

CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

CUSTOMER SURVEY

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Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents an overview of the results of the consultation carried out on customers' satisfaction with their experience of contacting Argyll and Bute Council and their views on how this could potentially be improved. All Citizens Panel Members had the opportunity to complete the survey in October and November 2014 and 490 responses were received (42%). Of those responding, only 57% had contacted the council in the last year, and of those contacts by far the largest numbers (56%) were in respect of environmental and amenity services. Many of the questions were the same as the last survey in 2008 which allowed us to track changes.

The way in which people are contacting the council is changing

- 1.2 71% contacted the council by telephone which is reduced from 2008 when this was 84%. The use of email (30%) and website (30%) has grown significantly. Conversely the use of letter has fallen from 27% to just 15%. The numbers choosing to visit a council office is virtually unchanged at 35% (up from 32%).
- 1.3 There is good satisfaction with telephone and face to face contacts - 81% and 82% respectively are fairly or very satisfied with these channels. This reflects the effort put into the customer service centre and the improvements both in customer service points and the telephony centre since the service centre was set up and the Process for Change project.
- 1.4 Conversely satisfaction with email and the website channels leaves a lot to be desired. 37% and 36% respectively are fairly or very dissatisfied with these channels. These newer channels are not meeting customer expectations yet. There is high awareness of these channels (88% and 93% respectively) and just over three-quarters of respondents say they would be prepared to use these channels for interacting with the council. This is substantially more than the 30% who have actually used these channels recently.
- 1.5 This tells us that there is significant opportunity for the council to develop digital channels. The majority of our customers are prepared to use them as long as they are fit for purpose. This is a huge opportunity for the council as these channels are cheaper to service.

How can we improve council online services?

- 1.6 Our customers' top 3 priorities were for better broadband coverage, provision of wi-fi hot spots in main towns and single sign on for all our online systems. The Next Generation Broadband project will give coverage to at least 85% of all premises in our area and a wi-fi project has been approved for Helensburgh and if successful, will provide a template for the other main towns. We are working with the Improvement Service to progress the ability to use the new national MyAccount authentication service to provide the single public sector sign-on for online services which our customers clearly want.

Increased access to customer service points and telephony customer service centre

- 1.7 Currently the customer service points are open from 9 a.m. to 5p.m. weekdays but close for lunch 12.30 to 1.30 p.m. and there is late opening at 10 a.m. on a Wednesday to allow for staff training. The telephony customer service centre is open 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. weekdays. Respondents were given a range of options for increasing these hours and told what the associated costs would be and asked if they thought that extending any of these would be value for money. The only option finding favour with the majority was a no cost option to open customer service points till 6 p.m. one day per week by amending staff rotas. The next lowest cost option of opening the telephony centre on a Saturday morning at a cost of £20,500 p.a. was only supported by 28% of respondents.
- 1.8 In contrast, there was considerable appetite for considering the potential to save money by providing face to face services in a different way e.g. through moving these into libraries or other council offices, or through co-location with community planning partners. Most respondents wanted to continue to be able to make cash payments at customer service points and did not support reducing the numbers of these.

Customers' priorities

- 1.9 We gave customers a number of different options for improving customer service across a range of channels (face to face opening hours; 24/7 voice automated telephony services; telephony opening hours; improved website services; helping customers get online) and asked them to rank these. The weighted rankings of all the options were pretty similar.
- 1.10 However, it is clear from other questions that customers are concerned about value for money and expect us to take this into account before prioritising any particular aspects.

Customer service standards

- 1.11 Only one third of our customers are aware of the customer service charter. However nearly all think we should have measurable standards and should publish how we perform against those standards. Quite a number think our response times are too long, especially for simple enquiries. Expectations are higher for emails. We do not meet these expectations as we do not prioritise this channel.

Conclusion

- 1.12 Our revised customer service strategy must take into account the changing way in which our customers want to do business with us, recognise their desire for value for money from the different channels, and meet their expectations of faster response especially from digital channels.

1. Overview

1.1 Introduction

The Council's existing Customer Service Strategy was derived from the Process for Change Customer Management Project that ran from 2009 to 2013. The Customer Service Board commissioned a review of the strategy in June 2014 and as part of that review a customer survey was completed. This report presents the findings from the customer survey.

1.2 Customer Survey

The survey focuses on customers' satisfaction with their experience of contacting Argyll and Bute Council as well as their views on a range of potential customer service options for the Council in the future. The survey questionnaire covered the following topics:

- Your Contact with the Council
- Your Customer Service Experience
- Your Views on Contacting the Council
- Customer Service Standards

Where possible, comparisons were made to the 2008 Hexagon Survey of Citizens Panel Members on the same topics that informed the previous strategy, so that differences and trends could be identified.

The survey content was agreed by the Customer Service Board and signed off by the Head of Customer and Support Services and Chief Executive.

1.3 Survey Participants

The survey was posted to all Citizens Panel Members (1,170), who also had the option to complete the survey online. A version of the survey was added to the Council website within the consultations section and paper copies were also made available at all Customer Service Points.

1.4 Returns

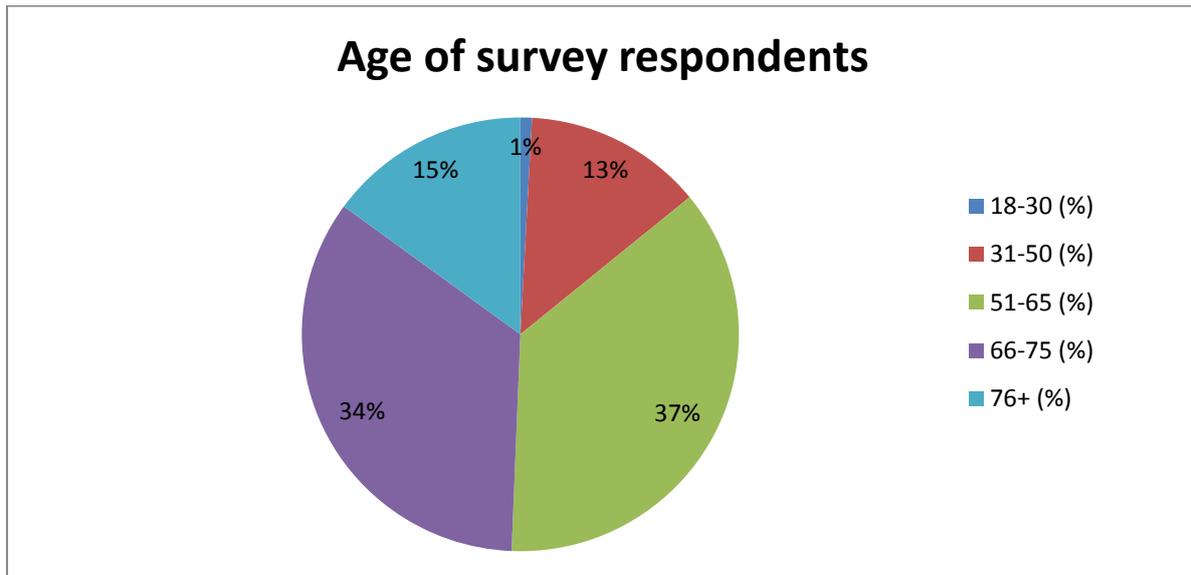
The total number of surveys returned was 490, however, it must be noted that not all surveys were fully completed.

1.5 Demographic Results

The gender (45% Male, 55% Female) and area ratio (B&C 27%, H&L 28%, MAKI 27%, OLI 18%) were as expected.

As detailed below, the customers who completed the survey were preponderantly over 50 years old. This must be kept under consideration when reviewing the survey results.

	18-30	31-50	51-65	66-75	76+
AGE	1%	13%	37%	34%	15%



2. Key Findings:

1A:	The number of people surveyed that had contacted the Council within the last year has dropped by almost 10% from the 2008 survey.
2A:	Environmental Services is still the most contacted service. Customer Services and Planning and Regulatory have switched 2 nd and 3 rd most popular contacted services..
2B:	There have been no large variations in contacts for any service area, but the reduced levels of building development probably accounts for lower levels of contacts to Planning and Regulatory whilst the benefit related activity is higher, hence more contacts to Customer Services.
3A:	Phone is still the most popular channel, however, usage has dropped from 84% down to 71% of customers since the 2008 survey.
3B:	Customers writing letters has almost halved (27% down to 15%) since the 2008 survey.
3C:	Customers using email has almost trebled (11% to 30%) since the 2008 survey.
3D:	Use of the Council website has increased five-fold (6% to 30%) since the 2008 survey.
3E:	Face to Face contact is undiminished.
4A:	Customers tell us that they use the telephone phone as it is convenient (57%), simple (49%) and provides a good quality of response (26%).
4B:	Customers use email as it is convenient (53%) and the best way to discuss a complicated matter (24%)
4C:	Customers use Face to Face as it is simple (52%), the best way to discuss a complicated matter (33%) and of customers it is the only channel they know about.
4D:	The website scores highest for convenience and simplicity (70%).
5A:	Face to Face delivers the highest service request resolution at 90%, followed by Phone at 77%
5B:	Overall 72% of customers' most recent enquiries were fully resolved
5C:	Letter (2), Email (9) and Website (5) are small sample sizes so no clear trends can be determined.
6A:	Face to Face (82%) and Phone (81%) have the highest customer satisfaction levels for overall contact experience.
6B:	Across all channels overall experience averaged 71% with 19% dissatisfied.
6C:	The poorest performing channel for experience is email (38% satisfied and 37% dissatisfied)
9A:	Face to Face (77%) and Phone (78%) have the highest levels for satisfaction with service.
9B:	Across all channels overall satisfaction with service (experience and outcome) is 67% with 25% dissatisfied.
9C:	The poorest performing channel is email (40% satisfied and 40% dissatisfied)
10A:	The top priority for contact improvement is that customers want to be responded to and kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry when they contact the Council.
10B:	Another customer contact improvement priority is to be able to speak to the correct person that can answer their enquiry.
11A:	More than three quarters of customers would use digital channels Email (78%) and Website (76%).
11B:	More than three quarters of customers surveyed say they would not use the following new media: Voice Automation (81%), Mobile Phone App (86%), Digital TV (90%),

	Facebook (89%), Twitter (94%) and SMS Text Messaging (83%).
11C:	Across all channels, 16% of customers would now use a channel that they previously were not aware of for contacting the Council.
12A:	Many customers were not aware of the range of online services and 45% said that now they are aware of them, they would use them.
13A:	Customers agree that going online is a convenient way to contact the Council (74%) and they can deal with the Council when they want (75%).
13B:	Of those surveyed, 17% do not have access to the internet.
13C:	63% Customers don't agree it is a secure way to deal with a confidential matter and 72% do not want to discuss complicated matters online (72%)
13D:	60% do not feel that the services they require are online (though many were unaware of the services that are available).
13E:	59% of customers don't want to have register for online services
13F:	A high proportion of customers believe contacting the council by web takes too long (42%) and the services don't operate well enough (43%).
14A:	Better Broadband coverage was the clear priority for improving web services for with 53% of customers selecting it as their top priority and 82% overall selecting it in their top 3 priorities.
14B:	Single registration sign on (53%) and provision of Wi-Fi hotspots in main towns (50%) were customers' other web improvement priorities.
15A:	61% of customers want Service Points to open until 6pm one day per week
15B:	There was little desire to increase opening hours of Customer Service Centre (8%) or Service Points (1%) to 8am – 6pm
15C:	One outcome of the CSC Service Review was to close Service Points over lunchtime from 12:30 to 13:30. Only 12% of customers requested this be reversed.
16A:	Customers are agreeable to relocating Service Points in to other Council offices (80%) or co-locating with partner organisations (64%)
16B:	Replacing Service Points with video booths is not popular (18%)
16C:	Customers are fairly evenly split on stopping cash payments at Service Points (40% Yes / 60% No) and on reducing the number of Service Points (41% Yes / 59% No)
16D:	95% of customers do not wish Service Points to close
17A:	There was only 2% difference across four of the five options for what should be the Councils' customer contact priority.
17B:	Increased voice automation divided opinion receiving the joint highest percentage priority ranking (23%) but also the lowest priority percentage (31%)
17C:	As per question 15, there is little desire to increase opening hours of the CSC with only 13% putting this as their highest priority.
17D:	Improving interactive and mobile web services received the most high priority votes (23%), the least low priority votes (12%) and scored highest overall (21.2%)
18A:	Only 34% of customers are aware of the Customer Service Charter
18B:	97% of customers think it is important the Council has measurable standards, and 91% think it is important that these standards are published.
19A:	Many customers are happy with the existing standards (16 out of 40), although some feel that response times for email, letter and fax should be reduced; especially for simple enquiries.
19B:	Customers are interested in having new standards for complaints management, being

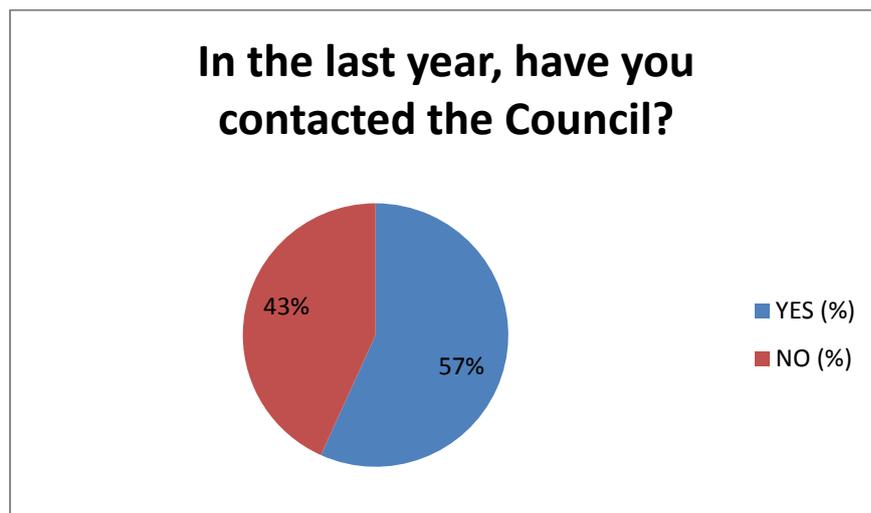
	able to find what they want on the web and on being informed of progress.
19C:	Customers are conscious of the difficulty for the Council to attain standards with reduced resource levels.
20A:	There were very low returns by the under 50s age group (1% for 18-30, 13% for 31-50).
20B:	More surveys were returned by customers aged 76+ (15%) than aged under50 (14%).
20C:	Returns were split fairly equally between male 45%, and female 55%.
20D:	OLI (18%) not as well represented as well as three other administrative areas (B&C 27%, MAKI 27%, H&L 28%).

3.1 Your Contact with the Council:

Q1: In the last year have you contacted the Council?

Results:

	2014 Survey	2008 Hexagon Survey	Difference
Yes	57%	68%	-9%
No	43%	32%	+9%



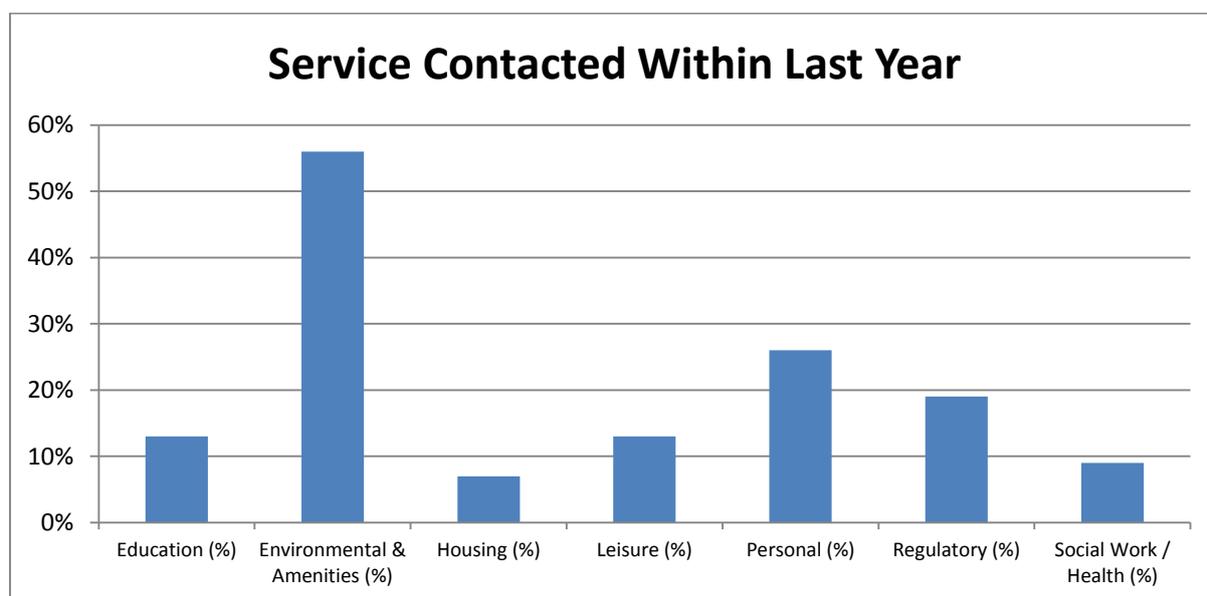
Key Findings:

1A:	The number of people surveyed that had contacted the Council within the last year has dropped by almost 10% from the 2008 survey.
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Q2: What services did you require or ask about when you were contacting the Council? Please tick all that apply.

Results:

SERVICE AREA	2014 Survey	2008 Survey	Difference
Education	13%	13%	0%
Environmental Services	56%	61%	-5%
Housing Services	7%	6%	+1%
Leisure Services	13%	16%	+3%
Personal Services (Council Tax, Registration, Benefits, etc.)	26%	22%	+4%
Regulatory Services (Licensing, Planning, Building Control, etc.)	19%	26%	-7%
Social Work/Health	9%	11%	-2%



Key Findings:

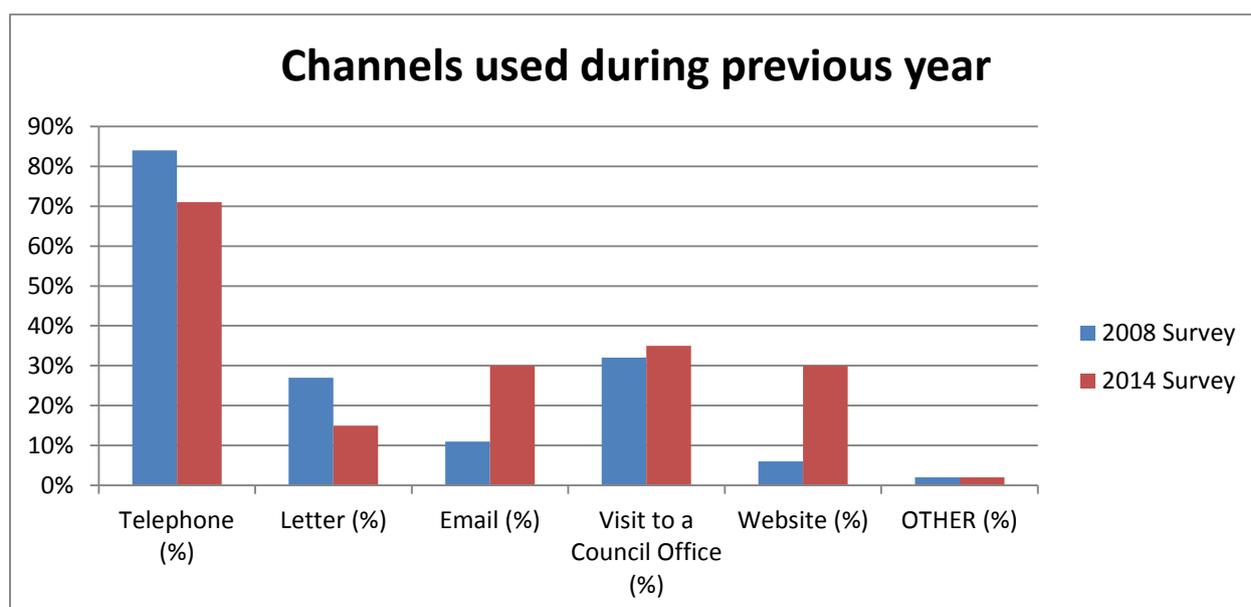
2A:	Environmental Services is still the most contacted service. Customer Services and Planning and Regulatory have switched 2 nd and 3 rd most popular contacted services..
2B:	There have been no large variations in contacts for any service area, but the reduced levels of building development probably accounts for lower levels of contacts to Planning and Regulatory whilst the benefit related activity is higher, hence more contacts to Customer Services.

Q3: Thinking about all your contacts with the Council in the last twelve months, which of these methods did you use? In the first column please tick all the methods used within the last year, and in the second column select the method you used most recently:

Results:

Method of contacts used in last year:

CHANNEL	2014 Survey	2008 Survey	Difference
Telephone	71%	84%	-13%
Letter	15%	27%	-12%
Email	30%	11%	+19%
Visit to a Council Office	35%	32%	+3%
Website	30%	6%	+24%
Other	1%	2%	-1%



Key Findings:

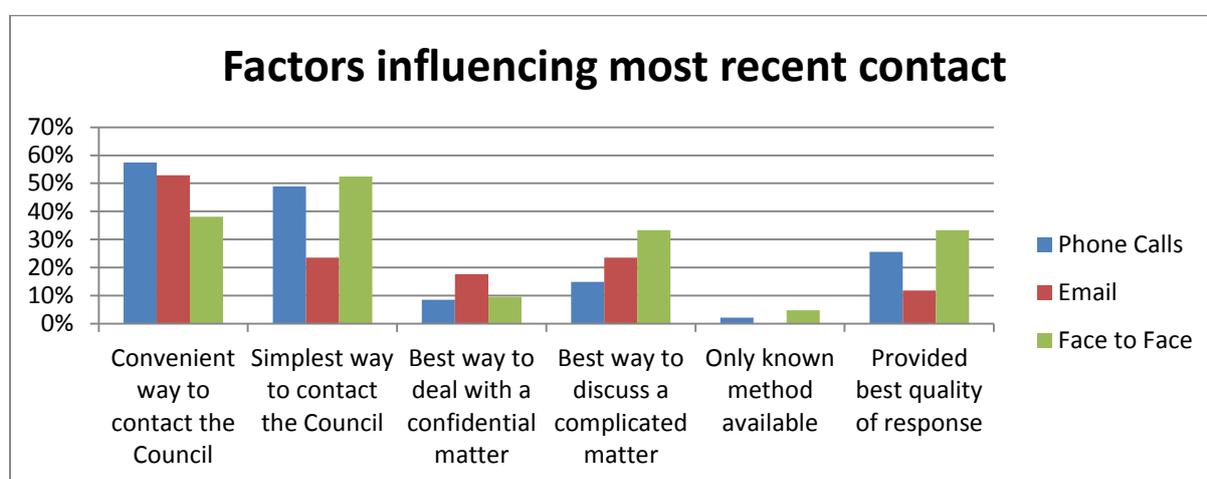
3A:	Phone is still the most popular channel, however, usage has dropped from 84% down to 71% of customers since the 2008 survey.
3B:	Customers writing letters has almost halved (27% down to 15%) since the 2008 survey.
3C:	Customers using email has almost trebled (11% to 30%) since the 2008 survey.
3D:	Use of the Council website has increased five-fold (6% to 30%) since the 2008 survey.
3E:	Face to Face contact is undiminished.

Q4: What factors influenced this most recent choice of contact method?

Please tick all that apply

Results:

	Phone	Email	Face to Face	Letter	Website
Convenient way to contact the Council	57%	53%	38%	60%	70%
Simplest way to contact the Council	49%	24%	52%	60%	70%
Best way to deal with a confidential matter	9%	18%	10%	20%	0%
Best way to discuss a complicated matter	15%	24%	33%	40%	0%
Only known method available	2%	0%	5%	0%	0%
Provided best quality of response	26%	12%	33%	0%	0%



Key Findings:

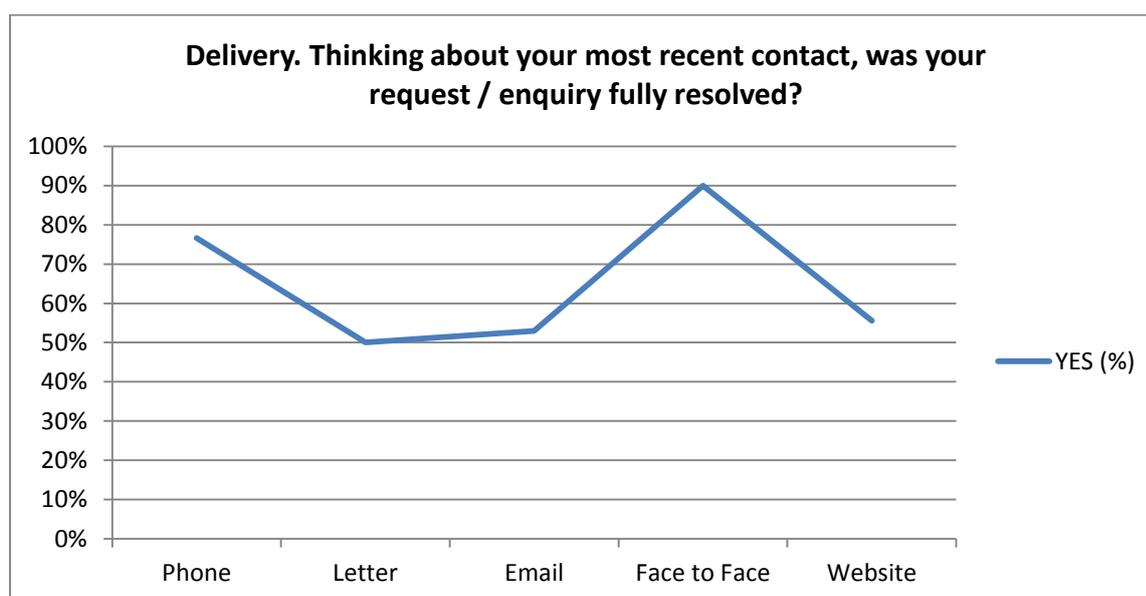
4A:	Customers tell us that they use the telephone phone as it is convenient (57%), simple (49%) and provides a good quality of response (26%).
4B:	Customers use email as it is convenient (53%) and the best way to discuss a complicated matter (24%)
4C:	Customers use Face to Face as it is simple (52%), the best way to discuss a complicated matter (33%) and of customers it is the only channel they know about.
4D:	The website scores highest for convenience and simplicity (70%).

3.2 Your Customer Service Experience

Q5: Delivery. Thinking about your most recent contact, was your request / enquiry fully resolved?

Results:

	Phone	Letter	Email	Face to Face	Website	OVERALL
Yes	77%	50%	53%	90%	56%	72%
No	23%	50%	47%	10%	44%	28%



Key Findings:

5A:	Face to Face delivers the highest service request resolution at 90%, followed by Phone at 77%
5B:	Overall 72% of customers' most recent enquiries were fully resolved
5C:	Letter (2), Email (9) and Website (5) are small sample sizes so no clear trends can be determined.

Q6-8: Experience (Timeliness, Information, Professional & Staff Attitude):

Results:

OVERALL SATISFACTION	PHONE	LETTER	EMAIL	FACE TO FACE	WEBSITE	OVERALL
Very Satisfied	51%	59%	12%	72%	24%	48%
Fairly Satisfied	30%	0%	26%	10%	31%	23%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	5%	25%	25%	7%	9%	10%
Fairly Dissatisfied	6%	16%	13%	2%	7%	7%

Very Dissatisfied	8%	0%	24%	9%	29%	12%
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Key Findings:

6A:	Face to Face (82%) and Phone (81%) have the highest customer satisfaction levels for overall contact experience.
6B:	Across all channels overall experience averaged 71% with 19% dissatisfied.
6C:	The poorest performing channel for experience is email (38% satisfied and 37% dissatisfied)

Q9: Satisfaction with Service

OVERALL SATISFACTION	PHONE	LETTER	EMAIL	FACE TO FACE	WEBSITE	OVERALL
Very Satisfied	62%	0%	11%	61%	19%	46%
Fairly Satisfied	14%	44%	29%	16%	38%	21%
Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	5%	33%	21%	3%	0%	8%
Fairly Dissatisfied	7%	11%	11%	5%	9%	8%
Very Dissatisfied	12%	11%	29%	16%	25%	17%

Key Findings:

9A:	Face to Face (77%) and Phone (78%) have the highest levels for satisfaction with service.
9B:	Across all channels overall satisfaction with service (experience and outcome) is 67% with 25% dissatisfied.
9C:	The poorest performing channel is email (40% satisfied and 40% dissatisfied)

Q10: Do you have any specific suggestions on how customer service and methods of contacting the Council should be improved in the future?

Results:

All 41 comments are detailed at **Appendix A**. A summary of comments are detailed below:

COMMENT TYPE	VOLUME
Easier to find correct contact details (phone or email)	2
Failure to respond and/or supply progress updates	10
Ensure service requests are completed	3
Improve phone systems	6
Suggestion relating to direct incident	6
More joined up working across Council departments	3
Improved staff training and/or availability	6

Miscellaneous	5
TOTAL	41

Key Findings:

10A:	The top priority for contact improvement is that customers want to be responded to and kept up to date with the progress of their enquiry when they contact the Council.
10B:	Another customer contact improvement priority is to be able to speak to the correct person that can answer their enquiry.

3.3 Your Views on Contacting the Council

Q11: The Council offers contact by a range of methods and these are listed below. Please tell us the ones you are aware of and which ones you would consider using:

Results:

CHANNEL	Aware of Channel		Would Use Channel	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Customer Service Points	59%	41%	77%	23%
Customer Service Centre	77%	23%	87%	13%
Voice Automation	24%	76%	19%	81%
Email	88%	12%	78%	22%
Website	93%	7%	76%	24%
Mobile Phone App	20%	80%	14%	86%
Digital TV	9%	91%	10%	90%
Facebook	31%	69%	11%	89%
Twitter	27%	73%	6%	94%
Text Service	17%	83%	17%	83%
General Enquiries Line	84%	16%	89%	11%

Of those that were unaware of a channel, the table below details the number that would use the channel and as a percentage of respondents previously unaware that would now use the channel:

CHANNEL	Now Aware of and Would Use Channel	Now Aware of and Would Use Channel (%)
Customer Service Points	81	47%
Customer Service Centre	61	60%
Voice Automation	25	9%
Email	26	50%
Website	6	20%
Mobile Phone App	32	10%
Digital TV	23	7%
Facebook	17	6%
Twitter	9	3%
Text Service	43	14%
General Enquiries Line	35	51%
TOTAL	358	16%

Key Findings:

11A:	More than three quarters of customers would use digital channels Email (78%) and Website (76%).
11B:	More than three quarters of customers surveyed say they would not use the following new media: Voice Automation (81%), Mobile Phone App (86%), Digital TV (90%), Facebook (89%), Twitter (94%) and SMS Text Messaging (83%).
11C:	Across all channels, 16% of customers would now use a channel that they previously were not aware of for contacting the Council.

Q12: The range of transactions that can be carried out on the Council website is detailed below. Please tell us the service you are aware of and if you would consider using them:

Results:

ONLINE SERVICE AREA	Aware of Online Service		Would Use Online Service	
	YES	NO	YES	NO
Making Payments	72%	28%	58%	42%
Library Services	52%	48%	54%	46%
Planning Portal	63%	37%	59%	41%
Report Issues	64%	36%	82%	18%
Request Council Services	62%	38%	76%	24%
Taking part in Consultations	47%	53%	57%	43%
Notification of Service Disruptions	55%	45%	75%	25%

Of those that were unaware of a service that is available online, the table below details the number that would use this service online and as a percentage of respondents previously unaware that would now use the channel:

ONLINE SERVICE AREA	Now Aware of and Would Use Online Service	Now Aware of and Would Use Online Service(%)
Making Payments	33	26%
Library Services	75	36%
Planning Portal	55	34%
Report Issues	108	65%
Request Council Services	96	58%
Taking part in Consultations	85	38%
Notification of Service Disruptions	107	55%

TOTAL	559	45%
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Key Findings:

12A:	Many customers were not aware of the range of online services and 45% said that now they are aware of them, they would use them.
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Q13: Please select whether you agree or disagree with the following statements regarding online service provided by the Council:

Results:

	AGREE	DISAGREE
Going online is a convenient way to contact the Council	74%	26%
I don't have the skills or confidence to use online services	24%	76%
Going online is the simplest way to contact the Council	41%	59%
I do not have access to the internet	17%	83%
I believe it is a secure way to deal with a confidential matter	37%	63%
I can deal with Council when I want, including out with normal opening hours	75%	25%
I don't want to discuss complicated matters online	72%	28%
I don't want to have to register for online services	59%	41%
It takes too long	42%	58%
The online services don't operate well enough	43%	57%
The services I require are provided online	60%	40%

Key Findings:

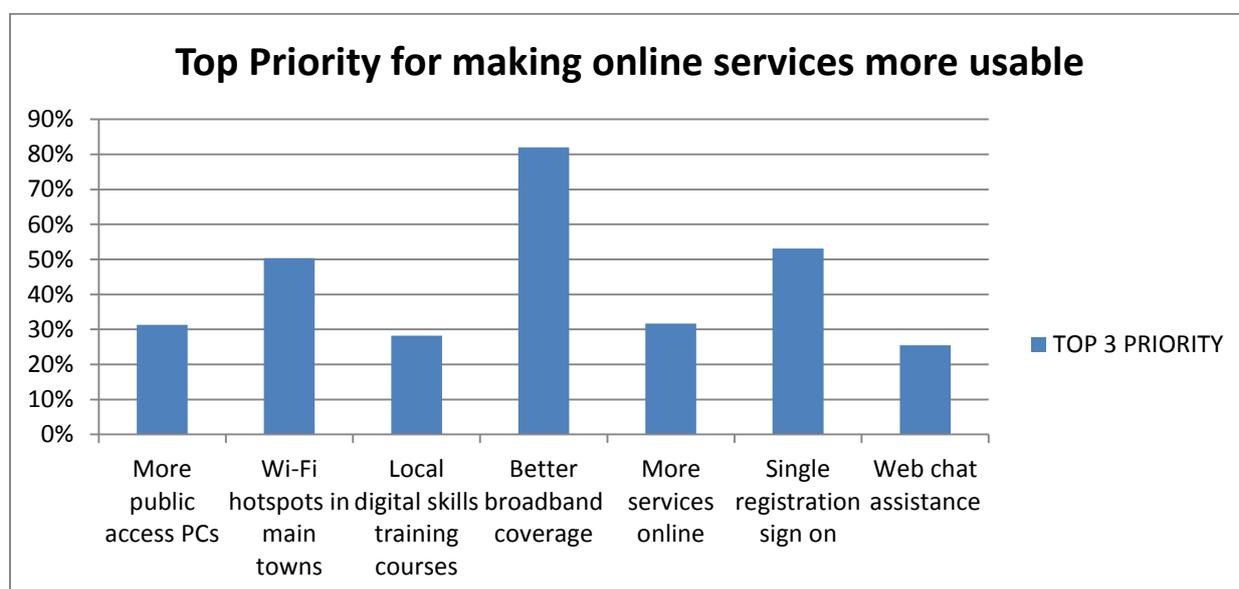
13A:	Customers agree that going online is a convenient way to contact the Council (74%) and they can deal with the Council when they want (75%).
13B:	Of those surveyed, 17% do not have access to the internet.
13C:	63% Customers don't agree it is a secure way to deal with a confidential matter and 72% do not want to discuss complicated matters online (72%)
13D:	60% do not feel that the services they require are online (though many were unaware of the services that are available).
13E:	59% of customers don't want to have register for online services
13F:	A high proportion of customers believe contacting the council by web takes too long (42%) and the services don't operate well enough (43%).

Q14: How could we make our online services more usable? Please rate your top 3, where 1 is your most desired option:

Results:

Only surveys where customers correctly marked their top three options with 1, 2 and 3 were included. To weight the priority of each selection, highest priority of 1 were multiplied by 3, those marked 2 were multiplied by 2 and those marked 3 were multiplied by 1.

	TOP PRIORITY – RANK 1	PRIORITY – RANK 1-3	WEIGHTED (%)
Provision of more public access PCs	8%	31%	9%
Provision of Wi-Fi hotspots in main towns	12%	50%	17%
Provision of local digital skills training courses	7%	28%	9%
Better broadband coverage	53%	82%	35%
Offering more services online	4%	32%	9%
A single registration sign on for all online services	11%	53%	15%
Offering web chat assistance	4%	26%	7%



Key Findings:

14A:	Better Broadband coverage was the clear priority for improving web services for with 53% of customers selecting it as their top priority and 82% overall selecting it in their top 3 priorities.
14B:	Single registration sign on (53%) and provision of Wi-Fi hotspots in main towns (50%) were customers’ other web improvement priorities.

Q15: The Customer Service Centre is open for telephone calls from 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday. The Customer Service Points in each main town are open from 9am to 5pm, Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and 10am to 5pm on Wednesdays. The Customer Service Points currently close for lunch between 12:30pm and 1:30pm every day.

Increasing the opening hours would incur the costs estimated below. Do you think the following changes would represent value for money?

Results:

INCREASED HOURS OPTION	YES	NO
All Customer Service Points opening until 6pm ONE day per week	61%	39%
Opening the Customer Service Centre for telephone calls on a Saturday morning from 9am – 12:30pm	28%	72%
Increasing opening hours at the Customer Service Centre for telephone calls from 8am to 6pm	8%	92%
Opening the Customer Service Points on a Saturday morning from 9am – 12:30pm	10%	90%
All Customer Service Points opening all day Monday to Friday from 9am to 5pm (including over lunchtime)	12%	88%
Increasing opening hours at Customer Service Points from 9am to 6pm	1%	99%

Key Findings:

15A:	61% of customers want Service Points to open until 6pm one day per week
15B:	There was little desire to increase opening hours of Customer Service Centre (8%) or Service Points (1%) to 8am – 6pm
15C:	One outcome of the CSC Service Review was to close Service Points over lunchtime from 12:30 to 13:30. Only 12% of customers requested this be reversed.

Q16: Other Councils have saved money by providing Face to Face services in a different way. Do you think the Council should consider any of the following options? Please tick all that apply:

Results:

FACE TO FACE DELIVERY OPTIONS	YES	NO
Relocating Customer Service Points into libraries or other Council offices	80%	20%
Co-locating with partner organisations (e.g. DWP, Post Office, NHS, Fire, Police, etc.)	64%	36%
Replacing Customer Service Points with interactive video booths at libraries or other Council offices linked to the Customer Service Centre	18%	82%
Stop taking <u>cash</u> payments at Customer Service Points – payments being made online, by telephone or at Post Office/Paypoints	40%	60%
Reducing the number of standalone Customer Service Points	41%	59%
Closing all Customer Service Points in favour of electronic channels	5%	95%

Key Findings:

16A:	Customers are agreeable to relocating Service Points in to other Council offices (80%) or co-locating with partner organisations (64%)
16B:	Replacing Service Points with video booths is not popular (18%)
16C:	Customers are fairly evenly split on stopping cash payments at Service Points (40% Yes / 60% No) and on reducing the number of Service Points (41% Yes / 59% No)
16D:	95% of customers do not wish Service Points to close

Q17: In the medium term what should be the Council's customer contact priorities? Please rate each of the following options from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest priority and 5 being the highest priority:

Results:

Only surveys where customers correctly marked their priorities 1 to 5 were evaluated. To weight the priority of each selection, highest priority of 5 were multiplied by 5, those marked 4 were multiplied by 4, etc.

	HIGHEST PRIORITY – RANK 5	LOWEST PRIORITY – RANK 1	WEIGHTED
Increased face to face services at Customer Service Points	21%	20%	19.9%
Increased voice automated 24/7 telephone services	23%	31%	18.9%
Increased opening hours for phone calls to the Customer	13%	19%	19.7%

Service Centre			
Improved interactive web and mobile web services	23%	12%	21.2%
Helping customers who struggle with digital services get online	20%	18%	20.4%

Key Findings:

17A:	There was only 2% difference across four of the five options for what should be the Councils' customer contact priority.
17B:	Increased voice automation divided opinion receiving the joint highest percentage priority ranking (23%) but also the lowest priority percentage (31%)
17C:	As per question 15, there is little desire to increase opening hours of the CSC with only 13% putting this as their highest priority.
17D:	Improving interactive and mobile web services received the most high priority votes (23%), the least low priority votes (12%) and scored highest overall (21.2%)

3.4 Customer Service Standards

Q18: Customer Service Standards:

Results:

	YES (%)	NO (%)
Are you aware of the Council's Customer Service Charter and the standards it contains?	34%	66%
Do you think it is important that the Council has measurable standards for Customer Services?	97%	3%
Do you think it is important that the Council publishes how it performs against the standards it sets?	91%	9%

Key Findings:

18A:	Only 34% of customers are aware of the Customer Service Charter
18B:	97% of customers think it is important the Council has measurable standards, and 91% think it is important that these standards are published.

Q19: Please tell us if you think any of the Charter standards are not appropriate, or if you think an alternative standard or pledge should be introduced:

Results:

All 40 comments are detailed at **Appendix B** (p39). A summary of comments are detailed below:

COMMENT TYPE	VOLUME
Happy with existing standards	16
Shorten existing timescales	6
Lengthen existing timescales	2
Alternative measurements / Improvements to existing measures	9
Reduced staffing levels / Difficulty attaining standards	3
Miscellaneous	4
TOTAL	40

Alternative Measures:

1. Easily find what they need on the Council website
2. Kept informed of progress
3. Complaints handling

Key Findings:

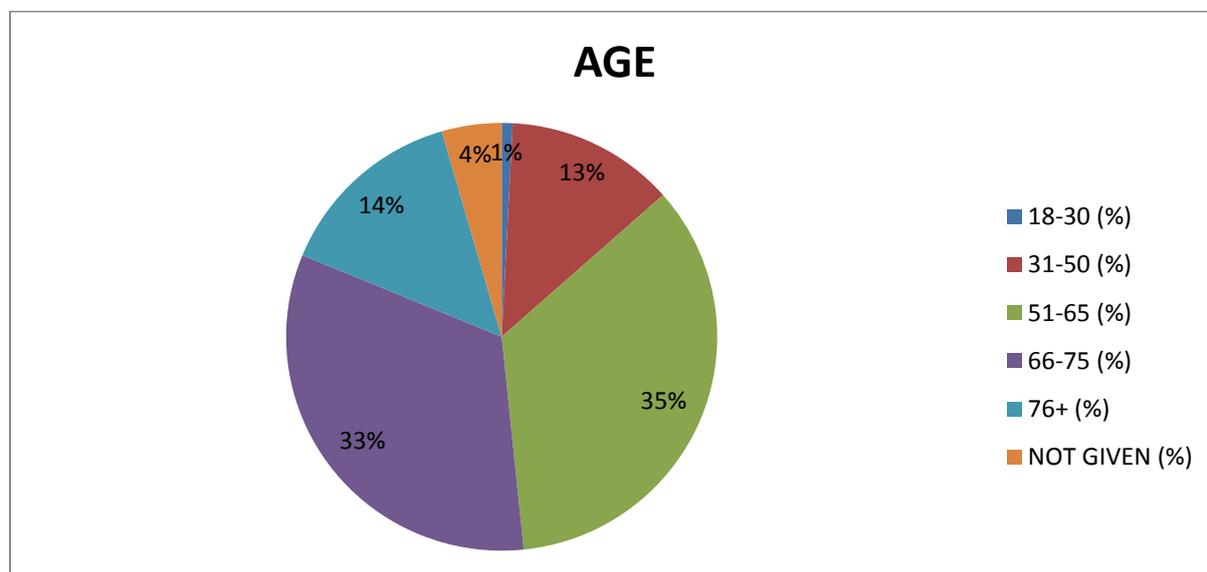
19A:	Many customers are happy with the existing standards (16 out of 40), although some feel that response times for email, letter and fax should be reduced; especially for simple enquiries.
19B:	Customers are interested in having new standards for complaints management, being able to find what they want on the web and on being informed of progress.
19C:	Customers are conscious of the difficulty for the Council to attain standards with reduced resource levels

Q20: The results of this survey are anonymous, however, it will help us to know what different groups of customers think about our customer service if you complete the following:

Results:

	MALE	FEMALE
GENDER	45%	55%

	18-30	31-50	51-65	66-75	76+
AGE	1%	13%	37%	34%	15%



	B&C	H&L	MAKI	OLI
LOCATION	27%	28%	27%	18%

Key Findings:

20A:	There were very low returns by the under 50s age group (1% for 18-30, 13% for 31-50).
20B:	More surveys were returned by customers aged 76+ (15%) than aged under50 (14%).
20C:	Returns were split fairly equally between male 45%, and female 55%.
20D:	OLI (18%) not as well represented as well as three other administrative areas (B&C 27%, MAKI 27%, H&L 28%).

Recommendations and Actions

No.	ACTION/RECOMMENDATION
1	Our main focus has been on developing and improving the Council website. It is clear that we need to refocus some of our efforts to email handling. From the survey, 30% of customers had used both email and the website to contact the Council within the last year. The satisfaction levels for email were poor with just 38% satisfied with the experience and 40% satisfied with the service.
2	Customers recommended improving customer service by ensuring that they are kept up to date with progress. The procedures set up for giving customers progress updates also require to be reviewed and improved.
3	The survey confirmed that more people (76%), are using email and the council website to contact the Council. This is a firm starting point for the new Digital First programme, especially as improving interactive and mobile web services scored highest on where the Council should be focusing their efforts. Customers have identified areas of the website that should be improved e.g. offering more services, improving existing functionality, adding single sign on registration and making people aware of the services that are available.
4	The age demographic of survey respondents decreased the probability of high desire for new channels and this was reflected in the results. Focus and effort on improving new channels should still be continued as they are more likely to be adopted by the younger demographic who were not well represented in the survey.
5	It is clear that customers are not aware of all channels available to them. More must be done to publicise and raise awareness of available channels and their capabilities.
7	The website must ensure it has high levels of authentication and encryption as required across the site. This must be clearly and simply displayed to customers to improve their understanding and increase their faith in the security and confidentiality of the site.

8	Customers do wish a single sign on for the website rather than the current set up of different sign ons for different parts of the site. The work underway with Improvement Service to provide a national single sign on must be continued to deliver this requirement.
9	The desire for better broadband is clear and the while this is a national issue, it may be worth exploring what return in broadband coverage could be leveraged from council specific coverage.
10	The only popular option for extending Customer Service Centre or Customer Service Point access is opening from 9am - 6pm one day per week. This should perhaps be piloted to establish true demand.
11	Customers still want to contact the Council Face to Face. If in the future there is a requirement to make savings across the network of Service Points, this should be achieved by creating efficiencies from relocating to other Council offices or co-locating with partner organisations, which found favour with a majority of respondents.
12	There is a desire from customers for Voice Automation improvements and this channel should continue to be developed as the technology improves. There is, however, some dislike of this channel therefore it should only be developed as part of a multi-channel solution.
13	The Customer Service Charter requires to be updated in line with some of the alternatives given in the survey. It must be publicised more to raise awareness and performance of the Council against the measures must be reported on.
16	The demographic makeup of the Citizens Panel requires to be reviewed as the results from this survey are not representative of the area. The Council must also identify better ways of engaging with the 18-30 and 31-50 age groups.

Appendix A – Customer Comments

Q10: Do you have any specific suggestions on how customer service and methods of contacting the Council should be improved in the future?

You should be up to date with yourselves

Please answer all emails, even if you can't help

Communication was a 1 way street i.e. me -> the Council. I had no idea they were going to do this thing I'd asked them to do. They did it without informing me they were going to do it or when they were going to do it.

Would prefer telephone call should be answered by a staff member. Not automatic selection of department on offer

Train staff in customer relations and not to be high handed when dealing with public

Follow up timeliness / getting back to you dependant on individual person you get. Some great, some slow and need reminding

Don't say someone will call unless it is known they will. Don't offer clearance service if NOT going to be provided. Answer phone within 20 rings NOT 5 minutes!!!!

More direct phone lines

I twice in the past telephoned regarding recycling collection. I was told someone in the correct department would phone back. They never did. Perhaps whatever method is used to contact the council a reply should be made where appropriate. I would be unlikely to contact eh council again unless absolutely necessary.

Revisit how charges are graded for uplifts e.g. sliding scale relating how difficult/time consuming the job is and then charge as appropriate.

It's not the contacting its getting the results

Staff should be allowed to smile and speed up responses

No contact was made me directly re my road complaint - I have had no response when I chased it up.

Not at this time

List of email addresses for specific enquiries

By ensuring that list of telephone numbers and email addresses are given to households.

Contact customer with an update

Simplify searching for planning applications by making it easy to search via multiple criteria

For members of staff to return calls when promised and to give accurate information to questions asked.

Have sufficient people available to answer queries at first time of asking.

The Council often do not reply to letters but the requested action detailed in the letter does take place.

Phone system should be simplified to direct to correct department and more availability of staff if possible.

I may have contacted the wrong person or the wrong department but surely one of them could have had the decency to advise me, Instead my enquiry was totally ignored.

*Yes you are as guilty as the Council in describing us as customers. Customers have a choice of providers. Tax payers do not. We are **Tax Payers.***

Response to emails normally is "I am out of the office etc.". And emails are therefore a waste of effort and this particularly where Community Council questions require a speedy response and urgent personal questions similarly. The filling out of surveys is long winded and rarely generates a response e.g. Core Paths.

Initial contact to take all details and then have appropriate person contact customer within 1 hour. Not pass you from one department to another. Have staff accept their responsibility and act correctly. Not pass the buck hoping you will go away. I had to do Social Work work for them.

I had 2 problems with my Planning application. 1) Phone calls were sent from a withheld number which we do not receive. One of the documents sent to us was badly laid out. Consequently we filled it on incorrectly. Subsequent phone calls established that this was already recognised as a problem. No one appeared to be able to make the necessary very simple changes to the document.

Improve online booking system

Telephone calls can take a long time to answer and may not feed through to required department messages not best way of contact

If not a straight forward enquiry they should get back to you.

When contacting by telephone, it is difficult to find a phone number dealing with local enquiries.

All too often the one specific individual responsible for taking action on an issue is not available

There is no point having improved methods of communication if the council still don't deal with the issue you're raising.

It took two visits and quite a long time before the alarm system was installed in the house. This was done without the paper work being filled in. I tried to pay for the system by direct debit and filled in two forms to get this done. I received demands to pay so I went to the council office and I believe the matter is now sorted out. The staff on this occasion was very helpful.

Please see comments at Q4. Rather than being passed from one department to the other I would much rather find the local number online and call direct. I was totally satisfied with Trading Standards once I finally got there. As mentioned, I've called to several departments over the year and each time the same thing happened. Please go back to contacting offices/departments directly.

No - quality of response has improved significantly over last 2 or 3 years

I would have thought the starting of a puppy farm in a residential area would require change of use or at least some planning permission.

Straight forward direct to correct department although press button good redirected if person not available or offline very frustrating due to time required to go through process several time before get correct person.

Telephone and or personal contact is preferred for most enquiries.

Matters could be resolved quicker

Ease to speak to someone appropriate is essential. Not reliant on having or access to a computer. Really best to have local contact.

I like to speak to someone with local knowledge. I don't think someone in Helensburgh would have had sufficient local knowledge to deal with an island related enquiry.

Employing more staff. Staff are always rushed off their feet

Q19: Please tell us if you think any of the Charter standards are not appropriate, or if you think an alternative standard or pledge should be introduced:

Too hard a standard for your calls answered within 20 seconds. Don't mind waiting a little longer

All seem good

Wasn't aware of charter standards

I have completed this from a personal viewpoint and do appreciate that for the vast majority of people modern technology is the most appropriate method of communication, but there are other people like me - and older - who prefer more 'old fashioned' ways of communicating. So until we are all gone I think it should still be an option.

I think they are sufficient and appropriate.

Find all Charter standards most appropriate

I think everything is covered all entirely appropriate.

I think the polite, friendly, professional should apply to all methods of contact including email.

The website is over complicated. Information is hidden and requires persistence to find what you require.

All seem satisfactory

I think charter standards are appropriate

All seem appropriate

10 days to answer for full response to simple email - not really acceptable. Should be much shorter.

The only appropriate ones are those that can be accurately measured - time taken for example. "polite, friendly, professional" is intangible and subjective and is meaningless here.

As long as its achievable it seems fine.

Surely a phone can ring for more than 20 second? How do these relate to, for example, schools? Do they have their own charter?

The current charter seems appropriate

Clear distinct speech

Sorry I could not answer many of your questions as I don't have a computer

The most important thing is a timely response and continuing progress reports on how a matter is being resolved. Non-communication when something is delayed, or proves difficult is not acceptable.

I think that contacting the Council offices should be a local rate number. I live in Campbeltown and it is expensive to call Kilmory during working hours.

15/20 days to reply to a letter is too long! With regards to giving names I was told recently by a member of staff (female) that they were not prepared to give out full names

Reduce response times for enquiries by letter, email or fax. 10 and 20 days is too long

The charter standards are excellent. Everyone employed must be suitably trained, and trusted to keep up standards.

Most of them are common decency, and should be expected without any charter stating them. The Council is setting itself up to fail by publishing some of these.

Timescales not strict enough. 2 weeks to reply to a simple query! Queries are normally holding up action e.g. important decisions people have to make. Thrown in bank holidays, a simple query could take 3 weeks.

Appropriate

All the standards are appropriate and simple courtesy expected.

The charter is bureaucratic gobbledygook. It is sufficient the Council does its job properly

Reduce time for contact by letter email or fax. Some of which have in recent times been excessively long - some by return which is app???? and normally very important otherwise why does one write to the Council

I agree with the charter standards. Over the years I have always found staff to be polite, friendly and professional.

They are appropriate. All you need is for all staff to comply.

"Answer calls within 20 secs" - this needs attention. "Letter/email/fax" acknowledge enquiry within 2 working day" - too slow - 24 hours

Contact by telephone: "Always ensure a suitable, qualified representative, or an alternative person, is available to resolve your query there and then."

If the charter is not being met, have someone to whom a complaint can be directed.

Example - Dolphin Hall offices, Dunoon. No reception desk. A telephone on the wall with a list of phone extension numbers beside it. There is a window for the homeless departments there that could answer and they could dial the extension number. My parents are elderly and couldn't understand what they had to do. They came for me and I had to go with them to contact the appropriate department. There was a reception desk there before but was taken away. The elderly don't want computers etc. They want to see a person when they contact the Council.

Appropriate but level of staffing make or put unrealistic pressure on staff to achieve. See a culture of bullying and fear among Council staff developing due to this pressure.

Some Council departments have fewer admin workers than before - how are they to answer all calls within the same timeframes?

Charter is acceptable

The standards listed are precise and to the point providing all are adhered to it will work well