



**Report to:** Cabinet

**Subject:** Review of Gedling One Stop

**Date:** 3 February 2005

**Author:** Head of Finance

**1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To advise Cabinet of the progress on Gedling One Stop following a full six months of operation

**2. BACKGROUND**

2.1 Gedling One Stop opened on 6 April 2004 and deals with all enquiries for Housing Benefits, Council Tax, Planning, Housing and Concessionary Fares.

2.2 The establishment of a One Stop Shop for Council Services was a recommendation arising from the Best Value Review of Communications agreed by Cabinet on 4 July 2002.

2.3 Attached, as appendix A to this report is a statement defining the principles and aims of the One Stop Shop, this has been presented to and agreed by Cabinet previously.

2.4 Through the Portfolio Holder – e-government and Member Services, a Scrutiny Review of the proposals was set up by the Resources and Management Scrutiny Committee and oversaw the project to completion.

2.5 A staffing report was presented to and agreed by the Personnel and Resources Committee on 8 September 2003.

2.6 Cabinet agreed on 4 September 2003 that an evaluation of this new service delivery would take place after 6 months full operation based on the following performance measures.

**Performance Measures: -**

**Measure**

- Overall level of satisfaction
- Waiting times for service
- Number of queries dealt with “first time”
- Number of queries each customer brings
- Reduced interruptions in Service Departments

In addition the One Stop Shop has a role in ensuring that Departments meet their performance indicators where these are related to the front line service, for example:

- Average time for processing new Housing Benefits Claims
- Average time for processing notifications of changes to Housing Benefits
- Percentage of renewal claims processed on time
- Percentage of Housing Repairs (responsive) appointments made and kept
- Percentage of urgent Housing repairs completed in time limits
- Percentage of rent arrears
- Planning cost per head of population
- Percentage of planning applications determined in target time

3. **EVALUATION**

At appendix A and B are detailed breakdowns of the comprehensive surveys undertaken to assess the impact of the One Stop Shop. Analysis has been used to provide information by which to evaluate the service, in line with the agreed performance measures.

### 3.1 Overall level of satisfaction

69.4% of those surveyed thought that the service was an improvement and, overall 92% were satisfied with their visit. Although comparative data for previous service delivery arrangements is not available the figure of 92% is considered excellent.

### 3.2 Waiting times for service

For the introduction of the One Stop Shop, a queue management system was purchased (Q – Matic). This is a ticket based issuing system, which fully complies with the Disability Discrimination Act. It allows staff to monitor customers queuing and when possible react accordingly. It also provides complete statistical information regarding waiting times, transaction times, customer numbers etc.

In respect of the waiting time for service, statistics obtained from Q Matic queue management system show that from 6 April 2004 to 30 September 2004 a total of 17,407 customers visited the council offices. Of these, 8,695 were dealt with at reception and the advisers saw 8,712. The average waiting time of those seen by the advisers was 5.34 minutes with the maximum waiting time being 1 hour 10 minutes. The current waiting time target is 80% seen within 5 minutes for which we attained 63%. Overall, 9 customers waited in excess of 1 hour to be seen by an adviser which represents 0.1% of total customers.

### 3.3 Number of Queries dealt with 'first time'

In respect of the number of queries dealt with 'first time,' monitoring was carried out for the period 29 September 2004 to 15 October 2004. During this period 854 customers were seen by the advisers of these 98% were directly dealt and 2% passed to departmental specialists.

### 3.4 Number of queries each customer brings

In respect of the number of queries each customer brings, it is difficult to precisely determine this figure in relation to the customers seen. However, using data from the Q-Matic system, for the period 6 April 2004 to 30 September 2004 a total of 12,372 enquiries were answered by the One stop advisers from the 8,712 customers seen. It can be ascertained from this that 42% of customers had multiple enquiries dealt with at one point.

This is higher than first thought and again is evidence that a One Stop Service point is in keeping with customer requirements.

### 3.5. Reduced interruptions in Service Departments

In order to ascertain the impact Gedling One Stop has had on other departments, a staff survey was undertaken of all effected departments.

At appendix C is a detailed analysis of the responses, from which overall, it can be seen that the consensus of opinion is the introduction of Gedling One Stop has had a positive effect on the departments both in terms of time management and performance targets.

The additional comments received centred around inadequacies of the interview rooms in respect of access, size and security arrangements. These have been reviewed in the light of these comment and alterations are being undertaken to address some of the issues where it is possible to do.

## 4. LONG – TERM AIMS

In bold are the long-term aims of the One Stop Shop as previously agreed by members' achievement against each point follows.

- **To close all receptions except for providing 'meet and greet' where visitors have appointments too see officers.**

All receptions within the civic centre have been closed, with the exception of Legal and Democratic Services. In addition, the Licensing reception was specifically excluded from the remit of the One Stop Shop.

### Action

Investigate the closure of Legal and Democratic Services as soon as possible.

- **To integrate the reception services at Jubilee House and Arnot Hill House into this source.**

Arrangements are being made to allow for bulk waste collection request to be taken by One Stop Advisors and for the new Leisure cards to be issued.

### Action

Limited progression, but further development anticipated if the Customer Relation Management (CRM) proposal is successful.

- **To invest in software to better integrate systems and provide information.**

A queue management system was purchased (Q-Matic) which has proved very successful in managing customer flow and the provision of statistics. Also a proposal is currently in progress in respect of a CRM system.

### Action

None.

- **To extend principles of a One Stop Shop service to telephone answering.**

This is seen as part of the CRM implementation and has not been progressed in detail at this stage.

### Action

This will be dependent on CRM proposal.

- **To involve other partners in a joined service e.g. County Contact, CVS, and PCT.**

The County Council are providing a full time presence in the form of County Contact whose staff can deal with the whole range of county council functions. They are also now fully trained to answer queries on behalf of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP). This replaces and enhances the surgeries previously provided on a monthly basis by the DWP.

A fortnightly Welfare Rights surgery has now been set up and all appointments are usually fully booked.

Weekly police surgeries for both staff and the public have also been implemented.

We are currently working with the Gedling Primary Care Trust to be able to provide information and advice on their services. An information board is in the foyer area, and shortly information packs will be available for distribution.

### Action

Good progress and section is working to develop joint arrangements with other agencies opportunities arise. This should feature as an on going element of the One Stop Shop manager's activity.

- **To extend these principles to other remote locations e.g. Netherfield.**

A report regarding the Netherfield access centre was put before cabinet in August detailing various options, which included a trial for Tele –Talk which was not supported. There are no resources available to offer a surgery-based service at remote locations. However, the Scrutiny Access Working Group is reviewing access to services across the Borough which will inform how best to address this aim.

### Action

Awaiting report of the access group.

## **5. OTHER CONSIDERATIONS**

### **5.1 Opening Times**

- From its inception Gedling One Stop has been trialing extended opening hours from 8.30 am to 6.00 pm Monday to Thursday and 8.30 am to 4.45 pm on Friday. These hours were advertised in the Arnold Eagle, Calverton Echo, Contacts Magazine and the Nottinghamshire Family Life Magazine.

For the period 6 April to 30 September 2004 the number of customers fro 8.30 am to 9.00 am was 387 and for 5.00 pm to 6.00 pm was 70.

- The initial trial has had staffing implications with regard to rota and flexi-time. Staff that are on rota to stay until 6 pm, have the option to start at 10.00 am. On busy mornings, this has meant a potential for a reduced service.
- From the statistics obtained it would seem that the early start has proved a success but there has been insufficient take up of the late finish to warrant further staff time.

## 5.2. Saturday Morning Opening

- In the staffing report to the Personnel and Resources Committee on 8 September 2003 it was agreed that consideration should be given to open on Saturday mornings, for a trial period to assess demand.
- Saturday morning opening cannot currently be accommodated within the existing One Stop resource. In addition it is felt that a cashiering service should also be available. Based on an opening time of 9.00 am to 1 pm it is anticipated that the following staff would be required:

**1 x Cashier – Band 3**

**1 x Receptionist – Band 3**

**2 x One-Stop Shop Advisers – Band 4/5**

**1 x One Stop Shop Manager/Assistant Manager – Band 9 & Band 7**

In order to accommodate this to allow the use of trained staff an additional One Stop Adviser and a half Cashier would be required at a cost of £15,443 including on costs for the six-month period.

- Members should be aware that the full One Stop service provided Monday to Friday will not be fully available for Saturday mornings as there would be no specialist services available e.g. Planning officers, Housing Officers, Direct Services etc. In addition the back office support to advisers will also not be available. This may possibly lead to customer frustration during the trial.

## 5.3. Staffing Issues

- During the six months of operation, the ability to cover the Reception and Adviser stations has proved difficult at time within the current staffing levels. It was envisaged that the One Stop Shop Manager would spend no more than 30% of her time covering these areas allowing her to develop the service, training and additional functions. Currently it is estimated that the Manger is spending 75% time covering in order to ensure adequate customer service provision.
- At times the Revenues Manager has provided cover, this is a poor use of senior management time.

- Training – it was envisaged that advisers would be kept up to date by regular training visits to the departments. This has not been possible.
- Analysis of waiting times
  - ∇ 63% of customers seen within 5 minutes target is 80%.
  - ∇ Maximum waiting time 1hour 10 minutes, which is unacceptable.
  - ∇ Survey suggests customers are willing to wait up to 15 minutes and it is considered a maximum waiting time of 30 minutes should be aimed for.

#### 5.4. Suitability of Accommodation

- Interview Rooms – Comments from both customer and staff surveys, particularly the Planning department, have identified problems with the interview room facilities. In response to these, the following changes have been made or are in progress: -
  - ∇ The desk in interview room 7 has been extended to provide more working space and extra security for staff.
  - ∇ The bus pass machine will shortly be re-located to secure interview room 6 to allow better use of interview room 5.
  - ∇ Alterations are to be made to the public access to interview room 6 to allow for wheelchairs.
  - ∇ PC's and telephones are to be installed in interview rooms 5 and 7 which then allow these to be used as overflow adviser stations at busy periods, thereby minimising customer waiting time.
- Privacy – comments from customers identified serious problems with the original privacy screens at the adviser stations. In order to rectify this, the divider screens have been extended to provide a greater degree of customer privacy.
- Hearing Induction Loops – Complaints have been made in respect of this, currently there is no facility. A grant request will be made to the Disabled Access group in order to progress this, which hopefully will be successful.



- Play equipment – Currently provided for children under school age.
- Heating – Adequate provision in the One Stop area for both staff and public, however problems exist for reception staff due to the automatic doors.

#### 5.5. Resource Issues

- Because the staff currently employed generally work full time the split of original budgets giving the equivalent of an 18.5 hour post as an overtime budget has not been readily utilised, this has added to the staffing issues described above.
- Staffing and budget issues have been discussed with our major partner, Nottinghamshire County Council, who have indicated a willingness to provide on going funding in the order of £4,000 per annum, which could be utilised to provide additional staffing resources.

### 6. PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE

#### Opening Times

- With immediate effect revert to the normal closing of 5.15pm and continue with the 8.30am start on a permanent basis.
- Subject to additional staffing, explore the possibility of opening from 8am Monday to Friday on a six-month trial period.

#### Saturday Morning Opening

- Subject to additional staffing and member agreement, explore the possibility of opening on Saturday mornings from 9.00 am to 1 pm on a six-month trial basis.

#### Staffing

- Creation of additional One Stop Adviser hours by use of increased support from partners and existing overtime budgets etc provided this can be contained within existing budgetary provision. This will allow for improvements in customer waiting times and for the 8.00 am opening trial.

### Accommodation

- Bid to be put forward to the Disabled Access Strategy group with regards to installation of hearing loop.
- Problems for reception staff can only be resolved by the installation of a double outer door. This will be subject to a budget bid at a later date.

### New Target for Waiting Times

- 95% of customers seen within 15 minutes.
- 99% of customers seen within 30 minutes.

### Customer Relationship Management

- One of the national e-government priorities is for all councils to operate a common database for all customers who access our services. One of the ways to achieve this is to invest in a Customer Relationship Management System, which will link into all the existing back office systems visits the offices we will be aware of their history and should be able to provide a fuller service.

One of the priorities of the IEG capital funding is to purchase and implement a CRM system. This will have significant impact on the way in which the One Stop Shop operates, and offers the opportunity for integrating telephone calls into the same service.

Further research is required to identify the most appropriate technology solution for CRM and one of the key tasks for 2005/06 will be to achieve this priority.

## **7 SCRUTINY ACCESS WORKING GROUP**

At a meeting on 20 January 2005, the Scrutiny Access Working Group considered the contents of this report and made the following recommendations: -

- Implementation Gedling One Stop is considered to have been highly successful, and that Cabinet should consider how they congratulate all those staff and departments involved e.g. article in the Gen.

- It is recognised that since the opening on 5 April, various developments have been actioned. It is also recognised that there is potential to deliver long-term aims more fully and that the One Stop Shop Manager should develop an action plan with time scales identifying further developments and how these will be achieved.
- In respect of Saturday Opening, it was noted that public demand for this service is not a high priority, although evidence to support this was limited. It is considered that gathering extra evidence as to the demand via consultation and contact with other Local Authorities is a more cost effective solution than the trial.
- This working group supported the change of Opening hours Monday to Friday as recommended in the report.
- It was also considered a more effective use of available resources to utilise overtime budgets and County Council contribution to increase permanent staffing levels, which should a move to an 8am opening time.

## **8 CONCLUSION**

From the results of the Customer and Staff surveys and from comments received from section heads, Heads of Service and Members, I believe that the introduction of Gedling One Stop can be seen as a positive and excellent move towards improving customer relations, service delivery and joint partnership working. This is now a sound base on which the Council can build and move forward with future developments in striving to become an excellent authority.

## **9 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Members are recommended to:

- i) Approve the opening times of 8 am to 5.15pm Monday to Thursday and 8 am to 4.45pm on Friday, subject to additional staffing.
- ii) Approve the increase in permanent staffing levels by utilising overtime budget and County Council contribution.
- iii) Consider how to congratulate staff on the successful implantation of Gedling One Stop
- iv) Approve the development of an action plan mapping the delivery of recognised long-term aims.

- v) Approve that a consultation exercise be undertaken to gather evidence in respect of Saturday opening.
- vi) Approve the new target for waiting times.

## One Stop Shop Questionnaire

The new One Stop Shop opened on 6 April 2004 and deals with all queries for Housing Benefits, Council Tax, Planning, Housing and Concessionary Fares.

Since July 2004 questionnaires have been available on the reception and in each booth for customers to give us their feedback on the service so far.

Based on 110 replies we have received the following responses.

Of the people who had previously visited the offices, 69.4% thought it was better or much better, 21.2% thought it was the same and 9.4% thought it was worse or much worse.

88.2% of people were happy with the amount of time they had to wait but 10% thought it was unacceptable, 1.8% did not respond.

The knowledge of the member of staff was rated as good by 90% of customers, average by 6.4% and poor by 3.6%.

Satisfaction with the visit overall was rated as very satisfied or satisfied by 89.1%, not satisfied by 5.5%, very unsatisfied by 4.5% and 0.9% did not respond.

Detailed below are the extra comments that were made:

Insufficient car parking  
Improved waiting times  
Lack of privacy x 7  
Much better service  
Too many staff deal with enquiries x 2  
Very impressed  
Pleasant staff x 2  
Building layout a lot better  
Very helpful staff x 5  
No wheelchair space at counter  
Suggest we invite Mansfield DC to show them how to get it right  
No protection for staff  
Very comfortable, nice and polite x 2  
Speed things up – long time looking for a file  
Clare very friendly, helpful and professional  
Mr Palmer should get a promotion  
Big improvement  
Noisy to look at plans

More signs required

Very pleasant environment, clean, welcoming

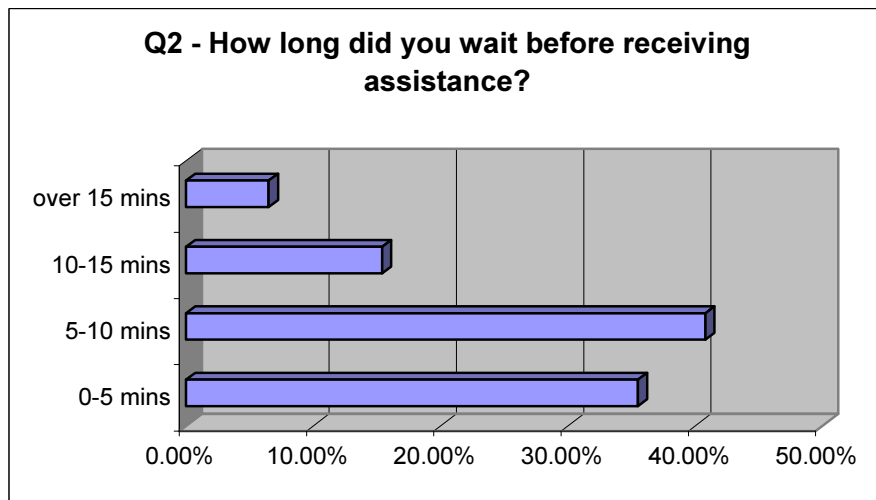
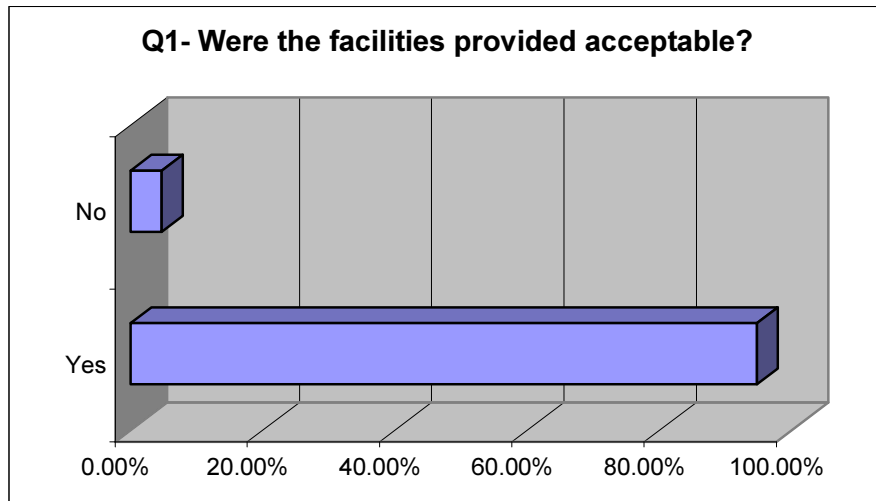
Wonderful – came in re death, very pleased with service

Pleasant staff – really impressed with new system

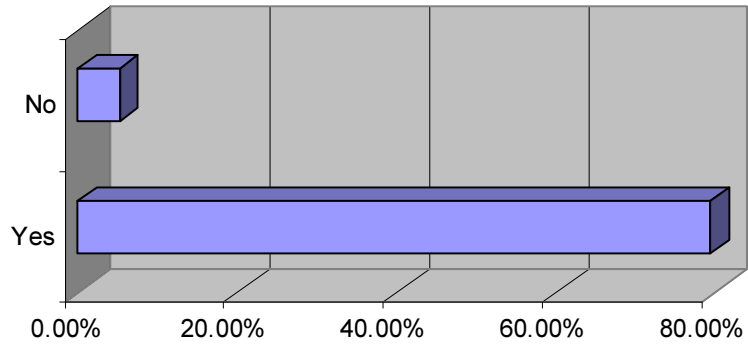
Feels like a conveyor belt in a sausage factory

Now that planning reception has been removed how can you be expected to answer planning queries

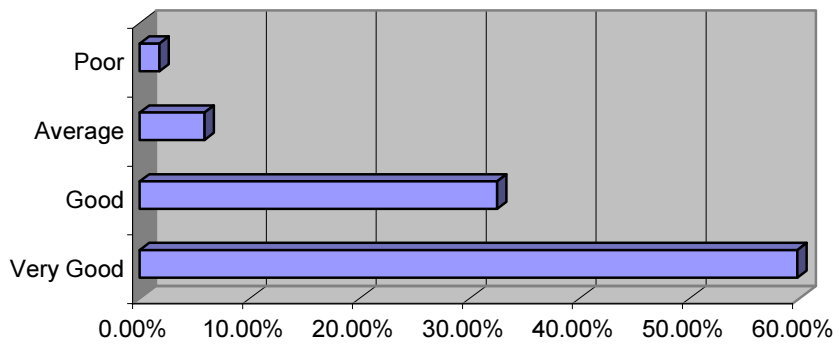
## ANALYSIS OF POSTAL QUESTIONNAIRE



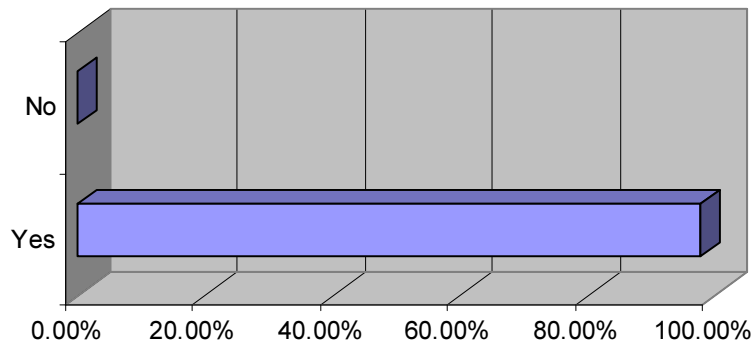
**Q3 - Was the amount of time you had to wait acceptable?**



**Q4 - How would you rate the Knowledge of the member of staff who served you?**

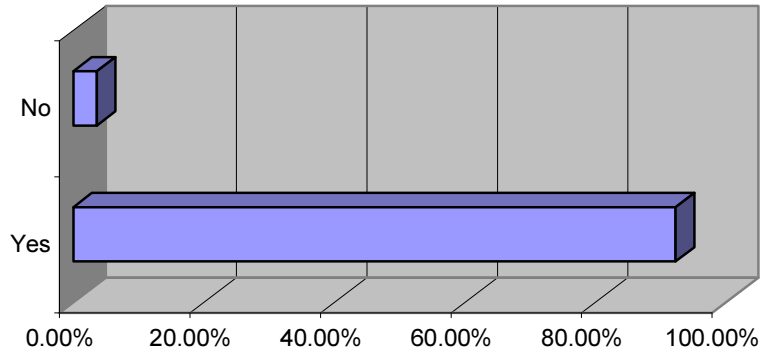


**Q5 - Were you treated respectfully and courteously?**

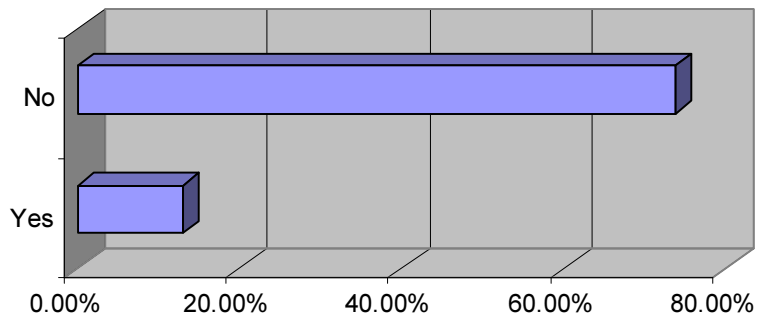




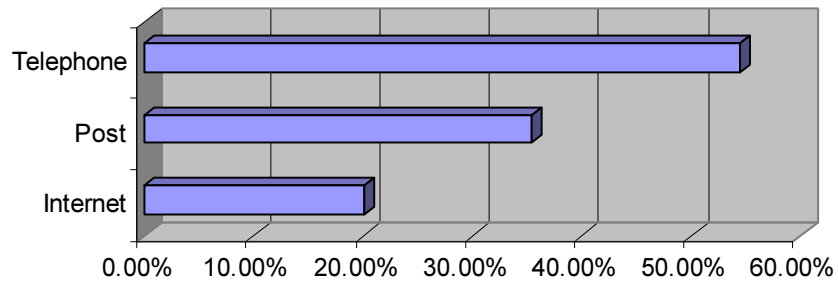
**Q6 - Were we able to answer all your queries satisfactorily?**



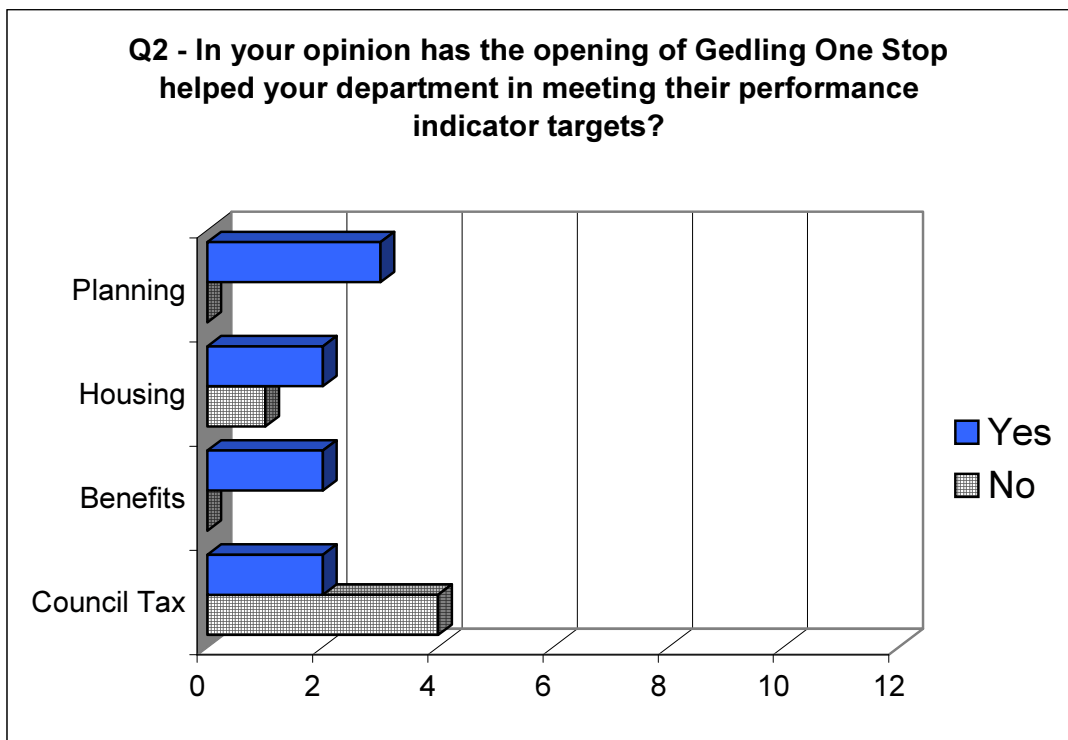
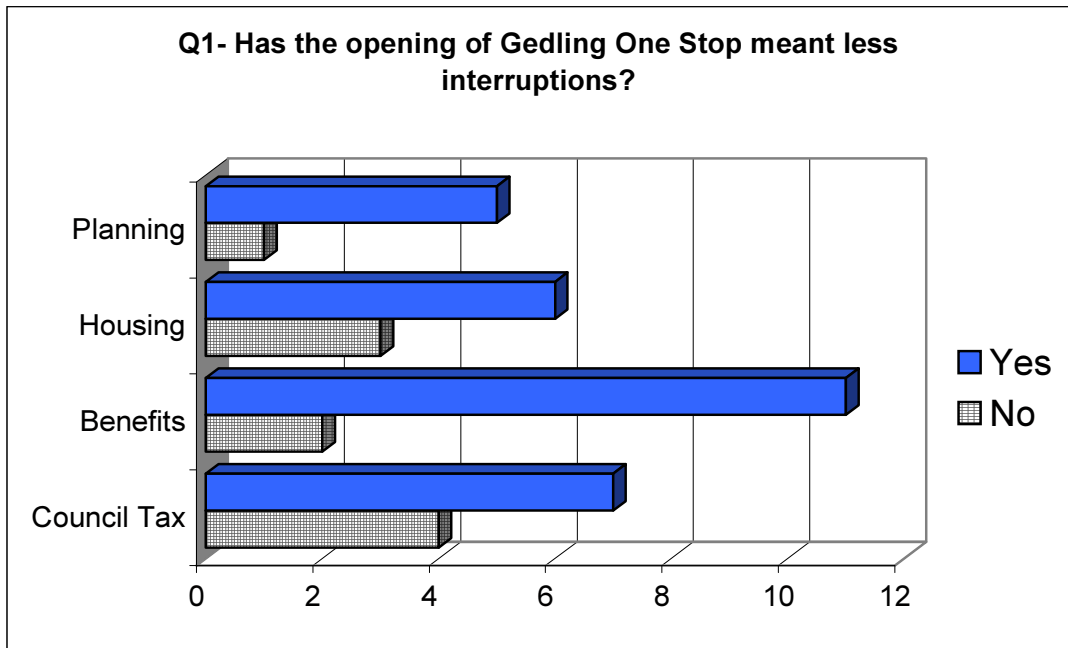
**Q7 - Are there any other public services that you would like to see made available in addition to those we already provide?**



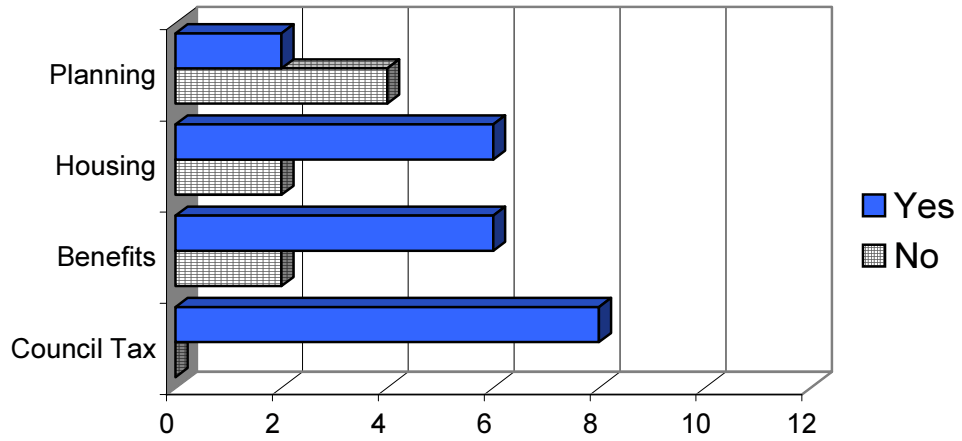
**Q8 - Reflecting on the service that you received at the Gedling One Stop Shop, would you consider using any of the following alternatives in the future?**



## ANALYSIS OF STAFF SURVEY



**Q3 - If you have been required to answer a specialist enquiry at Gedling One Stop did you consider the arrangements made for you adequate?**



**Q4 - If you have been requested to answer a specialist enquiry at Gedling One Stop did you consider the arrangements made for the customer adequate?**

