they were declared. The expectation is that any significant event or news is immediately tweeted without waiting for websites to be updated. We also aim where possible to be the first to communicate important council information rather than waiting for third parties to share it.

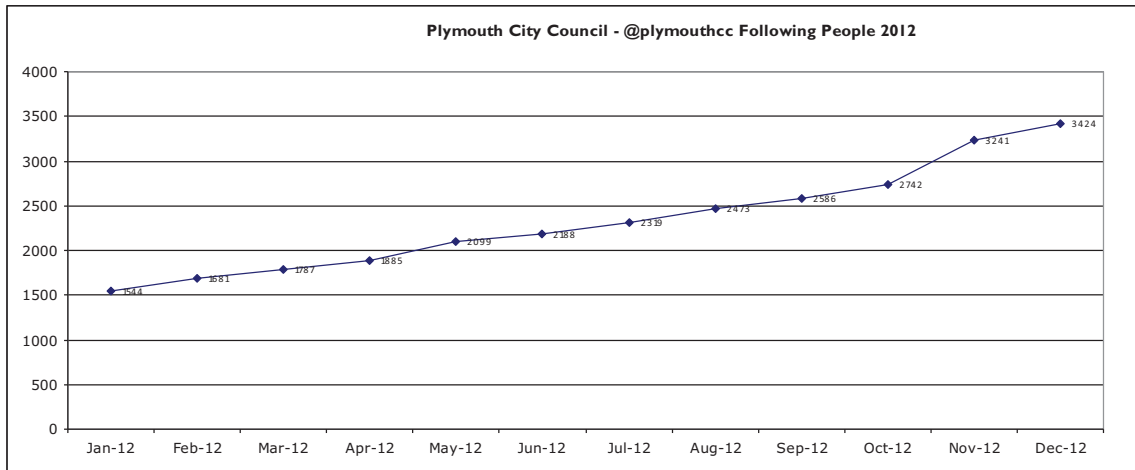
What we tweet about:

- Council news
- Job vacancies
- News about what is to be discussed at Council meetings
- Dates and venues of neighbourhood meetings
- Consultation opportunities
- Events and what's on information
- Weather alerts
- Road/traffic disruption information
- Flood information
- School closures

The @plymouthcc account gained a significant number of new followers during the poor weather and flooding in December 2012.

Information about road closures and flood was tweeted by the Communications Team from early morning into late evening and throughout the weekend. Information about new instances of flooding tweeted by residents and drivers was passed on for investigation by Transport and Highways. Plymouth City Council was highlighted in a Local Government Association press release for its proactive approach to using social media during the bad weather.

Growth in @plymouthcc followers on Twitter



By way of a comparison, as of 13 February the other Twitter accounts had the following number of followers:

ACCOUNT	FOLLOWERS
▪ @plymouthcc	3,751 people
▪ @plymleader	535 people
▪ @plymccplanning	295 people
▪ @plymoutharchive	1,046 people
▪ @PlymouthMuseum	1,263 people
▪ @plymlibraries	2,426 people
Total	9,316 people

**Comparisons**

▪ Devon County Council	10,190 people
▪ Cornwall Council	8,505 people
▪ South Hams District	2,620 people
▪ Torbay Council	3,389 people
▪ PCC (main)	3,751 people



**FACEBOOK**

We currently have the following official Plymouth City Council Facebook accounts:

Plymouth City Council	922 Likes
Plymouth West Devon Records Office	188 Likes
Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery	954 Likes
Plymouth Libraries	234 Likes
Total	2,298 people

The Youth Service is in the process of setting up a Facebook page aimed at young people, with the support of the Communications Team

Visits to the main Plymouth City Council account has grown as content has been improved. Picture stories are posted during or as soon after an event as possible.

The use of pictures significantly increases traffic to our Facebook site and the sharing of our information. The highest surge in use came when pictures were posted of flooding at Tinside in summer 2012 and during Armed Forces Day and the Olympic Torch Relay.

Significantly more people now read news items on the Council’s Facebook page than they do the main Council website.

The number of people visiting the Council’s website after clicking on an item on Facebook has doubled in a year.

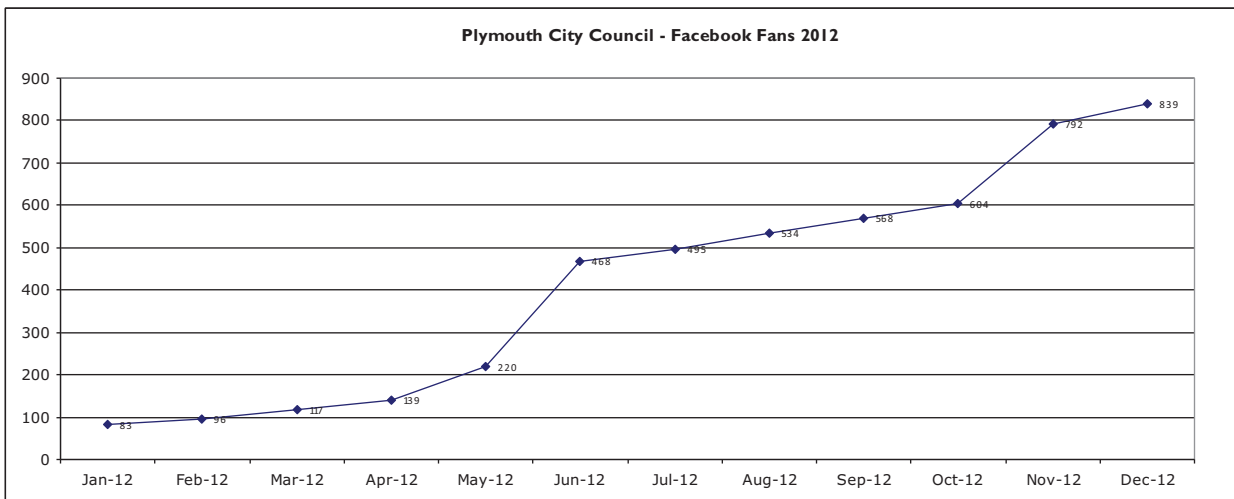
**2011**

Direct views	17,520 hits
Referrals	6,524 visits

**2012**

Direct views	160,593 hits
Referrals	12,935 visits

**Growth in Facebook fans**



**Comparisons (Facebook likes)**

Devon County Council	487
Cornwall Council	1,652
South Hams District Council	40
Torbay Council	1,392
Plymouth City Council (main)	992

**Flickr**

Flickr is an online photo sharing facility currently used by:

- Plymouth and West Devon Record Office
- Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery
- Plymouth Libraries
- Schools Library Service

**You Tube**

The main Plymouth City Council You Tube channel includes a small number of videos, including films promoting the city, archives material for social care recruitment and America's Cup footage.

**Blogs**

These sites currently enable people to submit comments and feedback about specific topics.

- Plymotion
- Plymouth Arts and Heritage
- Plymouth History Festival 2013

## **FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL AND DIGITAL MEDIA**

We need to take a structured approach to the development of our use of social media.

For social media to work effectively it is vital that it is used as part of the overall communications mix. Up to date information about the Council, its services and engagement activities must also be posted on the corporate website. Social media must also be connected to the use of e-alerts and other digital communications, as well as printed publications and campaign materials such as posters and advertisements.

### **Website**

Social media can be a powerful way of directing people to web content and online transactions, reducing the need for phone calls to the Council, so it is essential that all web content is up to date and simple to use. Our website currently promotes our social media channels. A current limitation for using social media to drive more traffic to our website is the time delay in information appearing on our site after being posted. Twitter messages and Facebook updates appear instantly while our website posts can take an hour or more to appear. This problem will be resolved when we launch a new website as part of the transformation programme. In the meantime our website will carry a Twitter feed with live updates.

### **Customer transactions**

At present we do not actively encourage residents to make requests or report problems through social media. If they do, we pass them on to the relevant department, as we would an email or phone call. Most councils are currently not using social media as a full customer access channel, enabling people to request services through Twitter or Facebook, as this requires a dedicated resource and it is more efficient to use a system that captures all the essential information. However, as technology enables these requests to be integrated with customer management systems this is more likely to be possible. This is an area that will be explored as part of the customer transformation project.

### **Email alerts and newsletters**

The Council has a new feature on its website that allows residents to sign up for e-alerts (emails) on a range of subjects. The alerts can also link people to further information on the Council's website, including news, forms and videos.

The e-alerts will significantly reduce the need for printed publications, though these publications remain important for those residents without access to the internet.

The e-alerts are more inclusive than social media as they can be read by anyone with access to the internet. Social media channels such as Facebook generally require people to set up an account to access information. While e-alerts are simpler to manage, they are a one-way communication channel and social media is more effective for when we want to receive feedback and engage people in a conversation.

E-alerts and social media complement each other. E-alerts can be set up to alert people to changes on social media sites and on specified Council web pages, while Twitter and Facebook can promote the availability of e-alerts.

## **Priorities**

The aim is to expand the number of authorised social media accounts to those services that can demonstrate a clear communications need to use social media and that have the skills and resources to maintain and monitor sites.

Facebook sites are suitable for a limited number of subjects while Twitter is likely to be the most suitable social media channel for use by Council services.

Social media sites require constant attention and while free to set up, they are resource intensive to maintain. It is also important not to duplicate information with other council channels and potentially cause confusion. This makes it important for Corporate Communications to oversee all authorised use of social media.

Before new sites are authorised, the following questions will be asked:

- What's the need? What do you need to communicate and to whom?
- What resources do you have (including knowledge, skills and time)?
- What feedback do you want and what will you do with it?
- What website information do you currently have and how frequently is it updated?
- How will you respond to questions and requests made over social media?
- Have you been using the existing corporate social media channels?

## **New channels**

One of the strengths of social media is that it enables people to interact and communicate about issues that matter most to them. This means social media channels focused on specific service areas are likely to become as popular as general channels.

Potential areas for expansion over the next six months include:

- Facebook site for young people (in development)
- School meals – tweeting daily menus
- Highways updates – tweeting significant works/disruption on the highways
- Promoting Council decision-making and opportunities to get involved – dedicated tweets about Council meetings and agendas and what meetings are open to the public
- Twitter sites for specific campaigns

Social networks are evolving rapidly. We will continually monitor emerging social media sites to assess whether we should be using them to reach more people.

## **Use of social media by elected members**

Some elected members already have access to social media sites (those who have requested it from ICT). The aim is to ensure all members have automatic access to social media, as well as appropriate guidance and training.

## **Staff access to social media**

As is common in many councils, access to social media sites remains blocked for most employees. The aim is to remove the filters on these sites to enable staff to:

- Look at social media sites for work purposes during work hours. For example, to see feedback about a service or relevant breaking news on Twitter.
- Look at work related videos on YouTube.
- Take part in professional online forums relevant to their work where they identify who you they and what their position is. However, they must remember that the views expressed are their own and not those of the Council. Corporate Communications will be responsible for posting information to represent the Council's official stance on a controversial issue.
- Use professional networking sites such as LinkedIn to network with peers.

Staff will not be allowed to:

- Use social media for personal reasons during work hours. This includes tweeting and updating a personal Facebook page.
- Watch non-work related videos on YouTube or other sites. Line manager can determine what is work related and what is not.
- Set up any social media channels to represent a Council service, or tweet or post Facebook messages on behalf of the Council (unless a team has been authorised to set up an official presence).
- Release any confidential or sensitive Council information on any social media channel, whether it is an authorised work site or a personal one.

## **Policies and guidance**

The Council's existing Code of Conduct and the appraisals process cover behaviour on social media.

Specific guidance will be made available to all members and staff as part of the Communications Toolkit.

## HOW WE WILL MEASURE OUR ACTIVITIES

Outputs can be easily measured but it is important that we place most emphasis on the outcomes of using social media.

Measures will include:

- Retweets on Twitter (people forwarding our messages to other users of the site).
- Conversations about us online, negative, positive or neutral.
- Followers on Twitter, fans and likes on Facebook, members of our groups or forums.
- Traffic generated to our website - time spent on key pages of our websites, and on the site in general.
- Comments on forums and blog posts (both on our sites and third party sites).
- Forum topics and blog posts submitted by users.
- Reviews posted and rated by users.
- Views of our videos and photos.
- Uploads of videos and photos by users.
- Social media sharing and participation - activity on bookmarking sites, sharing with friends on social networks etc.

More sophisticated measures will be introduced as our use of social media expands.

# OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT BOARD

ICT Shared Services Update Report



## AS AT 20 FEBRUARY 2013

This report seeks to update the Overview & scrutiny Management Board on the current status of the ICT Shared Services project and to pose a number of areas where input could prove helpful.

It is proposed that further updates are brought back to this committee by the nominated member of the Executive Group once that person has been nominated. Delt Services Ltd. Representatives would also be prepared to come back and to face any questions regarding the progress being made.

### Current status - Partners

- Four councils have formally approved to move to the next stage of producing a detailed business case by June 2013. [Plymouth, Exeter, Teignbridge & East Devon]
- NHS Plymouth, Western Locality CCG has agreed to take services from and share accommodation with PCC based at Windsor House.
- Other NHS organisations are actively looking to determine whether they wish to join the project and take services from the new company.
- Devon & Somerset Fire & Rescue Service have, at this stage, declined to move forward as a partner although they may wish to reconsider this at some future point.
- Meetings will have taken place with the University to determine whether there is genuine interest in progressing with the proposed cost sharing group.
- Other potential growth areas are still presenting themselves to the project.

### Governance

- Final governance arrangements have still to be negotiated but the Executive Group is expected to be established soon and this will be the body which negotiates on behalf of the client/partner base.
- This group will hold Delt Services Ltd. To account for delivery of SLA and customer satisfaction.
- Following the establishment of the Executive Group the Shadow Board will be established to set up the company avoiding conflicts of interest.
- The Executive Group will approve the annual business plan and will hold reserved matters. This latter point is potentially an area for OSMB to consider and to make proposals?
- OSMB may also wish to consider how it may like to work alongside other oversight committees' when looking at the performance in future?

- The final business case is due in June 2013 and if approved the new company should be functional by April 2014. Before June 2013 the ability to become a founder member will need to end, as only those partners deciding in June will be able to commit the resources and should therefore receive any benefits.

### Next Steps

- The work-streams are being established with associated Lead Officers
  - Governance
  - Finance
  - Technical
  - Operational
  - Communications
  - Staff consultation
- Staff questions are to be published to all organisations taking part so that all staff receive the same information and none are disadvantaged.
- Establishing an initial governance setting meeting for all relevant chief executives and Leaders.
- Planning has begun for a round of meetings in June to seek the final sign off of all partners.



**PLYMOUTH CITY COUNCIL**

**Subject:** Revenues and Benefits Performance Update  
**Committee:** Cabinet  
**Date:** 12 February 2013  
**Cabinet Member:** Councillor Lowry  
**CMT Member:** Adam Broome (Director for Corporate Services)  
**Author:** Martine Collins, Strategic Manager Revenues and Benefits  
**Contact details** Tel: 01752 304118  
Email: martine.collins@plymouth.gov.uk  
**Ref:**  
**Key Decision:** No  
**Part:** I

---

**Purpose of the report:**

To provide Cabinet with an update on the performance of the Revenues and Benefits service.

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**Corporate Plan 2012-2015:**

The Revenues and Benefits service significantly contributes to the Inequalities Agenda ensuring that the most vulnerable residents of Plymouth receive the appropriate benefit entitlement. Also strong links into Value for Communities.

---

**Implications for Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:  
Including finance, human, IT and land**

The Council administers housing benefit subsidy of c.£100m per annum.

---

**Other Implications: e.g. Child Poverty, Community Safety, Health and Safety and Risk Management:**

- An effective Revenues and Benefits service helps address inequalities through ensuring that vulnerable residents receive appropriate benefit entitlement.
  - The service undertakes annual benefit take up campaigns which are targeted to areas of greatest need.
- 

**Equality and Diversity**

Has an Equality Impact Assessment been undertaken? No

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**Recommendations and Reasons for recommended action:**

Cabinet are asked to note the progress made by the service since the implementation of a new structure in November 2011.

---

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

The restructure of the Revenues and Benefits service was undertaken in response to benchmarking information which demonstrated that the service was performing below standard and above cost.

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**Published work / information:**

**Background papers:**

None

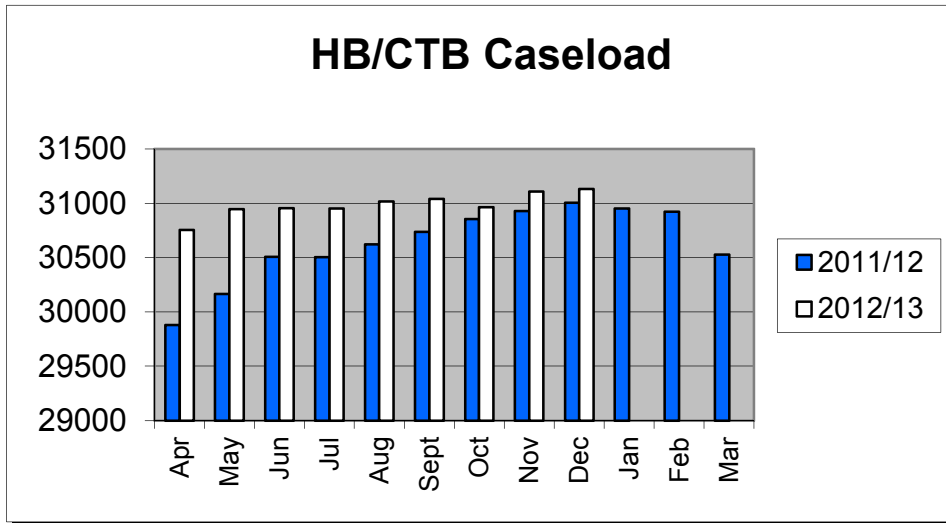
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**Sign off:**

Fin	djn12 13.03 4	Leg	TH2 5011 3	Mon Off	TH 25 01 13	HR		Assets		IT		Strat Proc	
Originating SMT Member: Malcolm Coe													
Has the Cabinet Member(s) agreed the contents of the report? Yes													

**Housing Benefit**

**Number of Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit claimants**

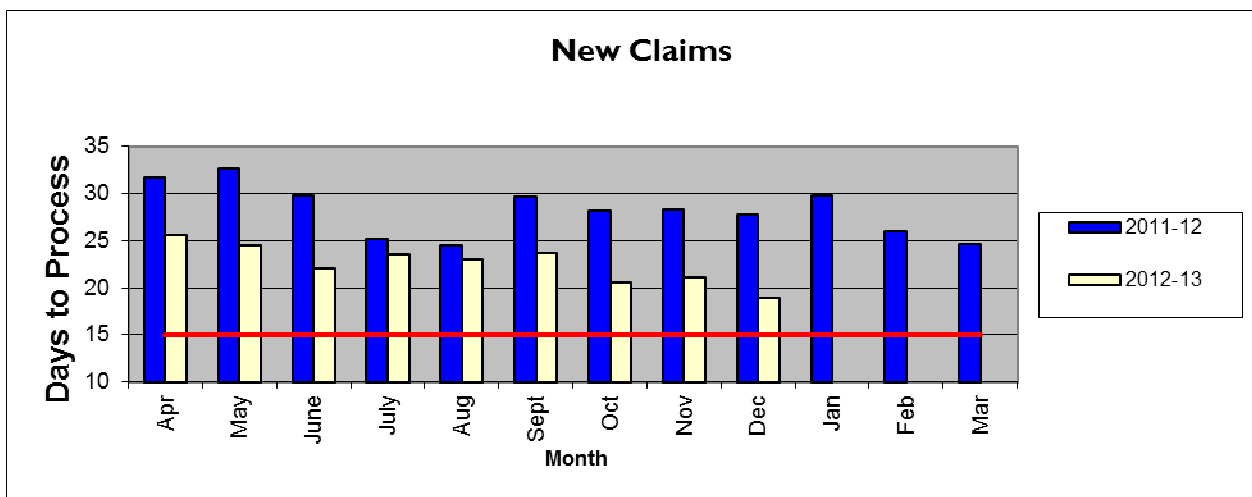


	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>2012/13</b>	<b>30754</b>	<b>30945</b>	<b>30953</b>	<b>30952</b>	<b>31015</b>	<b>31040</b>	<b>30,982</b>	<b>31,108</b>	<b>31,130</b>			
<b>2011/12</b>	29879	30165	30505	30504	30621	30737	30853	30929	31004	30952	30923	30528

The number of people in receipt of Housing and Council Tax Benefit increased during December by 0.08%. The average caseload per Plymouth City Council FTE staff member is more than 1,000 which is above average compared with other Councils.

**Processing of New Claims**

■ **Target 15 days – December 18.94 days**



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>2012</b>	<b>25.62</b>	<b>24.49</b>	<b>22.09</b>	<b>23.54</b>	<b>23.05</b>	<b>23.73</b>	<b>20.51</b>	<b>21.07</b>	<b>18.94</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>2011</b>	31.74	32.70	29.74	25.19	24.47	29.70	28.13	27.71	27.71	29.77	26.05	24.68

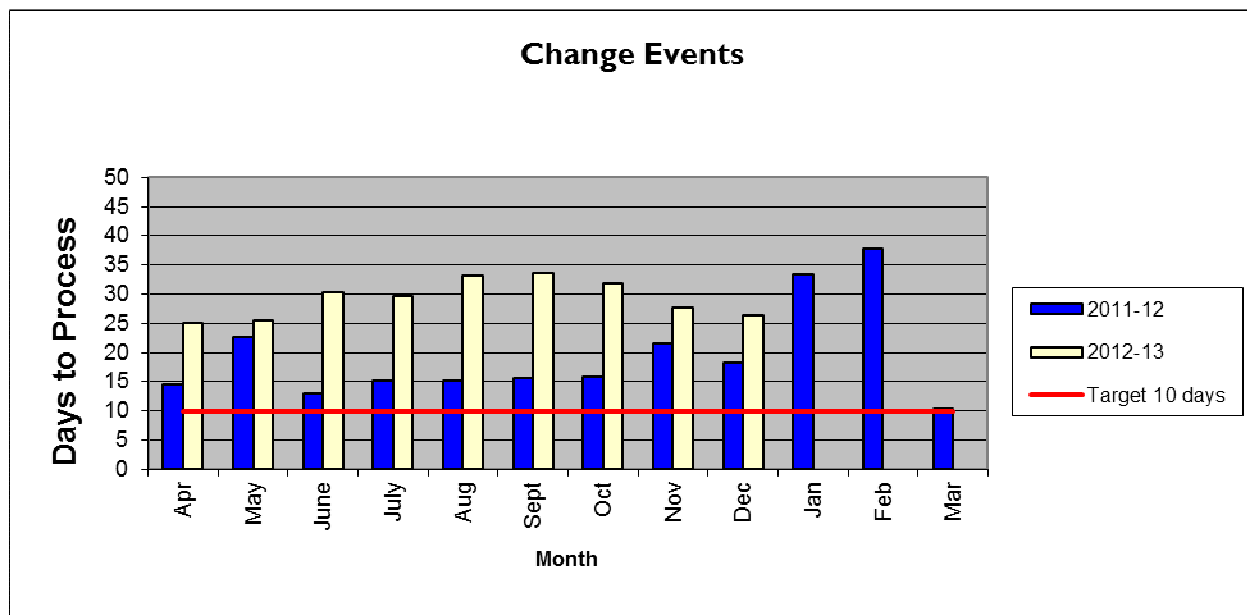
December saw a reduction in the number of days to process new claims. We remain ahead of the all Council average of 24 days and have exceeded our forecast of 20 days.

During January we anticipate a slight increase in processing times due to the impact of Christmas and New Year as profiled, but we expect this to be short term.

During January we will be expanding our trial with new claims and which aims to address customer wait times in the Civic, whilst also improving processing times.

### Processing of Change Events

**Target 10 days – December 26.36 days**



	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
<b>2012</b>	<b>25.05</b>	<b>25.41</b>	<b>30.23</b>	<b>29.73</b>	<b>33.08</b>	<b>33.86</b>	<b>31.89</b>	<b>27.69</b>	<b>26.36</b>	24	19	15
<b>2011</b>	14.58	22.57	12.94	12.12	15.15	15.62	15.73	18.34	18.34	33.36	37.82	25

### Forecast Processing Times

December saw a drop in the number of days to process changes as the outstanding ATLAS work continues to be cleared. We expect to be fully up to date with this work by the end of January. This is a considerable achievement given the national problems with ATLAS where some councils are seeing backlogs of up to 10,000 pieces of work and delays of 8 –10 weeks.

With the ATLAS work nearly cleared we will be focussing on the clearance of Electronic Transfer Documents from the DWP which is likely to impact on processing times during January, as will Christmas and New Year, however we expect to see significant improvements in processing times following this.

## Collection Rates

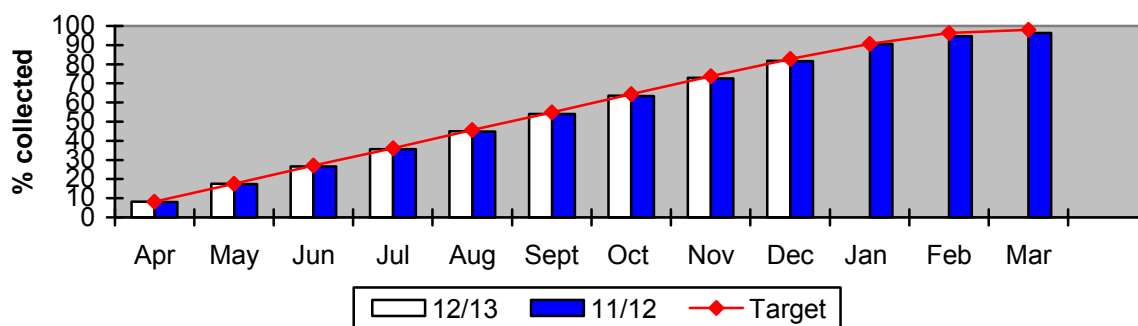
### Council Tax

- Net Collectable Debt 2012/13 £93,653m
- Collection Target 2012/13 98 %

Monthly Target = 82.82%	£77,489m
Collection Rate = 81.80%	£76,533m

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
12/13 (%)	8.25	17.53	26.53	35.70	44.95	54.07	63.60	72.87	81.80	90.91	94.93	96.6%
11/12 (%)	8.07	17.31	26.62	35.61	44.85	54.04	63.34	72.60	81.54	90.71	94.68	96.30
Target (%)	8.22	17.61	27.06	36.19	45.57	54.90	64.34	73.74	82.82	92.15	96.24	98.00

### % of Council Tax collected



Council Tax collection has continued to improve at 81.80% for December against a collection of 81.54% for the same point last year. This is slightly higher than our forecast of 81.68%. However, we are short of the in-year collection target that we have set.

We continue to telephone customers falling into arrears to promote payment and avoid recovery action. This is reducing the number of summons being issued and securing payments which would otherwise go through the recovery cycle.

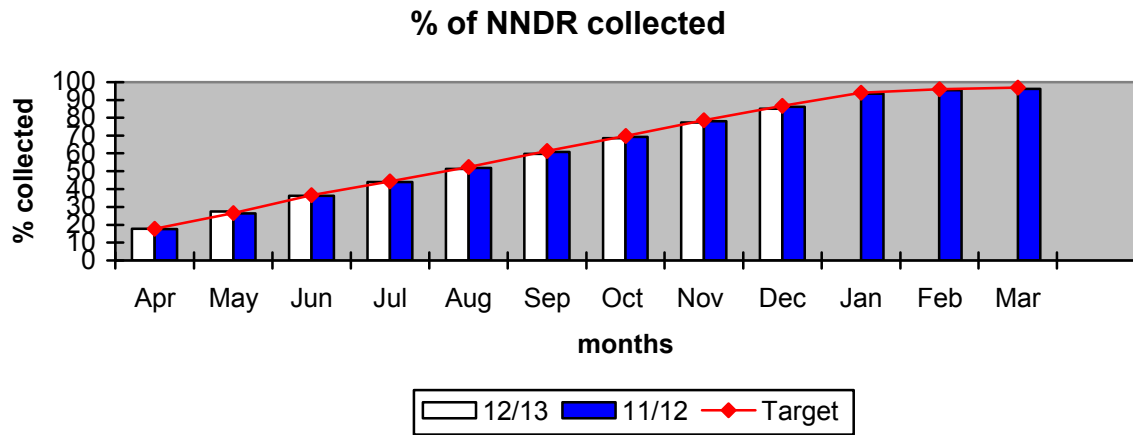
### National Non Domestic Rates

- Net Collectable Debt 2012/13 £88,024m
- Collection Target 2012/13 96.90%

Monthly Target = 86.73%	£75,787m
Collection Rate = 85.20%	£74,296m

	April	May	June	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
12/13 (%)	17.82	27.46	36.11	43.95	51.20	59.66	68.48	77.41	85.20	95.42	95.75	96.63
11/12 (%)	17.63	26.48	36.17	43.80	51.84	60.85	69.23	78.14	86.19	93.52	95.49	96.21
Target (%)	17.74	26.69	36.48	44.22	52.28	61.31	69.73	78.66	86.73	94.09	96.08	96.90

NOTE: Target of 96.90% is a revision from 97.50% after taking into account the business rates deferral scheme where businesses can defer payment of their rates for 2 years.



Collection of business rates continues to be a challenge and is 1.53% below target. Proactive recovery work and a revised recovery timetable has tightened our recovery processes to help improve our position, however we have seen an influx of banding schedules. Resources have been moved into the team during January to bring these up to date which will improve our position.

Many authorities are seeing a reduction in the collection of business rates as the economic climate continues to be a challenge, but we continue to focus on proactive recovery to improve the situation.

**Revenues and Benefits**  
**Customer Survey**







# Revenues and Benefits

## 2013 Face to Face and Telephone Survey Results

### Executive Summary

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## **I. Background**

The purpose of the survey was to assess the level of customer satisfaction with the front facing service of the department

The survey was run for a three week period and covered both face to face and telephone customers between 7th and 25th January 2013. A total of 527 surveys were completed, of which 321 were face to face and 206 were telephone surveys.

The attached report details the results from each survey, based on general information, details from the face to face contact, telephone contact and staff performance.

The number of surveys carried out provides a 95% confidence level with an error rate of +/- 4.1%.

## 2. Overview Report

### 2.1 General Information

Of the telephone calls, 134 (65%) were for Council Tax queries and of the face to face contact 224 (70%) were for benefit. were for benefit queries 224 (70%). This is in line with statistics from the reporting systems, and reflects the customer demand for these areas.

#### Reason for Contact:

Of the Council Tax queries 43 (19%) were primarily to 'make payment' and 108 (48%) 'other'. 'Other' related to account balances and payment queries. This represents over half of the enquiries and could be dealt with by using the self-service option if the customers were registered.

Making a new claim or advising of a change in circumstances represented 210 (72%) of Benefit queries by phone or visit. As expected, due to the nature of the work and the complexity of making a claim for benefit, most of these enquiries are currently dealt with face to face, however this may change with the implementation of an online claim form over the next few months.

#### Repeat Contact:

115 (36%) of customers who visited us had contacted us before. The main reason for the repeat contact was 'to provide further information', with 77 (67%) of customers needing to provide information they had not provided at previous visits.

47 (23%) of customers who telephoned us were calling again. 15 (33%) of those were because they were 'unable to make contact' with us and 15 (33%) stated, 'other' with reasons given that they were pursuing their enquiry further.

#### Opening Hours:

279 (87%) of customers visiting the Civic Centre and 167(81%) of customers telephoning the office thought the opening hours were convenient, with a small percentage thinking opening later on the phones and counter could be an option.

#### Follow up Action

114 (22%) of customers stated that they would be interested in attending a focus group and left contact details. It is planned to contact these customers again when the next survey is conducted to reassess their previous experience.

## **2.2 Face to Face Contact (321 Surveys)**

### Initial Contact

At reception, customers were told about the queue system on 250 (78%) occasions and anticipated wait times 215 (67%) occasions. Customers were offered an appointment on 83 (26%) of occasions, however of the 238 not offered an appointment over half said that they would prefer to wait, even if they had been offered a later appointment. The current process is for all customers to be given information about queues and wait times.

### Wait Times

Of those surveyed 170 (53%) waited less than 15 minutes and 226 (70%) waited less than 30 minutes before seeing an advisor who was able to deal with their query in full. CRM figures indicate that overall Council Tax customers are seen quicker than Housing Benefit customer's which reflects the nature of the enquiry.

When asked about how long would be an acceptable time to wait 186 (58%) of customers stated that they would be happy to wait up to 30 minutes with an additional 109 (34%) stating they would find it acceptable to wait up to an hour where their enquiry was being dealt with in full. Of the 321 surveys conducted 112 customers left specific feedback of which 51 (15%) stated they were happy with the wait times, as their enquiry was dealt with in full.

NOTE - In undertaking this survey it has been found that the CRM system is not used consistently across the department and therefore wait times are not being recorded correctly and wait times have been inflated. This is apparent in the conflicting evidence from customer experience against the CRM reports. Work is being undertaken to formalise this process and improve the reporting process. This will result in accurate wait time reporting.

## **2.3 Telephone Contact (206 Surveys)**

### Making Contact

167 (81%) of callers got through first time and 187 (91%) of callers were able to identify and select the service they required with 128 (63%) of callers stating that they would not try an alternative way to contact us if they had to wait. This was reviewed against the equality assessment questions and it was clear that although 56 (27%) of callers indicated they would try an alternative way of contacting us there was no apparent link between these individuals in relation to age or disability.

### Wait Times

Of those surveyed 134 (65%) waited less than 5 minutes for their call to be answered by an advisor who was able to deal with their query in full. The telephony system reports indicate that this is a true reflection of all customer contact by phone.

When asked about how long would be an acceptable time to wait 115 (56%) of customers stated that they would be happy to wait up to 5 minutes, with an additional 74 (36%) stating they would find it acceptable to wait up to 15 minutes.

A high percentage of customers were happy with the wait times for the telephones as their enquiry was dealt with in full at this time. Approximately half of our customers stated that they would rather leave a message and be called back later if they could not wait rather than calling

back. The general comments showed that of the 87 telephony customers who responded 33 (16%) suggested a call back system.

### **2.4 Staff Performance**

The majority of people who responded spoke highly of the staff who dealt with their query. 184 (89.5%) of telephone contact and 305 (94.9%) of face to face contact, either strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with the overall service they received. 371 of comments left by customers were of a positive nature in relation to how staff dealt with the enquiry.

### **2.5 Self-Service**

279 (53%) of customers stated that they would be willing to use the self-service facility and 111 (21%) of customers left their email address. These customers will be sent information on how to register for self-serve.

### **2.6 Points for Consideration**

The main areas that should be considered for improvement were:

- Notifying customers of wait times
- Improving wait times
- Increasing take up of self-service system
- Telephone Messaging system – call back facility

### **2.7 Recommendations**

#### **2.7.1 Notifying customers of wait times**

All reception and filter staff to be reminded of the necessity to advise customers of potential wait times. This will enable customers to make a choice around whether to wait or return outside of peak demand.

Currently customers for Revenues and Benefits (R&B) go to reception and are then passed on to a R&B officer to deal with their enquiry. Consideration is to be given to whether it is more practical to go direct to an R&B reception point to reduce customer hand-off and improve the experience of the customer by going direct to a person who can deal with their enquiry at the first point of contact.

#### **2.7.2 Improving wait times**

Work is underway to ensure consistency with how customer wait times are recorded. This needs to be explored more with the filter queues to ensure consistency of results. This will allow a better comparison of customer satisfaction based on accurate data from the CRM system.

At the end of January the department introduced a new claim process which offers appointments to benefit claimants. Part of this process will include the use of the online benefit application form and will reduce the wait times for these customers both on the telephone and face to face and improve processing times.

The time taken to process a benefit claim will also be reduced by the implementation of Risk Based Verification during February. This is an automated system that enables evidence levels for

each customer to be assessed based on the risk of there being an error on the application. . This will also improve the wait times for face to face customers.

### **2.7.3 Increasing take up of self-service system**

Notification of the self-service facility will be included in council tax bills during January.

Staff are offering the self-service facility to all customers whose enquiry could have been dealt with by this option. Guidance notices have been included in all counter and phone booths to help promotion of the services that are available.

Self-serve facility to be promoted during events and drop in sessions organised by the department and partners.

Customers who have left email addresses, will be contacted to support sign up for self-serve.

### **2.7.4 Telephone Messaging system**

Avaya telephone system to be reviewed; to see if enhancements are available to offer a message option for customers who have to wait longer than an agreed period of time or the option to not hold when we are experiencing busy periods.

### **2.7.5 Review**

Customer contact is likely to increase over March and April due to the issue of council tax bills and implementation of welfare reform changes. It is recommended that the surveys be conducted again at the end of May to review customer satisfaction after the suggested improvements have been implemented.

Customers who expressed an interest in focus group participation will be contacted for further feedback at review stage.

### 3. Survey Results

#### 3.1 GENERAL INFORMATION

##### Question 1: - What is the reason for your visit/call today?

This question was asked on the face to face and the telephony survey.

221 (70%) of face to face surveys were for Council Tax & Housing Benefits

134 (65%) of telephone surveys were Council Tax queries

This result is in line with demand on the phones and counter from Apr 2012 to Dec 2012, which show that there were;

16,429 face to face customers of which there is a 32% council tax and 68% benefit split.

114,517 telephone customers of which there is a 55% council tax and 45% benefit split.

This is line with expectations as Benefits queries are more complex in nature and require more paperwork from the customer, hence the increased volume on Face to Face.

##### Question 1a: - Breakdown of reason for visit for Benefits

The main reason for face to face Benefits visits were for Change of Circumstances and New Claims 180 (80% combined). The main reasons for phones queries were for Other and Change of Circumstances 55 (79% combined). See below:

Benefits Reason for Call/Visit

Reason	Face to Face	Telephony
Benefit payment	17 (8%)	7 (10%)
Change of Circ's	119 (53%)	23 (33%)
New Claim	61 (27%)	7 (10%)
Other	27 (12%)	32 (46%)

Other reasons for visiting:

Of the responses that ticked other the majority of the descriptions were about cancelling/suspended claims & future changes eg.

*'I had my Housing Benefit suspended',  
'Finding out about changes happening in April'*

**Question 1a: - Breakdown of reason for visit for Council Tax**

The main reason for face to face and telephone calls was identified as 'other' with face to face being 46 (49%) and calls 63 (48%). See below:

Reason	Face to Face	Telephony
Change of address	12 (13%)	19 (14%)
Claiming a reduction	11 (12%)	9 (7%)
Making a payment	13 (14%)	30 (23%)
Other	46 (49%)	63 (48%)
Query about who should pay the bill	11 (12%)	11 (8%)

The majority of the 'other' descriptions for face to face and phone were about account balances, making payment including payment options, and arrears. For example;

*'Wanted to find out how much I owed'*

*'Council tax arrangement'*.

This highlights that a percentage of calls could be dealt with online using self-serve. This is being promoted and will reduce the amount of simple balance queries, repeat contact, single person discount and change of owner/address queries.

**Question 2: - Have you previously tried to contact us about this query?**

For face to face visits 115 (36%) of customers had tried to contact us before about this query, of which 62 (54%) visited previously and 47 (41%) telephoned. On the telephones the repeat contact is a bit lower at 47 (23%), of which 76% had phoned previously & 14% came in to the office. A small percentage of customers contacted us by email or by post.

The main reasons for the re-visit for face to face contact was 'to provide information that we have asked for' 44 (38%) and 'to provide information that you think we need' 33 (29%). The main reason for the repeat calls on the phones is 'unable to make contact with us' 15 (33%) of customers, the 'other' option was 15 (33%) as well.

The examples given for the 'other' queries were updates/ongoing query/no response to email/decisions.

*'On-going problem', 'Hand documents in', 'my circumstances have now changed'*.

Of a total of 10640 calls per month an average of 25% (approximately 2660) calls are abandoned each month). It is difficult however to establish what the abandonment rate means as this could be one customer repeat calling or multiple customers phoning once.



### 3.2 FACE TO FACE (321 Surveys)

#### Question 3 – When you first spoke to a member of staff today were you...

A. Told how the queue system worked?

250 (78%) of visitors were told how the queue system worked. The process is for all customers to be notified of how the queue system works.

B. Advised what the estimated waiting time was before you would see a customer advisor?

215 (67%) of visitors advised of a waiting time. The process is for all customers to be notified of the anticipated wait time.

C. Were you offered an appointment to see an advisor if you felt the waiting time was not acceptable?

83 (26%) of visitors were offered an appointment.

D. If No would you have liked to have been offered an appointment?

The results show that 174 (54%) of people asked would not like to be offered an appointment compared against the 147 (46%) who would like to be offered an appointment.

#### Question 4 – How long did you have to wait before your interview with the advisor who dealt with your query?

The table below shows the length of times customers waited to be seen. 53% of the 321 that provided wait times, showing that they waited less than 15 minutes.

Wait Time	Number	Percentage
Less than 15 minutes	171	53%
15 to 30 minutes	56	17%
30 to 45 minutes	41	13%
45 minutes to 1 hour	20	6%
More than 1 hour	33	10%

Looking at CRM figures for the same time period 7<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> January it shows;

The total number of customers seen over the period of the survey was 1938 of which 341 (18%) were council tax and 1597 (82%) benefit customers.

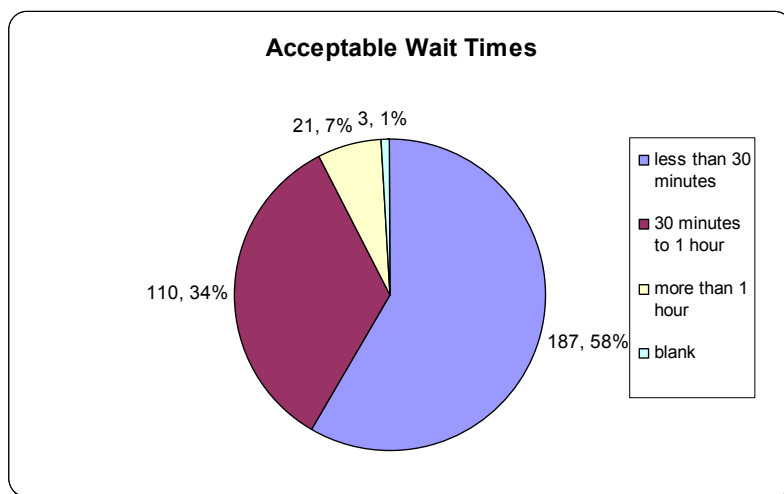
Only 10% of overall queries wait for more than 1 hour which is a positive position given the nature of benefit work and the fact that demand has gone up by over 30% during 12/13.

**Question 5 – Please tell us what you feel is an acceptable time to wait before being seen by an advisor who will be able to deal with your query in full?**

The table below shows the length of times customers are happy to wait to be seen by an advisor who can deal with their query fully. 58% Of the 321 that provided wait times stated that they would be happy to wait less than 30 minutes.

Acceptable Wait Time	Number	Percentage
Less than 30 minutes	187	58%
30 minutes to 1 hour	110	34%
More than 1 hour	21	7%
Blank	3	1%

The responses to this question clearly show the preference is for less than 30 minutes wait time 187 (58%). Although an additional 110 (34%) did state that 30 to 60 minutes would be an acceptable wait time. This is based on the knowledge that enquiries are now dealt with fully and benefit is assessed whilst customers wait rather than just taking an enquiry and responding at a later date.



**Question 6 – The office opening hours are 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday. Are these times convenient for you?**

The overwhelming response was yes – 279 (87%) thought our current opening times convenient, 38 (12%) of customers who answered ‘no’ were asked what would be good times

30 said open after 5pm,

4 said before 8.30am and

4 said both after 5pm and before 8.30am.

### 3.3 TELEPHONY (206 Surveys)

#### Question 4 – Did you get through first time?

The results show that 167 (81%) of callers got through first time. 39 (19%) Of customers tried on one or more occasions;

11 tried once

19 tried between 1 to 3 times and

9 tried more than 4 times.

#### Question 5 – Were you able to identify and select the service you required easily?

The responses clearly show that the majority of callers could identify and select the service they required, being 192 (93%).

#### Question 6 – If you were made aware of another way to get your query dealt with would you have stopped your call and contacted us in a different way?

A total of 184 customers responded to this question. Of those 130 (71%) said that they would not try an alternative option with 54 (29%) saying they would. This has been measured against the equality monitoring information to establish if there may have been a correlation with customers who stated they had a disability.

14% Of those who said they wouldn't stop their call had a disability and 11% of those who said they would stop their call had a disability. This shows that disability is not a main factor as to why people are not willing to try an alternative method of getting their queries resolved.

#### Question 7 – How long did you have to wait to speak to an advisor?

The table below shows the length of times customers waited to talk to an advisor with 65% of the 206 that provided wait times showing that they waited less than 5 minutes.

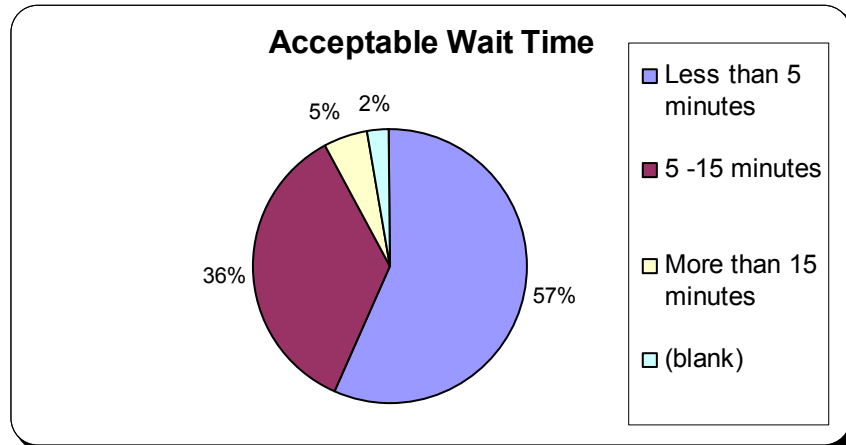
Wait time	Number	Percentage
Less than a minute	41	20%
1 - 5 minutes	93	45%
6 - 10 minutes	38	18%
11 - 15 minutes	11	5%
More than 15 minutes	22	11%
(blank)	1	0.5%

These figures seem to reflect the figures from the telephony system which show that the average wait time for each service for last year (Jan 12 to Dec 12) is:

Council Tax	4 minutes 6 seconds
Housing Benefits	6 minutes 40 seconds
Summons/Recoveries	5 minutes 42 seconds

**Question 8 – Please tell us what you feel is an acceptable time to wait before your call is answered by an advisor who will be able to deal with your query in full.**

The response to this question was fairly clear with 118 (56%) of customers being happy to wait up to 5 minutes, with an additional 74 (36%) saying they would be happy to wait between 5 and 15 minutes and only 10 (5%) saying more than 15 minutes is acceptable.



**Question 9 – If you were unable to wait would you prefer to leave a message for an advisor to call you back or contact us again at a later time?**

The results show that it is very close between the two options as the preference – 97 (47%) said 'contact us later' and 103 (50%) said 'leave message'. The other 3% were blank (no response).

**Question 10 – The telephone lines are open between 8.30am and 5pm Monday to Friday. Are these times convenient for you?**

The majority said that the opening hours were convenient with 167 (81%) customers saying Yes and 37 (18%) saying No.

Of the 37 saying that the times were not convenient;

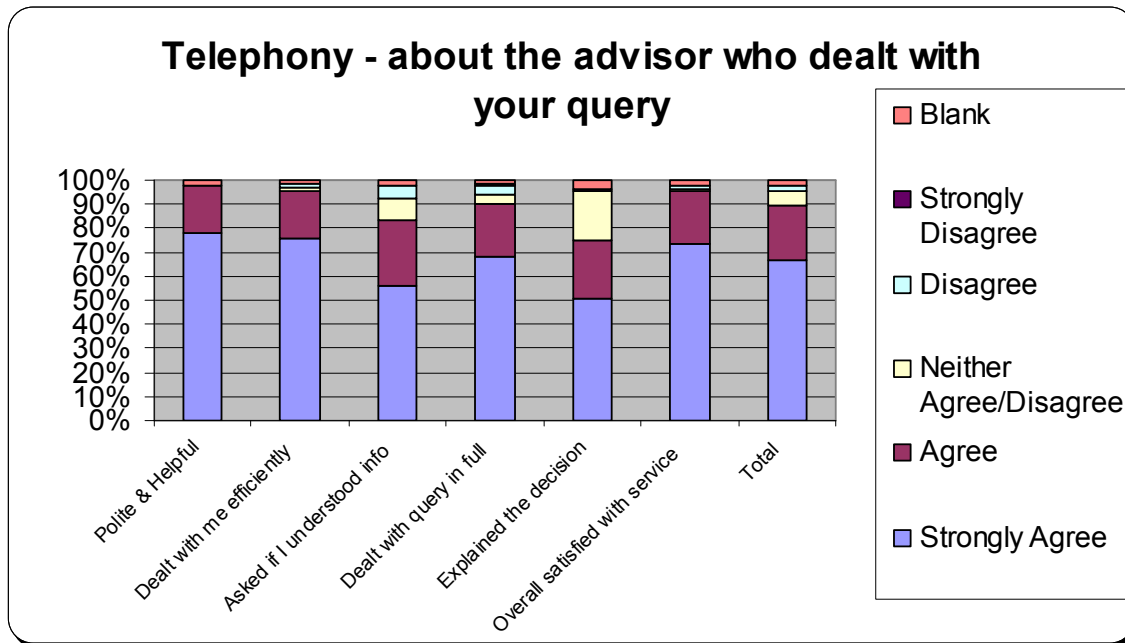
33 suggested 'Open after 5pm',

1 said 'Open before 8.30am' and

2 said both options.

### 3.4 STAFF PERFORMANCE – Telephony & Face to Face

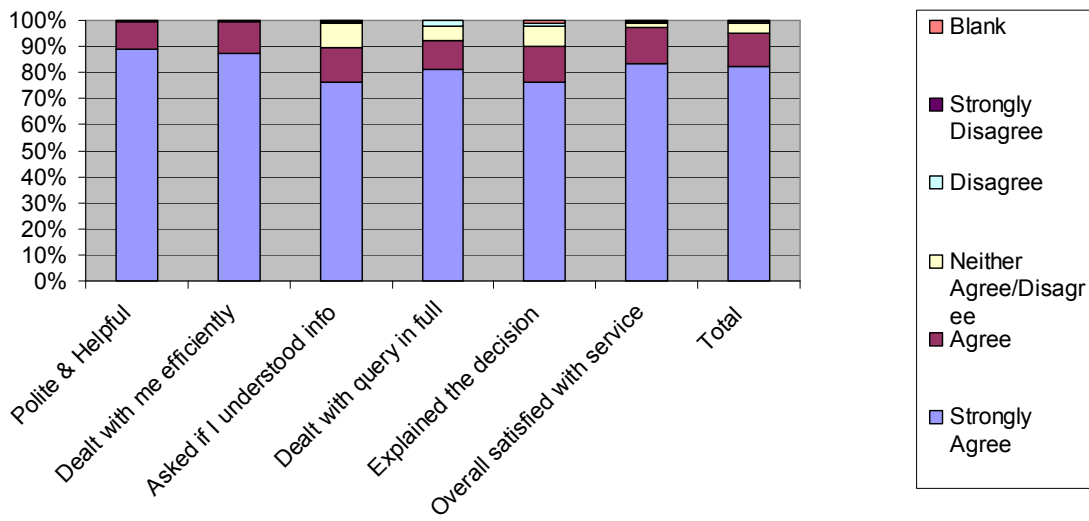
The following section looks at the questions about ‘Please tell us about the advisor who dealt with your query’ – This list of questions were the same for Face to Face and Telephony.



It is clear that a high percentage of the customers strongly agreed or agreed that the staff were polite and helpful, dealt with the enquiry in full in an efficient manner. The results for the telephone contact showed that 89.5% of customers were satisfied with the overall service they received with only 2.4% of customers not being happy with the service they received.

	Polite & Helpful	Dealt with me efficiently	Asked if I understood info	Dealt with query in full	Explained the decision	Overall satisfied with service	Total	Overall %
Strongly Agree	160	156	116	140	104	152	<b>828</b>	67.0%
Agree	41	41	55	45	51	45	<b>278</b>	22.5%
Neither Agree/Disagree	0	3	20	9	41	1	<b>74</b>	6.0%
Disagree	1	3	10	8	1	3	<b>26</b>	2.1%
Strongly Disagree	0	0	1	1	1	1	<b>4</b>	0.3%
Blank	4	3	4	3	8	4	<b>26</b>	2.1%
Total	206	206	206	206	206	206	<b>1236</b>	

**Face to Face - About the advisor who dealt with your query**



	Polite & Helpful	Dealt with me efficiently	Asked if I understood info	Dealt with query in full	Explained the decision	Overall satisfied with service	Total	Overall %
Strongly Agree	286	281	244	261	244	267	<b>1583</b>	82.2%
Agree	34	39	44	36	45	46	<b>244</b>	12.7%
Neither Agree/Disagree	1	0	29	17	25	4	<b>76</b>	3.9%
Disagree	0	0	1	7	3	0	<b>11</b>	0.6%
Strongly Disagree	0	0	1	0	0	3	<b>4</b>	0.2%
Blank	0	1	2	0	4	1	<b>8</b>	0.4%
Total	321	321	321	321	321	321	<b>1926</b>	

It is clear that a high percentage of the customers strongly agreed or agreed that the staff were polite and helpful, dealt with the enquiry in full and in an efficient manner. The results for the face to face contact showed that 94.9% of customers were satisfied with the overall service they received with only 0.8% of customers not being happy with the service they received.

It is reassuring that the majority of our customers, both on the telephone and face to face are happy with the level of service they receive and a high percentage of comments left were in recognition of the satisfaction with the service.

**If you need to provide more information or we need to contact you again so that we can complete your query was this agreed with you during your call/interview?**

The results are similar for both Telephony and Face to Face with 31% on phones and 40% on face to face getting agreement during the call/visit about more information/contact you again.

**The Council has recently introduced a 24/7 online self service facility. If the information you needed today was available online or if you were able to view your bill or of any changes or receive an electronic bill, would you use it?**

The results to this question show that at least half of the customers would be willing to use self-serve option online. E-mail addresses were left by 111 customers willing to use self-serve (45 from Telephony and 66 from Face to Face).

	Telephone		Face to Face	
	Number	%	Number	%
Yes	118	57%	162	50%
No	71	34%	140	44%
Don't know	15	7%	14	4%
Blank	2	1%	5	2%

114 People expressed an interest in attending focus groups and left contact details.

### 3.5 CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

#### **What did you like about our service today?**

For both Telephony and Face to Face there was a combined total of 371 comments left. All the comments left were of a positive nature and generally mentioned the following attributes: quick/efficient/helpful/ approachable/polite/friendly. Please see some example comments below:

*“Advisor was very polite and understanding and she didn't make any judgements about what I was saying I am happy that the assessors are actually taking the calls now, rather than a general customer service team. It makes it a much quicker service.”*

*“Comprehensive, friendly and helpful professionally dealt with in regard to personal details and data protection”*

*“Helpfulness and courtesy of the guy helping with me. Spoke clearly and slowed down speech when I said I was deaf”*

*“Promptness answered, info was clear, adviser gave more info about another organisation which could offer him more help. Very happy with service.”*

*“Approachable and friendly, staff were all excellent and polite. Knowledgeable. Can't fault the service - 10/10”*

#### **What could we do better?**

The combined number of responses left for both Face to Face and Telephony is 199, of which 87 Telephony and 112 Face to Face.

A brief breakdown of the 87 comment types for the phones are:

Wait time for calls too high – 33 comments of which many suggesting call back facility. 21 (65%) of these calls relate to council tax. Take up of self-serve is therefore likely to improve wait times for customer that still need to call.

Poor communication – 3 comments

Recovery process too harsh – 3 comments

Late night opening – 2 comments

The rest of the comments were general feedback ie Nothing to add.

A brief breakdown of the 112 comment types in for face to face :

Waiting times – 61 comments about the waiting times too long and 9 of these mentioned they had queued previously on phones.

Opening times – 7 comments about opening Saturdays or late night.

Waiting Facilities – 16 comments re TV/Magazine/play areas and cheaper refreshments.



General positive nature/all fine – 17 comments.

A selection of comments is shown below from both categories. A full list of comments can be found at Appendix A.

*'Advisor was top of the class - he did everything he could and was really brilliant - you've got to ring the council mindset - he was a breath of fresh air - put the phone down and thought ah that was lovely'*

*'Advisor was very polite and understanding and she didn't make any judgements about what i was saying I am happy that the assessors are actually taking the calls now, rather than a general customer service team. It makes it a much quicker service'*

*'cannot fault the service'*

*'All done in front of him, nice to see someone deal with it and what each stage meant in terms of the decision process. good to know'*

*'Nothing this advisor could do better but should make sure that everything is correct and clear on the first phone call so he would not have to phone back a second time in future'*

*'Approachable and friendly, staff were all excellent and polite. Knowledgeable. Can't fault the service - 10/10'*

*"Explain forms that may need to be filled out before interviewed, was told on the phone nothing needed to be done prior to the interview but when they came in they had needed to fill forms out"*

*"lady at reception gave the wrong information, she told us to wait in the the wrong place and the wrong estimated waiting time. Get a better system with less waiting time - what happen to being seen at the front? Used to be able to get what I needed completed"*

*"Phone service. can't get an answer or have got through and been cut off when transferred. This meant that she would rather come in than call. Would be convenient to leave a message for someone to call back instead of hanging on the phone."*

**Appendix A****Customer Comments:**

Telephony Housing Benefits Reason for visit today – Other

Account was suspended and did not know why.
Trying to get my claim sorted out
Rent amount query
Check how much to pay - another person in the household gets the letter not her so wanted to know how much she had to pay
Bedroom Tax
To see what was top up and what he had to pay
overpayment
Finding out about changes happening in April
Find out it had been cancelled, originally phoned to change bank details but informed about change
Letter from Housing Association
I had my Housing Benefit suspended
my claim was suspended
Information about both as going through divorce
Received a letter in post
To find out why were only paid one week.
Benefit stopped
Hb Overpayment Balance
Landlord had letter, benefit had stopped, contacted to discuss and get the rent paid
Tenant claiming HB - having issues filling in form
Ringling for update
shortfall in my rent,
update info
Information request
Looking for a reduction possibly for rent
Paying claw back - wanted to know when it was finished
Query regarding benefit changes this year.

## Telephony Council Tax Reason for visit today – Other

Valuation Letter
Making an arrangement
Deferred payment
Council Tax Arrears
bank
Wanted to find out how much I owed
I wasn't sure if I had paid my Council Tax for December 2012
Change the name the flat was in to her son's name
Empty property in Plymouth.
received a summons letter
Find out the days payments are taken on
Break in council tax payment
Reassessment of housing benefit, checking if council tax had too
Get a bill for council tax
Received a letter saying payment had not been received.
instalments and adding someone to the bill
Departments don't talk to one another
Discuss letter about final notice
couldn't find one of my receipts for council tax
Went online - wouldn't go through to SP allowance
recovery
wanted to know outstanding
Property banding query.
Couldn't pay bill.
received a letter
Payment lost
Final notice for payment resolution
Letter received regarding payment, cross information.
Query about amount owing
recovery of tax
Single Person Discount info
Refund
Split with partner, wanted to discuss some information received on a letter

Set up arrangement
Tenant as payee of council tax
Moving house change council tax
council tax letter enquiry
Information and advice
Direct Debit set up
Changing banks and changing direct debits
Checking account - see the balance
SPD
Mother
I wanted to find out how much I needed to pay
council tax arrangement
Council tax arrears
Nasty letter about council tax
Just bought property in Plymouth
Postpone payment
Change of tenants
Changing my arrangement
now moving back into property after being empty for renovation so need to cancel exemption
Query about declaring as no-one living there
Moving out so cancelled council tax payments
Unpaid council tax

### Telephony – Other Reasons for previously contacting us

We could resolve the query at that time.
Was setting up a different payment?
Wasn't explained correctly the first time he called
Circumstances changed, was going to apply with another party but now that isn't the case.
Received no response to the email I sent so I didn't know if you had got the information. Was calling to check that you had received my email.
For an update
Still wasn't sorted
On-going problem
Ringling constantly - Waiting for husband

ongoing query
waiting on a decision

Face to Face Housing Benefits Reason for visit today – Other

Hand documents in
Looking to move out of parents home and get my own. Wanted to get help with my income.
Checking information relating to claim
re-start
Landlord is not paying the customer's mortgage.
Rent had not been paid since 16th November.
in because HB had been suspended
Letter from us
You are not paying my benefit on time, I keep being in arrears, I have to waste a lot of my time visiting because you do not answer the 'phone and keep wanting to see more paperwork
Needed to bring in additional docs.
Re-assessment
to get information about a new claim
Bringing in docs
Payment details
Cancelling my claim
Query about bill amount
Claim Suspended
missing payment
STILL A STUDENT SO SHOULD BE COUNCIL TAX EXAMPT RECEIVED LETTER STATING OTHERWISE HERE TO RESPONDED
overpayment

Face to Face Council Tax Reason for visit today – Other

Currently sofa surfing so needed to arrange to stop paying council tax on previous property (flat)
Parking Permit Exemption.
making an arrangement to pay off arrears
Single Persons Discount
Attachment of Earnings

problem with payments sue to going on to old account
banding change
change of circumstances
Changing current method of payment
Query did not relate directly to Housing Benefit or Council Tax but was about getting help with her pension as she is taking early retirement.
Problem with making a payment, money went to wrong account.
Print of Bill 2011
change of hours
Query over his bill
Information required
Details about when to pay.
I received a final reminder
I received a letter
Direct Debit enquiry
Household change
CT exemption.
Liability order
Single persons discount.
Family matters
Student, so don't need to pay, referring to landlord
change of owner of house
change of owner of house
changing to 12 monthly payments
PAYMENT QUERY
Payment enquiry
Refund enquiry
Wants Single Person Discount
DIRECT DEBIT ENQUIRY
CTAX ARRANGEMENT REQUEST
DIRECT DEBIT ENQUIRY

Face to Face – Other Reasons for Previously contacting us

Was told that it would be quicker to deal with the claim in person rather than sending the docs in and waiting for them to be processed
Household change
Another change of address
waiting times
short of time could wait that long
my circumstances have now changed
Check out how the claim was progressing
HB keeps getting stopped after problem with DWP and JSA
Told her to come in
didn't want to wait
Staff error - I had to come in 3 separate times just to cancel my claim
I have now moved into my property
It's quicker to pass the information in than post it...
You had issues being able to check my pension details online and it took ages for the dip to inform you of this.

What did you like about the service today

Telephony

Helpful and went out her wait to assist me
Advisor was clear & quick
Advisor was friendly and knew what she was talking about.
Advisor was helpful and gave a lot of info.
Advisor was top of the class - he did everything he could and was really brilliant Eugh you've got to ring the council mindset - he was a breath of fresh air - put the phone and thought ah that was lovely
Advisor was very polite and understanding and she didn't make any judgements about what I was saying I am happy that the assessors are actually taking the calls now, rather than a general customer service team. It makes it a much quicker service.
All sorted.
Always satisfied - every time she rings she is always dealt with properly
Been dealt efficiently Simple thing dealt with and it was, prompt quick and easy know what they're talking about

Brilliant
Call was answered really quickly and didn't take long
cannot fault the service
Clear and precise.
Comprehensive Friendly and helpful professionally dealt with in regard to personal details and data protection
dealt in full there and then
Dealt with as expected
Dealt with the matter efficiently, properly and clearly explained everything
Done and dusted, all out of the way now
Dyslexic and a lot of the forms aren't clear but they did their best to make it clearer to her if she explains she cannot understand.
Easy to sort out and understand
Efficient
Efficient & explained
efficient and fast
Efficient and straight-forward, dealt with query
English speaker, clearly able to get to the bottom of the issue without difficulty. Friendly advisor
Everybody's been very friendly More than helpful and polite
Everything, liked not having to come in
Explained well
fast
Fast, was expecting a longer wait The advisor was very nice - not grumpy Handled very well, very helpful
Finally got through He was polite and rang back when they got cut off, really good
Fine
Friendliness of the advisor, very helpful Excellent
friendly
friendly & co-operative
Friendly and helpful
Friendly and helpful.
Friendly, not aggressive like it used to be.
Friendly.
Gave information I needed Very happy Karen listened to me, understood what I wanted to achieved, gave information about who he needed to contact and what would happen with the claim
getting through to a person that could provide an answer



Girls were polite
Good manner on the phone.
Got through very quickly - lucky to get through as quickly as I did Dealt with quickly and efficiently
got what he wanted
He took time to read the notes and called me back
Help as much as you can Offer support Comes in normally but stiches prevented him doing so Outstanding help, really happy with the service
Helpful
Helpful advisor
Helpfulness and courtesy of the guy helping with me. Spoke clearly and slowed down speech when I said I was deaf
Housing benefit person, very civil and polite, nice to speak to a person
how polite and efficient the staff were
I was able to have my query dealt with today
It is good that you don't need to explain everything in full each time you phone up, as they can access it through your council tax account
It was completed within a reasonable time and the lady was very helpful. She gave me her direct line.
It was fine
It was quick and easy
It was quick and helpful
It was quite convenient to get through Easily dealt with Quick to get through
It was straightforward and easy
It was very efficient and the advisor was polite. My query was dealt with in less than a minute
Just quick and efficient Was fine
Just quick and simple
Lady was just really nice, friendly, polite Great
Lady was nice and down to earth didn't sound like a robot.
Lady was very helpful, very polite Made her feel comfortable
Lady was very nice and polite Sorted out quickly
Louise was extremely polite and very helpful. Rather than make me wait on the line she called me back within 10 minutes.
Low waiting time on second call, less than 1 minute.
Nice and quick She dealt with the query fantastically
Nice manner
Nice to speak to someone - not all automated

Nice to speak to someone who isn't reading off of a script, it is nice to chat to someone whilst dealing with the query? Good to deal with a person. They made me feel at ease.
no
no complaints - dealt with efficiently
Normal service.
Not too complicated with the automated system
nothing
Overall it was very good. Nice and dealt with query in full
Patient member of staff
Person dealing with enquiry knew what she was talking about. Answered all questions clearly and explained everything needed to do.
Polite and friendly, and quite quick. Dealt with in a couple of minutes
Polite, cheerful, helpful
Politeness All done and dusted and there was no problems
Politeness and helpful.
Politeness and helpfulness of the gentleman. He was a lovely man.
pretty prompt service
Process worked
Prompt & efficient
Promptness answered, info was clear, adviser gave more info about another organisation which could offer him more help. Very happy with service.
Quick
quick & efficient
quick & outcome was fine
Quick and easy, no stress
Quick and Efficient
Quick service
Quick, convenient
Quick, efficient and on the ball
Quick.
Quickly they dealt with it She was really polite - helps on a Monday morning
Quite good really
Ready way in which your advisor laughed
Really easy Answered query quickly
Really helpful
really helpful and put me to ease

Really lovely person, said she would ring back in 10, and she was quicker than she said she would be Really good
Resolved the issue
satisfied
service was ok she was helpful
She was brilliant yesterday - 2 weeks ago the advisor gave me the incorrect information She was very helpful, dealt with a letter sent before Christmas as well
She was friendly Gave all the information needed Got through better than before
She was nice, the lady who dealt with the query
She was perfect Polite when asked about this survey Quick and to the point Didn't have to wait in a queue
She was polite and gave more information than I expected Very helpful Quite pleased
She was very easy to talk to & listened. She let me talk and was very informative. She also asked if I had any further questions and put me at ease.
She was very friendly Not too much information at once
She was very helpful
She was very polite and helpful Gave direct number and told me when to ring
She was very speedy direct, excellent
Simple and quick
Sorted straight away and dealt with
Talking to a human being
That it was quick and friendly Uncomplicated
that someone answered the call and where friendly
The adviser didn't know the answer to one of the queries so she said she would phone me back at a time to suit me with the answer and she did.
The adviser was very polite and helpful. Really happy about the fact when originally got call to do survey he asked if he could get a call back in 30 - 40 minutes time and this was carried out.
The advisor was lovely and happy and extremely polite and gave me her help.
The advisor was polite and helpful
The advisor went away and found out the answer to my queries. She gave me her direct phone number
The advisor who dealt with me was intelligent and polite and dealt with my enquiry efficiently.
The Assessor solved the query quickly and clearly, it was nice to know that I did not have to go through a long complicated process to get my issue sorted. It was very simple.
The assessor that dealt with the issue was lovely. It was a good overall service.
The guy was nice and friendly, got straight to the point
The lady I spoke to - she was just very nice and very understanding

The lady was particularly friendly and helpful
The people are always really helpful that I speak to. Also I have had a lot of financial problems over recent years and I have been quite scared to call about my Council Tax arrears, but the people that I have spoken to have always been nice and helpful a
The service was quick
The woman was really, really nice, best customer service ever had on the phone Made sure I really understood Offered options Sympathetic Made her feel at ease Competent
Thought that the woman was straight to the case Phone answered quickly Helpful, excellent
To the point She went to the trouble of finding out the reason why, took the time and trouble to find out when things were happening with the upcoming changes Very good service
treated with respect and was not belittle
Very efficient
very friendly
Very friendly, respectful.
Very good, especially telephone section
Very Helpful & quick
Very helpful and very thorough
very helpful, and fast
Very helpful, answered all questions and dealt with enquiry in full there and then.
Very helpful, kind, arranged a visit.
Very pleasant to speak to, efficient and in time
Very satisfied
very satisfied, efficient, understood everything
Very Satisfied with service
Very polite
Was happy with service from advisor.
Was passed to someone who could deal with it Handled well Quite good
was quick and lady knew what she was doing
was straight to the point
was very polite
we did what we said we were going to do
What he would expect Seemed good service apart from the wait
What she called for was dealt with there and then
Yes got the answer he was hoping for, quick

Face to Face

A really good service with the advisor
A very quick service today
Able to explain situation and felt listened to by all staff spoken to.
Absolutely fine.
Advisor noticed errors made by staff. Advisor was very professional.
advisor was brilliant and efficient and thoroughly explained the process
Advisor was efficient and polite, explaining clearly the situation
Advisor was helpful and gave all the information I needed
Advisor was helpful and made sure everything was understood.
Advisor was on the ball with the correct advice/info.
Advisor was very kind and friendly
Advisor was very pleasant. I feel lighter hearted going out than when I came in.
Advisor went above and beyond anyone else to help. Very supportive and understanding
All done in front of him, nice to see someone deal with it and what each stage meant in terms of the decision process. Good to know.
Approachable and friendly, staff was all excellent and polite. Knowledgeable. Can't fault the service - 10/10
Assessor was polite and pleasant and dealt with enquiry well and in full.
Bent over backwards to process claim
Brilliant and polite
Brilliant Helpful Really pleased with it Spot on Come forward/ improved in 10 years - shocked
Changes finally dealt with.
Conducted in a good manner.
Customer happy with service as whole. Did not see an assessor as only handing docs in.
Dave Carne gave outstanding service, was helpful and understanding
Decisions was made quickly
dealt with my queries efficiently
Easy to understand the Advisor
Efficiency
Efficient
Efficient and helpful
Efficient and well explained
Efficient Non- Judgemental Professional and Joined up services Stress Free.
Efficient service, I got what I needed done in a short period of time once I was seen

Efficient staff
Efficient To the point No time waster
everyone was polite and helpful
Everyone was so happy
everything nice, quick and polite
Everything was explained and I knew what I was going to get
FAIRLY SHORT WAITING TIME WAS GIVEN AN ESTIMATE- RAN OVER BY ABOUT 10 MIN WHICH I FELL IS RESONABLE
Fantastic and quick
fast
fast and easy
finding out today and no waiting for the post to get my decision
Fine
Friendly
Friendly and nice office to visit
Friendly people
Friendly, helpful.
Friendly, quick and efficient
Glad to be treated as a human being. You used to be treated like dirt!
good
Good - Explained well.
Good customer service -friendly staff
Good service.
good to get it all sorted out
Good to get it sorted out in one go
Good visual signs of size of queue
got everything we need sorted in a short amount of time
Had a TV
Had an appointment
Happy with service in general
Hayley Grant was extremely helpful
Helen Flynn is brilliant. She is like a breath of fresh air! This comment will be logged as a Compliment
Helpful
Helpful - Quick waiting time
Helpful - Staff know what they are doing.
helpful adviser
Helpful Advisor

Helpful Advisor Addressed all concerns
Helpful and smiling, co-operative very can do attitude.
Helpful staff on counter and assessor.
Helpful.
High standard
How easily problem was sorted
I always find the service efficient and helpful. They never judge you.
I did not have to hang around
I was served by Joe Nobbs; he was very helpful and patient and explained how the calculation works. He spent 1 hour with me going through it.
Informative and good
information provide was helpful
It is less oppressive than it used to be
It was a fast service.
It was fine
It was fine.
It was nice and quick.
it was quick and to the point
It was quick today
It was very nice. good
It works.
it was quicker than previous times I've been in
Just fine.
kind and helpful service
Knowing how long I would be waiting
Lady was really nice and understanding, awkward circumstances she was kind about it
Liked that the staff are polite and helpful.
Lisa was very helpful
Mrs collier was very helpful and understanding, she explained everything I needed to do and what was the next step
My interview was excellent
Nice polite staff. Lady on Reception and Housing Benefit advisor was very helpful.
nice, friendly, quick and effective
Not a lot. Bit of a drag really...although time went quickly as I expected to be waiting ages. But that isn't how it went down and went bare quickly.
Nothing in particular
Nothing
OK, sort waiting time, efficient.
Okay.
Paul put me at ease and was very patient and thorough
Paul Yeatman was exceptional; he made me an appointment to suit me and got his number so I could call him if I needed to cancel.
Pleasant and friendly at reception and assessor. Not long to wait. Actions were clear but the assessment was brief.
polite
Polite and friendly. Dealt with it as quickly as possible as the claim was complicated, dealt with it calmly.

Polite and helpful.
Polite efficient staff
Polite people.
Polite service
Polite staff
Prompt and efficient
Prompt response
Quick and efficient service today
quick
Quick - saw the girl at the front and didn't have to go round to the back
quick & efficient
Quick (for a change), polite and helpful.
Quick and all sorted
Quick and easy
quick and efficient
Quick and efficient
Quick and efficient Nice advisor
Quick and efficient when with the advisor
quick and helpful
quick and helpful service ,staff polite and efficient
Quick Efficient
Quick Efficient Very nice lady - couldn't wish for nicer
Quick for a change
Quick for once
Quick Helpful staff
Quick once in appointment Don't have to come back again about this query
Quick once in interview
Quick seen straight
Quick service
Quick to be seen
quick, I was very impressed with the level of care and attention
Quick, Polite and Efficient.
Quick. Organised and efficient
quickest ever
Quickly dealt with.
Quiet because early am
Really good despite the wait
really good fast time
Really helpful Explained everything
SEEN VERY QUICKLY
Service has improved over the last two years
service is good and everyone was polite overall it was fabulous
Service was quick advisor dealt with the query well
service was quick and efficient
Service was quick.
so efficient



Speed and punctuality. it was all done with ease
Speedy
Staff very helpful
Staffs were polite, friendly and apologised for the wait.
Swift - today at least
television
the adviser (Janet) was very helpful
the adviser was really helpful and dealt with my query in full
The advisor acted like a normal person and spoke to me like I was normal as well
The advisor was efficient
The advisor was friendly and polite. She came across as non-judgmental and was understanding which is important
The advisor was friendly and very thorough. She made time to find out other information and it was not rushed.
The advisor was polite and respectful
The advisor was really nice and went out of her way to help and fully explained it to me
The advisor was very helpful, very friendly and made me feel very much at ease.
The advisor was very helpful. I came in today worried and I left feeling happy.
The first adviser in the cubicle was really helpful but when we wanted more information she said the best person to speak to was her colleague due to a wider knowledge of the subject. When we saw her colleague (Karen Adamson) she was extremely helpful.
The lady was clear and helpful
The lady was lovely and I've always received good service, I even told my daughters how good it was.
The respectful way I was treated
The service was very efficient with no problems encountered. Everything was explained clearly and dealt with in a very private manner. Paul who dealt with the enquiry was a very nice young man.
The service was good today but only because I was here early
the staff were very helpful
understanding of the circumstances
very straight forward
very courteous staff
Very Efficient
Very fast
very friendly and efficient adviser
very friendly staff
Very happy, very quick and I did not expect that
Very Helpful
Very helpful advisor
Very helpful and polite
Very helpful they explained in full
Very human
Very pleasant lady advisor, they are always good
Very pleasant staff
Very pleasant

very polite and cheerful staff
very polite lady and very efficient
Very polite, advisor double checked my understanding as my English is not good.
very quick efficient and friendly
Very quick today!
Very Quick, Very Efficient, Very Good
Warm waiting area Very good
warm welcome, helpful people
was fast and got everything sorted
Was not unpleasant
Was quick and Jolly for this time of the morning
Well done efficient and as quick as they could be.
You provide a personal and very human touch.

### What could we do better?

#### Telephony

Answer calls quicker, people don't want to wait too long on the phone. Especially when have children.
Been living there since March so didn't know this was happening, bit of a shock that no bill had been sent. Now has find Â£800 in the next 3 months
Better options more clear and a shorter queue - kept getting put through to adult social care.
Bins: they are an eye-saw. But nothing wrong with the service from the civic centre.
Call waiting times were very long, tried to contact us four times before and was waiting over half an hour each time. Message that customers get while waiting doesn't relate to their query, makes them think they have chosen the wrong option.
Change had been reported but was initially refuted by PCC. You were informed!
Change the phone line back to tell you how many people were in the queue. Fed up of listening to pre-recorded message.
Customer could be given consideration for previous history (25 years) of payments rather than threatening letters. Maybe a phone call would be better way to approach this issue. Customer came into Civic Centre (2.5 hours) to arrange moving house but still
cut down waiting time
Details wouldn't show, took a while for the information to be brought up on screen so the enquiry could be dealt with Mail had been sent to the wrong address for over two years, need more regular checks with system info
Didn't receive the postal information sent More staff
Don't like the facts and figures when on hold, don't like choosing the numbers would rather speak to a person straight away Tried another number on letter, was for payments not for general
Efficient
Everything was satisfactory. I cannot suggest any ways not improve it.
Find council tax system confusing

First call there was incorrect information given; the advisor told the customer that they could to set up a direct debit over the phone. This was incorrect and on the second call the customer managed to do this without issue.
get rid of the automated service
Getting right information.
Happy with housing benefit side but not council tax, she was very rude Departments should talk to one another Bit of a delay over the Christmas period, acknowledgement that claim is being dealt with
Have had to wait a long time on previous occasions so could improve waiting times
I have left messages in the past for a call back but I have never received one. I am not impressed with the service I have received. The staff that dealt with my claim 12-18 months ago did not do so correctly.
I think that before reminder or summons letters for council are sent out you should look at individual cases, as some people do pay, but just late.
I wanted to know that you had my email ad it worried me that you did not get a response. Some kind of automatic response via email would have been useful to me. Also I found that there were not many options/space on the email to write my query. Perhaps a b
I would like to know where I am in the queue
If I was to leave a message for a call back I would only be happy to do so if I knew I would be contacted within 24 hours.
improve the waiting time
Incentive small but good on the survey - day pass to the life centre, small businesses - offering a percentage off if customers complete the survey, Opening hours - should trial having the building open late one night a week to see if it would be something
Information readily available. E-mailing evidence.
It took so long to get through. The call back option would be good when waiting on the phone.
Joined up services - easier to get through to Housing Benefit.
Just waiting times
Lack of communication between departments, e.g. DWP and PCC Should be able to claim NHS prescriptions back if in receipt of Housing Benefit and on sickness
less waiting but you do your best
less waiting time
less waiting times
Approachable and friendly, staff was all excellent and polite. Knowledgeable. Can't fault the service - 10/10
More information required. The lady I spoke to needed to explain it better to me. The laws quoted on Council Tax letters should be accessible online or made available to the customer.
n/a
Nice to get through immediately
Nice to have a rough time that you will have to wait, if it had been 15 minutes she might have hung up and called back.
no
No - more than happy
No don't think so
No everything was fine
No it was fine
No not at all
no not really

No suggestions
No.
None
Not at this time
Not based on the experience yesterday. However customer received a second reminder but did not receive a first reminder for his bill.
Not from us but not happy with new rules on number or rooms allowed & disabled children
not on this occasion
not really
Nothing
nothing based on this experience
Nothing this advisor could do better but should make sure that everything is correct and clear on the first phone call so he would not have to phone back a second time in future
Online system does not work... applied online and PCC did not have his form. Waiting time on the phones. Same when come into the Civic Centre.
Opening times longer and maybe on a Saturday.
Paid claw back didn't know that he had finished paying it so he could stop the direct debit
Phone line confusing Be firm about payments.
put a Direct Debit form in with the bill
reduce the waiting time
Reduce waiting times.
Refunds take too long on Council Tax Band Reduction
shouldn't of had to ring should of been done automatically
Tell customers to put phone on speaker before they start so they can select all the options
The call waiting times could be shorter.
The lottery winning no's!
Tried calling about HB few times and I've been on hold for 20 minutes, then still not got through More people on phone or call back facility
VOA information that they were given on the phone previously could have been accurate.
Wait times on the phone and in the Civic itself. Partner went into Civic and was told that he would have to wait 1 hour to get a HB form to take away. Waited 20 minutes on phone this time, tried for 4 days previously and waited on phone for 25 minutes.
Waited too long to get through
Waiting time
Waiting time too long
Waiting time. Telling how many are in the queue, speak to a person if waiting too long.
Waiting times
Waiting times are a bit long on the phone - could improve by 5 minutes. Nothing on the phone to say how long you will be waiting for.
Waiting times are highly unacceptable, not just for housing benefit and council tax Income generating department, should put more staff onto it
waiting times opening times
Waiting times, paying for phone call, would really appreciate being able to have a call back, even within 24 hours
Waiting Times.

Website bin collection query, advisor was too sure of answer, info was not on the website, and advisor did call back with the information later however.
Website problems.
Wish that somebody would run through the tapes because just before Christmas you had 4 tapes running at the same time, kept cutting up when on hold and couldn't listen to the messages, only one tape should be running at one time, becomes irritating
Would be good if always quick

Face to Face

A cup of coffee would have been nice
Accurate waiting time was told 10 minutes and waited nearly an hour and a half. Queue list, saw customers who arrived after her being seen before hand
Answer the 'phone when I call, I cannot afford to hang about on my mobile. It is quicker to walk in from Wyndham Square than to 'phone. I have not been offered an appointment and often have to wait for over an hour to see someone.
Answer your phones!
Benefit staff need to communicate with their reception staff, as I was previously told I could just come in and hand in docs over the reception desk and would not need to take a ticket. Although to get a yellow receipt this does involve taking a ticket alt
Better waiting times.
better way of showing where we should wait
Car Parking-council could make it cheaper
Change the council tax payment system. I could not get through on the phone to make a payment query, so it was easier for me to come in
Cheaper coffee from the machine. But I'm new to Plymouth and have never had a problem.
Choice of television programme.
Coffee. Get through a queue quicker at front desk.
Conflicting advice from advisors regarding war disability pension and its impact on DLA. Have been told by PCC initially that a war disability pension is accountable after the first Â£10 however on the next visit was told that it is totally separate an
Couldn't get an answer on the phone.
Customer felt that she was really not any better informed when she left, would have liked to have been given more information which would have helped her.
cut the waiting time
CUT WAITING TIMES-EMPLOY MORE STAFF.
Deal with customers faster, felt left waiting around when advisers were busy talking to each other and not dealing with customers.
decreasing waiting times
Didn't like the filter queue, waited an hour to be told to go and wait in the next queue Waited over 4 hours
different program on the TV - Jeremy Kyle drives people crazy
Don't think so. It is a fair system
Everything is fine
Explain forms that may need to be filled out before interviewed, was told on the phone nothing needed to be done prior to the interview but when they came in they had needed to fill forms out

FASTER RESPONSE TO E-MAIL ENQUIRIES BETTER ADVERTISING OF ONLINE SYSTEM.
Filter means extra waiting time
Free coffee/tea in the waiting area. When customer leaves a member of staff voicemail they would like to get a call back.
Free cup of tea/drink.
From my experience today I don't think so.
Front desk not always fully manned and staffs do not know enough to help you properly when you first arrive. It always seems slow and long wait until you see someone competent
Get it right first time
Had a lot of trouble with the phone menu system. Found it very complicated and frustrating. The waiting music is very annoying. Useful to have an instant messaging service. Website is very complicated for me. Different numbers for different services.
Have a water machine in the waiting area, have something to show peoples place in the queue (like Argos), bigger numbers on the doors.
Have toys for kids to play with while waiting
I pay by cash sometimes as much as £200 using the cash machines. I think these should be moved as there are not always staffs about and I have felt threatened and uncomfortable in the past. Once when it was quiet two men approached me while I was paying I
I was sitting for 45mins then called to desk 8 for a minute before going straight in to see the advisor. Why didn't they ask at reception what my enquiry was about so I could go round to see an advisor?
I was told that I would be seen in 20mins and waited over an hour.
I was told that the waiting time was 10 to 20 minutes and I waited nearly an hour. What about a scheme so you could do work to "pay" off Council Tax arrears? Keeps down the wages bill, gets work done the Council needs and helps work less people get experience
I was unable to see the person who is dealing with my claim (on leave), I am back again tomorrow with yet more evidence (self-employed)
Improve waiting times
It was a bit confusing going to one desk and then being sent to another desk
Lady at reception gave the wrong information, she told us to wait in the wrong place and the wrong estimated waiting time. Get a better system with less waiting time - what happen to being seen at the front? Used to be able to get what I needed complete
less waiting
Less waiting - appointments?
less waiting time
less waiting times from previous experience
Less waiting, if you have to cancel an appointment there should be a different phone line
Long wait to be seen
LOWER WAITING TIME TO BE SEEN
Make the process shorter, reduce waiting times, and give you an appointment time.
Make the waiting time less and longer opening times or on a Sat morning for working people.
Maybe just liven up the place with like: more art on the walls, music etc. actually cheap coffee and such would be awesome.
MORE FLEXIBLE OPENING TIMES -OPEN LATER FOR WORKING PEOPLE
More staff during busy time - understands it was the time of day
More water fountains

n/a
no
No wait for 2 hours
No.
none
none maybe queuing tome
Normally - waiting times
Nothing
Nothing at this time
Nothing everything is really good.
nothing from what I could see from todays visit, in future the office should be open later to cater for the people who don't finish work till five pm
Nothing in mind
Nothing it was marvellous
Nothing, everything was sorted.
OK
Open on a Saturday
open on weekends
open the service it up to the internet
Opening times-longer Reduce waiting times
Phone service. Can't get an answer or have got through and been cut off when transferred. This means that she would rather come in than call. Would be convenient to leave a message for someone to call back instead of hanging on the phone.
Previously knowing how many people are in front of you in the queue would be helpful.
provide a free water cooler in the waiting areas
Provide Magazines for reading while waiting
Put more staff on at busy times
Reduce my waiting time
reduce the waiting time
Reduce waiting times
REDUCE WAITING TIMES-HAD TOO LONG TO WAIT.
Seen quicker
Service was good
Shorter waiting times, more seats
Sort out where people queue at the front reception.
Staff should not be sat working on computer for long time -should be seeing customers.
Stop duplicating letters
Tell people which area to sit in.
The first receptionist I saw made me 'phone PCC to find out who my appointment was with so I spent 11 minutes on my mobile and then had to go back to reception once I knew I needed to see Helen! Why could she not check for me?
The queue times need to be shortened. Mis-communication - I just wanted to cancel my claim but I had to come in several times to do so.
the service to day was good but previous times I've had to wait hours and no one answers your phones

The television programs on can be a little bit more appropriate: Auction programme with lots of money flying about when people don't have much. Papers and magazines might be nice to have to read.
The wait was long
the wait was too long
to be quicker
Try and cut down the waiting times.
Turn up the TV. MAGASINES IN WAITING AREA
Very hot, toilet facilities very limited when busy especially if you have young children, have a children's play area
Very satisfied
Waiting time
Waiting time - having numbers on a screen, or waiting times
waiting time could be better
Waiting time too long as I have young children
Waiting time was too long.
Waiting times
Waiting times - I have spent 3 hours waiting to be seen on a previous visit.
Waiting times could be shorter.
Waiting times reduced crèche for the kids.
We have done very well
WOULD LIKE OFFICE TO OPEN ON SATURDAY MORNINGS 9-12PM. MAKE INTERIOR MORE PLEASANT FOR STAFF AND CUSTOMERS

**Telephony Housing Benefits Reason for visit today – Other**

Account was suspended and did not know why.
Trying to get my claim sorted out
Rent amount query
Check how much to pay - another person in the household gets the letter not her so wanted to know how much she had to pay
Bedroom Tax
To see what was top up and what he had to pay
overpayment
Finding out about changes happening in April
Find out it had been cancelled, originally phoned to change bank details but informed about change
Letter from Housing Association
I had my Housing Benefit suspended
my claim was suspended
Information about both as going through divorce
Received a letter in post
To find out why were only paid one week.
Benefit stopped
Hb Overpayment Balance
Landlord had letter, benefit had stopped, contacted to discuss and get the rent paid
Tenant claiming HB - having issues filling in form



Ringling for update
shortfall in my rent,
update info
Information request
Looking for a reduction possibly for rent
Paying claw back - wanted to know when it was finished
Query regarding benefit changes this year.

### Telephony Council Tax Reason for visit today – Other

Valuation Letter
Making an arrangement
Deferred payment
Council Tax Arrears
bank
Wanted to find out how much I owed
I wasn't sure if I had paid my Council Tax for December 2012
Change the name the flat was in to her son's name
Empty property in Plymouth.
received a summons letter
Find out the days payments are taken on
Break in council tax payment
Reassessment of housing benefit, checking if council tax had too
Get a bill for council tax
Received a letter saying payment had not been received.
instalments and adding someone to the bill
Departments don't talk to one another
Discuss letter about final notice
couldn't find one of my receipts for council tax
Went online - wouldn't go through to SP allowance
recovery
wanted to know outstanding
Property banding query.
Couldn't pay bill.
received a letter
Payment lost
Final notice for payment resolution
Letter received regarding payment, cross information.
Query about amount owing
recovery of tax
Single Person Discount info
Refund
Split with partner, wanted to discuss some information received on a letter
Set up arrangement
Tenant as payee of council tax

Moving house change council tax
council tax letter enquiry
Information and advice
Direct Debit set up
Changing banks and changing direct debits
Checking account - see the balance
SPD
Mother
I wanted to find out how much I needed to pay
council tax arrangement
Council tax arrears
Nasty letter about council tax
Just bought property in Plymouth
Postpone payment
Change of tenants
Changing my arrangement
now moving back into property after being empty for renovation so need to cancel exemption
Query about declaring as no-one living there
Moving out so cancelled council tax payments
Unpaid council tax

### Telephony – Other Reasons for previously contacting us

We could resolve the query at that time.
Was setting up a different payment?
Wasn't explained correctly the first time he called
Circumstances changed, was going to apply with another party but now that isn't the case.
Received no response to the email I sent so I didn't know if you had got the information. Was calling to check that you had received my email.
For an update
Still wasn't sorted
On-going problem
Ringling constantly - Waiting for husband
ongoing query
waiting on a decision

### Face to Face Housing Benefits Reason for visit today – Other

Hand documents in
Looking to move out of parents home and get my own. Wanted to get help with my income.
Checking information relating to claim
re-start
Landlord is not paying the customer's mortgage.
Rent had not been paid since 16th November.

in because HB had been suspended
Letter from us
You are not paying my benefit on time, I keep being in arrears, I have to waste a lot of my time visiting because you do not answer the 'phone and keep wanting to see more paperwork
Needed to bring in additional docs.
Re-assessment
to get information about a new claim
Bringing in docs
Payment details
Cancelling my claim
Query about bill amount
Claim Suspended
missing payment
STILL A STUDENT SO SHOULD BE COUNCIL TAX EXAMPT RECEIVED LETTER STATING OTHERWISE HERE TO RESPONDED
overpayment

### Face to Face Council Tax Reason for visit today – Other

Currently sofa surfing so needed to arrange to stop paying council tax on previous property (flat)
Parking Permit Exemption.
making an arrangement to pay off arrears
Single Persons Discount
Attachment of Earnings
problem with payments sue to going on to old account
banding change
change of circumstances
Changing current method of payment
Query did not relate directly to Housing Benefit or Council Tax but was about getting help with her pension as she is taking early retirement.
Problem with making a payment, money went to wrong account.
Print of Bill 2011
change of hours
Query over his bill
Information required
Details about when to pay.
I received a final reminder
I received a letter
Direct Debit enquiry
Household change
CT exemption.
Liability order
Single persons discount.
Family matters
Student, so don't need to pay, referring to landlord

change of owner of house
change of owner of house
changing to 12 monthly payments
PAYMENT QUERY
Payment enquiry
Refund enquiry
Wants Single Person Discount
DIRECT DEBIT ENQUIRY
CTAX ARRANGEMENT REQUEST
DIRECT DEBIT ENQUIRY

### Face to Face – Other Reasons for Previously contacting us

Was told that it would be quicker to deal with the claim in person rather than sending the docs in and waiting for them to be processed
Household change
Another change of address
waiting times
short of time could wait that long
my circumstances have now changed
Check out how the claim was progressing
HB keeps getting stopped after problem with DWP and JSA
Told her to come in
didn't want to wait
Staff error - I had to come in 3 separate times just to cancel my claim
I have now moved into my property
It's quicker to pass the information in than post it...
You had issues being able to check my pension details online and it took ages for the dip to inform you of this.

## TRACKING RESOLUTIONS

### Support Services Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date/Minute Number	Resolution	Explanation/Minute	Officer	Progress	Target Date
19.11.13 40 (1)	Agreed to request an update on the effects of the Localism Act on Planning Service	This request followed a presentation on the Localism Act by The Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance	Paul Barnard	Request submitted for inclusion on April Agenda.	
19.11.13 40 (2)	Agreed to request that the monitoring officer email advice to all members on how the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) England Regulations 2012 affected committees.	This request followed a presentation on the Regulations by the Assistant Director for Democracy and Governance	Tim Howes	The advice was emailed on 19.11.2013	
19.11.13 41	Agreed to request clarification on when the programme would come to scrutiny.	This is in relation to the ICT shared Services Programme	Neville Cannon	The item is on the Agenda of 4 March 2013 meeting.	
19.11.13 42	Agreed to request that councillor Lowry provide further evidence on how member involvement could be built into the process.	This resolution is in connection with the Capital Programme	Clive Perkin	Cllr Lowry has commissioned a review of councils constitution concerning capital allocations to conclude April 2013, a piece of work to compile the councils data on to a single platform so that members can have access to capital prioritisation is underway.	

19.11.13 43	Agreed to request information on which services are being offered to schools from outside the City. Reassurance that a proactive approach is being taken to ensure that business is not lost.	This request relates to traded services	Jayne Gorton	Request submitted for inclusion on April Agenda.	
19.11.13 43	Agreed that the Democratic Support Officer Circulate (by email) the minutes if the Children and Young Peoples Scrutiny Panel meeting at which this matter was considered.	This request relates to traded services	Gemma Pearce	There were no minutes of the specified meeting as the panel were given the information as part of a private panel work programme planning session on 10 September.	
19.11.13 44	Agreed to request a report on wait times and customer satisfaction levels in relation to revenues and benefits customers at the Civic Centre.		Martine Collins	The item is on the Agenda of 4 March 2013 meeting.	
19.11.13 45	Agreed to request that the officers return to the panel in around six months time with a progress report on the ongoing work to improve response times.	This request followed a presentation on the failure to meet the required response times for Freedom of Information Requests	Richard Woodfield / Mike Hocking	To be added to the 2013/14 Work Programme	
19.11.13 47	Agree to request that the Team Leader (Democratic Support) advise members as to the extent to which they could consider election costs without crossing the boundaries.		Gemma Pearce	This information is scheduled for consideration under the work programme review on 4 March 2013	

**Grey** = Completed (once completed resolutions have been noted by the panel they will be removed from this document)

**Red** = Urgent – item not considered at last meeting or requires an urgent response

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