

ITEM 8



SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMISSION 29 September 2008

Joint Report of the Head of Customer Services and Head of Waste Management

Derby Direct Performance

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 1.1 To note the performance of Derby Direct over the review period since June 2008. .
- 1.2 To note progress made against the Programme of Activities reported to the Commission in July.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Derby Direct Performance

- 2.1 This paper gives the Commission an update on the performance of Derby Direct with regard to the Waste Management, Council Tax, Benefits and Reception services for the period June through to the second week of September. It also explains the progress made against the Programme of Activities reported to the Commission in July 2008.

Waste Management

- 2.2 When the service was transferred into Derby Direct in October 2006, 3.5FTEs were transferred based on the information on call volumes available at that time – giving a capacity to answer 250 calls per day.
- 2.3 The Refuse and Recycling Collection service provide a 3 bin system plus paper and textile collections to 100,000 properties – the equivalent of 50,000 collections per day. Prior to the implementation of Equal Pay and the removal of bonus the average rate of missed collections was 55 per day and sickness levels were 12%.
- 2.4 The months of June and July saw a ‘work to rule’ by collection crews and a two day strike, both of which resulted in the volumes of calls to the Council – and in particular Derby Direct – rise to unprecedented levels. For example, 4 times in June Derby Direct was offered over 1,200 calls in one day and following the strike days in July, Derby Direct was offered over 600 calls per day every day until the end of the month.

- 2.5 The impacts on the service were that the number of missed bins peaked at 91 per day in mid June and averaged 75 per day through June and July with sickness levels rising to an average of 18%, peaking at 21% in June.
- 2.6 The priority of the Waste Management service in this period was to ensure that black bin waste was emptied and Refuse Managers and Supervisors worked additional hours to ensure the 'clear up' plans were implemented.
- 2.7 The volume of customer calls in August began to reduce as the impact of the work to rule and the strike began to minimise.
- 2.8 In August a service plan was agreed to answer more customer calls in the short term and implement service changes to reduce the need for customers to call the Council.
- 2.9 For the short term additional temporary staff has been recruited for Derby Direct and since they started on 4 September 76% of all calls have been answered in 2 minutes. Two additional collection crews have been introduced and this has helped to reduce the number of calls into the Council. From 15 September the number of calls per day has dropped to 325 per day and the number of missed bins has reduced to 61 per day.
- 2.10 In addition a business case and plan to implement an automated service for calls to the Waste Management will be agreed before 30 September 2008 with the objective of significantly increasing the number of customer calls the service can answer.
- 2.11 The Waste Management service is currently reviewing the entire Refuse Collection service and expects the project to conclude at the end of the year with a series of actions to further improve the service.

Benefits

- 2.12 Through this period the Customer Service Improvement Programme in Customer Services has involved customers and Benefits staff in redesigning how the Benefits service will be delivered. Every individual within Customer Services took up the opportunity to be involved in redesigning the service by attending service workshops and rewriting or redesigning over 100 ways of working.
- 2.13 Against the backdrop of staff attending workshops the Benefits service has continued to perform to the levels reported to the Commission on 1 July 2008 with 72% of calls answered with waiting times of 3 minutes. The Benefits service reduced the number of days to process a new claim from 37 days to 33, reduced the days to process changes from 21 to 16 days and paid benefit within 7 days of a decision being made 98% of the time. The percentage of customers seen did drop from 81% in May to an average of 72% over the period.
- 2.14 A plan to clear the backlog of Benefits revisions by the end of November

has begun and progress is discussed weekly with Derby Homes.

- 2.15 The aim of this programme is to increase the number of times the service is delivered right first time and includes a robust method to measure the service improvement.
- 2.16 The first of a series of service changes – ‘Customer Disagreements with Decisions’ – will be implemented in September and will be followed by further service changes in subsequent months. The direction of these service changes is to process more claims and changes in circumstances when the customer visits the Council. To achieve this Assisted Claims software, an appointment system and personal reminder process will be implemented.

Council Tax

- 2.17 At the end of July 2008 the Council Tax service adopted a ‘whole process’ approach to allocating staff to activities to include customer contact and processing. These changes have seen a significant improvement in the Council Tax service. In August 65% of calls were answered with a waiting time of 4 minutes and in September this has risen to 72% answered with waiting times under 4 minutes.
- 2.18 At 31 August 2008 Council Tax arrears for 2007/08 was £7.9m which is two months ahead of the position last year.
- 2.19 The Customer Service Improvement Programme in Customer Services is looking to further improve the Council Tax service by:
 - Making Direct Debits easier to sign up to by customers by introducing an increased number of payment dates and the option to setup Direct Debit instructions over the telephone
 - Different methods - such as SMS text messages and email - to prompt for payment are being tested alongside the traditional reminder letter process
 - Joining up Council Services in Derby Direct to remove the need for the customer to contact us to tell us of changes in circumstances - this will begin with a link to the Registrar service.

Reception

- 2.20 Through the review period the average number of calls offered to the Reception service remained constant at 650 calls per day though the percentage of calls answered improved to 91% with an average waiting time of 30 seconds.
- 2.21 In September the number of calls per day fell to 575 per day and performance improved to 94% of calls answered in 20 seconds.
- 2.22 The report to the Commission in July explained that 659 calls were offered each day, with 88.7% of them answered in an average of 30 seconds.

- 2.23 On average the switchboard team receive 105 calls per day from staff and members asking for colleagues' telephone number. We are taking every opportunity to direct people to the telephone directory on Derby Net.

Further Developments

- 2.24 In August the rationalisation of the telephone systems across the Council has increased the number of telephone lines into the Council.
- 2.25 By the end of September a business case and plan to develop the telephony used in Derby Direct will be completed. Subject to funding this will include the ability to advise customers about the expected length of wait in the queue and offer the option to leave a message.
- 2.26 The Business Planning Guidance for 2009 will include guidance on how to better understand what our customers think about the service they receive and how to use this information to further improve the service.
- 2.27 We are working toward a Contact Centre accreditation status through the Institute of Customer Service – ICS – the pre-assessment will be conducted in October 2008.
- 2.28 During National Customer Service Week Derby Direct is offering a number of 30 minutes slots where Council Officers and Members can work alongside Derby Direct staff in answering customer calls and working with customers that visit the Council. If you want to take up this opportunity please contact Bernard Fenton using the contact details below.

For more information contact: David Romaine 01332 255598 e-mail david.romaine@derby.gov.uk
Bernard Fenton 01332 255132 e-mail Bernard.fenton@derby.gov.uk

Background papers:

List of appendices:

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

1. None arising from this report.

Legal

2. None arising from this report.

Personnel

3. None arising from this report.

Equalities impact

4. None arising from this report

Corporate Objectives

5. This report links to the Council's Corporate Plan 2008- 2011 by helping to meet its priorities of "Giving you excellent services and value for money".