

Questions for IT

Q 1 What is your perception of the IT support provided and what are the strengths and weaknesses? How are the weaknesses resolved?

The perception of support is generally good, but we are constantly working to improve performance.

Our Strengths are:-

- Incidents for Customer Services are treated as a high priority (due to the impact)
- Clear escalation process
- ITIL frame work in place
- Regular meeting with our suppliers

Our challenges are:-

- We're currently supporting two environments: legacy and the refreshed environments. This will be resolved by the completion of refresh.
- Contracts need to be reviewed to reflect our core business hours. (This assumes that funding can be identified)
- A significant amount of change is required to manage a continuous stream of government projects. This is managed through robust project and programme management.
- The extent to which Customer services are reliant on IT solutions. This managed by extensive support.

Our sources of learning to improve the service are

- Lessons learnt from previous issues
- Industry recognised techniques and best practices used within other organisations or taken from the ITIL frame work to address a weakness
- Post implementation review with suppliers and Project Managers
- Reviews and recommendations by internal audit
- Risk management using the BS7799 approach
- Feedback from users and from training to improve the education of our staff and Users.

Q2 Current Plans

The next phase of our plans is to deploy a new version of Siebel, which will be deployed week commencing 7 November. This is a major upgrade utilising the Public Sector version of the Siebel product. It introduces new "easier to use" processes and activities for the Customer Services operatives in the Call Centre and Customer Service Centres and also provides the foundation for the continued evolution of Siebel.

Future enhancements to Siebel will be aimed at continuing to both widen the services provided by Customer Services and “deepen” the service offerings through integration between Siebel in the front-office and the back-office “departmental” systems. This evolution will include Siebel interacting with various customer channels such as face-to-face, web, phone, fax, SMS etc.

The plans are not rigid, it allows for flexibility to support the evolution and any changing priorities of the Customer Services Strategy.

Q 3 How are system downtimes resolved? How do you minimise the time it takes to resolve such issues?

Down time is measured from the moment the call has been logged within Clarify (the call logging system) until the call is resolved (deemed fixed by the user). The resolution process is to:

- Log it with the Helpdesk. All IT are logged and classified within our call handling system, Clarify; Details taken from the user assist the helpdesk analyst determine a number of categories eg: Impact and issue, Urgency and Priority,
- All incidents are given a Priority categorised between P1-P5 and then passed to the appropriate resolving team. There are 11 resolving teams used to support ‘all councils’ systems, who in turn are supported by third parties with appropriate contracts and Service Level Agreement (SLA)
- During the life span of an incident, an owner is allocated to the incident (as it’s possible for a call to be passed between teams) it’s the responsibility of the owner to investigate the issue and where possible implement an appropriate fix. Where a fix has been tried and failed or the impact deem to be disrupting or affecting a building or business unit performance or their operational functionality, the incident is escalated within the IT services management structure.
- There is a clear escalation route when issues are not resolved.

All systems and services deployed during the last 12 months have added resilience built into the design of the systems/services, these include:-

- Hot fixes for hardware (hardware can be removed without effecting the services or impacting the users further)
- Network resilience for infrastructure failures (alternate routing for data should the network fail.)
- Uninterruptible power supplies (UPS) and generators for power failures.
- Third parties can also connect to our network to provide a prompt fix/investigate reported issues.
- System best practices such as monitoring system performance and management of data growth are conducted on a daily basis.

Q4 Plan & Introduce New Systems

A project Board has been established for Customer Services. It is chaired by Head of Customer Services and includes management representation from both Customer Services and IT Services. Currently this board is focussing upon the upgrade to the Siebel Public Sector version in November.

The Board manages the priorities for IT investment based upon the needs of the Customer Services Strategy. Projects are planned and executed in accordance with the Council's Project Management Framework and are jointly staffed and led by Customer Services and IT project managers.

Customer Services lead the business implementation, undertaking change management activities with the appropriate level of support from IT. In the case of Siebel, over the course of the next 24 months it is anticipated that on average, 3 new releases per year will take place in line with the roadmap, thereby providing new functionality in a regular and controlled manner and avoiding the higher risks associated with "Big Bang" deployments

Q5 When is the tech refresh project planned for the customer services department?

Customer Services are planned to be deployed w/c 5th December 2005.

Q6 Do you think the implementation and post implementation process will affect the performance of customer services? What contingency plans are there to minimise system down time during this period?

The implementation of Tech Refresh should have minimal affect on Customer Services operation. The deployment of the new technology will be scheduled with the business unit to ensure cover can be provided by other operators whilst users are cutover. The switch over of a user takes approximately 15 minutes and can be coordinated with break times or overnight. Post implementation floor walkers are present to deal with issues arising immediately in addition to User handouts and guides. The number of floorwalkers is based on the umber of users being refreshed at one time.