

WIRRAL COUNCIL
STANDARDS COMMITTEE
29 SEPTEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	MYSTERY SHOPPING
WARD/S AFFECTED:	ALL
REPORT OF:	DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	COUNCILLOR JEAN STAPLETON
KEY DECISION?	NO.

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Standards Committee on 4 July 2011 (minute 3) asked for details of the mystery shopper work undertaken to assess the quality of service at the Call Centre, Libraries and One Stop Shops. This report details the work undertaken and the results.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1. That Members note the report.

3.0 REASON FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 3.1 To allow Members to be aware of the work and results of the mystery shopper exercise that was undertaken to assess service quality and identify improvements.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 All services need to know how they are seen by users and this can be achieved in a number of ways from asking users directly to having a review of the services in place from the perspective of the service user. This is sometimes undertaken as mystery shopping. This involves a person not known to the service using the service and assessing the experience of all aspects of the service against pre set criteria. These will reflect the quality and experience of the service user.
- 4.2 Mystery Shopping provides a key element of the programme for ongoing improvement. The first Mystery Shopping exercise was undertaken from December 2010 to February 2011. The areas assessed were Libraries, One Stop Shops and the Call Centre.
- 4.3 Services were assessed on over 60 criteria including quality of service provided, response times and internal and external building maintenance. The assessment takes place on general information not case specific as this is assessed via direct public feedback such as surveys and complaints.
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- 4.4 The Call Centre and One Stop Shop services were generally rated as 'Good' or 'Excellent'. Staff was viewed as friendly and polite, and willing to go the extra step to provide great service. Where knowledge of specific areas was lacking it was found that there was generally good use of the Council website to provide information. Where the posting out of documentation was requested, all relevant documents were received within five working days, and adequate information explaining how to complete them was supplied.
- 4.5 The Library service was rated as either 'Good' or 'Average'. While the resources offered by each Library in terms of book stock and IT vary greatly depending on the size of the Library, overall staff knowledge of services requires some development.
- 4.6 A number of areas for staff development included:
- More signposting of the Council website as the first port of call for information enquiries and for downloading documents.
 - Timescales need to be provided wherever possible and explanations of 'what happens next'.
 - Further promotion of other services that might remove the need for customers to repeat visit.
- 4.7. Key environmental concerns included:
- The external condition of Library buildings was often poor, with a lack of street signage.
 - Quiet study areas could often be small and in some cases untidy.
 - Leaflet racks were often untidy.
 - Accessibility was poor in places, with the smaller Libraries in particular, not offering easy access for disabled users.
- 4.8. The issues and concerns detailed above now form part of the customer service development work over the coming year.
- 4.9. While this was the first exercise to include Libraries it was the second for the One Stop Shops and it built on the lessons learnt in the original exercise. The One Stop Shops also take part in the periodic Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) mystery shopping work and are assessed in the role as the WPH public contact points. The most recent assessment of interaction with the customer was given a satisfaction rating of 96.3%.
- 4.10. The work undertaken has been considered successful and we now plan a rolling exercise of mystery shopping across sections which will focus on the customer care standards.
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5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 By not using this type of quality check we could lose an important opportunity to improve service delivery and the quality of public contact.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 Use of commercial organisations was considered but they are costly.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 None was undertaken.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

8.1 None arising from this report.

9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

9.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 There are none arising directly from this report.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required specifically as part of this report although one has been developed for the Customer Access Strategy which informs the approach taken for customer feedback.

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

12.1 None.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

13.1 None.

FNCE/192/11

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APPENDICES

None.

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Standards Committee	4 July 2011
