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Chebucto Community Council
April 12, 2010

TO: Chair and Members of Chebucto Community Council

SUBMITTED BY:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Anguish".

Brad Anguish, Director Business Planning and Information Management
and Harbour Solutions Project

DATE: March 16, 2010

SUBJECT: HRM Corporate Call Centre 490-4000 - Resident Concerns

INFORMATION REPORT

ORIGIN

At the January 4, 2010 meeting of Chebucto Community Council the following motion was passed:

12.5 - Councillor Mosher

“MOVED BY Councillor Mosher, seconded by Councillor Adams, that Chebucto Community Council request a report regarding HRM Call Centre response times at the 490-4000 number and how service delivery models may be enhanced. MOTION PUT AND PASSED.”

BACKGROUND

Due to a major snow event on January 2, 2010, many residents who called the HRM Call Centre waited for their call to be answered for long periods of time and became frustrated with the lack of response received. Some residents hung up before their call was answered.

DISCUSSION

The Call Centre and Dispatch Service current Grade of Service (GOS) standard is at 80/25. This means that 80% of the calls should be answered (picked up) in 25 seconds or less, with an abandonment rate (the caller hangs up before the call is answered) of under 10%. The overall GOS for January, 2010 was **77.81%** with an abandonment rate of **7.36%**.

The Call Centre is open from 7:00 a.m. to 11:00 p.m. every day of the week except Christmas Day and New Year's Day. There are 24 full-time Agents and 4 part-time Agents who work a rotational shift schedule based on a 7.5 hour day. The overall staffing model and shift schedules have been developed using historical call volume data and trends during past events. However, the setting of individual work schedules and managing overtime call-in processes are dictated by the collective agreement. This is sometimes a challenge to manage and still accomplish the service delivery goals of the Centre in meeting the Grade of Service.

On a typical Saturday, the average call volume is **1,200** calls and the Call Centre is staffed appropriately with eight Agents who work staggered shifts throughout the day. On Saturday, January 2, 2010, HRM experienced a major snow event. On this day, **4,275** calls were made to the Centre - over three times the normal volume. All available resources were called in to assist; however, as a result of the storm hampering travel, only five additional staff were able to respond. This call-in resulted in 32 hours of overtime costing \$1,200 in addition to regular staffing. Even with the additional resources, the extremely high call volume severely impacted the ability to provide service to the citizens and there were extended waits for callers on that day.

The main topics of the calls were transit (80%), snow plowing (7%), solid waste collection (5%), general information and other (8%). It is important to note that over 99% of the calls were information in nature, and were closed by the Call Centre Agents on the initial contact.

The Call Centre strives to provide great service to our citizens, and recent customer satisfaction surveys indicate they are pleased with the service received. Management is continually looking for ways to improve and enhance what we do. Initiatives include creating more effective messaging to citizens on the front-end of the phone system, building a knowledge tool to assist Call Centre Agents in responding more quickly, creating more on-line service request types on the web, and monitoring the quality of the work both on the phone and in the service requests which are sent to Business Units. As well, where so many calls are for repetitive information, staff intend to investigate implementation of a call routing system such that citizens may be able to "self-help" rather than being forced to speak to an agent. This is increasingly becoming a public sector practice. The above said, despite all these efforts, there is no way to entirely eliminate the risk of reduced service in the cases of severe events like a snow storm other than to significantly "over staff" on a regular basis, requiring a significant increase to the current operating budget.

BUDGET IMPLICATIONS

There are no budget implications with this report.

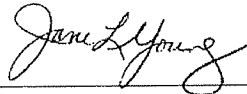
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT POLICIES / BUSINESS PLAN

This report complies with the Municipality's Multi-Year Financial Strategy, the approved Operating, Capital and Reserve budgets, policies and procedures regarding withdrawals from the utilization of Capital and Operating reserves, as well as any relevant legislation.


ATTACHMENTS

There are no attachments with this report.

A copy of this report can be obtained online at <http://www.halifax.ca/commcoun/cc.html> then choose the appropriate Community Council and meeting date, or by contacting the Office of the Municipal Clerk at 490-4210, or Fax 490-4208.



Report Prepared by : Jane Young, Manager, Call Centre and Dispatch Services



Report Approved by: Brad Anguish, Director, Business Planning and Information Management and Harbour Solutions

Financial Approval by: Cathie O'Toole, CGA, Director of Finance, 490-6308