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**Customer Satisfaction Survey**

**Service Point Survey 2014**

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**Rural and Small Service Points**

1. **Introduction**

Customer surveys are an important method of judging customer satisfaction with the service provided. This is just one of a number of methods used to measure customer satisfaction in Service Points. These surveys are conducted on a regular basis and they provide a snapshot of customer satisfaction at a particular time.

As Customer Service provides a full range of services to a wide group of customers, other surveys are conducted in cooperation with other services to ensure the service the customers receive meets their expectations. This supports other surveys focusing on Housing, PeoplesHub and Registration which have been conducted in the last 12 months.

1. **Methodology**

The method used for this particular survey is a questionnaire which customer have been asked to complete while visiting the Service point. This is a simple method and requires little time on the part of the customer to complete the survey. Although this assists the customer it restricts the amount of detail on the survey form as a longer survey form with more questions may deter a customer from completing the form. (The Council Annual Performance Survey which is completed by the Councils Citizens Panel, includes questions relating to the service customers receive at Service Points.) This survey is in addition to this provides information on the customers views at individual service Points.

1. **Survey Questions**

The survey questions are based on customer experience from previous surveys. Question 1 asked customers how often they contacted the Council. This information is important in developing a Customer Service Strategy, as how often and by which means customers contact the Council assists in providing the means to meet customer demand.

Question 2 asked the reason for the customer visiting the Service Point. As more and more services are now available on line, it is important to understand why the customer visited the service point rather than use the online system or telephone the council Service Centre with their enquiry. Question 3 and Question 4 are linked together. Question 3 asked the customer how they had contacted the council previously, and Question4 asked how they would prefer to contact the council, in future.

Question 5 deals with satisfaction on their visit to the Service Point. This is a straight yes or no question on whether their visit was satisfactory. Question 6 asks the question about the amount of time customers had to wait to speak to an adviser and this is followed by Question7 asking whether the waiting time to see the adviser is satisfactory. The last question asks customers about their preference for payment options. If they had made a payment in person at the Service Point, would they use an automated telephone line if one was available rather than visit a Service Point.

 **Q.1 How often do you contact the Highland Council?**

The choices the customer had on this question was once a week, once a month or rarely. As can be seen from the graph the majority of those surveyed, 49%, contact the council at least once a week. The next highest figure is the customer group contacting the council on a monthly basis at 30%. 82 customers rarely contact the council

Figure 1

 **Q.2. Please indicate the reason for your visit:**

The main reason for visit to the Service Point is to make a payment. 135 customers or 30% of the those surveyed gave this as their main reason for the visit. The next highest category is “other” which is confusing as all other options for the main reasons for visiting the service point are contained in the question. Some customers indicated they were visiting to enquire about more than one service which explains the high numbers returned in this question. Some examples under “other” are purchasing CityLink bus tickets available at some Service Points but this does not account for the large number registering “other” as the reason for their visit. Further investigation of these figures is required.

Figure 2

**Q.3. Have you contacted the council using any of the following methods?**

This question asked how customers have contacted the council in the past. Phone is the most popular method with 46% of customers indicating they have contacted the council using this method. The use of email and letter are on equal parity with 11%. 122 customers declined to answer this question. At 26% this is a large percentage of customers who declined this question. There may have been some other reason but in each service point surveyed, some customers did not answer this question.

Figure 3

**Q.4. What method would you use to contact the Council in future?**

This survey was conducted among the smaller and more rural Service Points. Face to face visits to service points are more common in rural areas other than the use of the telephone. Service Point staff are well known to the local population and live among them. A visit to a Service Point in Lochcarron or Gairloch is also a chance to meet friends and converse and catch up. It is weekly visit to share what is happening in the village – not just a journey to pay rent or council tax. This may explain why the “face to face” interaction scores so highly at 54% in the question. Again a rather puzzling 19% decided not to answer this question.

Figure 4

**Q.5. Did you receive a satisfactory result of you call today?**

This is a straightforward “yes” or “no” to the question. It deals with how satisfied the customer is with how the enquiry was handled. As can be seen from the graph at Figure 5 the majority of customers at 96% were satisfied with the result of their enquiry.

Figure 5

**Q.6. How long did you have to wait to see an adviser?**

The majority of customers, 71%, were seen within 30 seconds. This is a very good result but it should be noted in the rural areas and smaller service points, customers very rarely experience extended waiting times to see an adviser. 23% of customers were seen between 30 – 60 seconds and again this is good customer service. Only 18 customers or 4% of those surveyed found they had to wait over a minute to be seen.

It should be noted that the larger Service Point in Wick, Fort William, Inverness and the other large service points are subject to a separate survey and their waiting times will be longer than the times reported in this survey.

Figure 6

**Q.7 How would you rate the time you had to wait to see an adviser?**

Waiting times are one of the most difficult things to get right. Different customers have different needs and what is a reasonable waiting time to one person is unreasonable to another. In some of our larger Service Points a queuing system is in operation. This tells the exact time a customer has to wait and also how long it takes to deal with an enquiry.

In this latest survey 354 customers or 87% of those surveyed felt the waiting times are very satisfactory. A further 48 customers or 12% felt the waiting are satisfactory and a further 5 customers declined to answer the question

Figure 7

**Q.8 If you are making a payment today and an automated telephone payment line was available, would you use it to make payments?**

There was one other question that was asked on the questionnaire. The council intends to introduce an automated payment line and this is a chance to gauge customer reaction to the system. The automated line would give customers the choice of how to pay their bills or invoices. However judging by the customer responses, this would not be very popular.

The overwhelming majority of customers 69% would not use the automated payment line. However 17% indicated they would use the line and a further 13% of customers declined to answer the question.

Figure 8

**Customer Comments**

Some customers took the opportunity to make comments on the survey questionnaire. The majority of the comments are positive and although some very not so positive, all comments are welcome as it is only by analysing the comments can the service be improved. A selction of comments are listed below;

“A first class service from first class staff”

“Have always found the service to be excellent”

“The Council should do more with the bus service in Inverness”

“Friendly and helpful staff”

“ Been coming here for ages. Still have not got a house”

**Recommendations:**

In question 2 some customers indicated they were there for services other than those offered by the Service Point. This will discussed with staff to determine what these services are and whether better signposting of services can be offered.

A reminder to staff not to answer the phone when handling customer enquiries at the front desk-unless the customer indicates to the member of staff to answer the phone – will be circulated to all staff. It is not good customer service to leave a face to face customer waiting while the member of staff deals with a telephone enquiry

As is evident from the other responses to the survey, the vast majority of customers are pleased with the overall commitment of staff and are satisfied with the customer service they receive. Highland Council do not control the Bus Operators in Inverness.