

# Members Enquiry Workshop

*Review of Member enquiries that will investigate whether the administration and procedures in place are working effectively and to investigate what improvements can be made.*

## *Key Themes*

### **1. Democratic Service Unit Staff**

- Members praised the DSU staff for being exceptional and for providing outstanding and ongoing support for members, with nothing ever being too much for them.
- During the workshop members addressed the problems that have occurred over the years mainly regarding the timeline of response within the Service. Even though members underlined that the DSU staff shouldn't be blamed for lack of response as the unit play a valuable role and assist members in every way possible.
- Members are grateful that the Services provides full traceability and that the DSU staff are more than happy to talk members through any updates about their enquiry or what stage it's at, and what steps can be taken next.

### **2. Delay in response**

- During both workshops, time of response was the issue that raised most concern for members and the issue that needs most improvement. Members added that a lack detail in the response is a further issue as members normally receive a 1-line response.
- Members expressed that officers respond on average around 5 days with a 'basic' holding response and then must wait 6-7 months for a full response, although identified that some enquiries can take longer and can be more complex.
- Members noted that if a full response is not possible in 7 days, the department should let members know via progress report where they members can then keep in touch with the individual that reported the problem. However, it is essential that the issue must be followed up if the original target is not met.
- From a different perspective, other members believed that there shouldn't be a strict template for responses as they will all be different, with the speed of response varying depending on the size of the enquiry / problem.

### **3. Following up with officers**

- Above, comments were made regarding delay in response. Several members within the workshop brought attention to the fact that they would contact the officers immediately when the problem is an emergency that needs to be dealt with within the day or if there is an ongoing problem. If the problem is not an emergency, then members will go through the DSU (as per member training).

- Members also stated that once they have contacted officers several times, they create and build a long – term relationship with them which then leads to contacting officers directly as for convenience as they are certain they will receive a high-speed reply from officers direct whereas members highlighted that the DSU is not so successful in obtaining a fast response.
- Although some members did raise concern over the amount of officers’ time that is being taken up dealing with escalations and the potential effect that this can have on public services when officers needed to prioritise a member enquiry over other duties.

#### **4. Categorisation of requests**

- Within every group during both 2 sessions the idea of traffic lights categorising system was put forward by members. For example, with red representing all emergency and danger enquires to the safety of the public, with green standing for problem and enquires that can be dealt with over a longer period and doesn’t need to be done immediately.
- A proposal was made by members for an officer to have the role of reading through the emails to categorise in order as mentioned above, although members predict that everyone will log their problems as red (urgent / emergency).
- Another meaningful suggestion made by members was the possibility of filtering the service required. For example, Priority 1 (P1) or P2 basis with reason. Standards would need to be written for all members to understand, with the DSU then being able to categorise them. Furthermore, members also suggested the possibility to access to the system of this categorisation request as it would allow them to receive an overview of what category their request has been put in and when it will be dealt with. The main reason behind this suggestion by the members is as for currently a large quantity of the members are having to keep a personal record of every enquiry regarding which officer is dealing with, what action has been taken and when the enquiry has been delt with and the loop is closed.

#### **5. Delta Wellbeing**

- Many members highlighted that not all members are aware of Delta wellbeing, especially the newest ones. Members noted the need for reinforcement that it can be used on weekends. Delta Wellbeing staff are trained to know what can be actioned on a weekend and are there to give members advice on how to reduce the level of danger of the enquiry / problem and any action that can be taken until officers are able to deal with it on the next working day.
- To add, many members also weren’t aware of ‘Fix my street’ and ‘My Area’. Members mentioned the possibility of having a resource available with all the contact numbers / emails that can be used on weekend / bank holiday if an emergency arises that cannot wait until the next working day.

## **6. New Members**

- New members noted that they report everything through the DSU as per member training, with further comments made that the newest members were not aware until the workshop that other members contact officers directly instead of DSU when a problem occurs.
- New members mentioned that having conversations with officers would be beneficial to widen their understanding of how the system works and to ask questions that would clear any queries they have.
- New members underlined that they are extremely grateful to DSU for the training and programming that they provided, with the DSU offering to catch up on Zoom which new members greatly appreciated.

## **7. Other findings**

- Several members noted the lack of consistency in reference numbers between the DSU reference and Contact Centre reference. The description on the Contact Centre response is often poor, needing a further request to understand which response the enquiry is for, particularly when there are several similar enquiries in progress.
- Members addressed a newly challenge that appeared mostly in December which was contacting the authority on the phone. The highest percentage of complaints members received was from the public trying to contact the authority and having to wait on the line for a long time before being spoken to.