

Customer Contact Consultation: January – April 2013 Summary

The good levels of satisfaction with the telephone service expressed in focus groups and mystery shopping is consistent with satisfaction levels from GovMetric

The service delivered via the phones is generally regarded as having improved overall during the past 18 months. CSOs are seen as pro-active, polite and helpful

Customers are aware of the changes made to SAC and feel the refurbishment has helped to improve the atmosphere and service

There is a willingness to channel shift, or to consider channel shift.

There is a willingness to do more online self-service (survey and focus groups)

In the survey (conducted mainly on-line)

- 64% were happy to receive statutory information, for example Council Tax mailing, by email.
- Only 20% of customers in the survey would not consider using a single-sign on customer account on the website
- 43% access the internet using a mobile phone
- Email and telephone are the top preferences for contact between the customer and Council.

The focus groups revealed some additional information

- Self-service needs to be pro-actively supported to encourage inexperienced customers to use the website more
- Printing facilities would make self-service more attractive
- Low income communities find web-based transactions attractive. These are effectively 'free' (either because a fixed subscription is paid, or access is via community facilities). This is better than running out of credit on the phone.
- Concerns were expressed about replacing emails with web forms (no record of input; quality of information in automated response).
- A strong preference was expressed for receiving a phone call rather than a letter, especially about debts, so that the issue could be understood and resolved quickly, perhaps avoiding court costs

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Methodology

Purpose of consultations and surveys

To

- Provide information on overall satisfaction with services provided by and via Customer Contact
- Identify customer use, views, and preferences regarding channels of communication
- Identify issues with service provision and channels as identified by customers

To inform and support

- The review of the Customer Contact Strategy
- Understanding of issues influencing customer satisfaction
- Understanding customers awareness and view of channel shift options

To develop Customer insight for future service improvement

Consultation methods

Focus Groups: January – March 2013

- specific groups in the community, targeting customers that might not normally participate in surveys or accept invitations to focus groups in the Town Hall
- 8 groups involving a approximately 66 people (group size ranged from 3 to almost 20)

Mystery Shopping: January - February 2013

- Ten residents were trained, and carried out a total of 65 shops
- 40 telephone
- 19 visits to SAC or TSQ
- 5 email
- 1 website

Survey: February – April 2013

- On-line
- Face to face
- 129 in total

GovMetric: ongoing, year round, feedback

- Compare themes and satisfaction levels with those from the other sources above

Headline Findings

Focus Groups

The feedback from participants who used the contact centre was overwhelmingly positive. Even when there was dissatisfaction with outcomes, in the main, CSOs were seen as proactively helpful and polite. Some long wait times were experienced, but lots of participants were pleased with how fast the phones were answered.

Shorter queues in Customer Service Centres were also noted.

*David Williams, Local Councillor (Donnington TRA):
'I have far fewer complaints about the City Council's service than I used to. Now I only hear about difficult or unresolved issues. Residents go straight to council officers to get things done'*

Mystery Shopping

The feedback from calls was good Over 50% on average chose 'Very good' when summarising all aspects of their call.

For visits, between 14 and 16 out of 19 shoppers summarised their experience as good or very good.

Email and website numbers were too small draw conclusions

Survey

The survey was piloted face-to-face at Templar Square and St Aldate's Customer Service Centres and in focus groups where appropriate. There were 28 responses.

The survey was slightly revised and put on the website. The survey was notified to everyone registered as interested in consultations. The link was emailed to individuals and organisations using the voluntary groups and Housing Associations on our 'partnership' list' and to other community and interest groups via the Neighbourhood and Communities team and other networks.

However, just over 100 responses were received direct to the website (face-to-face results were later added to econsult)

Channel-specific feedback from focus groups and mystery shoppers

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	Focus Groups	Mystery Shoppers
Website	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More interactive website individual accounts, so that rent, council tax etc can be managed on-line. • Use of the website is perceived as free, in contrast to costly mobile calls <i>‘Doing stuff on-line is easy, convenient and no-cost. Can we have more please?’</i> • GovMetric results published on the web regularly • Bulky waste service on-line 	<p><i>‘Not confident about the change to ‘email’ webforms. You don’t have a record of what you have written, no immediate confirmation, you have to wait for acknowledgement.’</i></p>
Contact Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freephone number for mobiles (from tenants used to the 0800 number) • Pro-active advice given about Council Tax benefit during a call about something else. Appointment made, and explained everything she needed <i>‘Could there be a message to say how long you might wait (...you are number 4 in the queue...)?’</i> 	<p><i>‘The phones are much, much more efficient now. I didn’t have to wait for the phone to be answered. Found the options quick to use.’</i></p> <p><i>‘Overall I was very satisfied with all the responses. The CSOs were happy to ‘go the extra mile. I’m still waiting for a call back from Council Tax.’</i></p>
Customer Service Centres & Self Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Printing facilities for self-service pcs • Customer ‘seen in seconds’ in SAC. Approached by CSO and offered immediate help • SAC improved: ‘hostility gone’, shorter queues, shorter waiting times • Lots of leaflets, staff patient and well informed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need to have printing facilities in receptions <p><i>‘I have mystery shopped Templar Square before and it wasn’t good, and staff didn’t wear their badges. Now it’s much better – really good. The service at TSQ is slightly quicker.’</i></p>
Emails and letters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarity of letters: <i>‘they tell you what your rent is, and your benefit, but not how much you owe or have to pay. It’s confusing.’</i> <i>‘I’ve had letters about £2 outstanding, and a court</i> 	<p><i>‘I sent an email and didn’t get an answer. Then I got all the information in the post. The note said my email bounced back. They bothered to trace my address from the email and post the information. I was really impressed – they went the extra mile.’</i></p>

	<i>summons for a debt of £7, Couldn't they just pick up the phone and remind me?'</i>	
Complaints	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Need to address perceptions that making a formal complaint may negatively affect out comes (in relation to benefits and repairs?)	<i>'I asked for a complaints leaflet [in SAC] and I was told there isn't one. Told to write or phone. Later, I looked and found one on the website'</i> <i>'I was given a complaints form at Templar Square when I asked for one.'</i>

Survey results: Summary

Contact preferences and frequency

Most customer want contacts by phone – which is already a good service with high satisfaction levels

Email and text very popular. Focus group discussions revealed less confidence in webforms

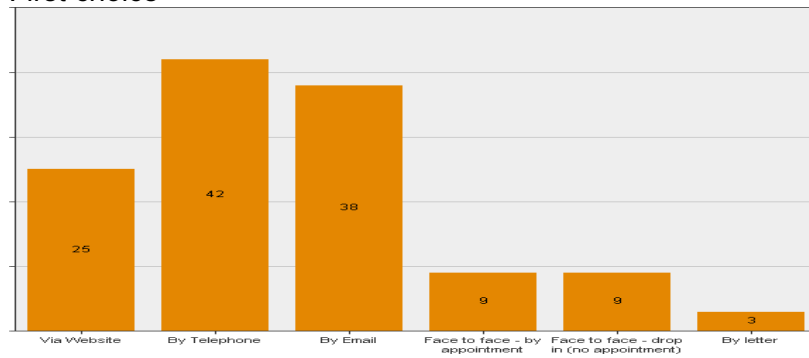
'you don't have a record of what you wrote'

'You don't know who it is going to – it's anonymous'

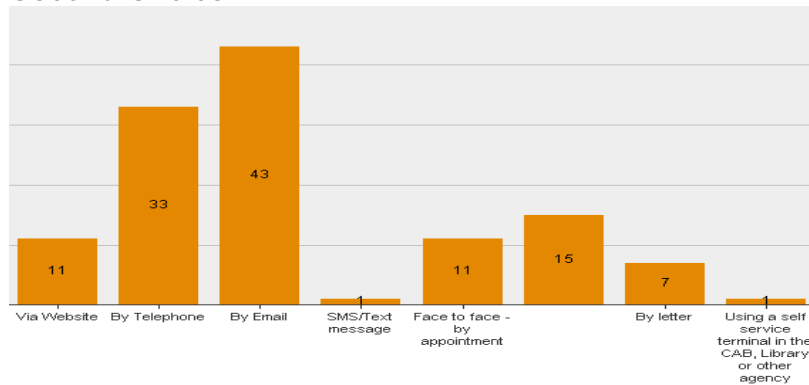
Most customer want contacts by phone – which is already a good service with high satisfaction levels

Q1 - How do you prefer to contact the Council?

First choice

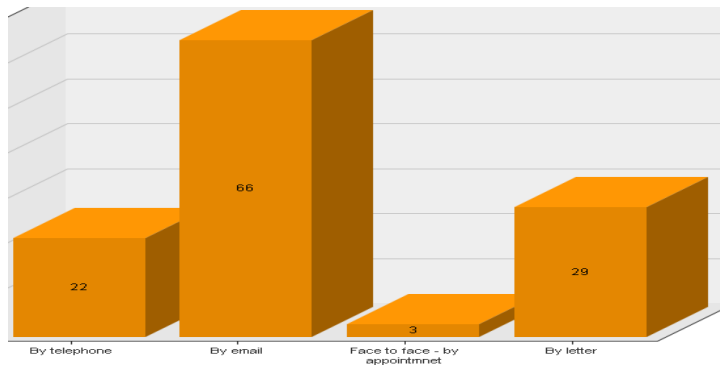


Second Choice

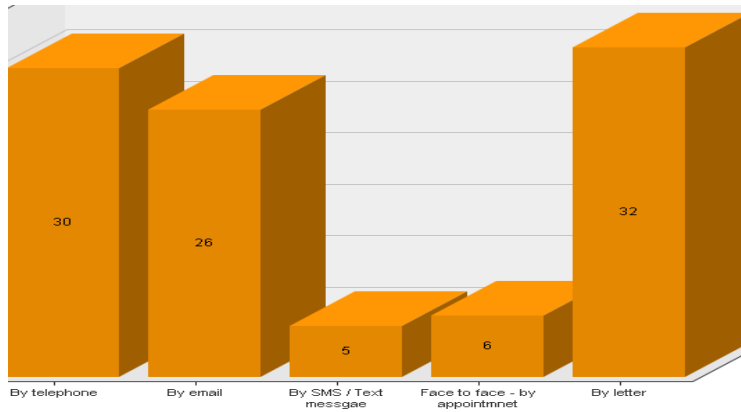


Q2 - How do you prefer the Council to contact you?

First Choice



Second Choice



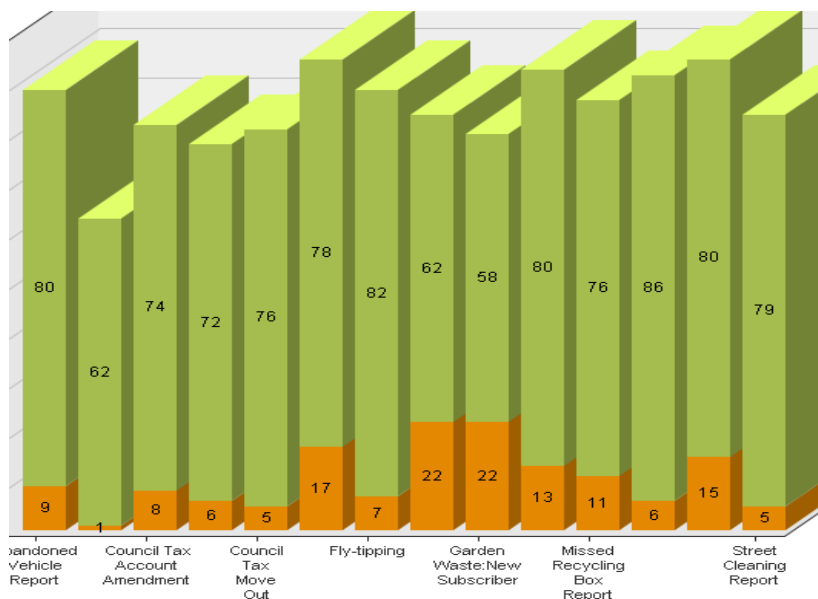
Q12 - What was your reason for contacting us?

Compare reasons for contact profiles in the survey with profile of actual calls received to check how representative the survey is in terms of call type.

Channel shift: willingness and barriers

Q5 - Have you used any of these on line services? If not, might you use them in the future?

The majority of respondents who chose to answer this question would consider using our on-line services



Q 6 - If you could sign-up to a secure online account on the City Council website that would enable you to check and manage services such as Council Tax, Rents, Consultations and other services, would you do this?

Only 20% said 'no' to this. 45% said 'yes' and 35% 'maybe'. It might be possible to turn the 35% into 'yes' responses if we understand the barriers.

Q8 – Do you have access to the internet? Please tick all that apply.

91% of respondents have access to the internet. However, as this was predominantly an online survey this result may be biased.

43% access the internet from a mobile phone, suggesting we should prioritise working on access to the website / council services via phones.

Awareness of online services – converting the 'maybes'

Q9 - Oxford City Council has a legal duty to communicate with city residents on topics such as Council Tax. Today this is done by post; in future would you be happy to receive these letters electronically?

64% said yes. Could this be provided as an opt-in alternative?

Lessons Learned & future actions

Survey and focus group methodology *(more to add here)*

- The survey combined questions on channel shift and customer satisfaction. These could have been better differentiated on the survey.
- The requirement to register may have acted as a disincentive to participate on-line
- The numbers participating are too small to be statistically significant

Ongoing work in Customer Contact:

- Customer Insight co-ordinators: introduced as part of restructure to support continued development and application of customer insight
- Customer Complaints Satisfaction Survey
 - Trial with past complaints
 - Rolling survey of future complaints
- Customer Satisfaction / Insight improvement plan. Based on:
 - Focus Group Feedback
 - Survey Feedback
 - GovMetric feedback
 - Complaints 'lessons learned'
- Ongoing Customer Contact Focus Groups
 - 'Standing' group, to act as sounding board for improvements, changes and communications
 - Community and hard to reach groups

Recommendations

- Consider providing corporate training on survey methodology
- Encourage standardisation of survey styles and questions, where ever possible and appropriate, to enable Council-wide comparison and analysis.
- Introduce annual or bi-annual overview and analysis of all (or most) surveys which cover key issues (eg: customer satisfaction, channel use and preferences), to reduce duplication and survey fatigue, and to provide corporate customer insight.
- Develop Customer Journey Mapping and Customer Experience Mapping. Use historical data to conduct 'virtual' journey mapping via Lagan and 'reality check' effectiveness of process change / improve procedures by actual mapping using groups of customers with recent experience of processes.