

## Scrutiny Project Report

### Project 4 - Communications (Telephony)

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#### Source of Scrutiny Project

Following the launch of the new automated telephone system, several TIG members had expressed their dissatisfaction regarding instances of being unable to get to the person they needed to speak with. A member of ELHA's Housing staff suggested that the TIG might like to scrutinise the phone system, and the TIG agreed.

#### **Stage 1: Fact Finding & Research**

The group:

- Looked into the reasons why an automated phone system had been put in place
- Examined the structure of the phone system
- Took part in a mock 'secret shopper' exercise, with the Customer Information Officer (CIO) taking the part of the phone system

#### **Stage 2: ELHA Corporate Approach**

The group requested additional technical details from Corporate Services regarding:

- The use of extension numbers
- What happened if no options were selected on the phone system

#### **Stage 3: What Actually Happens**

Over several meetings the group discussed their own personal experiences with the phone system, and how phone calls and voicemails are managed. The CIO was able to give information on where each option leads, and the group discussed how the terminology used could be misleading.

#### **Findings:**

- During the scrutiny exercise, the group found themselves frequently choosing an option which seemed logical at the time, but which led to the wrong department. They specifically pointed out that the second menu gave very narrow and misleading options – they had used many examples which should have gone to Asset Management, but the only route to Asset Management is by selecting 'any other maintenance issue', which they did not associate things like gas servicing, pest control and information about alterations & Improvements
- The Group were unsure of where phone calls would go in cases where they knew they wanted to talk to someone in a specific department; they didn't know how to get there. For example, a letter or voicemail to speak to someone in Finance.
- One of the Group had used the scenario paper slips to make the note. "Why does the narrative take so long to go through? If you know the extension number it's fine, and very efficient. You could lose the will to live it takes so long." While the Group found this amusing, a member also stated that he didn't listen to the automated messages; he just hit random numbers until he got a person, and then asked them to transfer the call.

#### **Stage 4: Recommendations:**

1. A change to voicemail procedures. At the moment, most voicemails take the following format, "Hello, this is a message for Mrs Smith. This is Jane from the Asset Management department at East Lothian Housing Association, can you give me a call back on 01620 825032, thanks." As the automated phone system does not give the option to choose a name or a department, the group proposes voicemails should give clear instructions, e.g. "Hello, this is a message for Mrs Smith. This is Jane from East Lothian Housing Association. Please call me back on 01620 825032 extension number 228, thanks."
2. A 'none of the above' option to take the tenant back to the previous menu or a 'press \* to return to the main menu' option.
3. A newsletter article detailing what each department does, to make it clear that the Housing department deals with the tenant, and the Asset Management department deals with the house.
4. A leaflet or information web page with the same information at point 3 above to be given to new tenants at sign up.