Voicemail Policy

London Borough of Barnet

Document Control

Document Description	This document outlines the policy for the use of voicemail at Barnet Council		
Version	1.0		
Date Created	09/11/11		
Status	Draft		
Document Owner	XXXXXX		
Document Classification:			
Authorisation	Name	Signature	Date
Prepared By:			
Checked By			

Version Control

Version number	Date	Author	Reason for New Version
1.0	09/11/11	XXXXXX	Creation

Date last reviewed: [*Enter date*   ]
Date of next review: [*Enter date*   ]

Contents

1   Introduction

This policy aims to improve call handling and customer experience whilst also outlining best practise for the use of voicemail. It details the procedures necessary to provide clear and definitive direction for those involved in its use and deployment for the London Borough of Barnet.

One of the key objectives for the council as outlined in the 2010 – 2013 Corporate Plan is to provide high quality, responsive services to customers who have increasingly changing expectations of the council, with less money. As a result the Council needs to consider all technologies that can enhance the customer experience as well as achieve more value for public pound. As a result this policy covers all aspects including individual responsibilities of those who are using voicemail and is applicable to all users of voicemail.

This Policy sets out clear criteria for the deployment and use of the corporate voicemail service.

2   Purpose and Scope

This Policy applies to all approved users of the corporate voicemail service.

As telephone is still the most popular way for customers to contact the council it is important that everyone plays their part in regard to improved call handling and the appropriate use of voicemail. The following principles are central to good call handling and are simple steps we can take to make the services we deliver even better:

- Access to services where possible should be provided at the first point of contact

- Telephones are answered in a timely, friendly and professional manner (within 20 seconds or 8 rings)

- No telephone should be left to continually ring

- Any diversion should be agreed in advance and only be diverted to someone who can deal with the call at the first point of contact, not simply stall the customer or take messages

- Voicemail should not be used as a way of avoiding customers

- Where voicemail is necessary messages will be returned the same day

3   Use of Voicemail

Voicemail can be utilised in a number of different ways either for an individual or for a team or department, both have slightly different requirements.

Individuals Voicemail, must include:

- Name

- Role

- Date with current availability

- Alternative contact number where applicable (for example when on Annual Leave)

- Explanation of when the call will be returned (for example I will be in meetings all morning today but will return your call after 1:00)

- Voicemail message should be changed as necessary to reflect your availability

Team or Department Voicemail must include:

- Name of team or department

- Opening hours

- Alternative number for urgent calls

- Explanation that all calls will be returned the same day

All users

- Any diverting arrangements must be agreed in advance with the other party and diverts must only be placed to people who can deal with as at first point of contact so customers can receive the proper attention and a meaningful reply.

- Individual extension numbers should never be transferred to public access numbers such as the switchboard or the contact centres for message taking, this restricts the councils customer facing teams from responding to customers

- Customer access numbers should never be put on voicemail except if the service is closed.

- Whenever the voicemail system has been used it should be checked and the system deactivated. Voicemail should not be left as the permanent state, individuals and teams need to have robust processes to manage the number of messages stored.

- Managers and team leaders will need to ensure these processes are complied with, with regular monitoring and random sampling built in to performance measures

- Each time the voicemail system is activated the message should be changed, that way the message is always up to date offering the customer confidence that you check your messages regularly and that any message left will be answered.

- It is the responsibility of the individual to ensure that they manage their voicemail account effectively. Account holders are responsible for ensuring messages are responded to the same day, meeting caller expectations and maintaining public confidence in the council.

- Any caller stating they left a message and it was not responded to will be categorised and logged as a stage 1 complaint and passed to the appropriate manager to be responded to.

4   Voicemail principles

- Public access offices or departments should not be put on voicemail or forwarded to the switchboard

- The voicemail policy should be applied to all Council Officers using voicemail

- Voicemail should not compromise current call handling targets outlines in the Customer Service Standards and the Corporate Plan

- Voicemail should only be available to those that need it, and may be only part of a solution other options should also be considered including the use of hunt groups for example

- When a voicemail is left a red visual indication will be sent to their telephone handset and for integrated voicemail accounts an e-mail will be sent to the individual so they are aware they have a message

- The good practice guidelines for voicemail should also apply to mobile phone voicemail.

- Managers are responsible for monitoring the appropriate use of voicemail

- Any caller stating they have not had a response to a voicemail message will be treated as a stage 1 complaint

5   Associated Policies / Legislation

6   Management of Policy

Managers and team leaders will be responsible for carrying out random sampling of voicemail users within their teams to ensure that voicemail messages are being returned and that message boxes are being accessed.

The policy will be managed by the Information Governance Council and owned by the Information Management Working Group.

7 Review of Policy

The Policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Information management Working Group, or when a significant change in business practices or legislation is implemented..

8 Contact Information/ Further Guidance

Further advice and guidance is available from the IS Service Desk

Address: London Borough of Barnet
Building 4
North London Business Park
Oakleigh Road South
London NW 11 1NP

Tel No: (020) 8359 3333