

## **Meeting of Executive Members for City Strategy and Advisory Panel**

7<sup>th</sup> June 2006

Report of the Assistant Director of Resource and Business Management,  
City Strategy

### **Report on the performance of the Member Enquiry system - 2005**

#### **Summary**

1. This report sets out the performance of the City Strategy Member Enquiry system, based in Business and Policy Development, from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2005 to December 31<sup>st</sup> 2005.
2. Members are asked to note the improvement in performance and to continue to lend their support to the system.

#### **Background**

3. With the support of Directorate Management Team, the Customer and Member Services team officially took responsibility for the Member correspondence and contact monitoring system in December 2004.
4. The route for contacting Environment and Development Services is by email through the DEDS\* Inbox and the Member and Customer Services team is responsible for circulating requests, comments, suggestions, complaints (Stage1, 2 and Ombudsman) and compliments from Members and others to the correct officer or service area within the Directorate. (\*DEDS is Directorate of Environment and Development Services, the former name of what is now known as the Directorate of City Strategy)
5. Although the team primarily deal with contacts from Members coming through the DEDS Inbox, requests that come through the Council website and from other email Inboxes, through the Director, referrals from Reception, the Chief Executive and other Directorates are also swept up and dealt with so they can be properly tracked. Therefore the team also deals with letters, emails, telephone calls, faxes and visitors to 9 St. Leonard's Place reception.
6. The following groups form our key customer base:
  - The public (residents, students and visitors)
  - Members of Parliament

- The Ombudsman
  - Parish Councils
  - Businesses and developers
7. General letters from the public are tracked under a separate system by the Administration team in Support Services who provide their own performance management reports through the Directorate Performance Management Framework, and for this reason information on these contacts does not appear in this report.

## **Consultation**

8. None required

## **Options**

9. None as this report is for information only.

## **Analysis**

### **Contacting the Directorate**

10. The DEDS Inbox (e mail) is the primary route for contacting the Directorate, and is reflected in the number of contacts made by email. These figures show only the requests that are received through the DEDS Inbox as data cannot otherwise be captured for recording purposes.
11. The figures included in the table below show the three most popular methods of contacting the Directorate. Most significant is the amount of e mails recorded, and the significant difference between that and the next most used ways of contact. This data span is between 1st January 2005 and 31st December 2005 :

<b>Method of contact</b>	<b>% of contacts made in this way</b>
Email	76.8% (2809)
Letter	21.3% (780)
Telephone	0.85% (31)

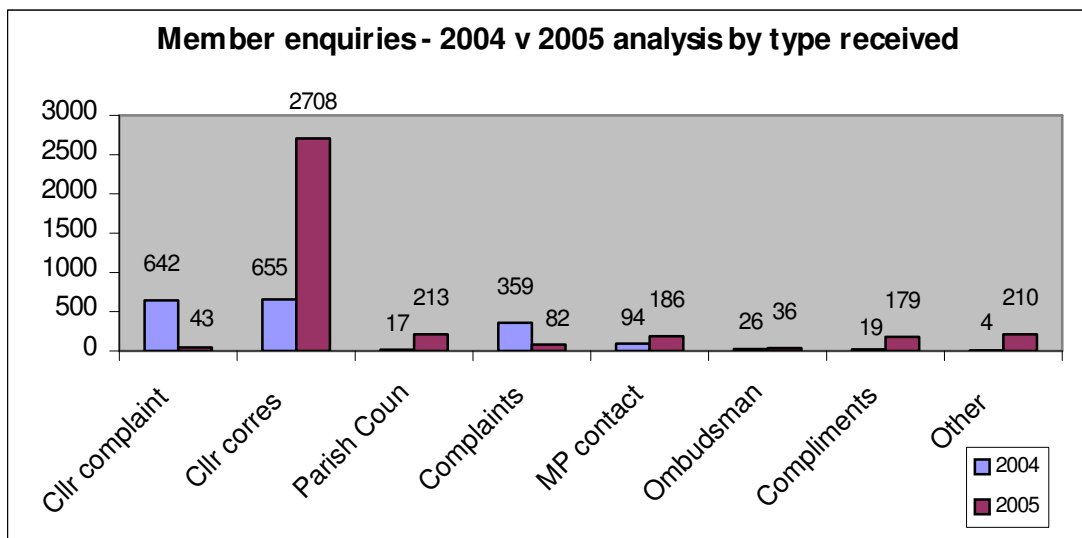
### **Logging contacts received**

12. Many officers are still getting direct contact from Members, although this is sometimes unavoidable due to matters of confidentiality. Not all data is being captured and, even though the amount of items logged has increased, it is difficult to track performance and workload, thereby reducing the likelihood of

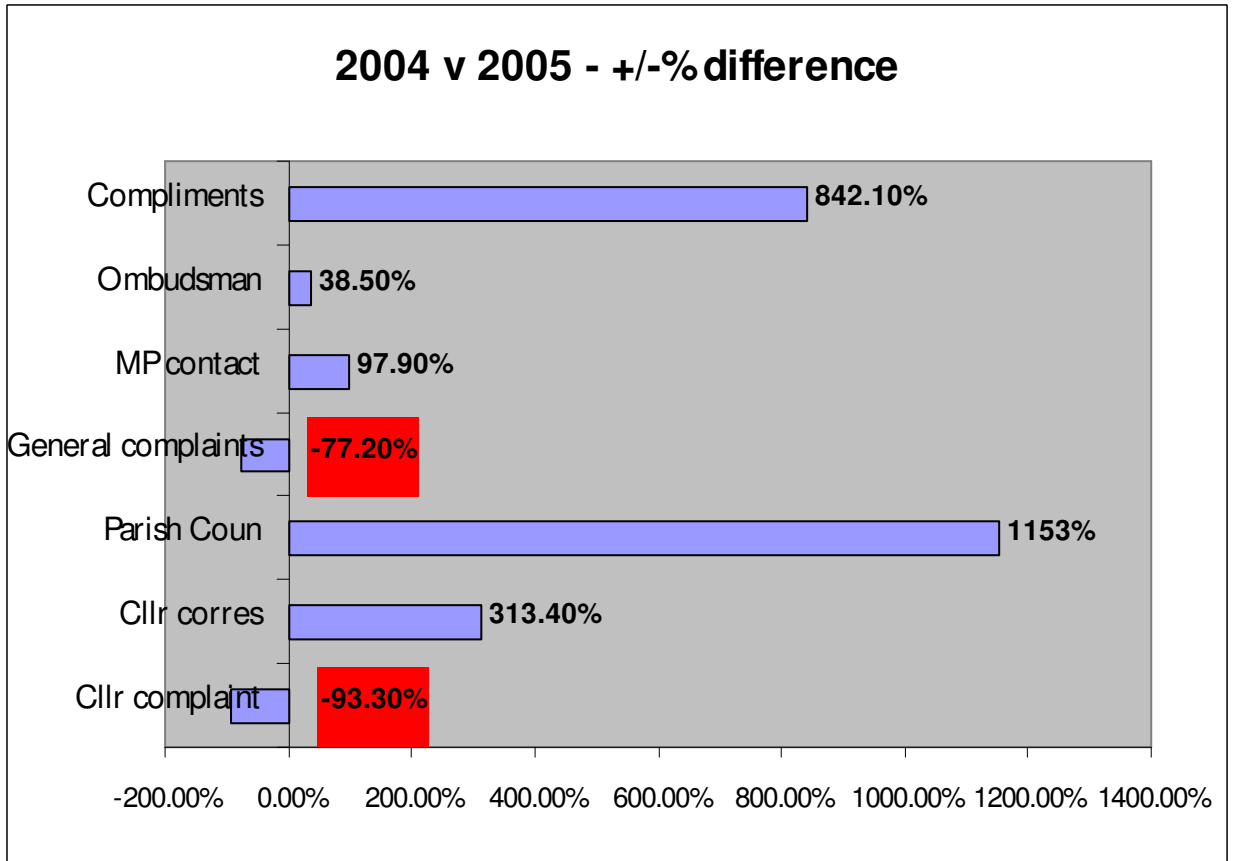
a 10 day response time. Some officers are letting us know that they are getting this extra work by copying emails to the team, but this practise needs to be adopted by all officers. This issue is being addressed internally.

**Performance information**

- 13. Statistical data collated on the use of the enquiries@DEDS route, letters from the Ombudsman, MP's and Parish Councils and direct contact from residents, visitors and students have shown a significant increase from 2004.
- 14. Overall, the number of items dealt with by the team increased from 1816 in 2004, to 3657 in 2005, an increase of 101.4%.
- 15. Member contact ranges widely from none at all over the year to weekly contact, which takes up a significant percentage of the overall numbers received.



- 16. The increase in requests, and subsequent improvement in performance, is perhaps best represented by the +/-% difference graph below which compares data from 2004 and 2005.

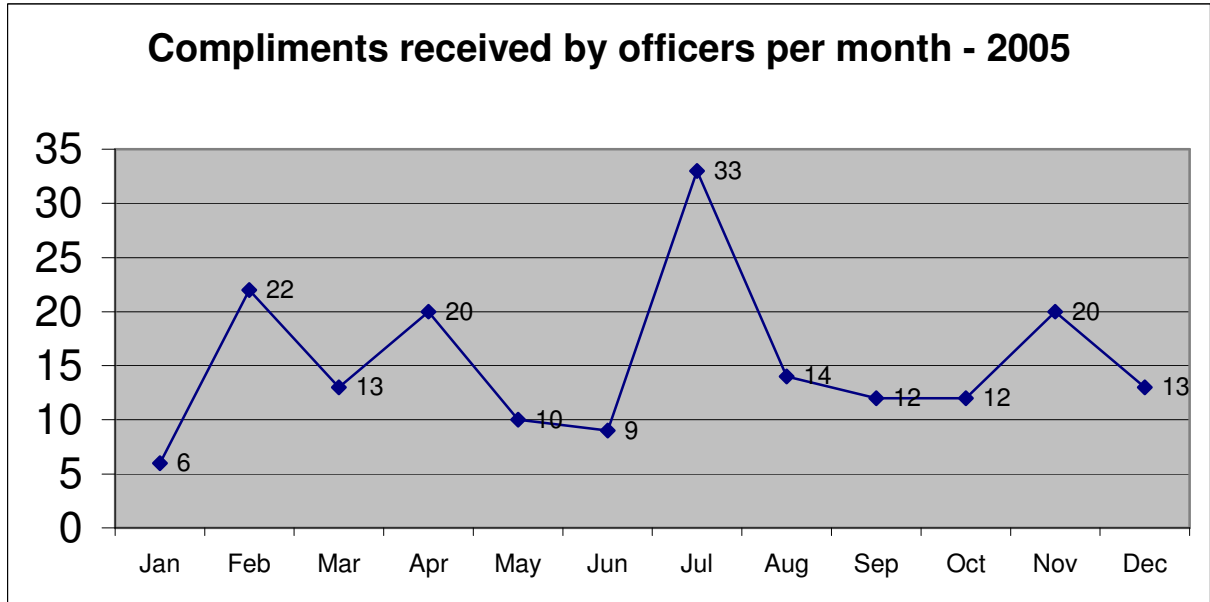


17. The figures show a substantial reduction in the number of actual Member complaints, down by 93.3% from 2004 and general complaints – those from residents, visitors and businesses - are down by 77.2% in the same period.
18. Conversely, there has been an increase in the amount of Councillor correspondence – requests for service, information etc, -received with a rise in numbers of 313.4%. This is for several reasons, but the Member ‘walkabouts’ and surgeries appear to be the greatest contributory factor. In October 2005 for example, 700 requests for service and information were logged following Member ‘walkabouts’ in their Wards.
19. It is essential that advance warning of when these are to taking place is given as staff can then be prepared for the additional influx of work.
20. Despite the large increase in volume over the course of the year, the average response time has now fallen from 11 working days in 2004 to 6 working days.
21. There has also been a correspondingly large rise in the number of compliments (842%) received by officers. Detailed information follows in paragraph 23.
22. Closer monitoring of correspondence from Parish Councils has also been taking place which has seen an increase of 1153% from 2004. Clerks have now been informed that Penny Hepworth is the point of contact for any

correspondence they send to the Directorate, and there have been a number of telephone calls with questions and queries.

### Compliments

23. For 2005, the number of compliments received by staff are as follows:



24. This amounts to 184 compliments received over the course of the year, a rise of 842% from 2004, and an average of 15.3 per month of those that are logged.

25. The spike in July was due to a rash of compliments regarding Ascot and the way in which the occasion was organised and acquitted. Of the 33 received, 24 (72.8%) were regarding the event.

### Diary Management system

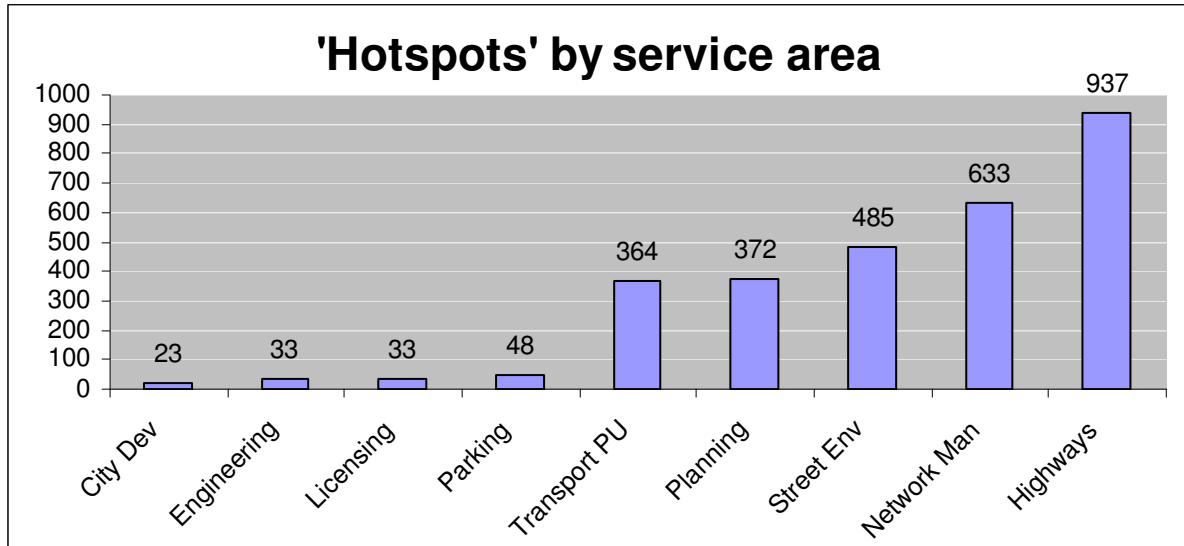
26. The diary management system, created to support service managers and their staff in meeting deadlines, has proved to be a useful tool in helping track and deal with items. This is in the form of an Excel spreadsheet and can be interrogated by individual service areas, shows which reference numbers need to be answered by specific dates and who is responsible for that item.

27. The diary is circulated on Fridays and continues to receive positive feedback

### Valuable statistical information

28. 'Hotspot' information is now accessible, whereby the service areas which receive the most contact or requests for information through the Member and Customer service channel can be identified and support offered where necessary.

29. A snapshot of this data appears in the following graph, although it should be noted that not all correspondence is going through the DEDS Inbox and data may be subject to change. A full list of items received by service area can be found in Annexes 3 and 4 of this report, but extremes of the spectrum from 1st January to 31 December 2005 are represented here.



30. The volumes responded to by Highways and Street Operations, for example, constitute almost 26% of the total logged for the whole Directorate. 94.3% of these were replied to on time with an average time of 6 working days.

31. Network Management dealt with the second highest volumes with 17.3% of the share. They responded to 98.02% within 7 working days.

32. As well as logging all calls and correspondence received directly, Street Environment Service, primarily through York Pride Action Line, had the third highest volume of items to deal with. They dealt with 13.3% of contacts within 6 days, but with a lower response rate of 88.8% of queries replied to within 10 working days.

### **IT issues**

33. There are a number of concerns over the reliability and capability of the database used to capture the information. Currently use is being made of an Access database, but this system is not very reliable.

34. There is also similar customer service based work being carried out by the easy@york team which will impact on the provision of an IT system and associated protocols over time. Separate discussions on this subject are being held.

## Corporate Objectives

35. The content of this report relates to Corporate Objective 7 – Ensure that City of York Council is a high-performing Council, and in particular to objective 7.4 which is to ensure continuous service improvement and high quality in the delivery of services.

## Implications

36.

- **Financial** – there are no financial implications.
- **Human Resources** - there are no human resources implications.
- **Equalities** - there are no equalities implications.
- **Legal** - there are no legal implications.
- **Crime and Disorder** there are no crime and disorder implications.
- **Information Technology (IT)** - there are currently no IT implications, although this may change when [easy@york](mailto:easy@york) is launched.
- **Property** - there are no property implications.
- **Other** - None

## Risk Management

37. There are no known risks

## Recommendations

38. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member for City Strategy to note the increase in performance and other key areas from 2004 to 2005

**Reason:** So the Executive Member is aware of the improvement.

39. That the Advisory Panel advise the Executive Member for City Strategy to note the content of this report and to continue to support the Member enquiry system.

**Reason:** So that the Executive Member has full knowledge of the Member enquiry system in City Strategy, is aware of its performance and can continue to offer support where appropriate.

## Contact Details

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### Chief Officer Responsible for the report:

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Report Approved



Date 21/02/2006

### Specialist Implications Officers:

None

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all:*

All



For further information please contact the author of the report

### Background Papers:

There are no background papers to this report.

### Annexes:

ANNEX A - **Numbers of correspondence received by service area – 2005**

ANNEX B - **Percentage of replies made within deadline by service area**