

CITIZEN LED INSPECTION

FEEDBACK REPORT FOR WEST LoTHIAN COUNCIL

CUSTOMER SERVICE CENTRE

MARCH 2013

INSPECTION TEAM:

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REPORT SUBMITTED TO:

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A. Introduction to the inspection feedback report

A.1. This report has been produced following an inspection of the Customer Service Centre (CSC) in West Lothian Council, using the Citizen Led Inspection framework and the associated framework rating system.

A.2. The inspection process began with an introduction in December 2012. Documentary evidence considered by the team comprised:

- an overview of the CSC including its activity budget, actions, customer service schedule and key performance indicators.
- CSC performance report (December 2012 and March 2013) from the *Covalent* system
- CSC guide to call standards and call evaluation monitoring
- report of 'rapid improvement event' on repairs reporting (February 2012) and progress report (December 2012)
- CSC customer survey information (October – December 2012)
- complaints (July – December 2012)
- tele-talk calls statistical data (April – December 2012)

A.3. Further primary evidence was gathered over 4 weeks in January 2013 by means of:

- observation of call handling in all teams, both during the day and in the evening
- listening in to calls, both during the day and in the evening
- interviews with 6 Advisers (selected by the inspection team to ensure representation from CSC's generic, revenues and repairs teams, plus Careline; consideration was also given to length of service)
- interviews with CSC trainers, resolvers and all CSC team managers
- questionnaire for all CSC staff (24 responses received)
- interviews with Anna Brash, Karen Cawte and Steve Field
- interviews with representatives of 7 Council services which are CSC 'customers'
- 'mystery shopper' calls.

A.4. The inspection team comprised:

- Mrs A Anderson
- Mr I Fowell
- Mrs G Grant
- Mr R Wilson

A.5. Mr D Nichol was a member of the team at the start of the inspection, but unfortunately had to leave part way through due to personal circumstances.

A.6. During the inspection process every effort has been made by the team to ensure that conclusions and feedback are based on fact and are the result of consensus.

B. Key strengths

B.1. The Customer Service Centre has demonstrated good practice/performance in the following areas:

- enthusiastic staff with strong commitment to excellent customer service
- provides service for 24 hours every day of the week
- high level of staff knowledge and expertise
- customers say Advisers are friendly, courteous and knowledgeable
- staff performance is measured, both individually and for the service as a whole
- there are plans for the continuing development of the service
- considerable importance is given to staff training
- the 'resolver' role is instrumental in resolving difficulties and promoting customer care
- particularly good working relationships have been established with some Council services
- the CSC reduces overheads by supporting external agencies out-of-hours
- arrangements are in place to provide continuity of service in an emergency

C. Key areas for improvement

C.1. The Customer Service Centre requires improvement in the following areas:

- more consistent mutual understanding with Council services of each other's roles and better working relationships
- front line management helped to move beyond day-to-day management and 'firefighting' to address longer term management goals
- greater use of the staff review system (PRPDP), 1-1 meetings and the development of a CSC training plan
- greater priority given to call monitoring and its positive use for staff
- improved staff morale and the work of the CSC held in higher esteem (opportunities to address these matters arise with the move to the Civic Centre, and also to improve working relationships with Council services, and inform the public of the extent and availability of the service)
- integration of computer systems to avoid duplication of effort or manual transfer of information between systems
- changes to the telephone system to reduce delay in getting through to an Adviser, keep the customer informed if they are kept waiting, inform the Adviser how long the customer has been waiting, and improve the customer experience (opportunities exist with the introduction of the new telephone system)
- discontinue tele-talk since there are other means of communication from customers, or direct it to the CIS

D. Ratings

D.1. The Citizen Inspection team was very impressed with the Customer Service Centre. The team felt that the 24-hour-a-day availability of the service, the extent of knowledge of the Advisers and the quality of their response far exceeded the service provided by many other public authorities. However, the need for improvements to the systems used, front line management, and cooperation from/with other Council services has reduced the overall score for each of the following criteria.

D.2. The inspection team has provided numerical values to more clearly reflect their views, and has rated the service as follows:

Criterion	Rating (✓)				
	<u>E</u> (Excellent) 9 - 10	<u>G</u> (Good) 7 - 8	<u>A</u> (Adequate) 5 - 6	<u>W</u> (Weak) 3 - 4	<u>U</u> (Unsatisfactory) 1 - 2
1 Leadership		8			
2 Service Planning		8			
3 People Resources		7			
4 Partners & Other Resources		7 (*see text)			
5 Service Processes		7			
6 Customer Results		7			
7 Key Results		8			

E. Overview of the service

(1) Leadership

E.1. Summary:

- strong commitment of managers to customer service
- clear vision of the role of the service and its future direction
- open and approachable management
- Advisers are accountable to several front line managers
- some Advisers feel unsupported and distanced from management

E.2. The inspection team found CSC management, at all levels, to be open and approachable, and very willing to cooperate fully with the inspection. Managers promoted a strong ethos of high quality customer service, and systems were in place to promote consistency of service and high levels of staff skill and knowledge. Appropriate performance indicators were regularly reported to managers and Councillors.

E.3. Middle and senior managers have a clear vision for the service, and its particular role in being one of the primary points of contact between the council and its customers. They have plans for development of the service, with the imminent introduction of an enhanced telephone system and the move of the CSC team to be located in the Civic Centre. There is evidence that problem areas are identified and addressed.

E.4. Many of the front line managers have responsibilities which are wider than their own teams and cover the whole CSC, such as performance management and being duty manager. As a result, Advisers can receive management instruction or advice not just from the manager of their own team, but also from the duty manager of the day, the performance manager or a trainer. This, together with the lack of planned routine contact between Adviser and front line manager, means that some Advisers feel distanced from management and unsupported.

E.5. The inspection team was informed that the management structure within the CSC is under consideration at present, and the team hopes that the review will effectively address the lack of clarity in the management structure and other issues of front line management, particularly span of control, team identity, staff support and supervision, and staff morale. Consideration should also be given to additional leadership and team building training for frontline managers.

Rating: GOOD (8)

(2) Service planning

E.6. Summary:

- good service planning at a strategic level
- plans and strategies are strongly customer focused
- implementation of improvement plans have suffered delays
- the CSC is not always informed by other Council services of mailings or changes in policy which would affect them

E.7. There is substantial evidence of service planning at a strategic level – the CSC is about to move to the Civic Centre, where it will use a new, modern telephone system. Both these changes are significant for the service, with considerable potential for service difficulty or failure. Service management is clear about the purpose and advantages of these changes, and the transition appears to be well planned, with allowances for contingencies and anticipated pitfalls. It was noted that the timescales for the implementation of developments had slipped (e.g., the introduction of the new telephone system; actions arising from the rapid improvement event) though this was not always in the direct control of the CSC.

E.8. The inspection team was not aware of an annual plan for the CSC, as such, but it was clear that managers were aware of additional pressures at particular times of year (e.g., council mailings, bad weather, etc) and had established plans to cope with them. CSC managers made the point that other council services do not always tell them of new developments or mass mailings which might have an impact on the CSC, and they cannot plan for events they are not told about.

E.9. During the period of the inspection, briefing sessions were held to train/brief CSC staff on changes in a particular council policy. While it is recognised that releasing staff to attend such sessions has operational implications, the inspection team recognises the value of such briefings and considers that similar briefing sessions once or twice a year to consider the CSC operational plan and future direction, or to consider significant changes such as the move to the Civic Centre, could do much to engage staff in the development of the CSC and promote dialogue between CSC Advisers and managers.

Rating: GOOD (8)

(3) People resources

E.10. Summary:

- enthusiastic staff with strong commitment to excellent customer service
- 2 modern apprenticeships offered
- dedicated trainers to ensure consistency and high level of skill and knowledge
- robust induction training
- commitment to continuing training for all Advisers, but lack of systematic training plan
- front line managers are firefighting to cope with day-to-day pressures, at the expense of medium and long-term management
- staff appraisal meetings, and 1-1 meetings between Adviser and manager, do not take place regularly and consistently
- call monitoring system takes place for quality assurance purposes, but could be more extensively utilised with more positive outcomes
- low staff morale among some staff
- feeling that work of the CSC is not valued by services or the council

E.11. **Overview:** The staff of the CSC, both Advisers and managers, are the major resource of the CSC and are crucial to its success. The inspection team found the staff to be very enthusiastic about their work, with a strong commitment to providing excellent customer service. There was a strong feeling of professionalism amongst the staff, and the inspection team was very impressed by the breadth and depth of Advisers' knowledge and the level of information they could impart to customers. It was also good to see that the CSC is providing two 'modern apprenticeship' places, with the postholders working towards an SVQ in customer care.

E.12. **Management:** Front line managers similarly have a strong commitment to high quality customer care and consistency of service. However, the inspection team found that front line managers focussed primarily on day-to-day operational matters, dealing with the pressures of a very busy contact centre, and had little time for medium and long-term staff management. Consequently, for example, 1 to 1 meetings with staff and the council's staff review system (PRPDP) were not undertaken regularly, if at all, although the team was advised that all staff were to have their PRPDP completed by the end of March. It was noted that the number of Advisers had increased during the previous 12 months, without a commensurate increase in front line managers.

E.13. **Training:** The CSC has two dedicated trainers, to ensure all Advisers are skilled and well informed and can provide a consistently high quality of service. They provide a robust induction for new staff, with a 3-4 week period of teaching and 'on the job' training beside an experienced Adviser in order to gain sufficient experience and confidence to work alone. There is also a commitment to the ongoing training of all Advisers, whatever their level of experience, to keep them up-to-date about changes in council services and other matters which might be relevant to customers.

- E.14. However, the systems for ongoing training could be improved. On a day-to-day basis new information is imparted to Advisers by email and there is a 'did you know?' process to impart key facts of interest to Advisers and customers. In addition, individual Advisers can be selected to undertake further training in particular areas, if considered necessary, or, as indicated in the Service planning sub-section (E.9.), staff can be taken 'off the floor' for a service briefing on significant changes in policy or procedure.
- E.15. Advisers appear to cope with the daily bombardment of emails containing new information in their own way – most appear to try to absorb the information into the knowledge bank in their heads, and/or file the emails in a way which is available for easy reference – and it might be helpful if a central reference system were established to hold key service information. More significantly, however, the lack of completed staff reviews means that there is no overview of training needs nor a training plan for the CSC as a whole. The inspection team recommends that this be addressed as a priority when the present round of PRPDP meetings is completed by the end of March.
- E.16. **Performance management:** Consistency and quality of the service provided by the CSC is seen to be of high importance, and Advisers are aware of the standard of customer care expected of them. All calls are recorded for quality control purposes. The Team Manager (Performance) listens to recorded calls and assesses the quality of the Adviser's response against a set schedule. Recorded calls are also available to Advisers' own team managers and to the Advisers themselves, if they wish to review a particular call, or seek advice on its handling. However, it was apparent that the day to day pressures were such that team managers rarely listened to calls taken by their staff, and the Team Manager (Performance) is unable to listen to the target number of calls per member of staff. The inspection team concluded that calls *are* being monitored and feedback *is* being given to Advisers, but at a lower volume than the CSC's internal standard. Greater management time and emphasis on call monitoring would not only improve the volume of calls monitored, but could also make it of more positive benefit to staff.
- E.17. The work of CSC staff is closely monitored on a minute-by-minute basis, and Advisers can be simultaneously accountable to a wide range of managers or other staff (see E.4.). This 'micromanagement' and constant workload of calls, voicemail and emails left some Advisers feeling isolated, with little opportunity for team building. The inspection team found evidence of peer support, with Advisers helping each other and sharing information, but some Advisers said they were discouraged from advising a colleague over an enquiry, and indicated any queries should be addressed to a trainer or a manager.
- E.18. **Organisation:** The CSC is organised into 4 teams – Careline, revenues and benefits, repairs, and generic – and there has clearly been debate for and against that team structure over the years. The debate is still current, as during the inspection it was suggested the revenues and benefits team and the repairs teams should be located in the finance and repairs services respectively, while at the same time one of the

conclusions of the rapid improvement event into repairs is that the repairs and generic teams be combined.

- E.19. The inspection team can see pros and cons in both approaches, but considers that the present strong ethos of good customer care and the ability to cope with peaks in customer demand would be better maintained if the CSC took all the relevant calls and only referred particularly complex or specialist matters to the service concerned (as is the practice with several services at present). The inspection team considered the advantages of integrating the work of all the CSC teams, but recognises the particular reasons why Careline and revenues and benefits calls should go to particular staff (namely, confidentiality, specialist knowledge, accreditation), while those staff continue to take generic and repairs calls overnight and during the day as demand requires.
- E.20. The inspection team is less convinced by an argument for separate repairs and generic teams, particularly when the generic team presently deals with all repairs calls outside Monday to Friday 08:30 to 17:00 and the CIS services in council offices across West Lothian deals with repairs referrals within working hours. It is recognised that there have been errors and inefficiencies in the repairs service in the past (see E.37) but the inspection team has no evidence this is presently the result of the CSC making errors in handling the customer's call. The inspection team is therefore of the view that there is no need for separate generic and repairs teams, especially if Advisers were supported by an effective expert 'repairs finder' system, and any particularly complex repairs were referred on to the repairs service.
- E.21. **Morale:** While it was clear that many Advisers had a strong commitment to their work and the CSC, there was low staff morale amongst some others. Across the staff of the CSC there was a general feeling of not being appreciated by the staff of other council services, and possibly by the council as a whole, and that other services treated them as 'just the switchboard'. This is clearly regrettable when the CSC plays such a key role in presenting the public face of the council and taking workload pressure off council services.
- E.22. The inspection team suggests that, with the forthcoming move to the Civic Centre, an opportunity exists to improve morale by publicly 'welcoming' the CSC to the Civic Centre and reinforcing for them and other council services the key role they play at the forefront of the council's contact with its customers.

Rating: GOOD (7)

(4) Partners and other resources

E.23. Summary:

- provides 24 hour, 7 day a week service for most call types, thus providing a significantly more extensive period of service than could be provided by individual council services
- serves to relieve council services from customer call volumes
- provides service to external agencies out of hours
- feeling of separation between the CSC and the council services it supports
- services do not always keep the CSC informed of significant developments
- staff in other services do not appear to understand what the CSC does, or value the work of the CSC done on their behalf
- there is potential capacity to offer an out of hours service to other external agencies, with associated income generation opportunities
- there is an opportunity to improve the visibility of the CSC when it moves to Civic Centre and to promote closer working with other council services
- the council's Management Team, as well as service representatives, could visit the CSC and listen in to calls to better appreciate the role undertaken by the CSC

E.24. The CSC exists to support other council services and, whether it is taking referrals for services, passing on information to customers or dealing with difficult calls, everything it does is on behalf of other council services. Both on the telephone and online, the CSC is the public 'face' of the council. It relieves services from a 'bombardment' of calls, particularly during periods of bad weather or when mass mailings have been sent out, and so allows staff in the individual services to concentrate on their other work.

E.25. Many of the service representatives interviewed by the inspection team were well aware of the work of the CSC and the call volumes taken on their behalf. Several said that their service could not cope with the increase in call volumes if the CSC did not exist, and other work would be neglected. However, a number of Advisers informed us that the same level of understanding and appreciation is not held by all staff in other services. Advisers reported a 'them and us' attitude was apparent from many services, with a lack of cooperation if the CSC asked the service for information or clarification of an issue, and a feeling of resentment if a call had to be transferred to the service because (say) it was particularly complex. This is clearly not helpful when the CSC is the primary, or at least a significant, point of contact for many of the services' customers.

E.26. The inspection team considers that, with the forthcoming move of the CSC to the Civic Centre, an opportunity exists for the relationship between the CSC and council services to be improved, with better formal and informal contact and an opportunity for relevant service staff to visit the CSC and listen to calls to better understand what the CSC is doing on their behalf.

- E.27. The CSC can operate most effectively if Advisers are kept up to date with changes in Council service and new developments. While new information is frequently disseminated round the CSC, many staff told us there were too many times when significant information was not conveyed to them in advance. The inspection team heard of an Adviser who scours the local paper each week to read what announcements are being made by the council, and of a service which sent out a mass mailing with the CSC contact number at the top of the letter without informing the CSC.
- E.28. A significant example of a change in system having an impact on the CSC is the introduction of the council's new revenues and benefits finance system. The inspection team has concerns about the impact on staff workload and delayed income to the council caused by delays in the introduction of this system, but recognises that these issues lie outwith the scope of this inspection. Whatever the issues behind the introduction of this system, the delay in its introduction resulted in an increase in calls to the CSC and a backlog of work which is still being worked through. Services should be encouraged to 'think CSC' when making a change to their service, or issuing a press release, and advising them of the implications. It would also be relatively simple to email the CSC a copy of the council's Bulletin before it is published to customers.
- E.29. The CSC provides a service '24/7', which is essential to cover the Careline system, access to emergency roads or housing repairs staff, etc. Providing a staffed service overnight and throughout the weekend carries significant cost overheads. The inspection team was pleased to hear that the council reduces these overheads by providing a service to external agencies (e.g. Careline supporting Housing Association tenants; survey undertaken for West Lothian College), and that during the 'quiet' hours overnight some routine paperwork and updating of systems is done. However, the team wonders whether more external work could be taken on to reduce overheads further and to utilise any spare capacity when call volumes are naturally lower.
- E.30. (*) It is difficult to provide a single rating for this section. The inspection team considers that the CSC provides an excellent service to the council services, within the constraints of the information provided to it (rating 'excellent' - 9). However, there are clearly some weaknesses in the relationship with services, and the service to customers would be greatly improved if services kept the CSC informed of changes in service, and were more readily willing to accept the transfer of calls which were particularly complex or required a specialist response (rating 'poor' - 4). Consequently, this section has been rated as 'good'.

Rating: GOOD (7)

(5) Service processes

E.31. Summary:

- systems are designed to provide excellent customer service
- multiplicity of council computer systems which do not speak to each other
- CSC manually processes email referrals and online forms from one system to another
- improvements to ICT systems, greater integration of systems and changes to computer down time would save staff time and improve efficiency
- 'resolver' role successfully deals with difficult issues and reduces formal complaints
- repairs issues continue to give rise to higher levels of customer dissatisfaction
- introduction of new telephone system provides an opportunity to improve the customer experience before they get through to an Adviser
- tele-talk should be reviewed and discontinued, or transferred to the CIS service
- arrangements exist for resilience of CSC and Careline in an emergency, but should be tested in practice

E.32. Advisers have access to a range of systems which are geared to providing excellent customer service. The CSC deals with all 'general' incoming contact from customers (i.e., not directed to a particular individual or service), whether by telephone, email or internet enquiry form. The customer relationship management (CRM) system is designed to pull together all the information about a customer, so that the Adviser can see at a glance what enquiries are current or have been made previously. Advisers also have access to (some) service systems (e.g., CONFIRM) so can see what stage a job has reached or whether it has been completed.

E.33. However, the computer systems they use are not well integrated, resulting in inefficient use of Adviser time. Specific examples are that the council uses a variety of databases with customer information which do not 'talk' to each other, so a simple change to customer details requires Advisers to enter the same change on a number of systems, leading to duplication of effort and the potential for error or omission. Emails and several online forms are received electronically but need to be entered in to the council's service systems manually for them to be actioned, so Advisers are effectively transferring requests for service from one electronic format to another without necessarily adding value. An online form is sent to the CSC from an internal 'do not reply' council email address, so a response sent via the 'reply' button does not reach the customer. Email referrals and online forms can also set up new customer records on the CRM system, leading to multiple entries for the same customer. These are some of the examples where more efficient and integrated computer systems would lead to a saving of staff time and effort, and less opportunity for error.

E.34. Advisers also commented on system down times – clearly computer systems need to be backed up and maintained, but essential systems should still operate if a 24-hour service is to be offered, and any down time should be at a time of day when there is lower demand.

- E.35. Review of the 'repair finder' system to ensure it provides suitable expert guidance for all Advisers would allow repairs referrals to be handled by any Adviser at any time of the day, and would also assist staff in the CIS offices (see E.20).
- E.36. The CSC employs 2 'resolvers' to sort out any particularly complex or intransigent customer difficulties. They continue to work with the customer until the customer is satisfied with the outcome. The inspection team considers this to be a very innovative and useful addition to the customer service offered by the CSC, and is particularly effective in resolving issues which might otherwise end up as a formal complaint. It was reported that some services are beginning to refer issues to the resolvers which did not originate in the CSC, in order to utilise their expertise.
- E.37. It is of concern to the inspection team that a high proportion of issues passed to the resolvers is in connection with repairs (up to 90% of their workload). Little evidence was found to suggest that the difficulty lay in receipt of the referral and its processing by the CSC. The inspection team was pleased to see that the council had recognised there was a problem and had set up a 'rapid improvement event' to address it in February 2012. While some of the actions arising have been completed others have slipped, and the inspection looks forward to hearing the outcome for customers when feedback to this inspection is given in a year's time.
- E.38. The 'mystery shopper' element of the inspection identified some areas for improvement for customers regarding the telephone system (see E.43 and E.44).
- E.39. The 'tele-talk' service requires an Adviser to staff it, whether or nor any tele-talk calls are received (the Adviser can deal with email referrals while on tele-talk duty, but is unable to take phone calls). Tele-talk links with 2 locations - Fauldhouse and Carmondean. Statistics for the last six months of 2012 show that Fauldhouse has generated less than one call a fortnight and Carmondean 17 calls per week. Carmondean is 1.5 miles from the West Lothian Connected public contact office at Livingston town centre. Consequently, the inspection team questions whether continuation of the tele-talk system is a good use of staff time when alternative avenues exist for customers. If tele-talk is considered necessary, the team suggests that it could be linked to West Lothian Connected office or another CIS office, where staff are already used to face-to-face public contact, rather than to the CSC.
- E.40. It is essential that the CSC has the resilience to continue to operate in an emergency (e.g., fire, electrical failure, telephone system breakdown, etc), not only because it maintains essential systems (Careline, emergency repairs) but also to avoid loss of reputation for the council. The inspection team was impressed to hear that arrangements are in place to transfer Careline to an alternative operator elsewhere in the UK at a few minutes' notice, and the rest of the CSC's operations to an alternative council office within 15 minutes. The inspection team suggests that, once the CSC has settled into its new location and telephone system at the Civic Centre, such a transfer of operations is tested by physically carrying it out.

Rating: GOOD (7)

(6) Customer results

E.41. Summary:

- customer focussed
- Advisers are friendly, courteous and knowledgeable
- Advisers deal sensitively and fairly with customers and this reflects the strong ethos of customer satisfaction.
- Careline highly regarded
- service well liked by people who have used it
- customer experience is good once through to an Adviser but waiting times are a problem
- customers do not know where they are in the queue
- recorded music too loud
- feedback and information on progress is not always sent to the customer
- introduction of new telephone system provides an opportunity to improve the customer experience before they get through to an Adviser
- abandonment rates have improved over the past year, but remain too high for revenues and repairs calls
- benchmarking is undertaken but is limited

E.42. There is no doubt that the CSC service is appreciated by the great majority of its external customers, *once they get through to an Adviser*. Given the volume of calls, the level of official complaints is very low, and investigation sometimes illustrates misunderstanding on the customer's part rather than poor service by the CSC. Performance survey comment cards indicate that customers appreciate the service they receive from Advisers, whom they consider friendly, knowledgeable and courteous. This was borne out by the inspection team's own "mystery shopper" exercise and by listening in to calls. Careline is also highly regarded by its expanding client base. The CSC is to be commended for its focus on customer satisfaction.

E.43. There are, however, problems around waiting times. One mystery shopper tried five times, at different times of the day, and was not successful in getting to speak to an Adviser, although he was offered a call back within four hours. Length of waiting time is also the single most common negative remark on comment cards. Callers spend 1 minute 10 seconds listening to recorded messages and options before entering the queue for an Adviser, and then callers cannot tell where they are in the queue to decide whether it is worth holding on. There is no recorded apology if they are kept waiting, and Advisers cannot tell how long a customer has been kept waiting when they pick up the call. Some people also mentioned the loudness of the music played when they are "on hold". The new telephone system should be designed to address these problems.

E.44. For some customers the waiting time is too long, and they hang up before they get through to an Adviser. The inspection team was pleased to see that the abandonment rate for 'generic' calls had dropped from 27% in March 2012 to 3% in February 2013. The abandonment rate for repairs and revenues calls had also decreased over the

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year (from 44% to 13%, and 37% to 29%, respectively), but the inspection team was concerned that the abandonment rate for these teams remains too high. Not only are 29% of revenues calls abandoned, but performance information indicates that a further 24% of calls go to voicemail, with a consequent further delay in the customer receiving a response to their enquiry – though the inspection team is aware that the revenues team has been under particular pressure in recent months due to the introduction of a new revenues computer system.

- E.45. Not all customers are external. The CSC has to liaise with many different services in the council and communication with some of them is not always satisfactory. Calls from CSC Advisers can be regarded as “a pain” (see E.25.). There is also an issue for customers around repairs calls (see E.37.).
- E.46. There is some evidence of comparison with other similar organisations through periodic attendance at the Scottish Councils’ Contact Centre Management Group. The CSC Manager also liaises with Stirling Council and others. Greater effort could be made to compare or benchmark the CSC.
- E.47. The CSC service provides an excellent PR opportunity for the council. Its up-coming move to the Civic Centre would be an ideal time to promote the service to both external and internal customers and make residents aware it is available 24/7.

Rating: GOOD (7) (though ‘excellent’ once through to an Adviser)

(7) Key performance results

E.48. Summary:

- excellent level of service to customers and Council services
- service is round-the-clock (24/7) to all callers, except for revenues matters
- good partnership working at a senior level, though poorer cooperation from some services at a lower level
- key performance indicators are monitored, and considered by management and Councillors
- variations in performance could be explained
- a significant problem was identified in a particular area and action was taken to address it
- challenging targets are set and reviewed

E.49. The CSC provides an excellent level of service to its customers, including other Council services. The service is round-the-clock (24/7) for all types of call, except those involving revenues matters, which are only taken during normal business hours. This is due to the non-availability of revenues systems outwith these times.

E.50. There is evidence of good interdepartmental partnership working at a senior level. However, there is also strong evidence that the importance and value to the Council of the CSC does not penetrate down to lower levels within some services.

E.51. The Key Performance Indicator (KPI) report provided by management shows that targets are, in the main, being met. Outcomes are reported to management and to Councillors. The inspection team was given performance information for the previous 12 months, and so no comment can be made on previous years. The KPIs provided show that new targets are being set at a higher level, presumably to take account of the increase in staffing levels. Explanations of variations in performance are given in the reports, and these were explained in greater detail to inspection team members when requested.

E.52. A 'rapid improvement event' was established in response to an identified problem with the repairs service, though there have been delays in the implementation of the changes recommended in the report. The reasons given for the delay seem reasonable.

E.53. There is a clear culture of setting challenging targets and these appear to be reviewed on a regular basis.

Rating: GOOD (8)

F. Review Date

- F.1. The inspection team will return to the service in March 2014 (or six months after the CSC moves to Civic Centre, whichever is the later) to review the progress in the areas identified for improvement.