

**Statement by the Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer Services
and Asset Management**

17 September 2013

Customer Services

Customer Services have experienced a new peak in service demand. The highest number of customers were recorded in July, there were 8,304 telephone calls through the Contact Centre and 3,575 customers visiting the Civic Centre. This is in no small part due to the impact of welfare reform and increased provision is in place and will ensure that service standards are maintained to the best possible level.

Customer satisfaction monitoring has been unaffected by the increase in customers at present. To the end of July 94% of both callers and visitors were satisfied with the service provided.

Improvements are continuing against the 4 key priorities in the Customer Service Strategy and these are monitored by the Director of Customer Service and Customer Services Board.

Following the Member familiarisation sessions undertaken in October and November, if any Members would like to see behind the scenes of Customer Services, please contact the Manager to make arrangements. I have recently seen behind the scenes for the first time and it is very interesting to see how Customer Services operate.

Communities

- **Council Grants**

Applications continue to be received under the Investing in Communities Fund (capital) and the Community Grants Programme (revenue). Decisions on the first tranche of funding will be made in September. There are two leaflets available, which you may find helpful for groups in your wards, showing how groups can apply for these grants.

- **Funding & Development Work**

The Development Officer post based in the Voluntary sector at Northallerton Voluntary Services Association (NDVSA) and funded by the Council continues to support the development of community led projects in Hambleton by seeking and securing funding. During Quarter 1, 23 projects have been supported and £72,824 secured through submission of 10 successful funding applications.

- **Area Partnerships**

The second annual Northallerton Homegrown Food Festival took place on the 22nd June and proved a great success with over 4,000 people attending. The event, co-ordinated by members of the Northallerton & Villages Community Forum, attracted more than 70 food producers from a 40 mile radius of Northallerton. The Festival has recently won the Action for Market Town's 'Town's Alive' award 2013 (North & Scotland). As a result the project has been automatically entered into the Towns Alive National Award, the winner of which will be announced in November. I am looking forward to visiting the festival next year.

The River Leven Jubilee Bridge in Stokesley was officially opened by Lord Crathorne, Knight Commander of the Royal Victorian Order, on Saturday 1st June. Hambleton District Council was represented by Councillor John Prest, Vice-Chairman of the Council. A letter has been received from HRH the Queen congratulating the Steering Group, which included members of the Stokesley Area Partnership, on the completion of the bridge and thanking them for their efforts. A comprehensive evaluation of the scheme is now taking place to provide advice and guidance for other groups on the delivery of community led engineering projects.

- **CCTV**

Following the successful completion of the upgrade from analogue to digital, work has started on developing the project documentation for the next phase which is looking at linking the cameras via wireless thus potentially saving on having to use the wired BT network with its associated costs.

- **Parish Liaison**

A positive response has been received from Parish Council's to the recent consultation exercise regarding the proposal to hold a joint County/District/Parish Liaison meeting. Work is now being undertaken to move this forward.

- **Community Safety**

There has been a busy and productive period with the key Partnership Plan for 2013/14 and priority Action Plans being agreed - for Domestic Abuse, Antisocial Behaviour and Road Safety and other projects such as re-offending.

Our links with community initiatives have continued, a particular highpoint being supporting the "Summer Shock" Youth festival held in Bedale in July, attracting over 400 young people from the area with strong support from Bedale and Leyburn Police and Community Safety Officer teams. "Summer Shock" is an event co-ordinated by North Yorkshire County Council and other partner agencies to build respect amongst groups, as well as reducing anti-social behaviour through its positive activities.

Domestic Abuse incidents continue to rise, but much work has been undertaken to increase people's awareness of the issue, particularly in secondary schools. Crime figures remain comparatively stable across the District with 352 crimes reported in Quarter 1, although there has been an increase in non-domestic burglary. Projects have commenced already in response to this. Reports of Antisocial Behaviour continue to fall. Speed matrix work continues across the district providing resources for Parishes regarding speeding concerns. The excellent work through the Multi Agency Programme meetings and local problem-solving is clearly having a positive impact.

Asset Management

- **Part-Nighting of Public Lighting**

Public consultation is currently underway in conjunction with the County Council to establish those street lights throughout the District which will be turned off between 12am and 5am. It is hoped that the necessary works to the lamps will commence in September 2013 and be completed early in 2014.

- **Adoption of Highways at Thurston Road, Northallerton**

Works have been completed on Thurston Road at Northallerton Business Park which will allow it to be adopted as public highway by North Yorkshire County Council, thereby transferring future maintenance responsibilities to the County Council.

Councillor Nigel Knapton

Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Customer Services and Asset Management