

# **WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**

## **Report by Chief Executive**

**Audit & Performance Review Committee: 21 June 2006**

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**Subject: Customer Service Standards- Survey Results**

### **1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to report on the recent surveys of Customer Service Standards.

### **2 Background**

- 2.1 New Customer Service Standards were introduced in summer 2005 following Council approval in June 2005.
- 2.2 The new Citizens Panel (managed by Hexagon Research) was surveyed in March/April on their customer service experiences. In addition there were questions relating to performance reporting and overall satisfaction with Council services.
- 2.3 A mystery shopping survey was carried out early in 2006 by a external company.

### **3. Summary of Key Findings of Citizens Panel Survey**

#### **3.1 Survey Response**

The survey was conducted by post in April 2006. 749 replies were received (63%). A concise and clear report was received in good time from Hexagon Research.

#### **3.2 The Council's Customer Service Standards**

Attitudes to contacting the Council are very positive, particularly among those contacting by phone and through face-to-face meetings.

A very high proportion of Panel members contacting by phone said their call was answered within the new standard of six rings (up to 87%) and that staff were polite, courteous and helpful (up to 89%).

Of those making face-to-face contact, 94% said they were treated politely and with respect.

Contacting the Council in writing was the least common contact method used. While 81% said they received a reply that was courteous and easy to understand, only 65% said they received an acknowledgement or reply within the ten days stipulated in the standard.

We will use these results will be used to inform service developments – in particular the on-going implementation of new technology for customer contacts.

### 3.3 Performance Reporting in West Dunbartonshire News

Just under two thirds of Panel members (62%) recalled receiving a copy of **West Dunbartonshire News** in the last three months.

A high proportion (75%) of those receiving a copy of the newspaper said they had read the two pages of articles on the performance of the Council.

Almost two thirds (63%) found the articles interesting, just over half (54%) said they were balanced and 62% felt they were useful.

The majority of Panel members (65%) felt placing the articles in **West Dunbartonshire News** was the most effective way to provide the public with information on the Council's performance.

### 3.4 Satisfaction with Council Services

Only 16% of Panel members think the Council is good at listening to the needs of its residents.

Almost a third (30%) feel that the Council does not communicate well with its residents.

Under a quarter of Panel members (22%) stated that the Council provides services which are value for money.

Panel members have a more positive view of the Council's role as a service provider. For example, 60% are satisfied with the services they receive from the Council. Just under a quarter (24%) stated they were fairly dissatisfied while only 11% said they were very dissatisfied.

The 2006 survey can be compared to the 2005 survey as shown in the table below:

	<b>2005</b> <i>230 replies (35%)</i>	<b>2006</b> <i>749 replies (63%)</i>
Very Satisfied	4%	6%
Fairly Satisfied	37%	54%
Neither or Don't know*	28%	5%
Dissatisfied	23%	24%
Very dissatisfied	8%	11%

(\* 'Neither' category used in 2005, 'Don't know' in 2006)

## **4. Mystery Shoppers Survey**

### **4.1 Background**

Mystery Shoppers Ltd conducted customer service surveys of all 441 UK local authorities in 2005. The survey comprised three components: a telephone survey, a study of email responses and a review of the website. This year Mystery Shoppers is repeating the exercise but limiting it to those authorities who pay 'up-front'. There are two phases – firstly a repeat of the telephone/email/website surveys followed by a new phase (in April/May) involving letters and visits (which will be reported in a future report). 30 Authorities across the UK participated in the survey; 2 from Scotland (ourselves and Moray). Survey techniques have improved since the first survey; they now cover all aspects of our services and include the switchboard response separate from direct calls to services

### **4.2 Telephone Survey**

The survey comprised 30 (compared to 15 last year) telephone calls to each authority and the same 'scenario' questions were used each time. The breakdown of calls was as follows: Housing 6, Planning 3, Roads 2, Waste Services 2, Environmental Health 1, Social Work 3, Education 4, Cultural Services 3, Finance 3 and Switchboard 3. The numbers used were taken from the Council website. The overall score for WDC is 79%. This is a 1% improvement on 2005. The switchboard does not score well in any of the measures. 35 seconds is about 18 rings – well above our standard of 6 – however this is based on only 3 calls. We score well in call answering (time to answer and giving departmental name) when the calls are directly dialled or transferred from the switchboard. Our average of 6.7 seconds is the equivalent of about 3 rings – which is half our standard of 6 rings.

### **4.3 Email Survey**

The survey comprised 27 emails to each authority and the same 'scenario' questions were used each time. The breakdown of emails was as follows: Housing 6, Planning 3, Roads 2, Waste Services 2, Environmental Health 1, Education 4, Cultural Services 3, Finance 3 and webforum 3. The overall score for WDC is 60%. This is an improvement from 2005 when our score was 47%. The average has improved from 63% to 67%. 4 days to reply is low compared to the average of 1.7 days; however it is within our standard (this includes acknowledgements and automated replies).

### **4.4. Website Survey**

The survey comprised 15 measures which were used to test each website plus three subjective measures of search facilities, ease of use and speed. The overall score for WDC is 74% (up 1%). This compares to an average of 74%. We believe that some of the tests are too prescriptive. It is relatively easy to find lists of libraries, leisure centres and waste disposal facilities and their telephone numbers but because the manner in which

they are displayed does not suit their standard methodology, some of these measures scored poorly as a result.

#### 4.5 Conclusions

The telephone and email surveys are more useful this year given that they now cover more of our services and have a larger range of questions. Detailed logging sheets will be requested and distributed to relevant departments. The website survey results are not representative: We believe our site is much improved from last year but the scoring does not show this.

### 5 Financial Implications

None

### 6 Personnel Implications

None

### 7. Recommendations

The committee is asked to note the contents of this report.

**Tim Huntingford**  
Chief Executive

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### **Background Papers**

Report to Council on Customer Service Standards June 2005  
Report to A&PR Committee on Mystery Shopping September 2005