

## Vale of Glamorgan Council



# Contact Channel Strategy 2010



a customer service organisation

# 1. INTRODUCTION

This Channel Strategy defines the way in which this Council will provide access to services for our customers. It clarifies the factors influencing the strategy and clearly sets out our strategic objectives.

The nature of modern communications technology is such that it is constantly developing, providing new opportunities for customers and challenges for suppliers to meet rapidly changing customer demand and expectations. While this process is for the most part led by the private sector, inevitably customer expectations about how and when they can transact with us are shaped by their experiences of accessing services from other suppliers. This is exacerbated by the increasingly blurred lines between public and private sector services with traditionally public sector services being outsourced to private suppliers and public bodies undertaking services which fall outside of traditional remit (e.g. Essex Council operating as a lending bank to SME's and Southampton Council supplying energy to the local business community).

The WAG 'Making the Connections agenda' is a direct response to these issues and in particular WAG's desire to *"ensure that citizens can choose methods of access to services most appropriate to their needs and preferences, through a range of channels, while having assurance that, whatever channel is used, the information and advice exchanged, and service quality is consistent"*.

We have already reacted to these changing customer expectations and the opportunities afforded by developments in information communications technologies through the OneVale Programme. We have seen the creation of a new Customer Relations function and implementation of a corporate contact centre and associated Single Number Strategy for telephone based enquiries. However, the outlook for public sector spending and its likely impact on our resources means that we have had to revise how we achieve our strategic customer service objectives.

A revision of the OneVale Programme governance structure has seen the creation of the Channel Strategy Task Group in January 2009. Its terms of reference are to *"develop the customer service strategy for handling customer enquiries across all communications channels to achieve corporate objectives of improving access to services, delivering improved management information and delivering cashable efficiencies."*

The following Contact Channel Strategy has been formulated, following discussions and previous decisions made through the OneVale Programme governance structure, Corporate Plan commitments, the WAG Making the Connections agenda, the work of the Channel Strategy Task Group and the anticipated medium term budgetary environment.

Outline project plans for achieving Channel Strategy objectives do not form part of this document. These will be produced once the strategy has been agreed and are scheduled for final approval by 1<sup>st</sup> July 2009.

## **2. SCOPE OF STRATEGY**

The scope of the Contact Channel Strategy covers all current and future external customer contact points across all services, including:

1. Telephone
2. Web
3. email
4. Face to Face
5. DigiTV
6. SMS Text Messaging
7. Mail

As a general principle it is important that the Council anticipates market trends and take advantage of opportunities to minimise transaction costs and maximise access across all channels.

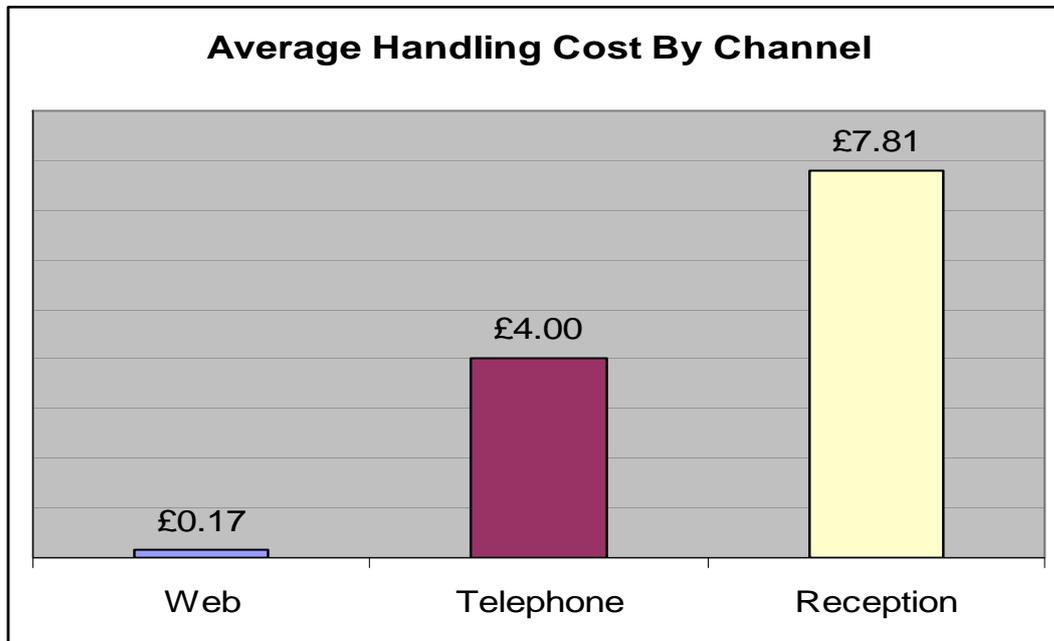
A separate internal channel strategy addressing how services such as ICT service desk and Transact are accessed by staff will be produced.

## **3. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES**

Vale of Glamorgan Council's Contact Channel Strategy will maintain customer choice while minimising transaction costs to the authority. To achieve this, we will:

1. Migrate customers to the lowest cost, most appropriate contact channel for their enquiry.
2. Minimise individual channel transaction costs
3. Maintain contact channel choice for all services
4. Ensure a consistent and positive customer experience irrespective of choice of channel
5. Maximise return on investment from existing channels
6. Minimise customer contact which is created by the way we deliver services, i.e. 'avoidable contact'.
7. Closely monitor customer usage and satisfaction with different access channels.

Largely, this will mean encouraging customers to use web based transactions whenever possible, while maintaining the ability to deliver services across a range of other channels, including telephony, face to face and by email.



\*Costs assume full systems integration (source: Synthetix Ltd 2009)

### 3.1 INDIVIDUAL CHANNEL STRATEGIES

While the overall strategy is to migrate customers to the lowest cost and most appropriate channel for their enquiry, each individual channel will have a set of objectives within the overall corporate migration strategy.

To ensure that these projects deliver best value for the organisation as well as providing value for the customer a robust business case will be developed for each before proceeding.

In addition, a marketing strategy needs to be in place to achieve our strategic objectives and a formal change management process, including staff participation, communication and training, is required to ensure benefits for the customer and the organisation are maximised

#### 3.1.1 Web Objectives

**Key Objective:** Make web the channel of choice for customers

Customer self service via the web provides an excellent opportunity for cost effective handling of customer enquiries. However, this assumes that the search and transaction functionality is easy to use and integration exists between the web site and back office systems to avoid unnecessary intervention and the manual inputting of information into systems supplied by the customer via the web.

Web self service also extends accessibility to many services on a 24 /7 basis.

We will develop the Vale of Glamorgan website to provide the highest possible number of self service transactions and ensure that the site is easy to use and navigate. We will develop a marketing plan which will inform target customer groups of the advantages of using the website and encourage its use as the preferred contact channel for interacting with us.

### **Strategic Actions**

1. Maximise transaction capability of the website
2. Create a single citizen “sign on account” to access all services easily and conveniently irrespective of delivery application.
3. Review response rates to manage customer expectations and make web the preferred contact channel for customers.
4. Integrate web transactions with legacy systems to minimise resource costs.
5. Create mobile web content to take advantage of market trends towards mobile access (e.g. “BBC News on the move”)
6. Develop a multi agency approach, creating links with partner organisations, joining up services and increasing customer usage.
7. All web content will be written in plain English and provided in Welsh

### **Short term actions**

1. Improving current service provision by updating “Do it online” using dynamic eforms.
2. Assess use of Oracle i-Support to integrate with CRM
3. Ensuring that Web content is written in plain English and provided in Welsh as a key part of the design process.
4. Investigate potential for implementing online leisure booking
5. Ensure a broadly consistent look and content of web pages

### **3.1.2 Telephony**

**Key Objective:** Maximise First Call Resolution, reduce avoidable contact and minimise cost

The telephone is likely to remain the most popular way of accessing our services and represents our best opportunity for improving access and generating cashable efficiencies in the medium term. The single number strategy has delivered dramatic improvements in our customers’ ability to access services and this process will continue as the Single Number Implementation Plan comes to fruition. While higher call volumes and effective resource planning will reduce cost per call it is important to minimise overall call handling costs wherever possible in both the front and back office.

### **Strategic Actions**

1. Integrate CRM with legacy systems to minimise employee intervention
2. Ensure contact handling service standards match customer expectations in order that C1V resource requirements and cost per call are minimised.
3. Reduce avoidable contact levels

## Short term actions

1. Continue with Single Number Implementation Plan to deliver economies of scale, maximise First Call Resolution and allow, through performance management and QM, for consistent customer experience
2. Review call handling service level tolerance to minimise resource requirements at C1V.
3. All publications to use 01446 700111 and [c1v@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk](mailto:c1v@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk) where telephone and email contact points are required until website is sufficiently developed.
4. Liaise with service operations to ascertain 'quick win' opportunities to maximise First Call Resolution at C1V.

### 3.1.3 Email

**Key Objective:** Maximise First Call Resolution reduce avoidable contact and minimise cost.

Email transactions will benefit from many of the objectives set out for the telephony contact channel. In addition we will standardise email responses through implementation of an automated acknowledgement message for all group email accounts and by using a single staffing resource to respond to enquiries.

We will develop the email contact channel as a principal channel of communication for the hearing impaired, together with text messaging and the web.

### 3.1.4 Text Messaging

**Key Objective:** Maximise First Call Resolution, reduce avoidable contact and minimise cost

Although the use of text messaging represents a low cost way for customers to access services, its use is limited due to limitation on the length of messages that can be sent. However, we will continue to investigate opportunities to develop inbound and outbound text messaging services, particularly as a means of reducing 'avoidable contact' and for those customer groups who already use this communication channel widely such as young people and those with hearing impairment.

It is likely that text messaging technology will superseded by mobile web technology.

## Short term Actions

1. Investigate potential for using existing outbound text messaging functionality to reduce avoidable contact

### 3.1.5 DigiTV

While the cost of establishing and maintaining a DigiTV channel is relatively low it is, to date, an unproven channel in terms of customer demand. There is some evidence or at least an assumption, that it may enable contact with hard to reach groups; however, cost per transaction will remain relatively high unless legacy systems integration can be achieved.

The five Heads of Valleys authorities have secured WAG funding to develop this medium and we will keep a watching brief on this project to ascertain success and usefulness for Vale of Glamorgan, especially the mobile technology module.

#### Short term Actions

1. Develop understanding of the technology and service
2. Monitor progress of Heads of Valleys initiative
3. Investigate possibility of delivering a pilot service to assess benefits

### 3.1.6 Reception / Face to face

**Key Objective:** Maximise the range of services that can be resolved at first point of contact, facilitate face to face service provision for all Vale residents, ensure a consistent customer experience irrespective of service or reception facility accessed and improve management information available.

The customer experience of reception based service provision in the Vale of Glamorgan is variable. Many receptions deal with a small range of services, enquiries are not recorded and the level of customer service provided by staff inconsistent.

#### Strategic Actions

1. Consistent branding at main corporate reception areas
2. Investigate the potential for Customer Relations to manage all customer facing reception areas.
3. Implement formal customer service performance management, including SMART objectives for staff, achieve consistent customer experience and maximise resource efficiencies. i.e. use combined resources to provide holiday and sickness cover
4. Expand range of services offered at corporate reception facilities.
5. Wherever possible enquiries should be logged on CRM in order to maximise depth and quality of management information as well as improving transparency and increasing First Call Resolution.
6. Maintain existing process efficiencies between reception and administrative duties wherever possible.
7. Maintain service expertise where it currently exists
8. The full range of services offered using the face to face channel will accessible to all Vale residents.

## Short term actions

1. Main corporate reception areas, Civic Offices, Docks Office and Alps Depot, to become part of Customer Relations service.
2. Utilise Library service as corporate access channel
3. Review use of Civic Offices reception area to improve accessibility
4. Customer Relations to begin discussions through the Channel Strategy Task Group regarding Customer Service training and performance management for all reception areas.

### 3.1.7 Mail

**Key Objective:** Reduce the amount of mail that is transported between sites and resolve basic enquiries at first point of contact. Mail enquiries are handled across the authority in many different ways, using different recording systems and with hard copy information being taken between sites.

#### Strategic Actions

1. Implement a corporate mail handling process to resolve as many enquiries as possible at First Point of Contact, provide a transparent audit trail and generate efficiency savings.
2. Reduce the amount of mail couriered through scanning of documentation in conjunction with the TRIM project.
3. Eliminate the 'junk mail' that is received and transported around organisation.

#### Short term actions

1. Document all existing call handling processes
2. Establish volume and type of mail received at all delivery points
3. Establish volume of mail that is transported between sites
4. Continue with mail handling pilot to assess potential service benefits and efficiencies.

### 3.1.8 Marketing

An effective marketing plan is critical to meeting our strategic objectives. We will utilise the most appropriate internal and external media to inform our customers about the options available to them when contacting this Council.

#### Short term actions

1. Research customer preference for using contact channels
2. Clarify what services customers most want to access via the web.
3. Clearly define web service 'product features and benefits'
4. Identify specific customer groups for targeted marketing
5. Identify the appropriate media, message and placement of marketing materials to access specific target groups.
6. Establish budget requirements and return on investment

### **3.1.9 Change Management**

Achieving our strategic objectives will be easier with the positive involvement and cooperation of staff. A formal change management programme, closely linked to the marketing plan, will be required if we are to maximise staff participation through effective communication and training.

#### **Short Term Actions**

1. Create a change management project plan

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