East Lothian Council

REPORT TO:	Policy and Performance Review Committee
MEETING DATE:	16 June 2015
BY:	Deputy Chief Executive – Partnerships and Community Services
SUBJECT:	East Lothian Council Customer Contact Centre

1   PURPOSE

1.1   The purpose of the Report is to advise the PPRC on the performance of the Council's Contact Centre.

2   RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1   PPRC to note the performance of the Council's Contact Centre.

3   BACKGROUND

3.1   The Council's Contact Centre was established at Penston House, Macmerry in October 2005. At that time, there were only 2 teams within the Contact Centre: the Housing Repairs Contact Team and East Lothian's Community Alarm Service.

3.2   The Contact Centre in 2015 is now made up of 4 teams:

- the Contact team where the staff answer all calls related to property maintenance, environment (roads, waste services, landscape and countryside services), public sector housing enquiries, payments, Council Tax calls and switchboard

- the Community Access team where the staff answer calls related to adult and children wellbeing services

- the Community Response team where the staff provide: the 24/7/365 call service for community alarm/telecare customers for East and Midlothian residents; the out of hours emergency call service for both Council areas; the call service for antisocial behaviour, town centre cctv monitoring and the locum supply teacher call service.

- the Systems and Development team which provides the IT and development support to the Customer Services team as a whole.

3.3   Each team has a dedicated staffing establishment (see Appendix 1).

- The Contact Team has a current establishment of:

  11.32 FTE which comprises 1 Supervisor and 10.32 FTE staff.

  The original establishment was 5 FTE (1 Supervisor and 4 staff) when the team was only dealing with Community Housing repairs calls and has increased when new services have been brought in.

- The Community Access Team has a current establishment of:

  7.00 FTE which comprises of 1 Supervisor and 6 FTE staff.

  The Team was established in August 2010 with 5 FTE but was increased when Children's Social work calls and additional Adult Social work calls were transferred into the team

- The Community Response team has a current establishment of:

  14.43 FTE

  The team's establishment was increased in 2010 when the service took on the community alarm and telecare calls and out-of-hours calls for Midlothian Council.

- The Systems and Development team has an establishment of:

  6 FTE which comprises 1 Supervisor and 5 FTE staff.

  The team was originally established in 2007 with 1 Systems Officer post when a vacant post was transferred from the Area offices following the Service Review – Area Offices in 2007.

  Further posts have been added through an additional resource request being approved in 2008 and moving resource from the Area Office – Face to Face Team.

  This team provides the support to all the systems which the Customer Services Team uses and also does the work on scripting for all the services within CRM.

3.4   Service calls and services now being provided through the Contact Centre are:

- Property maintenance calls related to Council Housing repairs (2007)

- Payments calls (2007)

- Transportation calls related to road repairs, street lighting faults, pavement repairs (2008)

- Waste service calls related to special uplift requests (2008)

- Property maintenance calls related to repairs in Council buildings (2009)

- Landscape and countryside calls related to grass cutting and ground maintenance, dog fouling and stray dogs (2009)

- Waste service calls related to recycling box requests, refuse bins requests and missed collections of waste (2010)

- Feedback on CRM (2010)

- Adult social care calls related to all calls for social work/occupational therapy assistance related to adults (2010)

- Community Alarm and Telecare calls for Midlothian Council (2010)

- Emergency out-of-hours calls for Midlothian Council (2010)

- Childrens Wellbeing Calls and other Adult Social Care Calls(2011)

- Council Tax Calls (2013)

- Council House Property Maintenance Appointments (2013)

- Special uplift calls – free special uplift service reintroduced (2013)

- Locum supply teacher requests (2013)

- Community care calls out-of-hours (2015)

In addition, calls for HR were taken on during 2013. However, it was clear that this service was a specialised service and so calls have been given back to HR, along with funding for a part-time post which had been transferred to the Contact Centre.

The Contact Centre also deals with all Switchboard calls. The implementation of a new automated switchboard in 2013 has reduced calls coming into the Contact Centre by 72%. (see appendix 2)

3.5 An Election Line has been established in recent years to deal with many Election/Referendum calls on the run up to an Election.

Calls are also taken for major events such as the Edinburgh Marathon, the Open Golf etc.

3.6 Routinely systems are upgraded which means additional work for the systems and development team and some or all of the contact centre teams and changes in Service systems or Services may also mean new scripting and changes in procedure for staff. Major work which has been ongoing for some months has been the changes in Waste Service uplifts which has involved significant workload for the Contact Centre staff.

3.7 **Funding**

The cost of the Contact Centre operation is approximately **£1.3 m.**

3.8 **Workload**

 Attached as Appendix 2 are call comparisons for calls between 2009 and 2014/15

In 2009, **225,483 calls** were coming through the Contact Centre (excluding calls through the PNC community alarm/telecare system). In 2014/15, this had reduced to **207,712 calls**.

However, the change in the nature of calls coming into the Contact Centre since 2009 has been significant.

In 2009, 64% of all calls were switchboard calls. At that time, the Contact Centre was not dealing with any Social Work calls, Council Tax calls and was not providing any services on behalf of Midlothian Council.

In 2014/15, only 22% of all calls are switchboard calls. Following the implementation of the automated switchboard in 2013, over 72% of all calls are dealt with through the automated switchboard.

Including all the PNC calls coming into the Community Response service, the staff within the Contact Centre dealt with **397,707 calls** in 2014/15.

As we understand it from a survey undertaken by Police Scotland in the past 2 years, East Lothian Council's Contact Centre is unique in providing an integrated Community Response, Emergency out-of-hours calls and CCTV monitoring service and the benefits to the customer which this provides.

3.9 Workload is generally steady and predictable though we have seen call volumes rise over the past few years.

In **2011/12, there were 20,271 Adult Social Care calls** offered. By **2014/15**, this call volume had increased by 48% to **29,955.** This increase has been dealt with without any extra staffing resource.

3.10 Community Housing Property Maintenance calls have been increasing over time but the most significant change is the depth of the service being provided.

In early 2013, the Contact team started making appointments at first point of contact. This has increased call times from 2 mins 54 secs to 3 mins 44 secs per call or a 29% increase in call length. There has been no additional staffing resource transfer to deal with this increased demand and additional service. However, there is now the added value of making an appointment at first point of contact for the customer.

3.11 In 2013, changes were made to the Special Uplift Service where charges were withdrawn and a free service was provided. Call traffic increased significantly but no additional staffing resource was given to the Contact

Centre to deal with this increase in call traffic. The total call volume on the Environment line (including special uplift calls) is now around 7% less than it was in 2009 although the changes in bin collections from 1.4.15 has seen a significant increase in call traffic and therefore, call statistics will see an increase in 2015/16.

3.12 Since 1 April 2015, changes have been made to bin collections. Calls for that service over the past two months has increased around 2.5 times which means that all other services are also affected as no additional staffing resource has been made to deal with this increase in call traffic. It is hoped that call demand will reduce to more normal levels in future months as customers become used to the new service being provided. See appendix 3 for the changes in call volume for April and May 2015 compared with April and May 2014.

3.13 Response rates to calls have improved in the last year. A review of the Council Tax calls has allowed improved efficiency in how these calls are handled and has decreased call handling time by about 1 min from 4 mins 47 secs to around 3 mins 51 seconds.

3.14 The target of answering 90% of all calls (excluding switchboard) has been met as the 2014/15 response rate is just under 92%. Please note that the average talk time for calls related to Adult Social Care are the longest at around 4 mins 27 secs and so to meet the 90% answering of call target is significant.

97.5% of switchboard calls were answered last year.

The response rate to answering all calls within 20 seconds in the last quarter was 68% which is just below the 70% target. However, overall in 2014/15, the response rate was 58%. Changes in improving efficiency of calls has improved the response rate but demand from waste service calls will decrease performance in the first quarter of 2015/16.

3.15 We benchmark our performance against a number of Local Authorities throughout the UK. These show us to perform on a par or better than most with regards to calls answered, speed of answer, average wait time, average talk time and call handling time.

In the last quarter comparison – October to December 2014, the stats are as follows:

- the average no. of calls answered is 87%, ELC – 92%

- answered within 20 secs – 65%, ELC – 68%

- average wait for call to be answered – 72 secs, ELC – 31 secs.

Of the 30 Councils we benchmark with, only 4 deal with Social Care calls.

3.16 In 2014, there was a CIPFA benchmarking exercise of 50 local authorities in relation to phone and face to face contact. Analysis of services provided within Contact Centres showed that only a very few Councils

provided anything other than an information/signposting service for Adult Social Care Services and, therefore, it should be recognised the important role the Contact Centre plays in freeing up Social worker time in both Adult Social Care and Children's Services to concentrate on their case work.

ELC will be involved in the CIPFA benchmarking exercise for 2014/15 stats.

3.17 **Customer Satisfaction is measured in a number of ways.**

An Annual Survey of the Community Alarm/Telecare Service is conducted and there is a consistent 95%+ satisfaction responses from customers about how their calls have been handled. The most recent survey held in February 2015 as attached where there was a 96% satisfaction (128 responses).

3.18 The **ELC residents survey in the Summer of 2014**, asked questions about calling the Council (this was in relation to all calls to the Council, not just the Contact Centre).

The results were as follows:

87% (345) advised that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the time it took to answer their call

87% (343) advised that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the way the person dealt with their call

74% (297) advised that they were very satisfied or satisfied with the response to their enquiry

Residents were also asked about their experience of the automated switchboard service.

Only 22% (180) said that they had used the automated switchboard service. Of these, **55% (99) advised they were satisfied with the service and 42% (76) advised that they were not.**

8% of respondents (63) said that they had called the Council's emergency telephone number out-of-hours.

79% (47) said that we had resolved their problem satisfactorily.

Discussion took place with the East Lothian Tenants and Residents Panel (ELTRP) about the automated switchboard following a mystery shopper survey that they had also conducted last year. An article was placed in Home Front this year advising residents how to use the automated switchboard system. Some other improvements have also been made to the system following consultation with ELTRP.

In addition, customers can make compliments and complaints through the Customer Feedback system. There have been few complaints about the Contact Centre operation over the years.

3.19 **Qualifications**

All new staff within the Customer Services Team are expected to study for a Customer Service Professional Qualification (CSPQ). There are now 16 staff with either a CSPQ at Award or Certificate level and there are currently 7 staff actively studying for a qualification.

A number of members of the management/supervisory team have management qualifications at CMI 3 or SVQ level 4.

3.20 **Developments**

Community Response Rota changes

There has recently been an agreement with the Community Response Team with regards to changing their rota. The new rota will simplify a complicated setup as well as help to address holiday and sickness cover issues within the team.

Upgrading systems for PSN compliance

A number of our systems require to be upgraded due to not being PSN compliant. These include our two main call handling systems – Netcall and PNC6.

The Netcall system is being replaced for a nominal sum under the terms of the existing contract.

The PNC6 upgrade is going out to tender shortly and it is hoped to have a joint procurement with another Council.

3.21 **Summary**

In summary, the Contact Centre has operated for nearly 10 years and in that time, there has been consistent development of the call service provided to the residents of East Lothian on behalf of Service areas.

There is close working with all service areas where the Contact Centre provides the main call service on their behalf. The Contact Centre management/supervisory staff are also in regular contact with Midlothian Council regarding the services which the Centre provides to them.

There is very close working with the IT service and meetings are held every month with IT; one month the focus is on Face to Face and Library services and the next month the focus is on the Contact Centre.

The Contact Centre staff provide a professional and dedicated call service to the residents of East Lothian and regular checks are made by supervisory staff on the quality of calls and information taken.

The Contact Centre also accommodates the Rapid Response Team, the Community Wardens and Night Noise Team in the evenings.

Recently, the Contact Centre Manager, Stuart Gibb, was seconded to an Area Manager position for 2 years. Raymond McGill and Kath Boyd have taken on acting up duties and we've put some additional resource into the Systems team to free up some manager time.

In the future there is, however, a need to reduce calls made to the contact centre and this could happen if there was improved self-service and information through the Council website which is part of a development project currently. Phone contact will be the main means of customers contacting the Council for many years to come.

In Autumn 2015, there will be a service review of the Contact Centre carried out to identify future developments for the Contact Centre. We want to look at the possibility of taking more of the calls being dealt with by Service areas to a greater depth but we would require additional staffing resource and we would require to review staff gradings.

The Customer Services Team has taken significant cuts to budget in recent years which has generally come from the Face to Face/Library team. However, the Contact Centre cannot continue to cope with more demand without additional staffing as this would compromise on the high standard of service currently being provided.

A further detailed report on the Community Response service will follow at a later date.

4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 None

5 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

5.1 Not applicable

6 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Financial – None

6.2 Personnel - None

6.3 Other – None

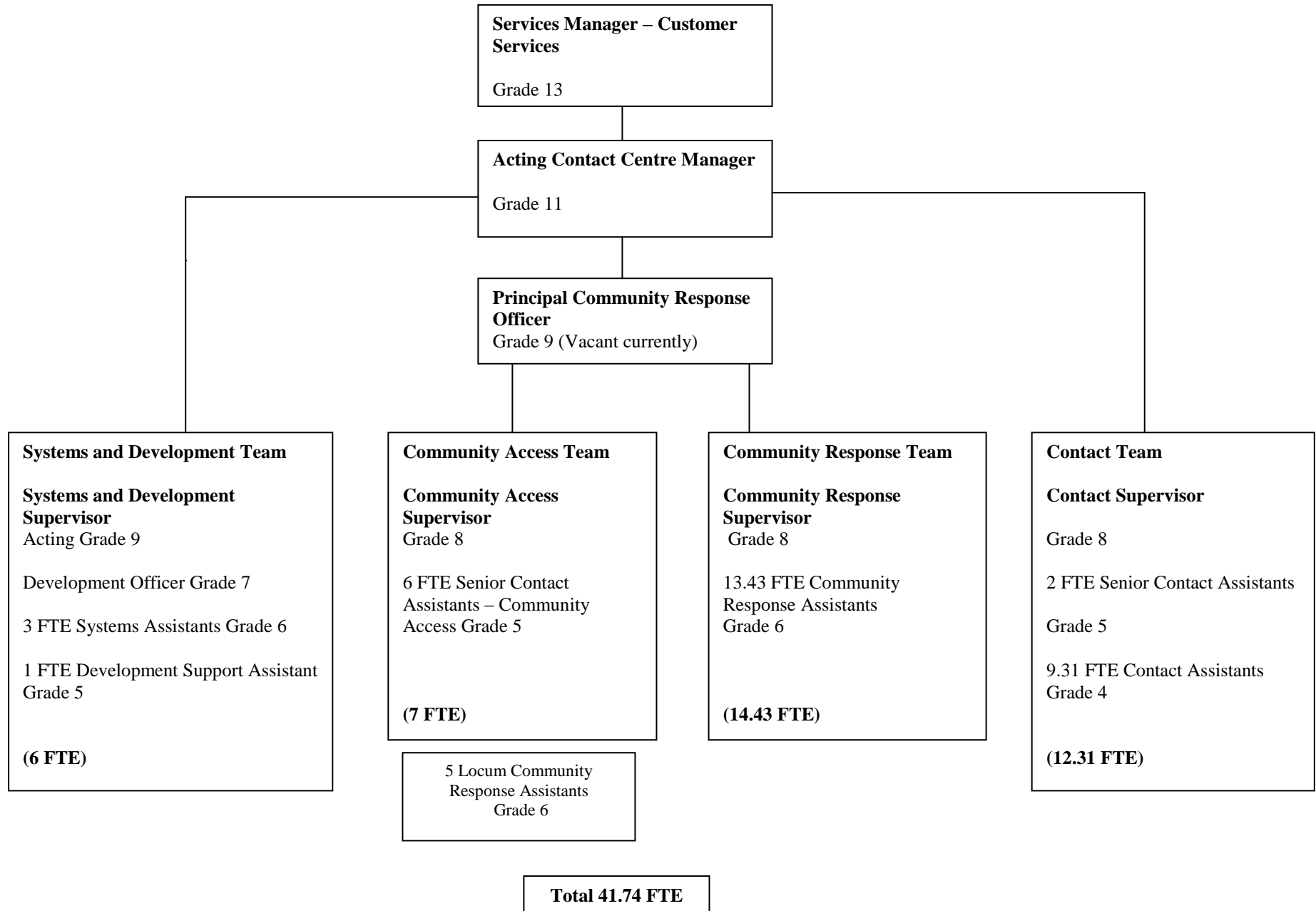## 7 BACKGROUND PAPERS

7.1 Appendix 1 – Contact Team Structure

7.2 Appendix 2 – Contact Centre calls – 2009 – 2014/15

7.3 Appendix 3 – Waste Service Calls – April/May 2014 and April/May 2015
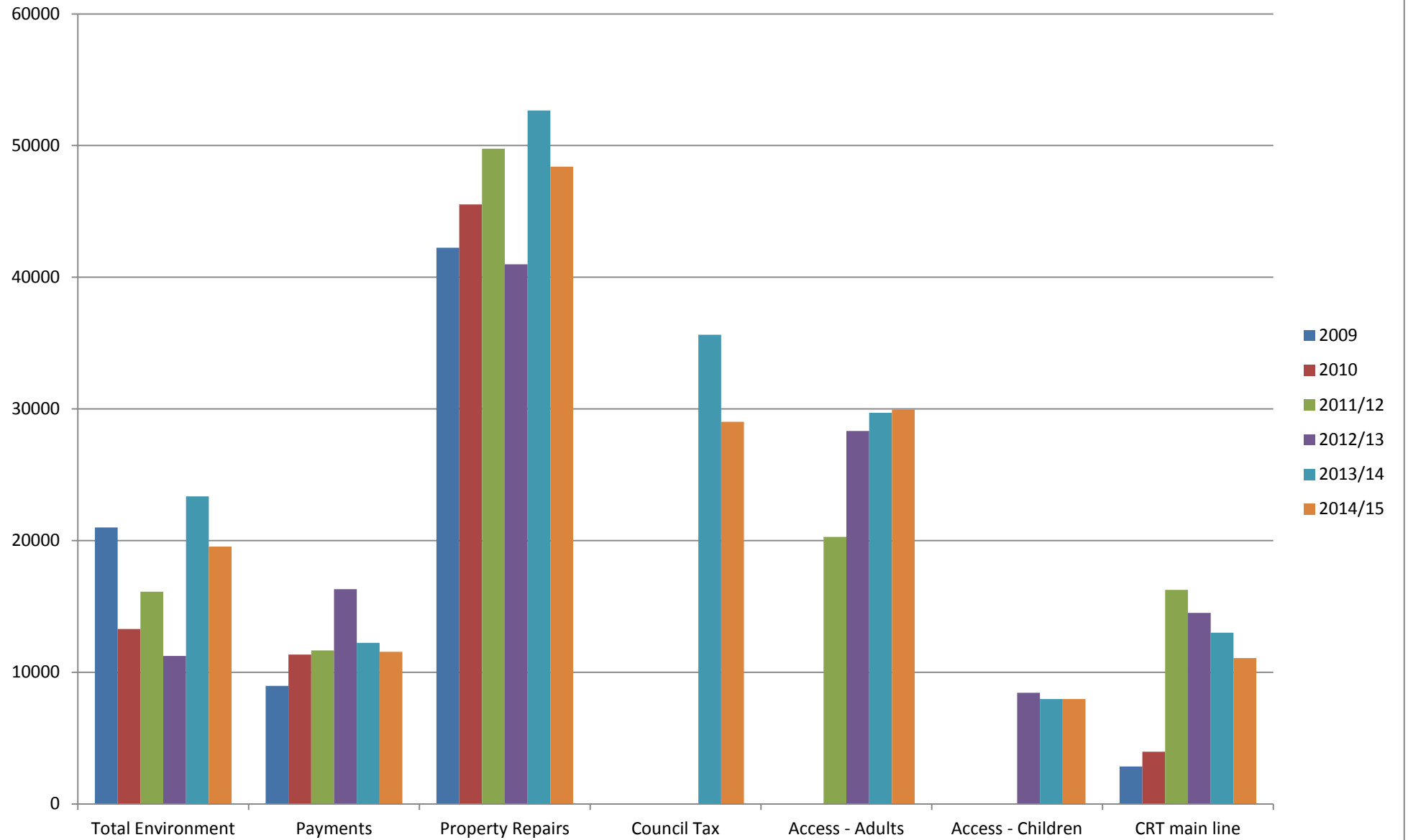
7.4 Appendix 4 – Community Alarm/Telecare Survey – 2015

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CONTACT INFO	Ext. 7211
DATE	26 May 2015

Contact Centre Structure – April 2015

Services Manager – Customer Services

Grade 13

Acting Contact Centre Manager

Grade 11

Principal Community Response Officer
Grade 9 (Vacant currently)

Systems and Development Team

Systems and Development Supervisor
Acting Grade 9

Development Officer Grade 7

3 FTE Systems Assistants Grade 6

1 FTE Development Support Assistant Grade 5

(6 FTE)

Community Access Team

Community Access Supervisor
Grade 8

6 FTE Senior Contact Assistants – Community Access Grade 5

(7 FTE)

5 Locum Community Response Assistants Grade 6

Community Response Team

Community Response Supervisor
Grade 8

13.43 FTE Community Response Assistants Grade 6

(14.43 FTE)

Contact Team

Contact Supervisor

Grade 8

2 FTE Senior Contact Assistants

Grade 5

9.31 FTE Contact Assistants Grade 4

(12.31 FTE)

Total 41.74 FTE

Calls offered within Contact Centre

Contact Centre	Calls offered					
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Environment	20998	13283	16121	11231	15355	12335
Special Uplift	0	0	0	0	8010	7205
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total Environment	20998	13283	16121	11231	23365	19540
Payments	8964	11351	11656	16307	12231	11559
Property Repairs	42245	45538	49765	40986	52668	48404
Council Tax	0	0	0	0	35637	29020
Access - Adults	0	0	20,271	28316	29697	29955
Access - Children	0	0	0	8444	7961	7966
CRT main line	2840	3968	16263	14515	13005	11077
ELC out-of-hours	7780	12548	10064	8995	7848	6794
MLC out-of-hours	0	2793	7394	6483	6667	6738
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Switchboard	166699	165440	166824	125132	50654	46171
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total calls	245056	267185	300320	262805	245275	222990

Calls coming to ELC through main tel. no
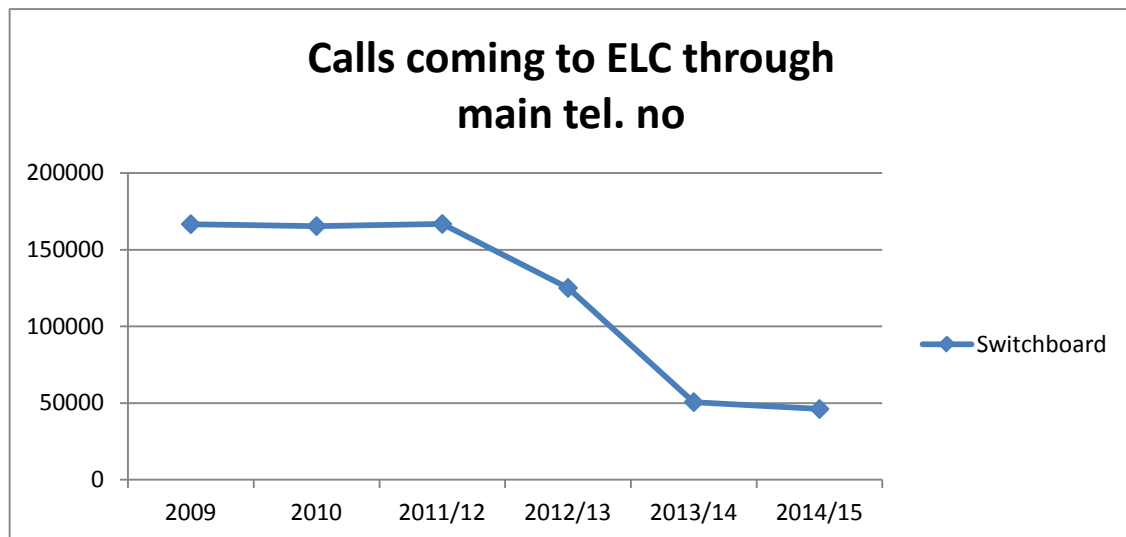
Calls answered by Contact Centre

Legend:
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011/12
- 2012/13
- 2013/14
- 2014/15

Categories: Total Environment, Payments, Property Repairs, Council Tax, Access - Adults, Access - Children, CRT main line
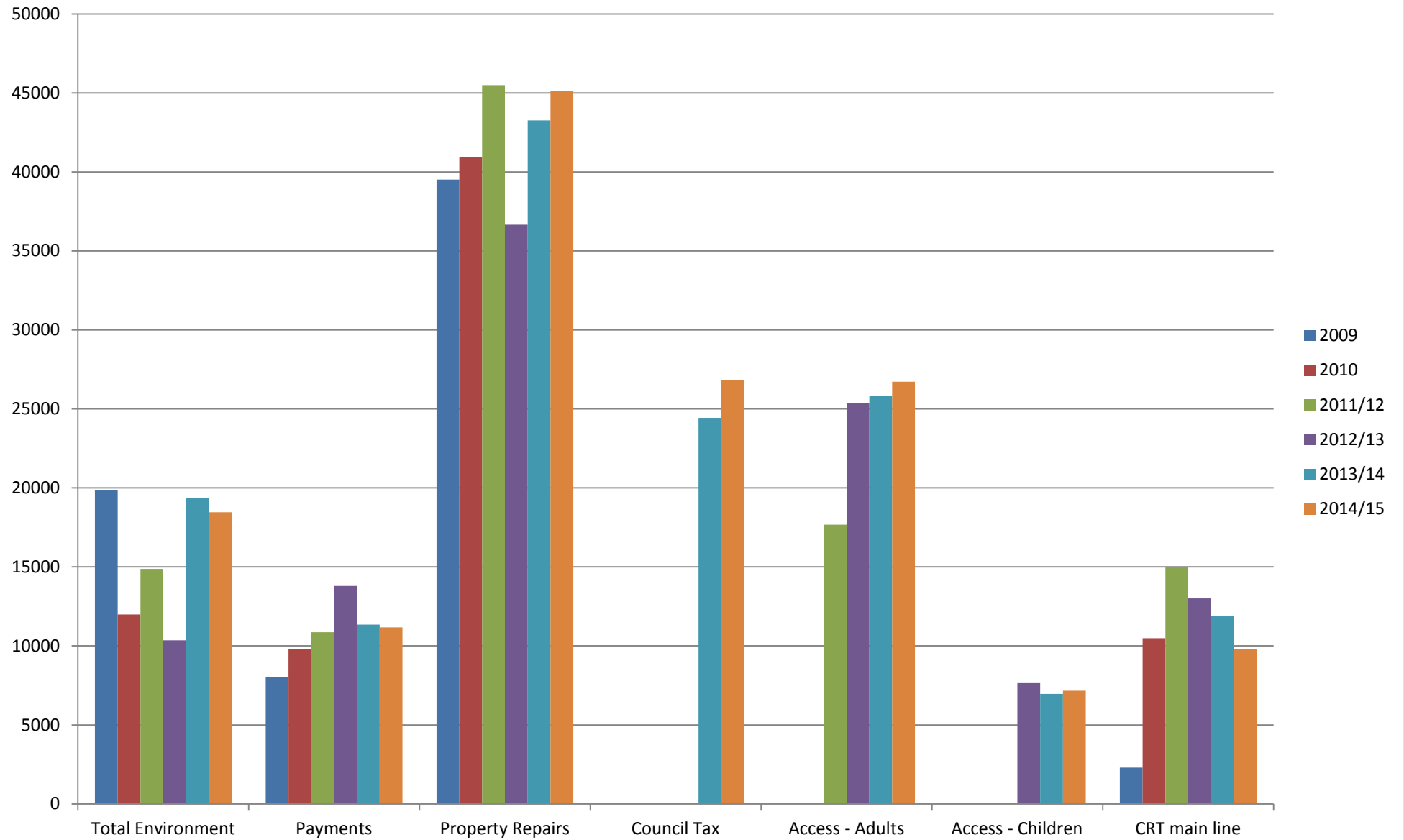
Contact Centre	Calls answered					
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Environment	19865	11995	14876	10357	12642	11733
Special Uplift	0	0	0	0	6722	6731
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total Environment	19865	11995	14876	10357	19364	18464
Payments	8032	9812	10861	13794	11351	11179
Property Repairs	39511	40944	45490	36663	43266	45114
Council Tax	0	0	0	0	24434	26818
Access - Adults	0	0	17675	25346	25842	26727
Access - Children	0	0	0	7644	6967	7162
CRT main line	2298	10488	14978	13004	11868	9807
ELC out-of-hours	7765	10443	8901	8232	7283	6294
MLC out-of-hours	0	1866	6725	5880	5960	6037
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Switchboard	144136	139260	139297	106188	48455	45024
	2009	2010	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
Total calls	225483	228923	260436	229110	209472	207712
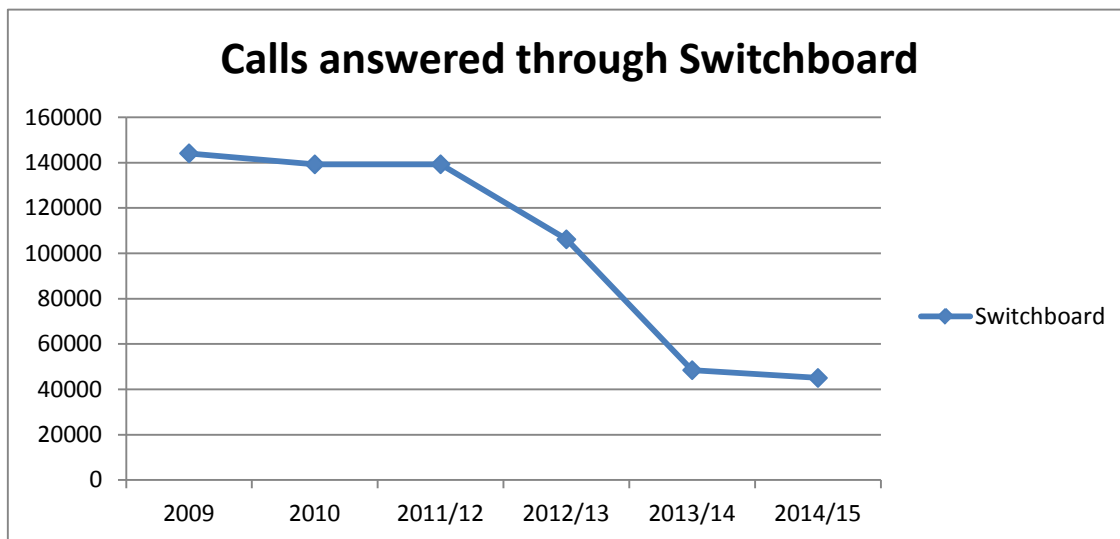
All Calls
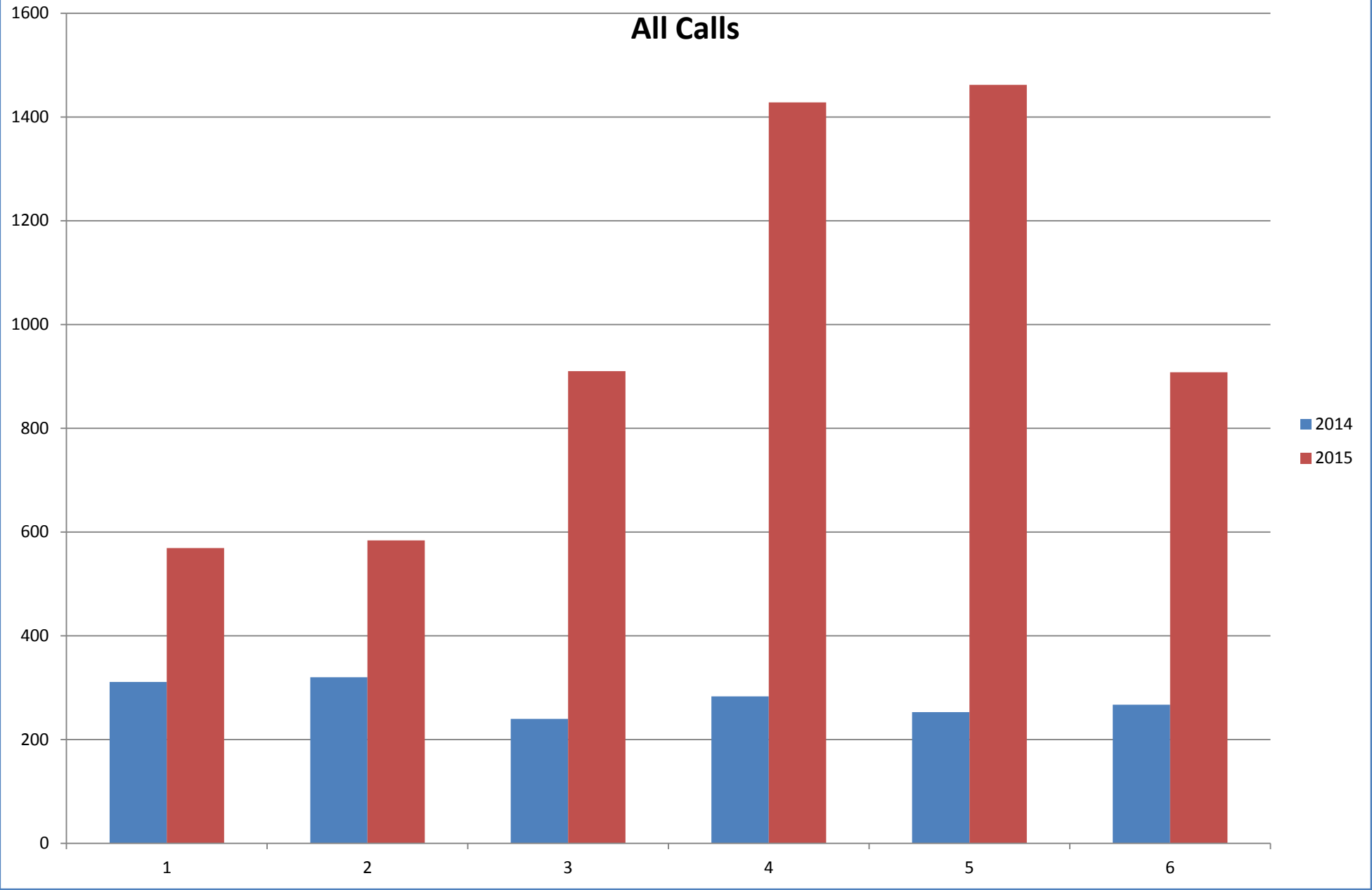
Answered Calls
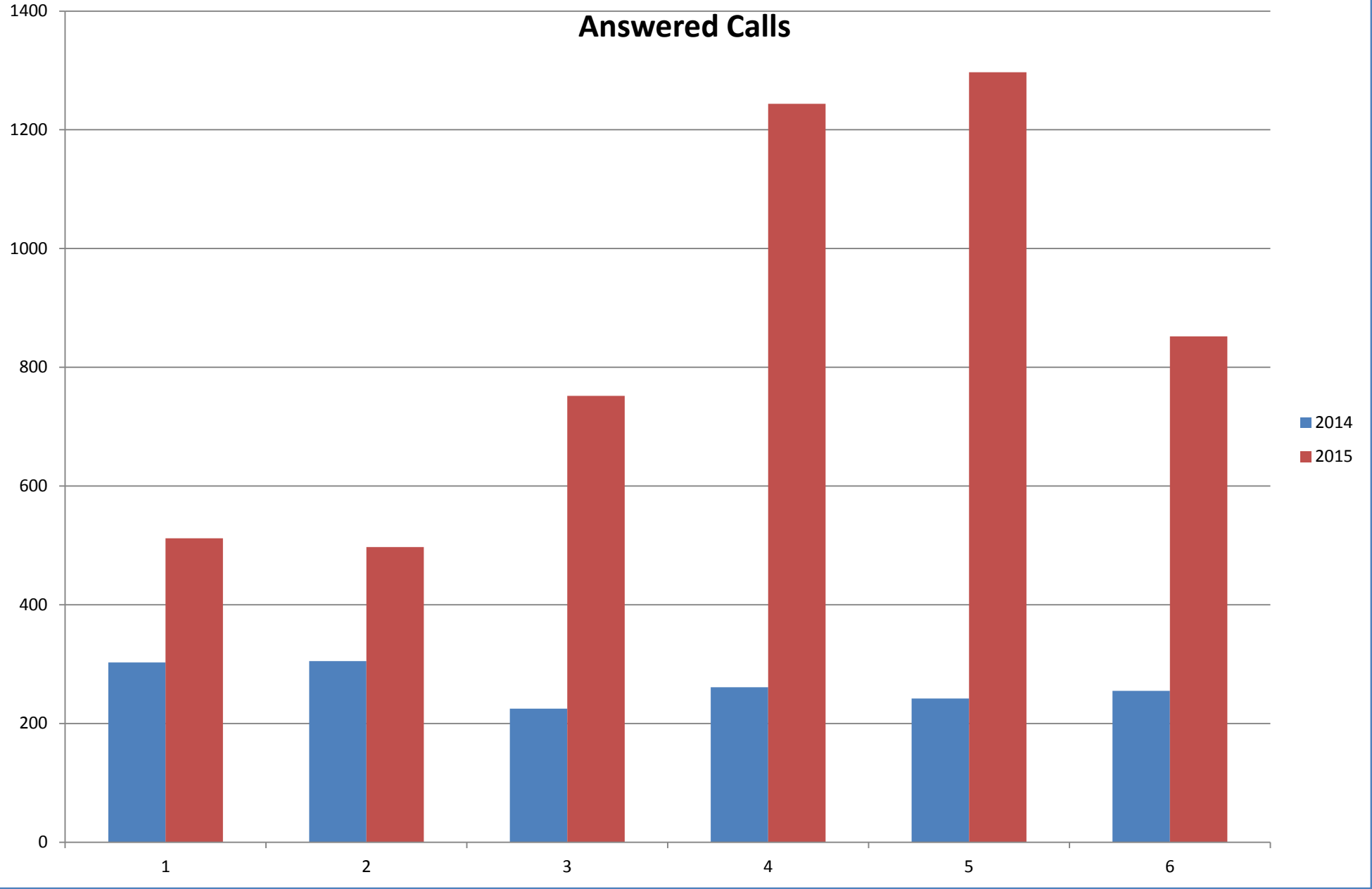
Environment/Waste Services Line

Call Comparison April 2014/2015

	2014					**2015**		
Week beginning		All Calls	Answered	Abandoned	Week beginning		All Calls	Answered	Abandoned
1	31/03/2014	311	303	8	1	30/03/2015	569	512	57
2	07/04/2014	320	305	15	2	06/04/2015	584	497	87
3	14/04/2014	240	225	15	3	13/04/2015	910	752	158
4	21/04/2014	283	261	22	4	20/04/2015	1428	1244	184
5	28/04/2014	253	242	11	5	27/04/2015	1462	1297	165
6	05/05/2014	267	255	12	6	04/05/2015	908	852	56
Total		1674	1591	83			5861	5154	707

2014-2015 Comparison
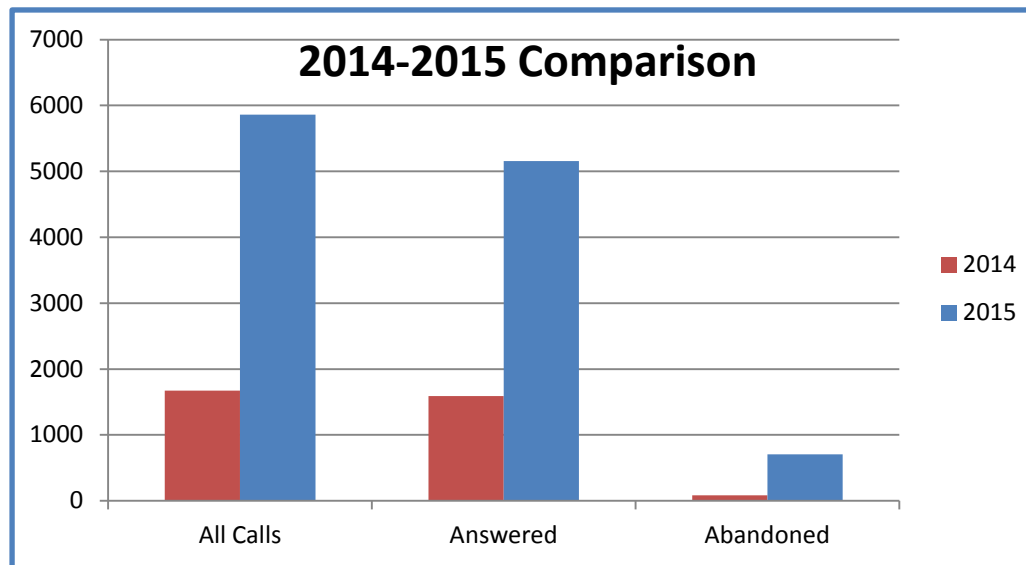
Telecare Questionnaire 2015 - Results

250 Questionnaires were sent out. 125 to East and 125 to Mid clients. There were 61 East returned (49%) and 67 Mid returned (54%), giving a total return of 51%.

Section 1: About the Standard Community Alarm service

1. Was it easy to apply for a Community Alarm?

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	79%	91%
No	2%	-
Don't know/can't remember	19%	9%

Section 2: The Telecare side of the service.

The Community Alarm Service can have additional "Telecare" equipment attached to it.
Telecare includes a range of sensors and detectors such as smoke detectors and bed occupancy sensors (to detect possible over-night falls).

2. Have you received any Telecare equipment?

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	25%	50%
No	72%	45%
Don't know/not sure	3%	5%

3. If you do not have any Telecare equipment, are you aware that this side of the service is available?

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	35%	58%
No	65%	42%

Section 3: Having the Community Alarm and/or Telecare Equipment Installed

(Please place X in boxes that apply)

4. **When the engineer came to install the alarm and/or Telecare equipment, were they polite and courteous to you?**

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	83%	100%
No	-	-
Don't know/can't remember	17%	-

5. **Did they show you an ID badge?**

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	64%	83%
No	4%	3%
Don't know/can't remember	32%	14%

6. **Were you shown how to use the system as soon as it was set up?**

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	97%	93%
No	-	2%
Don't know/can't remember	3%	5%

Section 4: Contacting the Alarm Service

7. Thinking about the last time you contacted the Community Alarm / Telecare Service, was the person you spoke to supportive?

	East Lothian	Midlothian	Combined
Yes	100%	98%	99%
No	-	2	1%

8. Was your call answered quickly enough?

	East Lothian	Midlothian	Combined
Yes	98%	98%	98%
No	2%	2%	2%

9. Did they do the right things to help you?

	East Lothian	Midlothian	Combined
Yes	98%	100%	99%
No	2%	-	1%

10. How satisfied were you with the way your call was handled? (Please circle)

	East Lothian	Midlothian	Combined
Very satisfied	86%	89%	87.5%
Fairly satisfied	10%	8%	9%
Fairly dissatisfied	-	1.5%	0.75%
Very dissatisfied	4%	1.5%	2.75%

Section 5: The Responder Service

11. Were you aware that there was now a response service in your area?

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	55%	63%
No	45%	37%

12. Have you ever had to use the Response service?

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	26%	33%
No	74%	67%

13. If so, did they do the right things to help you?

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	94%	95%
No	6%	5%

Section 6: Your Community Alarm

(Please place X in boxes that apply)

14. **During the last year, how many times have <u>you</u> tested your own pendant?**

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Never	20%	18%
Once	2%	12%
2 to 3 times	37%	28%
More than 3 times	39%	42%
Don't have a pendant	2%	-

15. **Do you feel confident that you know how to use the system if you need to?**

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Yes	96%	95%
No	4%	5%

16. **On balance, do you think that the Community Alarm / Telecare Service offers value for money?**

	East Lothian	Midlothian
Very good	83%	85%
Fairly good	17%	10%
Fairly poor	-	1.5%
Very poor	-	3.5%

17. What improvements, if any, would you make to the Community Alarm /Telecare Service? (Also includes any feedback about calls not handled to the customer's satisfaction).

East Lothian:
- None (x3):
- Can't think of anything, I think the service is brilliant:
- Freephone number (for contacting the service):
- Sometimes unclear what is being said on the machine:
- I am very satisfied with the service:
- Make more people aware of other parts to the service. My son works in a similar environment in England and the people there can have a wrist band of sorts which detects someone falling. He works in the Yorkshire area":
- Making the people that answer the alarm know what is wrong with the person that presses it as sometimes they can't ask or tell who or what they need and keep asking what they want putting off time when they could be getting the help for them (anon).
- The smoke alarm was fitted by the fire service people. Then tell me why it doesn't go to the police service. You have to call 101 (anon).

Midlothian
- I feel that (the service for) people that are elderly (or) vulnerable with mental health problems should be free.
- It's a pity you have to charge, it was free at one point.
- Cost of System: When you are on benefits it's hard for another bill to pay which means less heating or food.
- Nil.
- Happy with service, no issues.
- None as it's alright.
- I can't think of any, as I am satisfied with the service as it is.
- Make it free of charge
- Very satisfied with present arrangement.
- Should be free.
- That they contact people weekly.
- It is perfectly adequate.
- I didn't need a smoke detector; there is one in the house which is 2 or 3 years old and working well. Getting charged for one I did not need, and being told that it would cost £26.65 a quarter and that leaves me to find another £100 plus a year which will go up just like the alarm which went up last year.
- "I told the person the reason for my call which was to check my dad's catheter. They said just to call the doctor myself. I thought that they should have contacted them as it was after hours and needed to contact NHS24"