



**EVERY CUSTOMER, EVERY TIME -
“Everybody Matters”**

**Making Experiences Count
Quarterly Customer Service Report**

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

1st April 2013 – 30th June 2013



Bromsgrove
District Council

www.bromsgrove.gov.uk

1. Introduction

This report details the customer feedback received by Bromsgrove District Council during the period from 1st April 2013 to 30th June 2013.

It also provides information about the customer demand received through the customer service team and payment channels.

2. Customer Feedback Analysis

57 complaints were received during this quarter because we did not meet the customer's expectations, or failed to meet our own standards, or the customer was unhappy with an outcome. Details of all complaints received can be found at the end of this report in Appendix A.

49 complaints (85%) were answered in 15 working days or less. 8 complaints took longer than 15 working days to respond to.

We also received **24** compliments.

Complaint figures have more than doubled since last quarter when we received **24** across the Council. We can see that the majority of the complaints for this quarter have been triggered by the Route Optimisation project for Refuse and Recycling and issues with the telephony service within the Revenues team.

The Route Optimisation project has seen a change of collection days for the majority of residents in Bromsgrove along with new routes, new team members and new patterns of duty for refuse and recycling teams. This has resulted in **19** complaints which is higher than usual. However, with approximately thirty nine and a half thousand households to deal with, it is a surprisingly lower figure. The crews have been very flexible during this period of change and have gone the extra mile to help customers who have been confused by the new collection arrangements. It is expected that complaints about collections will continue to rise in the next couple of months as residents get used to the change in collection days.

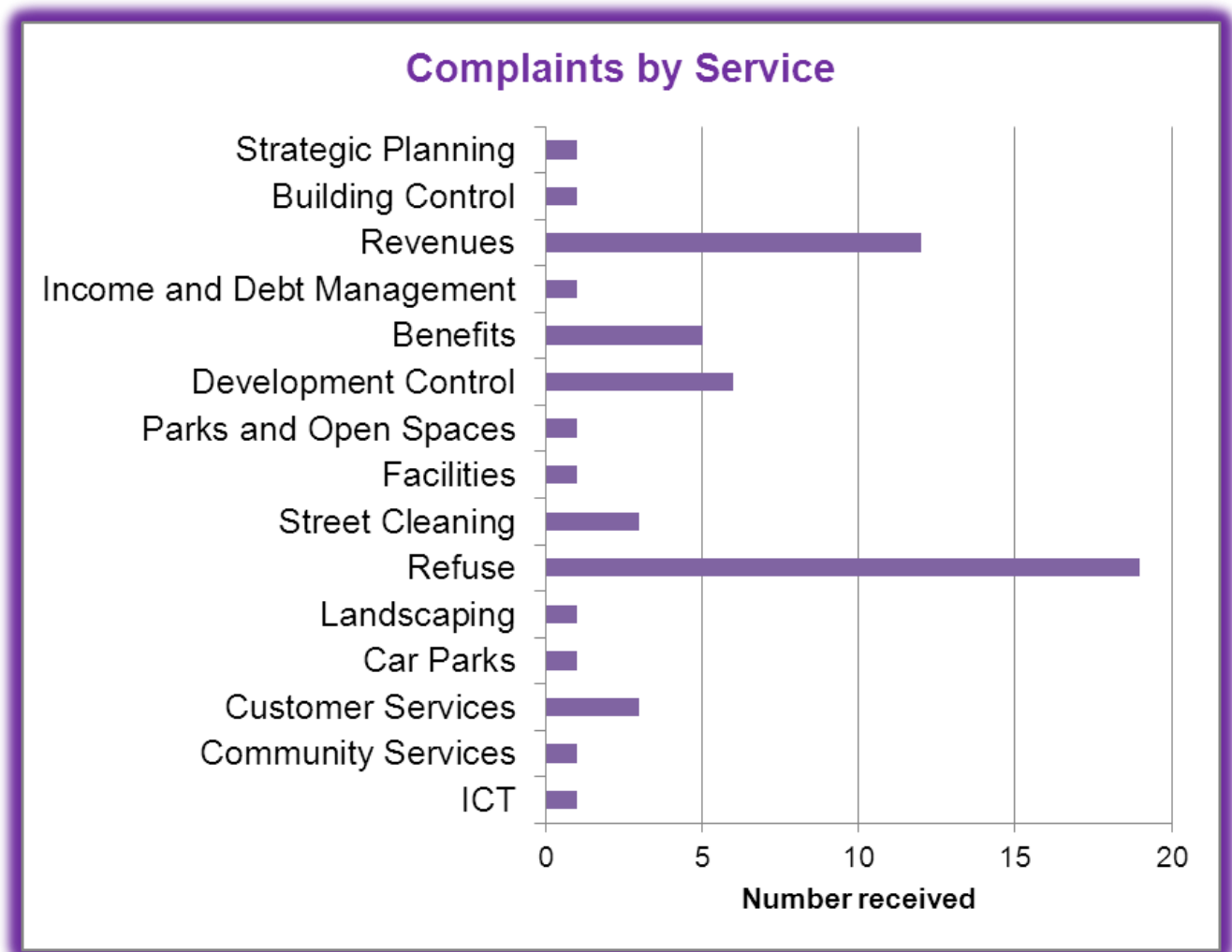
The Revenues team has been experiencing problems with their telephony service which has caused calls to go unanswered or to be cut off. However, a new contact centre module for the Revenues team is due to be installed shortly. This should alleviate any of these types of problems and allow officers to give a quicker response.

The common themes in the complaints received this quarter were:

- Automated systems not working properly.
- Problems getting through on the telephone.
- Bins not being put back in safe positions.
- Missed bins.
- Staff being unfriendly.
- Not doing what we promised.
- Brown Bin stickers causing confusion.
- Not responding to customers calls and queries.
- Unacceptable delays in taking action.
- Not keeping customers informed of changes/cancellations of service.

Number of complaints by service (detailed)

The following table provides a more detailed breakdown of complaints by service.



“You said – we listened” – what did we change as a result of complaints?

Some of the changes made as a result of complaints include:-

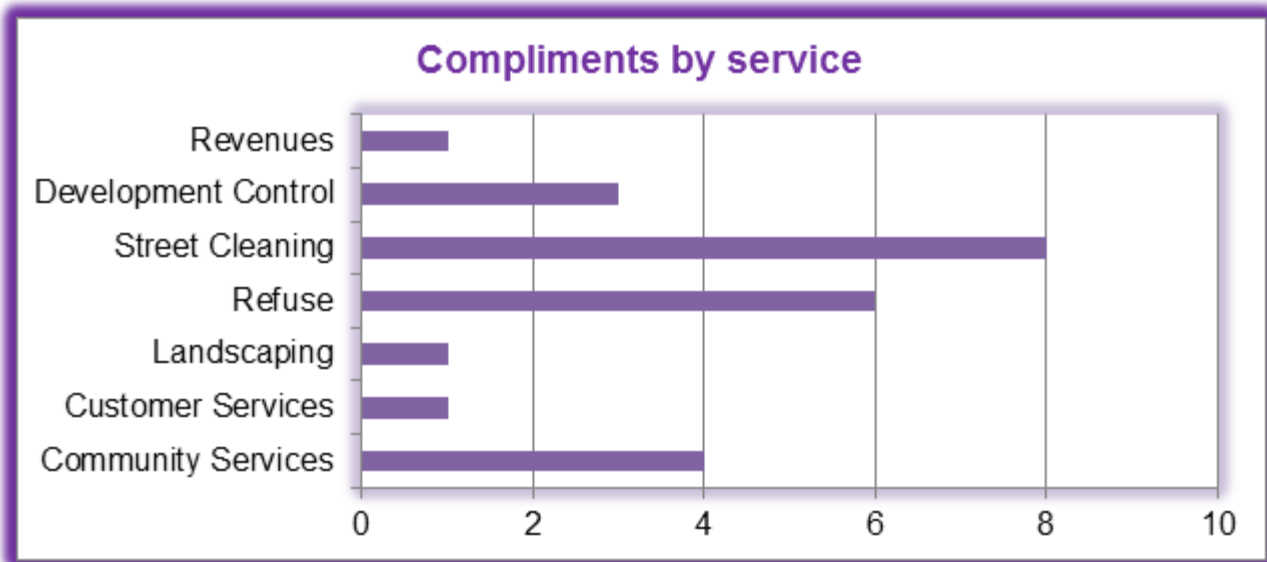
- Amended Council Tax documents with revised opening hours.
- Review of the garden waste sticker system underway.
- Improved template and system for email responses to planning queries.

Number of complaints escalated to Head of Customer Services

There were no complaints escalated to the Head of Customer Services for further investigation or action.

Happy Customers!

From the **24** compliments received we can see that customers appreciate the range of services the Council provides, especially when we deal with their requests in a timely and professional manner.



Here are some of the compliments we have received for information.

Team	Compliment Detail
Lifeline	Customer had a fall in the garden and called back in to say what a marvellous service we give and thanked us very much for our help.
Customer Services	Customer received a parking fine recently. He called into the customer service centre and was helped to complete an appeal form. The appeal has been upheld and he does not have to pay the fine. He was helped at customer services by Nicki Grainger. He wanted his thanks passed on to Nicki as he said she was extremely helpful and courteous.
Refuse	Customer spoke to Sandra at the depot to arrange a sofa to be collected. She would like to say how helpful Sandra was, as there were a few complications regarding the collection, as the customer lives on a narrow road. Also, she would like to thank the crew who collected it at the time that they said that they would.
Street Cleaning	Customer telephoned to pass on her thanks to the crew for the excellent job done in cleaning up Beoley Lane. She said that they had been very thorough.
Street Cleaning	Customer would like to compliment Allan the Sweeper who takes his time sweeping the frontage of the bank and the way he keeps this area clean and tidy.
Development Control	Customer emailed to say "Great service from Development Control"

3. Local Government Ombudsman Complaints

There was 1 complaint referred from the Ombudsman this quarter.

- The customer is unhappy with the decision for a planning application close to his home. A response to the Ombudsman is currently being prepared.

This quarter there has also been a total of four complaints that the Ombudsman considered directly without an investigation and decided not to take any further. These are detailed below:

- Customer complaint about New Homes Bonus Scheme.
- Complaint about Council Tax Setting.
- Complaint about development control- application process.
- Complaint about Hagley, 106 monies and the way in which Cala Homes planning application dealt with.

4. Customer Service Centre Information

This section provides some statistical information in respect of the amount of customer demand received via the telephone, face to face and through our payment channels.

The operational purpose of the Customer Services team is **'Help me get the support I need with my issue or problem'**. Most customer demand is now passed to expert teams and the customer service staff act as a filter to ensure that the customer gets to see or speak to the right expert.

We use this information to help us understand the demand on all Council services.

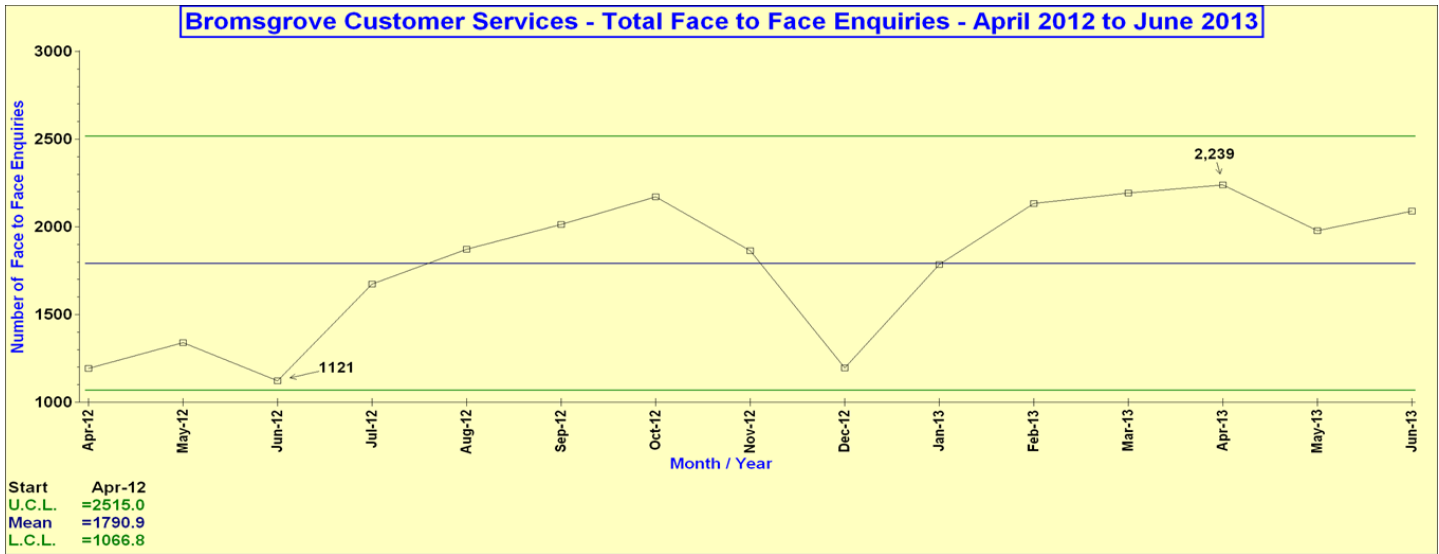
The following tables and charts show the numbers of customer transactions recorded and trends over time.

Face to face demand at the Customer Service Centre

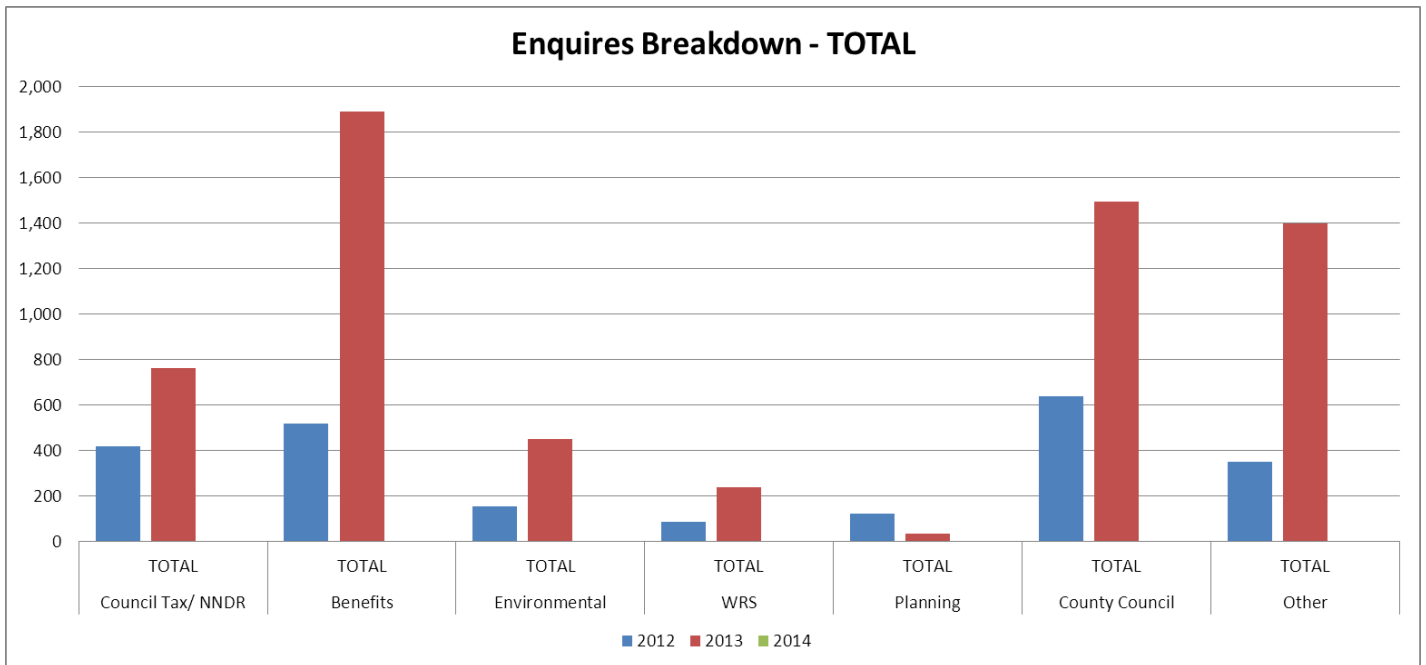
The following chart shows the total face to face enquiries being dealt with at the customer service centre on a month by month basis since April 2012. This is showing that there has been increase in face to face business since July 2012, but this is not the case. In June 2012 we implemented a new queue management system and therefore the data from July 2012 is more accurate.

We can see that the total amount of demand has remained reasonably predictable since February 2013. This is unusual as we would normally see a dip during February and a peak in March/April.

As we continue to chart the demand data we will be able to see whether this changes over the coming months.

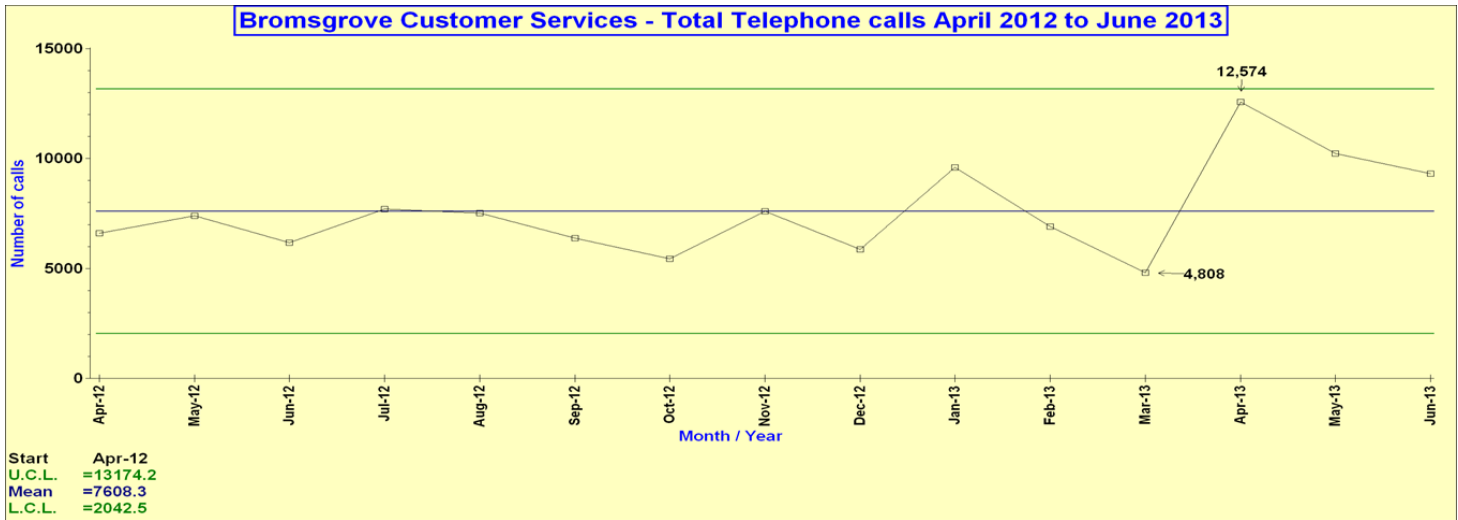


The following chart shows the breakdown of face to face customer enquiries received during the 1st quarter of 2013/14, compared with the same period last year. Due to the change in recording data during 2012/13 the data for that period cannot be used for comparison, only as an indicator of the spread of enquiry volumes.



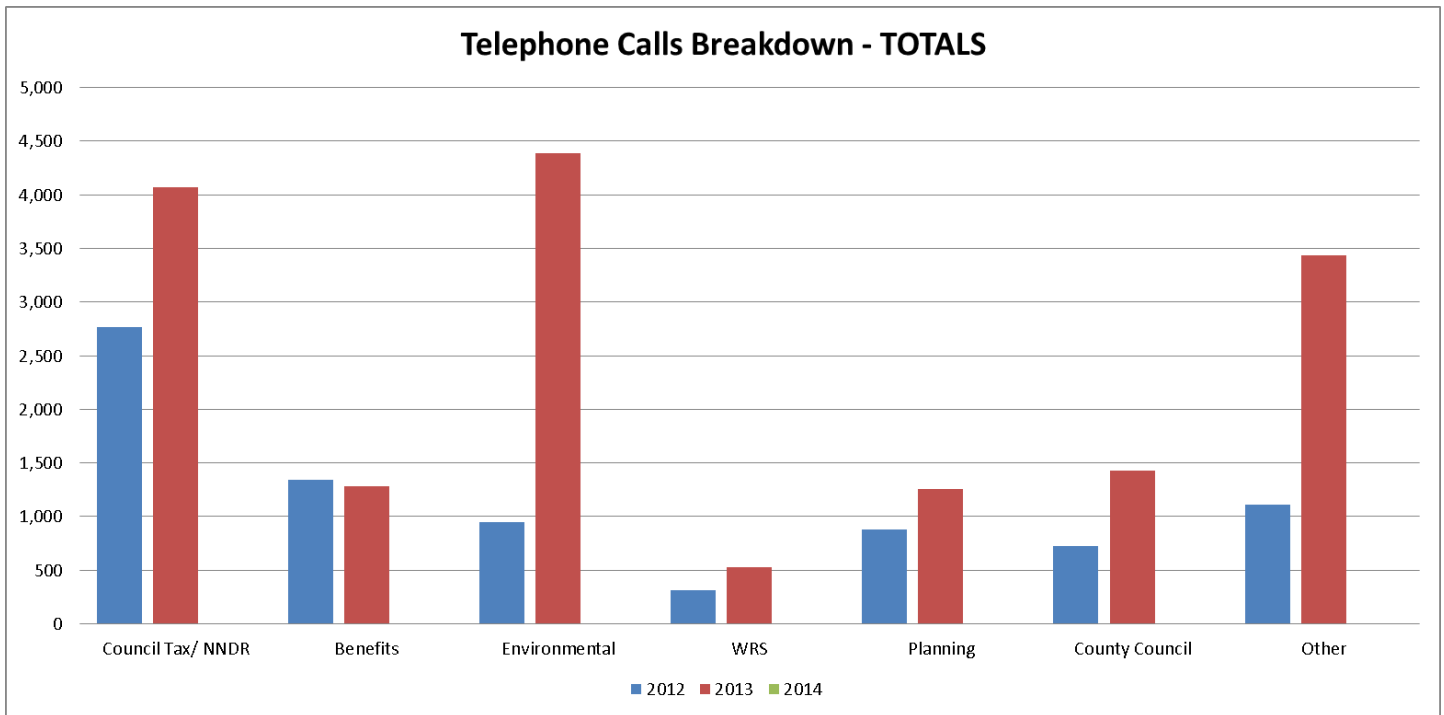
Telephone demand received

The following chart shows the total telephone calls recorded on the customer service systems from April 2012 until the end of June 2013. This shows a significant peak during April 2013 and a sustained increase in calls received over the first quarter of 2013/14 compared with the same period last year.



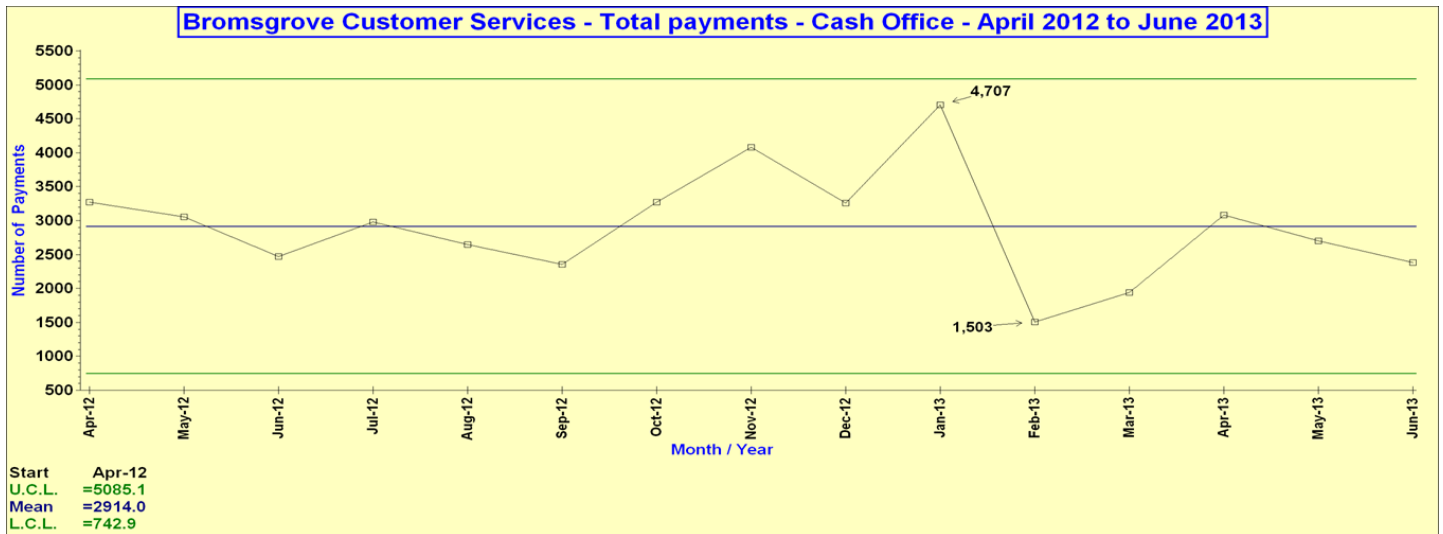
The following chart shows the breakdown of calls received via the switchboard and customer contact centre phone lines by department during the quarter. (Calls made to direct dial lines are not recorded and therefore not included.)

This shows the significant peak in calls as a result of the changes to the waste collection service, and also an increase in calls relating to Council Tax.

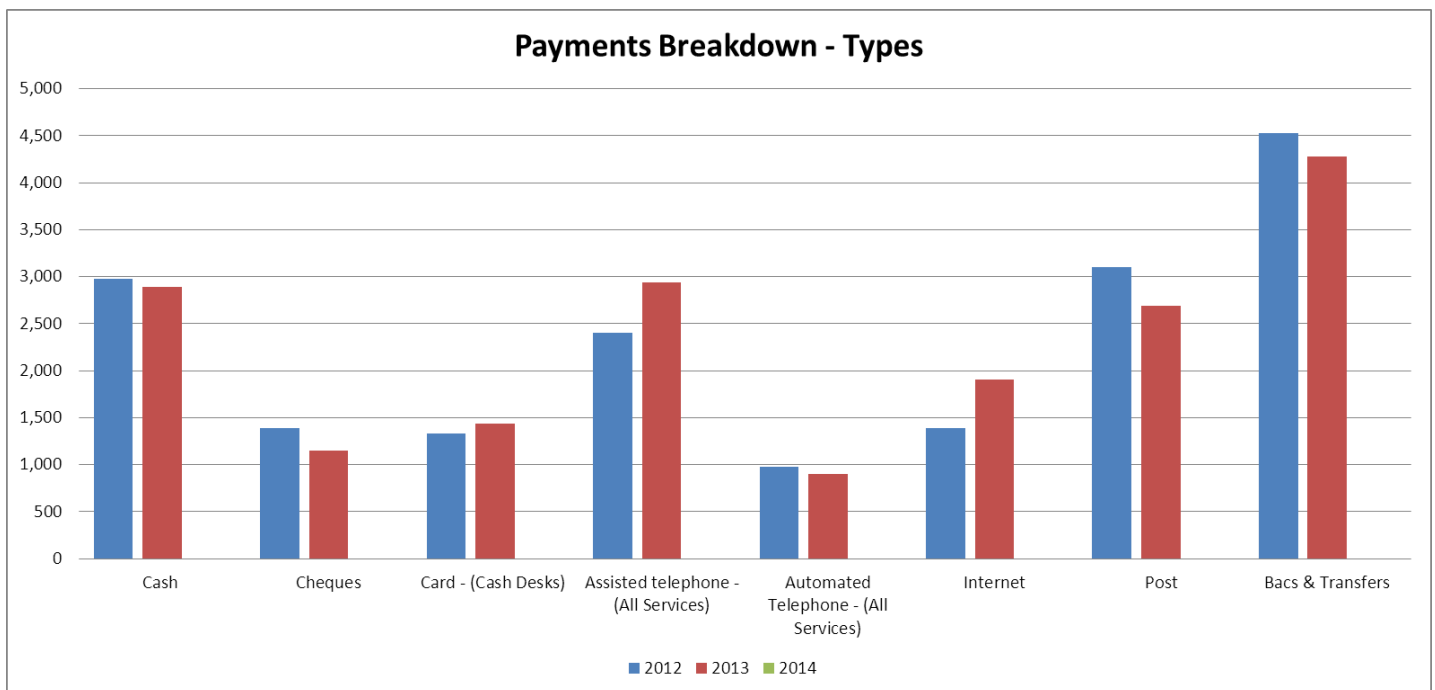


Payments

The following chart shows a month by month comparison of payments received by the cash office and customer services staff during the period April 2012 – July 2013. The peaks in November and January are due to the volumes of garden waste invoices dealt with at that time. We see an annual dip in February as Council Tax installments drop.



This chart shows the breakdown of payments across all payment channels and shows an increase in telephone and internet payments.



Amanda de Warr
 Head of Customer Services
 July 2013

Details of complaints received and outcomes

Complaint details	Days taken to respond	Action taken	Outcome update from Head of Service
Business Transformation			
Customer reported that the automatized payment system not working.	1 day	Spoken to customer and agreed we will look at the technical reason for the failure and correct it before calling him back again to confirm all is ok.	No further action.
Community Services			
Customer unhappy that he hasn't received a response to his email regarding litter at the back of a business premise this was forwarded to the Community Enforcement Team.	1 day	Customer makes significant number of reports about Community Safety issues and it is not possible to update him on progress on them all even though appropriate action is being taken.	No further action taken
Customer Services			
Customer unhappy that Bromsgrove Council is not in the telephone directory	4 days	Explanation given to customer about costs associated with having the number in the main part of the telephone directory. Customer advised where to find the number in the general community section.	No further action
Customer rang to complain about the quality of the recorded message on the telephone system at BDC switchboard. He thinks that the announcer sounds "drunk or drugged".	11 days	Discussed this with the customer and agreed this because the announcer has a regional accent and may not be clear as customer currently has ear complaint.	No further action at this time.
Customer unhappy that she was kept on hold for 50 minutes and is concerned that other people are having this problem.	10 days	Customer using old telephone number which had not been routed into new telephone system when changed over. Now routed correctly.	ICT deleting this number

Leisure and Culture			
Customer unhappy about details given to police by an usher (caretaker) about an incident at planning committee that claimed he was the person causing a nuisance which started a criminal investigation against him.	8 days	Customer informed that this is a police matter	Since the receipt of the letter the customer has contacted the Council to discuss this matter. He is now aware of the Council's view and has indicated although he disagrees he is happy to disagree at this stage. As such the matter is considered as closed.
Customer unhappy about the dangerous state of the play area in Stoke Road.	5 days	Customer contacted and plans for the play area discussed.	No further action
Environmental Services			
Customer was walking along the pavement and two men were using sit-on mowers to cut the grass. One of the men was looking behind him, talking to the other operative and almost ran her over. She had to swerve out of his way. He did not apologise or even acknowledge his mistake.	12 days	Letter of apology sent	Operatives have been spoken to about taking care and acting courteously when mowing. NB This seems to be an isolated incident.
Customer complained that a neighbour's garden waste was emptied when it has a 2012 label on it. Customer unhappy that they may be subsidising other households.	10 days	The charge had been paid and crew had checked this. Customer informed.	We are currently carrying out a Transformation Review of garden waste and looking at the need for stickers.
Customer complained that Waste Crew left the empty bins in the middle of shared driveway to 5 houses causing an obstruction. Customer could not exit the end of driveway and had to stop the car and get out and move the bins.	1 day	Apology given to customer.	The crews have been spoken to about this as part of the Route Optimisation changes to ensure bins are returned properly.

Customer complained that Waste Crew has access to a key safe to access the bins, and are not securing the key after use. Customer reported that the crews rarely put the key away and lock it back up resulting in security concerns.	14 days	Officer has spoken to the crews about this and has apologised to customer	The Team Leader is monitoring this situation.
Customer on assisted collection complained bins are not being returned to agreed place	27 days Problem contacting the customer	Apology given to customer and crews informed	The crews have been spoken to about this as part of the Route Optimisation changes to ensure bins are returned properly.
Customer is unhappy that crews left his bin a long way down the road away from his house and they often leave it in the middle of his drive.	4 days	Spoken to crew and advised them of problem	The crews have been spoken to about this as part of the Route Optimisation changes to ensure bins are returned properly.
Customer unhappy with the attitude of a member of the waste crew who told her to empty the bin herself when she questioned why it hadn't been emptied.	21 Staff concerned on leave	Apology given to the customer- staff attitude will be monitored.	Being monitored
Customer unhappy about the amount of cigarette ends outside the Dolphin Centre	13 days	This area is cleaned regularly every day and this was explained to the customer.	Environmental Services to liaise with Leisure Services regarding cigarette bins and signage.
Customer complained that he was woken up by street cleaning machine outside his home at 6.25am.	10 days	Customer contacted and informed this this wasn't our machine	No further action.
Customer complained that they had got wet when paying money to the Council when paying to park and requested covers.	3 days	Replied to the customer in a letter explaining that we will consider their suggestion of covers over the parking machines.	No further action.
Customer wrote to complain about her bins and other people's bins are being carelessly left after being emptied and reported that this has happened on numerous	15 days	Apology given to customer and assurance that we are working to improve this situation	The crews have been spoken to about this as part of the Route Optimisation changes to ensure bins are returned properly.

occasions.			
Customer hadn't put the brown bin sticker on her bin. Spoke to the bin man who said he couldn't empty it without the sticker. She told him she had paid but they still didn't empty the bin	16 days	Contacted resident to explain the crew were acting on instructions. Not to empty garden waste bins without the correct sticker.	Garden waste team investigating
Customer unhappy that the truck for recycling cannot fit down her street to collect the recycling what is the street meant to do with the recycling?	14 days	Contacted the customer and explained the situation. Agreed alternative collection site.	We have revised the collections to some hard to reach properties as part of Route Optimisation changes and will be reviewing others in October.
Customer emailed about missed bin and also reported failure to reply to a missed bin collection online report.	5 days	Crew have not been collecting weekly as they thought the property could do with going fortnightly but did not have the authority to do this and did not inform the customer.	Crew spoken to. Issue also resolved via route Optimisation. Apologies given to the customer.
Customer reported that the collection on Friday mornings coincides with school opening and causes an obstruction in the very busy road outside, with cars then mounting pavements (with children inside!) to get past the collection vehicle.	15 days	This will be reviewed by officers.	New proposals are being drawn up to try and avoid this.
Customer complained that they had ordered grey bin and not received it.	15 days	Additional resources have been allocated to catch up with excessive workloads.	Two crews have been working continuously, which include Monday working to catch up. New bin deliveries are expected in early July to meet demand.
Customer complained that whilst driving, they had approached a bend only to be faced by a waste collection truck parked on the wrong side of the road, and on the bend.	15 days	Crews have raised the issue of the speed of this vehicle. They could have been broken down or a similar vehicle parked up. The	This vehicle was not parked but carrying out collection duties.

<p>The customer reported that there were two passengers in the truck, one of whom could easily have got out and directed traffic past the dangerously-parked vehicle.</p> <p>When customer got home, the two brown bins had been left across his drive, but the grey one was nowhere to be seen.</p>		<p>crew were not parked illegally and were carrying out their daily duties</p>	
<p>Customer unhappy about the crews returning her bins and leaving them across her drive. She lives on the A38 and has specifically positioned her bins for easy access and storage because of the position of her property - if the bins are left in the middle of her drive she has to stop in the middle of a very busy road on the brow of a hill. She feels it is no more effort to return the bins to the correct storage space within her side of her drive.</p>	<p>6 days</p>	<p>Apology given as we failed to return bins to a safe location</p>	<p>Passed to officer to address with crew.</p>
<p>Customer complained about a crew member looking in her bin and taking out 2 atlas books, whilst emptying her recycling bin.</p>	<p>5 days</p>	<p>Spoken to customer and resolved the complaint immediately. Crew members have been spoken too regarding ownership of waste products presented</p>	<p>No further action required</p>
<p>Customer reported difficulties contacting the Environmental Services team.</p>	<p>7 days</p>	<p>Apologised to customer - asked what number was being used and gave direct line for Env Service for future reference – tested line and did not experience what customer did.</p>	<p>No further action required</p>
<p>Customer unhappy that after reporting a missing bin it wasn't collected as arranged and when he reported it again a week later he was promised a call back but didn't get one! . Customer has also waited</p>	<p>5 days</p>	<p>Bin has been collected and customer contacted to apologise.</p> <p>High volumes of calls have impacted on the waiting times to get through to the</p>	<p>No further action required.</p>

over 30 minutes each time to get through to the number called		team dealing with enquiries.	
Customer unhappy as her request for additional green bin has not been responded to even though she has emailed 3 times.	1 day	Apology given and bin delivered	No further action required as due to high volume of issues at this time.
Customer lives in a block of flats, with three very large dumpsters for refuse, which are kept in a fenced off area. A few weeks ago she came home to find all three dumpsters in her parking space. She had to get help to move them before she could park. She didn't complain at the time, because it's never happened before. On 12/06/13 bin men did not return the bins but left them behind her car, and she couldn't move it.	8 days	Advised supervisor to address crew to ensure bins are put back behind fenced off area and not left in car park	Supervisor to speak to crew to ensure bins are put back behind fence.
Planning and Regeneration			
Customer feels that she has not been given the right advice for a steel support to be fitted during buildings work and now damage has appeared as a result of lack of support to the ceiling	10 days	Explanation given to customer about the building control service	No further action required
Customer unhappy about the planning grant and decision notice for Old Birmingham Road.	13	Explanation given to customer	No further action required
Formal complaint regarding handling of planning decision for two dwellings at 79 Old Birmingham Road.	10	Explained to the customer that we are certain that the process and final decision procedure for this application has been handled correctly.	No further action required
Parish Council concerned about development at Old Fiery Hill.	20	Letter sent on behalf of Monitoring Officer explaining situation.	No further action required
Customer concerned about information on the 106 monies not being on our website.	4 days	Customer contacted and told that we agree that it would be better if our website could be improved but that we can't make the	No further action required

		changes in line with the timescales for live applications in Hagley. He understood and appreciated this. In any case we are already working with the local community to identify issues.	
Customers concerned about a confusing email he received from the Council.	3 days	The template response has been tested and fixed. Apology given to customer.	No further action required
Customer unhappy with the response he received from his planning objection.	11 days	This was an administrative error- apology given to the customer	No further action required
Customer unhappy that neighbour next door has not completed repair works to his listed property and that it looks unsightly and the noise of the repairs is stressful. He also wants to know why the Council hasn't followed up the enforcement notice.	20	We responded to his complaint in writing explaining our remit and answering other queries. We have arranged a meeting with him, neighbour, Ruth Bamford, Dale Birch and Mary Worsfold.	No further action required
Resources			
Customer phoned Saturday morning, very upset regarding Council Tax reminder she had received. She is unable to call during the week as she is at work until 6pm. She was very unhappy as the letter she received states the service is open on a Saturday and she always used to be able to resolve these issues on a Saturday. She wants to know why there is nobody available from Council Tax to provide this service and has requested a manager call her.	43 Several calls made before making contact with customer	Spoke to customer and resolved situation.	Amended documentation with revised opening hours
Customer complaining about the 'bedroom tax'. He has autism and has medical documents to prove he	15 days	Customer's expectation is different to what the Council can provide. However there is an	

<p>requires an extra bedroom. He has a bedroom converted to a bathroom which was converted before he moved in to property. Says people older have been allowed an extra room so is accusing BDC of age discrimination. Has been informed by benefits that his benefit will be reduced. Says this is unfair. Property was given to him to meet his needs. Has applied to BDC for a grant to change the bathroom back to a bedroom but this was denied.</p>		<p>appeal taking place</p>	
<p>Customer unhappy with the attitude of a member of the benefits team. Customer not happy that the rest of the office would have been able to hear their conversation as customer could hear everything as not on hold.</p>	<p>15</p>	<p>Apology given to customer and reminder issued to staff to give name and to put call on hold</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Customer has been trying to resolve revised and correct Council Tax bills for two months." I am making every effort to notify you of changes at a difficult time for me and the position is far from satisfactory".</p>	<p>3 days</p>	<p>Apology given to customer. Reminder to staff to respond in timely fashion to complaint and provide full and accurate reasoning for refusal to award discount</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Customer rang today to speak to a manager. He had just been into the CSC to pay his Council Tax and was told he owed more than he thought. He was very upset and said he feels upset every time he has to go in the CSC. He always comes away feeling bad.</p>	<p>1 day</p>	<p>No further action taken as staff have gone the extra mile to help the customer</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Customer complained that he had phoned twice to speak to council tax, but that the system then cut him off because no officers were free.</p>	<p>9 days</p>	<p>A letter of apology was issued apologising for the problems with the phones and access to speak with a member of staff</p>	<p>Contact Centre module to be installed shortly. Should alleviate problem.</p>

<p>Customer complained that she had tried numerous times and cannot get through to council tax. She is not happy and doesn't like the way it just cuts her off at the end.</p>	<p>6 days</p>	<p>A letter of apology was issued apologising for the problems with the phones and access to speak with a member of staff</p>	<p>Contact Centre module to be installed shortly Should alleviate problem</p>
<p>Customer posted in Direct Debit mandate for Council Tax payments at least 3 weeks ago. She is now in France (she spends half the year there) and has been told that she has received a demand letter from Council tax advising she has seven days to pay her council tax. She has called 6 times today from France to speak to Council tax and has been unable to get through to the department.</p>	<p>4 days</p>	<p>Apology offered to customer and this was accepted. Account updated</p>	<p>Contact Centre module to be installed shortly. Should alleviate problem</p>
<p>The customer has tried to contact benefits several times. Most times she gets transferred through and gets a voicemail or is cut off. After several attempts the customer finally got through in which she asked for a change of circs form which she claims it was never sent as hasn't received it. She then phoned again and again she was told a form will be sent. Since this she has had a letter off us telling her, her benefits have been suspended to do a change and that there is no record of her requesting these forms.</p>	<p>1 day</p>	<p>Apology given for not noting original request.</p>	<p>Contact Centre module to be installed shortly. Should alleviate problem</p>
<p>Customer informed Benefits of new bank details for housing benefit and visited the centre on several occasions to check they were going to pay the Housing Benefit into his new account, on each visit customer was assured that it would be paid into the new</p>	<p>14 days</p>	<p>Mistake made. Faster payment made and customer able to pay rent</p>	<p>Not feasible to put anything in place to prevent a similar mistake.</p>

<p>account. When payment was made it went into the old now closed account - this has caused problems as customer now has no money to pay rent. Customer reported that a member of the benefits staff had told them that the bank will return the money to the council but until this happened they cannot pay any money.</p>			
<p>Customer complaining she is paying council tax and not getting the service she deserves - rang could not get through and the automatic payment systems does not work.</p>	18 days	Customers account up to date, no arrears.	Contact Centre module to be installed shortly. Should alleviate problem. Maintenance of ATP being carried out 03/07/2013.
<p>Customer tried to contact revenues several times following a reminder notice for council tax he claims does not owe. It was for a previous address and he had previously been assured he had paid everything that was owed Numerous calls were made to CSC who tried in vain to connect him with the revenues department -- there was no holding facility or opportunity to leave a message for someone to phone him back.</p>	16 days	Customer contacted and he is happy that the matter is now resolved in the form of a payment received	Contact Centre module to be installed shortly. Should alleviate problem
<p>Customer complained about level of service. Customer reported that as a single parent on a small salary they cannot afford to suddenly be sent a large bill for any amount owing, hence the reason for immediate notification. Customer reported that they have also gone from a weekly wage to monthly so need to know how much the new direct debit payment will be and from when the change will start as soon as possible.</p>	9 days	Telephone call has been made by customer and an apology has been made for the delay in getting back to her	

<p>Customer contacted CSC to query correspondence from Finance with invoices relating to life line equipment, Letter had wrong name for reference and resulted in her being transferred to four different people before arriving back at Customer Services where she was informed she would have to be transferred to someone else. Customer feels this is extremely confusing for elderly vulnerable people.</p>	<p>1 day</p>	<p>Dealt with call at point of contact</p>	<p>This issue is being looked at as part of a Lifeline income billing and collection intervention</p>
<p>Customer is unhappy that she has received a court summons for her business rates after making an arrangement plan.</p>	<p>13 days</p>	<p>Customer contacted to discuss her payment options and apology given for her earlier query not being responded to correctly.</p>	<p>Business Rates matter resolved, Revenues Manager telephoned customer and discussed issues.</p>
<p>Customer has sent in a complaint card saying that she received a letter regarding Council Tax regarding information about her son who passed away 8 years ago. This was very upsetting and has had an impact on her health.</p>	<p>13 days</p>	<p>The Council were not aware of this and apology given to the customer.</p>	<p>No further action</p>
<p>Customer rang Revenues and was very upset at the way she was spoken to. She said officer was very rude and not respectful</p>	<p>13 days</p>		