

THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE
HELD ON TUESDAY 27 JANUARY 2009

Present: Councillor A Burnip (Chair)
Councillors Mrs M Baird, A Collinson,
J Haggan, R Liddle, and Mrs J Maitland

Apology: Councillor D Myers

1 **THE MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING** held on 6 January 2009, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were confirmed.

2 **THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE** held on 13 January 2009, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were submitted.

RESOLVED that the information contained within the Minutes, be noted.

3 **PUBLIC QUESTION AND ANSWER SESSION**

There were no members of the public present.

4 **SERVICE UNIT PERFORMANCE REPORTING – CUSTOMER SERVICES**

Consideration was given to the report of the Head of Customer Services, which gave an update on the performance of the Customer Services unit, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member.

Members were advised that following a period of poor performance during 2007 many actions were taken to stabilise and improve the performance of the Customer Services Centre, details of which had previously been reported to this Committee.

Details of performance levels for October, November and December 2008 were outlined in the report. Particular reference was made to the number of calls received for East Durham Homes (EDH). Customers calling the Council were now given the option to press 1 and be transferred direct to EDH. The percentage of customers choosing to do this had increased from 5% to 8.25%.

Councillor Mrs J Maitland queried the number of abandoned calls. D Payne explained that there were many reasons why customers chose to abandon a call. The average time for a call to be answered was 15-20 seconds, however, this could be longer during busy periods. The target for abandoned calls was 3.9% and performance was currently 1.6%.

Councillor A Collinson pointed out that customer satisfaction appeared to have dropped during December and asked if this was a seasonal trend. D Payne advised that the cold weather at the beginning of December led to a significant number of calls related to winter gritting. Whilst it was explained to customers that this was not a service provided by the District Council it did impact on customer satisfaction levels.

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Councillor Collinson also made reference to the increase in customer visits to the main reception area. D Payne advised that in September 2008 the Concessionary Travel section had transferred to Customer Services and customers were now able to use Building 9 to apply for a bus pass rather than Building 5. This helped customers with mobility issues as there was parking directly outside the building, it had flat access, and was nearer to the bus stop for those using public transport.

Members were advised that all Customer Service Advisors now handled information requests and gave advice on over 25 services (including Council Tax, Planning & Development Control, Environmental Services, Fuel Poverty, Sports Development and Asset & Property Management) as well as taking credit and debit card payments, sending out relevant forms and completing requests for service for a number of services e.g. bin deliveries, bin removals, missed bin collections, bin repairs and assisted pull-outs.

Customer Services also dealt with e-mails, letters and faxes from customers as well as the main switchboard number for the Council. They also staffed the reception area of Building 9 which was now the main reception area for customers on the site.

During 2008 the corporate post room function was transferred to Customer Services for the handling of incoming and outgoing post.

Customer Services also investigated all formal complaints about the Council's services and handled all investigations of complaints received from the Local Government Ombudsman.

The department was also the point of contact for all requests for information via the Freedom of Information Act and Data Protection Act, which was an area of work that was growing on a month by month basis.

It was unlikely that any further services would be migrated to Customer Services, due to the LGR process.

The Chair thanked D Payne for his attendance at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.