

MID SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE INFORMATION BULLETIN - 14 SEPTEMBER 2017

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1. Community Engagement

(An update on the Committee Recommendations from April 2017)

The Senior Leadership Team does take into account the feedback from all aspects of community engagement, particularly the feedback received from the presentation to Joint Scrutiny Committee by the Tenant Forum and Suffolk Food Hall business. Indeed, as part of our Public Access Strategy going forward, we are seeking better ways of engaging with communities, customers, businesses, tenants, and all those with whom we have dealings in a professional, customer and community-focused way. The feedback that we have received is an important element of this work.

We do take a pragmatic approach where we can, and where we have the flexibility so to do. Staff are receiving training accordingly, and the Customer Service Team, even without a Corporate Manager or Assistant Director, are striving to work better and improve the way we do business even in advance of the complete implementation of the Public Access Strategy.

The website was recently the subject of some positive and helpful feedback from our Parish Liaison Meetings, and we have made changes to it in order to improve responses and communications. Where we have not done as well as we would like is the operation of the 0300 single telephone number. However, the response times for answering telephone calls have improved significantly since the number was introduced, and there has been a commensurate fall in the abandoned call rate. For example, in May where our performance was not as good as we would have liked, it was taking over 4 minutes to answer calls, we were only answering 78-80% of them and our abandoned call rate was high at 19-20%. Through good teamwork, training and close supervision by the seniors in the staff, by the end of June we were consistently answering calls in times ranging from under 20 seconds to just over a minute. The answer rate was 91-96%, with abandoned rates down to 3-9%. August figures were good with calls answered in about 1 - 2 minutes, 90-98% answered and only 1 - 10% abandoned. We are re-working the telephone answering script based on customer feedback, and we shall be using a professional recording studio in The Mix

at Stowmarket with a trained voice-over person to give a better telephone response in the coming weeks, at no cost because we are being helped by The Mix in Stowmarket and an internal colleague. In addition to this, we have been training staff throughout the organisation in over-the-telephone card payment procedures to cut down service failure that has existed up to now.

In terms of responding to customers through media other than emails, we shall be using Skype for Business when the Customer Access Points in Sudbury and Stowmarket are up and running and once the move to Endeavour House is complete. Skype for Business is going to be used at the Customer Access Points to connect people with back office staff if we need to. This, together with a 24/7 website and self-service options for payments, planning and waste collection should improve our service to customers overall.

There has been a cultural change in the organisation as a result of the decision to move to Endeavour House and in the way that we will provide our services to customers, this is particularly so with Agile working. There is more to do and we continue to make cultural changes throughout all our teams. The communication for the move to Endeavour House has improved, but we do recognise that as ever with these matters, there are always lessons that can be learned about how it could have been more effective".