



THE ONE-STOP SERVICE

FOLLOW UP REVIEW

OCTOBER 2006

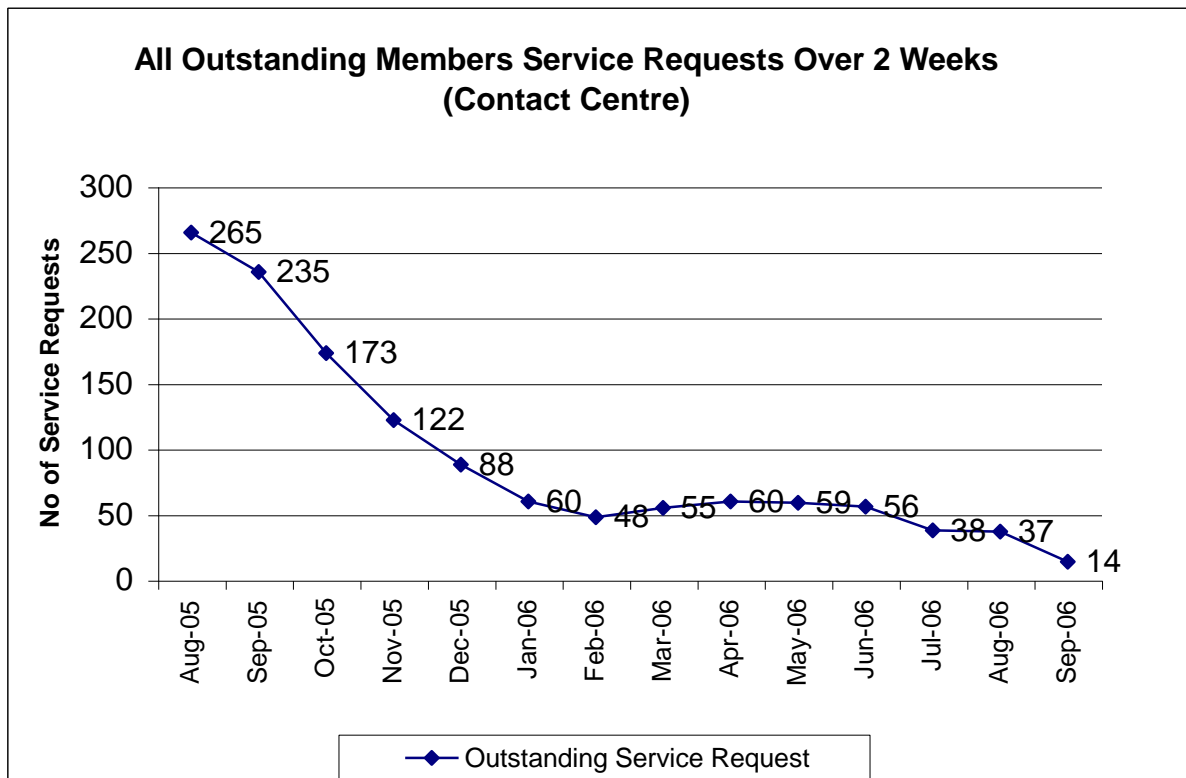
# CONTENTS

Executive summary	3
Background	4
Objectives and Methodology	6
Main findings	7
Conclusion	13

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. In 2005 a review of the One-Stop service was undertaken. This report provides an outline of progress made in implementing the actions arising from the original review and an evaluation of the success of these actions in improving outcomes for users.
2. The follow-up review found that councillors thought highly of the One-Stop service with the staff working in this area receiving particular praise.
3. All councillors interviewed thought that the One-Stop service had improved since the 2005 review.
4. The timeliness of responses has shown a significant improvement, with the number of service requests (Contact Centre) outstanding for more than 2 weeks falling from 265 in August 2005 to 14 in September 2006, see graph 1 below.

**Graph 1 - Outstanding Members service requests over 2 weeks**



5. Councillors and One-Stop staff had noticed an improvement in the timeliness and quality of the responses provided by the Environment department.
6. Councillors still occasionally found that the quality of feedback was not adequate, however these incidents were far less frequent than previously.
7. Agreement between the Environment department and the One-Stop service on whether or not the One-Stop system should be moved to a Seibel platform has not been reached. This is not affecting current performance but this issue needs to be addressed by the two relevant service areas to ensure that it does not cause future problems.

## BACKGROUND

8. The One-Stop has been operated by Members' Services since 2002. Prior to this, a similar system called MIRA had operated within the Environment department, which is the directorate that deals with the majority of One-Stop queries.
9. The One-Stop service provides a referral service for councillors when dealing with constituency casework in relation to all service areas of the Council. The One-Stop deals with initial service requests, complaints and requests for information that have been received by councillors from constituents.
10. The One-Stop logs the query on a database, and sends it electronically to the appropriate service area or nominated officer or Contact Centre to be dealt with. The aim is to do this on the same day that the enquiry is received. Queries sent to the Contact Centre tend to be service requests that are dealt with in a couple of days. The One-Stop automatically acknowledges that the case is being dealt with and a letter is sent to the constituent on the councillor's behalf. Once the service area has dealt with the referral, a response is provided using the database and this is returned to the councillor.
11. The One-Stop system can be accessed 24 hours a day, seven days a week by all councillors from their home. Referrals can also be made to the One-Stop in the following ways:
  - direct into the electronic One-Stop system
  - e-mail
  - in writing
  - by telephone or fax.
12. The One-Stop service was subject to a review in 2005 for three main reasons:
  - The One-Stop process had been operating for over two years and therefore a review was timely.
  - Overall, the One-Stop service was believed to be working well. However, some councillors had expressed dissatisfaction with elements of the service provided, particularly in dealing with service requests via the Contact Centre.
  - The corporate complaints system was undergoing development work, and because of the similarities between the two systems, it was prudent to review the One-Stop processes to see if there was any benefit in developing the two systems together.
13. During the review two main themes emerged, the high quality of service provided by the One-Stop staff and problems relating to feedback. The problems relating to feedback were:
  - lack of feedback
  - timeliness of feedback
  - the quality of the response provided.

14. In addition to the two main themes that emerged, several miscellaneous areas were also identified, these were:
  - low usage of the system by some councillors
  - lack of agreement between the One-Stop staff and Environment Services staff on definitions in use
  - IT system developments
  - process issues arising from the transfer of housing stock and responsibility for complaints relating to housing, to Erimus.
  
15. The 2005 review of the One-Stop resulted in eleven recommendations for improvement, to address the issues identified. These recommendations resulted in an Action Plan which was supported by CMT and approved by Executive. This report provides an evaluation of the actions taken in improving outcomes for users of the service.

## OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

### Objectives

16. The follow-up review had two objectives, these were to:
- evaluate the impact of the actions taken, to address the issues identified in the original review, on outcomes for users of the One-Stop service
  - identify if any additional issues had arisen that required action.

### Methodology

17. The follow-up review of the One-Stop service was undertaken using a variety of methodologies including:
- analysis of statistical data
  - interviews with councillors – a sample of 20% of councillors was used and interviews were conducted both face-to-face and by interview
  - interviews with staff within the One-Stop service and Environment
  - interviews with staff responsible for implementing the Action Plan arising from the original review.

## MAIN FINDINGS

18. The 2005 One-Stop review identified two main themes: high quality service provided by One-Stop staff and issues relating to feedback. Three different strands within the overall issue of feedback were identified, these were:
  - lack of feedback
  - timeliness of feedback
  - quality of feedback.
19. During the follow-up review the staff within the One-Stop service were once again praised by all councillors. Feedback from councillors included the comments  
“staff are very helpful and always give advice and guidance”  
“One-Stop staff are excellent”.
20. This section provides an overview of the progress made in implementing the actions to address the issues identified and provides an evaluation of the success of the actions implemented on outcomes for users.
21. The interviews with councillors provided evidence that the One-Stop service had improved. All councillors interviewed agreed that the service provided has improved since the 2005 review and expressed satisfaction with the progress made by both the One-Stop staff and in particular the Environment department.
22. No new issues relating to the One-Stop service were identified.

### Lack of feedback

23. The original review identified that the main cause of the issues relating to lack of feedback related to those queries within the One-Stop process that were categorised as service requests. The One-Stop process identified two different types of query: service requests and queries that require a response from a service area. Queries that were categorised as service requests were sent to the Contact Centre to be entered onto the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and dealt with via the CRM process. The query was then closed on the One-Stop system, without a response to councillors. This resulted in councillors being unaware of the action taken. A technical solution to this problem was identified and implemented, see Table 1.

**Table 1 – Progress implementing actions to address lack of feedback**

Action Required	Update August 2006
Instigate technical solution to close the feedback loop from CRM to the one stop shop. Solution must:	Completed. Changes have been made to the input screen 'channel' priority to default to 'Councillors – One-Stop' and provide automatic notification to the administration clerk within Environment department. The administration clerk within Environment advises when the request has been completed enabling Councillor notification.
a) Ensure that requests entered onto CRM are flagged as One-Stop-Shop requests	Completed. Some problems have occurred but actions are now in place in the Contact Centre and within the Environment department to ensure that any ongoing problems are minimised.
b) Ensure that above requests are closed on CRM	Completed. Access to appropriate information now available to the administration clerk. This allows weekly monitoring, chase up and closure of any outstanding issues. Environment have agreed a protocol for dealing with One-Stop queries and this is in place and being adhered to.
d) Ensure that where CRM queries are sent to another system e.g. Flare, feedback is given either via CRM or direct to the One-Stop-Shop.	Completed. Transport and Design service CRM link established 01.09.06. FLARE service request list now produced weekly to enable the administration clerk to monitor requests more effectively. Service improvements to enable cross-referencing have been agreed but require implementation. Protocol implemented and adhered to.

24. The technical solution implemented also addressed the 'softer' issues relating to the quality of the feedback. The implementation of this solution has resulted in users of the system receiving the feedback they required. Comments made by users include:

“Since the review took place there has been an overall improvement in the way it operates. In particular, I have noticed that we get a speedier response and less enquiries fall into what we referred to as the 'black hole' when we never received a response”

“We're now getting feedback on submissions. Councillors are now able to let residents know what's happening”.

25. The feedback from users identified that there had been a clear improvement in this area. However, a minority of queries still did not receive a response.

#### Timeliness of feedback

26. The original review identified a second issue in relation to feedback, this was the timeliness of the feedback. There was a perception amongst councillors that within certain areas of the Council the response to One-Stop queries was slow. Analysis of the data confirmed that certain areas of the Council did appear to take longer to respond to queries than others. The actions outlined in Table 2 were implemented to address this issue.

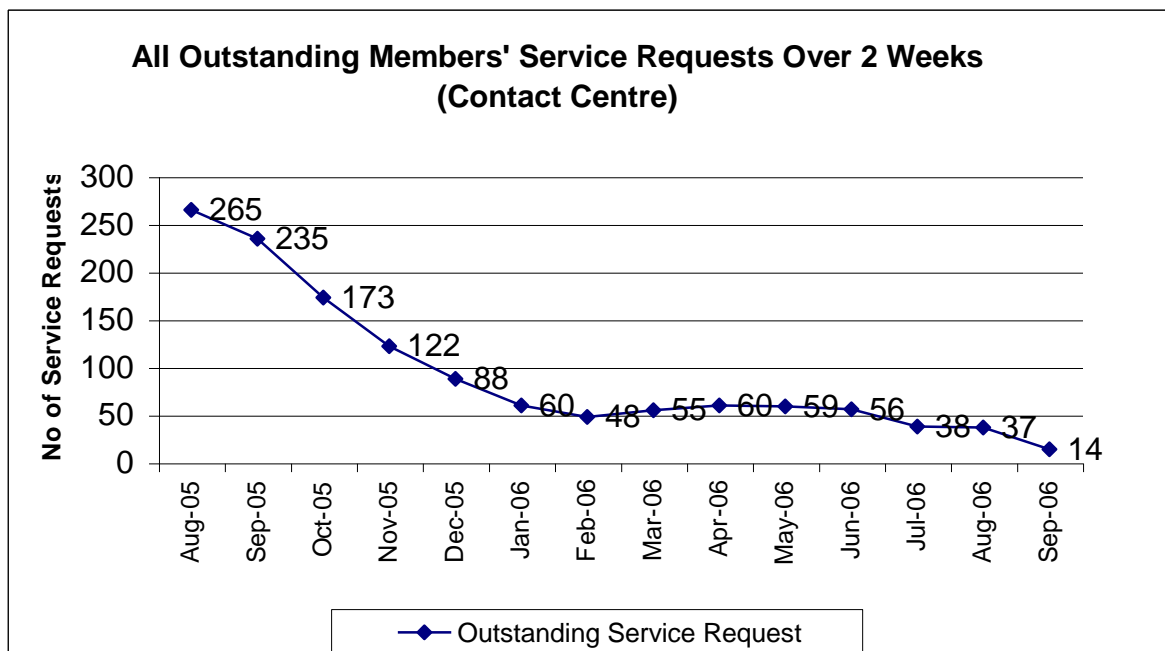


**Table 2 - Progress implementing actions to address timeliness of feedback**

Action Required	Update August 2006
Review the process within Environment to ascertain if the current process can be improved, in particular to ascertain if complaints can be sent directly to either Heads of Service or to the responding officer.	Completed. Piloting of alternative arrangements did not achieve any improvement but increased confusion and added to time spent by administration staff, therefore the previous arrangements were reinstated. Current response times indicate that the current system works well and reflects improvements made to the procedure and working practices of the admin support staff. Introduction of protocol.
Executive Director to ensure that all managers are aware of the importance of responding to One-Stop-Shop queries and to ensure that Executive Director and Heads of Service monitor and manage this.	Completed. New protocol introduced by Environment department for use by all officers.
Development of guidelines for staff on priority to be attached to One-Stop-Shop queries and timeliness of responses e.g. within x days etc.	Completed but additional work is required. Re-examination of target times of criteria for service requests to clearly include only those requests that can be dealt with within 4-5 days. Also update of target times with the introduction of the new protocol. However, some concerns that timescales for responses do not always match e.g. FOI.

27. The timeliness of feedback has significantly improved. In August 2005, 265 queries had not been responded to within 2 weeks. By September 2006 this had fallen to 14, see graph 2 below.

**Graph 2 – Number of requests outstanding for more than 2 weeks**



28. Councillors' comments on the improvement in service include:
- “Quicker response in the last year”
  - “Timing has improved”
  - “More timely responses from services particularly Streetscene”.

Quality of feedback

29. The original review identified that several councillors had difficulty in understanding the feedback provided. This was usually because the feedback provided was very short and did not fully answer the question, or the feedback included jargon and technical explanations that did not make sense to a layperson. This issue was addressed by the actions identified in table 3.

**Table 3 – Actions to address quality of feedback**

Action Required	Update August 2006
Ensure that closure comments are easily understood by the target audience.  Review of closure comments by One-Stop-Shop staff with feedback to service areas.	Completed. Regular reviews of responses are undertaken with procedures in place to return those which are not acceptable. Returns are currently standing at approximately 1% of all requests received.
Development of guidelines for staff on priority to be attached to One-Stop-Shop queries and timeliness of responses e.g. within x days etc.	Completed but additional work is required. Re-examination of target times of criteria for service requests to clearly include only those requests that can be dealt with within 4-5 days. Also update of target times with the introduction of the new protocol. However some concerns that timescales for responses do not always match e.g. Freedom of Information.

30. The above actions have resulted in an improvement in the quality of feedback, with both councillors and One-Stop staff noticing this improvement. The One-Stop staff undertake regular reviews of the responses provided by officers and return to officers any responses that are unsatisfactory. The return rate is currently running at 1%.
31. Despite the improvements noticed some councillors stated that some of the responses were still “snide”, “insulting” or didn’t provide sufficient detail.

## Miscellaneous issues

32. In addition to the two main themes identified within the review 'quality of service and feedback', several minor issues were also identified, these were:
- low usage of the system by some councillors
  - agreement between the One-Stop staff and Environment Services staff on definitions in use
  - IT system developments
  - process issues, arising from the transfer of housing stock and responsibility for complaints relating to housing, to Erimus.
33. The actions agreed to tackle the above issues and progress against them are shown in table 4.

**Table 4 – Actions to address miscellaneous issues**

Action Required	Update August 2006
Examination of the One-Stop-Shop database to see if it can meet the reporting and management information requirements of the Environment service area.	Completed. The administration clerk within Environment now has a greater level of report functionality, which enables him to monitor the progress of all service requests and meet the reporting needs of the Environmental department.  However, the Executive Director for Environment is to explore the possibilities of One-Stop-Shop being transferred onto a Siebel platform and for Heads of Service to report progress to the Executive Director on a weekly basis.
Protocols agreed between Environment and the One-Stop-Shop to cover definitional issues e.g. when should a case be reopened, when should it be designated a new case, definition of a service request.	Completed. Old cases are no longer re-opened, a new enquiry is created instead with link reference to previous case. Monthly meetings are now held between Members' Office and Environment staff to review / progress action plan.
Clarify processes and responses for dealing with Erimus enquiries. Erimus to issue a letter to councillors.	Completed. Instructions have been given to councillors to advise them to direct tenants to Erimus in the first instance for service requests. One-Stop should only be used for service complaints.
The ability to move the One-Stop-Shop to a Siebel platform should be considered during the early stages of the Corporate Complaints system design.	Completed. The ability to move the One-Stop-Shop to a Siebel platform has been considered. However, the Resources team do not feel that this is a suitable solution. However, Environment and HBS are keen to progress this possibility, as this would enable the current IT systems to 'talk' to one another in a more effective way.

34. Low usage of the system by some councillors was investigated and did not relate to any specific issue, it merely reflected the role some councillors undertook and their preferred method of working.

35. The original review found that there were differences in the definitions used by staff within the Environment department and staff within the One-Stop service. The development and use of a protocol and the instigation of regular monthly meetings had successfully addressed this issue.
36. There were two issues relating to use of IT: firstly whether the current system could meet the management information needs of the Environment department and secondly whether the current system should migrate to a Seibel platform.
37. Environment has been given access to the reporting functionality of the One-Stop system and this has enabled them to meet their management reporting needs.
38. However, there is a difference of opinion between the Environment department and One-Stop staff regarding moving the current system to a Seibel platform. The Environment department would like to progress this, to enable links to be made between the One-Stop system and other IT systems in operation within Environment. However, staff within the One-Stop service do not believe this is an appropriate way forward.
39. The Council transferred its housing stock to Erimus in November 2004. Consequently, queries relating to housing no longer fall within the scope of the One-Stop service. During the initial review it became apparent that problems regarding lack of feedback with regard to complaints that fell under Erimus' remit were developing. This was not a council-owned problem. However, to facilitate partnership working it was suggested that One-Stop staff meet with Erimus to offer advice to Erimus regarding this emerging problem. Despite this action being successfully completed, it was clear from interviews with councillors that some councillors still believed that Erimus queries were the responsibility of the One-Stop service.

## CONCLUSION

40. The follow-up review of the One-Stop service has revealed that all councillors have noticed that the service provided has improved. In particular, councillors have noticed that all queries now receive a response and have made reference to the 'black hole' that used to exist no longer existing.
41. The actions agreed by Executive following the 2005 review have all been completed and this has resulted in improved outcomes for users of the One-Stop service.
42. There is still scope for further improvements to the One-Stop service, in particular in ensuring that all responses are polite, informative and jargon-free.
43. There is a difference of opinion regarding the most appropriate technological way forward for the One-Stop system: the Environment department would like to see the One-Stop IT system moved to a Seibel platform to enable it to interact with other IT systems within the department, whereas, the One-Stop staff believe the current solution is the most appropriate.