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Committee Manager: Erica Keegan (Ext. 37547)

03 July 2018

## **HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP**

A meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will be held in Committee Room 1 (Pink Room) at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton, BN17 5LF on **Thursday, 19 July 2018 at 6.00pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Councillors Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Bicknell, Blampied, Edwards, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Purchase, Mrs Rapnik, Miss Rhodes and Stanley.

### **A G E N D A**

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Please send your apologies to Erica Keegan – tel: 01903 737547 or e-mail: [erica.keegan@arun.gov.uk](mailto:erica.keegan@arun.gov.uk)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers are invited to make any declarations of pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial interests that they may have in relation to items on the agenda, and are reminded that they should re-declare their interest before consideration of the item or as soon as the interest becomes apparent.

Members and officers should make their declaration by stating:

- a) the item they have the interest in
- b) whether it is a pecuniary, personal and/or prejudicial interest
- c) the nature of the interest

3. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 31 May 2018 **(attached)**.

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. REPORT BACK FROM CABINET/FULL COUNCIL

At the last meeting of the Working Group held on 31 May 2018 the following recommendations were put forward:

- Minute 5 - Housing & Customers Services Working Group Terms of Reference - Recommend to Full Council that the revised Terms of Reference be agreed.
- Minute 7 – Work Programme 2018/19 - Recommend to Full Council that the Housing & Customer Services Working Group Work Programme for 2018/19 be approved.

The Working Group may wish to consider the outcome of the Full Council meeting, held on 18 July 2018, when the recommendations from this Working Group were presented.

6. STONEPILLOW OPERATIONAL UPDATE

Founded in 1989 and now in its 29th year of operation, Stonepillow are a charity that provides a lifeline for homeless people with hubs, hostels and supported accommodation in Chichester, Bognor Regis and Littlehampton. Following the appointment of a new Chief Executive, Stonepillow have been invited to the working group to update Members on their work with a presentation.

7. \*CUSTOMER SERVICES ANNUAL UPDATE 2017-2018

This report provides members with a brief overview of Customer Services and how this has evolved since the service was set up in 2006. It specifically considers the operation of the services over the last financial year ending March 2018 and identifies emerging trends of operation comparing this with the operation over the previous 3-5 years. The report looks in some detail at the numbers of customers contacting and accessing services offered by the council either by phone by coming into the two reception areas or making inquiries using the Council's website.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2018-2019

To set and review the work programme for 2018/19 **(attached)**.

(Note: \*Indicates report is attached for Members of the Working Group and Cabinet only and the Press (excluding exempt items). Copies of reports can be viewed on the Council's web site at [www.arun.gov.uk](http://www.arun.gov.uk) or can be obtained on request from the Committee Manager.)

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

31 May 2018 at 6.00 p.m.

Present: - Councillors Hughes (Chairman), Mrs Porter (Vice-Chairman), Mrs Ayres, Bicknell, Mrs Harrison-Horn, Mrs Madeley, Purchase, Mrs Rapnik and Miss Rhodes.

Councillor Bence was also in attendance as Cabinet Member for Residential Services

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors Blampied, Edwards and Stanley.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest made.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 4 January 2018 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4. START TIMES

The Working Group

RESOLVED

That the start times of meetings for the remainder of 2018/19 be 6.00 p.m.

5. HOUSING & CUSTOMERS SERVICES WORKING GROUP TERMS OF REFERENCE

In the absence of the Group Head of Policy, the Services Director presented this report which put forward an amended Terms of Reference for the Working Group following a full review of the Council's Constitution, which sought to clarify and simplify the Council's formal processes.

In addition, and following an issue that had been raised at the last meeting of the Environment & Leisure Working Party, it was suggested that future Working Group agendas have a heading included to read:-

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

**“Report Back from Cabinet/Full Council**

The Working Group may wish to consider the outcome of the Cabinet/Full Council meeting held on (date to be inserted) when the recommendations from this Working Group were presented”

The purpose of this heading on the agenda would be to enable members of the Working Group to raise any queries on recommendations that had been forwarded to Cabinet/Full Council to ascertain how they had been dealt with. In addition, the issue of transparency would be covered as notice would be given of possible deliberations and discussion that might be entered into at the meeting. The Committee Manager could even list the matters that had recommendations from the previous meeting, therefore making it clear what subject could be raised.

Following a brief discussion whereby clarification was sought and given, the Working Group

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the revised Terms of Reference be agreed; and

RESOLVED

That the following heading be included on future agendas:-

**“Report Back from Cabinet/Full Council**

The Working Group may wish to consider the outcome of the Cabinet/Full Council meeting held on (date to be inserted) when the recommendations from this Working Group were presented”

6. **HOUSING ANNUAL UPDATE**

The Group Head of Residential Services circulated at the meeting a set of papers which provided an outline on the performance of the Housing Department for the year 2017/18 and which she then spoke to and expanded on the detail of the figures provided.

Members participated in a question and answer session with the Group Head of Residential Services whereby it was particularly highlighted that:-

- The Housing Fraud Officer was commended for her work in tackling housing fraud and achieving a recovery value of £2m for the Council.
- 8 competitive bids had been submitted on S106 sites for the Council to provide affordable housing for those on the Housing Waiting List.
- The Homeless Reduction Act had now come into effect and this would add to the previous legislation.
- Having taken account of the lessons learned from other local authorities, work was underway to mitigate the impact of the

‘Subject to Approval at the Next Working Group Meeting’

coming into effect of Universal Credit on 1 July 2018 by way of education, debt counselling and debt management, etc. A new software programme system was being implemented to help with early intervention. Members were also advised that Universal Credit would only be applied to new tenants and that existing tenants would still be eligible for Housing Benefit until 2021, when they would then be transferred over to the Universal Credit regime.

The Group Head of Residential Services was thanked for her interesting and informative update.

7. WORK PROGRAMME – 2018/19

Following consideration, the Working Group

RECOMMEND TO FULL COUNCIL

That the Housing & Customer Services Working Group Work Programme for 2018/19 be approved.

(The meeting concluded at 7.00 pm)

**AGENDA ITEM NO.7****ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL****REPORT TO AND DECISION OF HOUSING AND CUSTOMER  
SERVICES WORKING GROUP  
ON 19 JULY 2018**

<b>SUBJECT: Customer Services Annual Update – 2017-18</b>
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<b>REPORT AUTHOR:</b> Lisa Emmens
<b>DATE:</b> July 2018
<b>EXTN:</b> 37465
<b>PORTFOLIO AREA:</b> Neighbourhood Group, Customer Services

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

This report provides members with a brief overview of Customer Services and how this has evolved since the service was set up in 2006. It specifically considers the operation of the services over the last financial year ending March 2018 and identifies emerging trends of operation comparing this with the operation over the previous 3-5 years.

The report looks in some detail at the numbers of customers contacting and accessing services offered by the council either by phone by coming into the two reception areas or making inquiries using the Council's website.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

Members are requested to note the report

**1. BACKGROUND:**

**1.1** Arun District Council delivers a wide range of services, from waste and recycling collection impacting all resident, to much more specialist services which may affect a smaller number of residents, of equal importance, and may be to the more vulnerable members of the community. Services are provided to residents, businesses and visitors who make different demands, but all will require a responsive service that delivers consistently and aim to 'get it right first time'.

**1.2** Arun Direct (AD) was set up in 2006 to respond to the telephone inquiries made to the Council becoming a focal point for the customer. This began with the 2 services growing today to 10 services within Arun Direct and incorporating face to face enquiries both at Littlehampton and Bognor receptions; the service comes under the banner of Customer Services within the Neighbourhood Group.

**1.3** The following services are dealt with by Customer Services who will aim to deal with the customer inquiry at the first point of contact. The services are listed below:

- Cleansing
- Environmental Health
- Revenues
- Benefits
- Planning
- Building Control
- Elections
- Car Parks
- Housing repairs\*
- General inquiries & Switchboard

\*(Housing repairs – currently supported by providing trained AD staff to physically move to the Repairs Team within Housing rather than be based in the Contact Centre)

**1.4** Switchboard calls is a 'sign posting' service which directs external calls to the organisation. More in-depth enquiries are passed to the general enquiries line managed by AD.

**1.5** Housing rent enquiries is being piloted in the AD with the team taking payments, agreeing low level arrear agreements and setting up Direct debits and releasing vital resource in the Rent "back office" team.

## **2. Customer Access Strategy**

**2.1** The customer access strategy 2013-17 identified several initiatives to improve the service offered to the public by the council; a review of the strategy is underway. A report is due to be taken to the Working Group early next year with a revised Strategy. This will aim to identify the priorities for the service and the organisation, with the objective of putting the customer at the centre of everything that the organisation does.

## **3. Review of service**

**3.1** **Arun Direct** dealt with 170,726 calls during 2017/2018 and of that number 86.4% were dealt with at first point of contact. That means the telephony team dealt with the customer's enquiry without the need to transfer to the back office team. Regular meetings with our back office services ensures Customer Services are aware of all changes as well as all requirements from our internal customers (listed above), giving the team a greater understanding to be able to assist in any matter.

**3.2** In March each year the Revenues team send out Council Tax bills to approximately 80,000 households within the district. This significantly increases call volumes during the month, with calls peaking at 1,545 on 12 March 2018 from an average of 739 a day for the year (2017/18). Any election, but particularly a general election, increases call volumes. A telephony team will work the same hours as the opening times of the polling stations to give additional support to presiding officers and poll clerks. The flexibility in resourcing the service during these periods requires careful management.

**3.3** Appendix 1 identifies the call numbers as a total over the last 5 years and by each service area for the last year. Overall there is a decrease in call numbers from 2013 to 2018. There has been significant investment in the website during this time encouraging customers to self-serve reducing the need to contact the Council.

Other notable trends are as follows:

- Figures for Car Parks start in 2016/2017 financial year - before this all calls were handled by the back office and not by Arun Direct.
- Outsourcing of our Clinical Waste to Medisort has reduced Cleansing call numbers.
- Building Control shows an increase in calls received resulting from more back office processes being handled by Customer Service staff.
- The EU Referendum in 2016/2017 and the 2014//2015 General Election saw an increase of Election calls.
- Benefits related calls have steadily decreased over time. Going forward the decrease is expected to continue with the implementation of Universal Credit which is being administered by Department of Work and Pensions.

#### **4. Reception**

**4.1** Customer Services provide support for our customers who come in, both at the Civic Centre and Bognor Town Hall. Currently the Civic Centre customers visit for all general enquiries and appointment. A separate Housing desk is operated to support Housing related customers. At Bognor Regis Town Hall all customers are handled under the general enquiries including all Housing related enquiries.

**4.2** Despite encouraging customers to self-serve a steady flow of customers visiting the offices across both sites continues with 23,058 customers attending Civic Centre and 18,346 visiting Bognor Regis Town Hall for the year 2017/2018. See Appendix 2 which shows a comparison over the last two years. This identifies a continued demand for customers wanting to visit the offices in both Littlehampton and Bognor Regis.

#### **5. Website**

**5.1** The website continues to support other methods of contact. There has been an increase in usage over the last 3 years with Planning remaining the service receiving the greatest number of 'hits' /enquiries (see Appendix 3). Car Parks numbers have increased with customers preferring the ease of use to pay parking charges on line. 2017/2018 also saw a significant increase in customers visiting our Cleansing pages; this was likely due to the changes over the holiday period for collection days. Long term, Customer Services will need to look at the benefits of introducing web chat and how social media plays a part in reaching our customers.

#### **6. Summary**

**6.1** When comparing the three main methods for customers gaining access to Council services the website has by far the most contact and that has increased over the last three years (see Appendix 4). Customers wanting to access Council services by telephone or by coming into reception have remained fairly static and are clearly important for those



customers. The website continues to grow with more customers than ever before choosing to locate information via the website; this trend is likely to increase as the website improves and more services are offered.

**6.2** The update identifies that the public clearly make extensive use of contacting the organisation by coming into the office or calling. Further scrutiny of the statistics will be completed during the Customer Access Strategy review which will include further research on why the public choose to contact the council by different methods.

**2. PROPOSAL(S):**

Members are requested to note the report

**3. OPTIONS:**

NA

**4. CONSULTATION:**

No consultation for this report

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		X
Relevant District Ward Councillors		X
Other groups/persons (please specify)		X
<b>5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)</b>	YES	NO
Financial		X
Legal		X
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		X
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		X
Sustainability		X
Asset Management/Property/Land		X
Technology		X
Other (please explain)		X

**6. IMPLICATIONS:**

NA

**7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:**

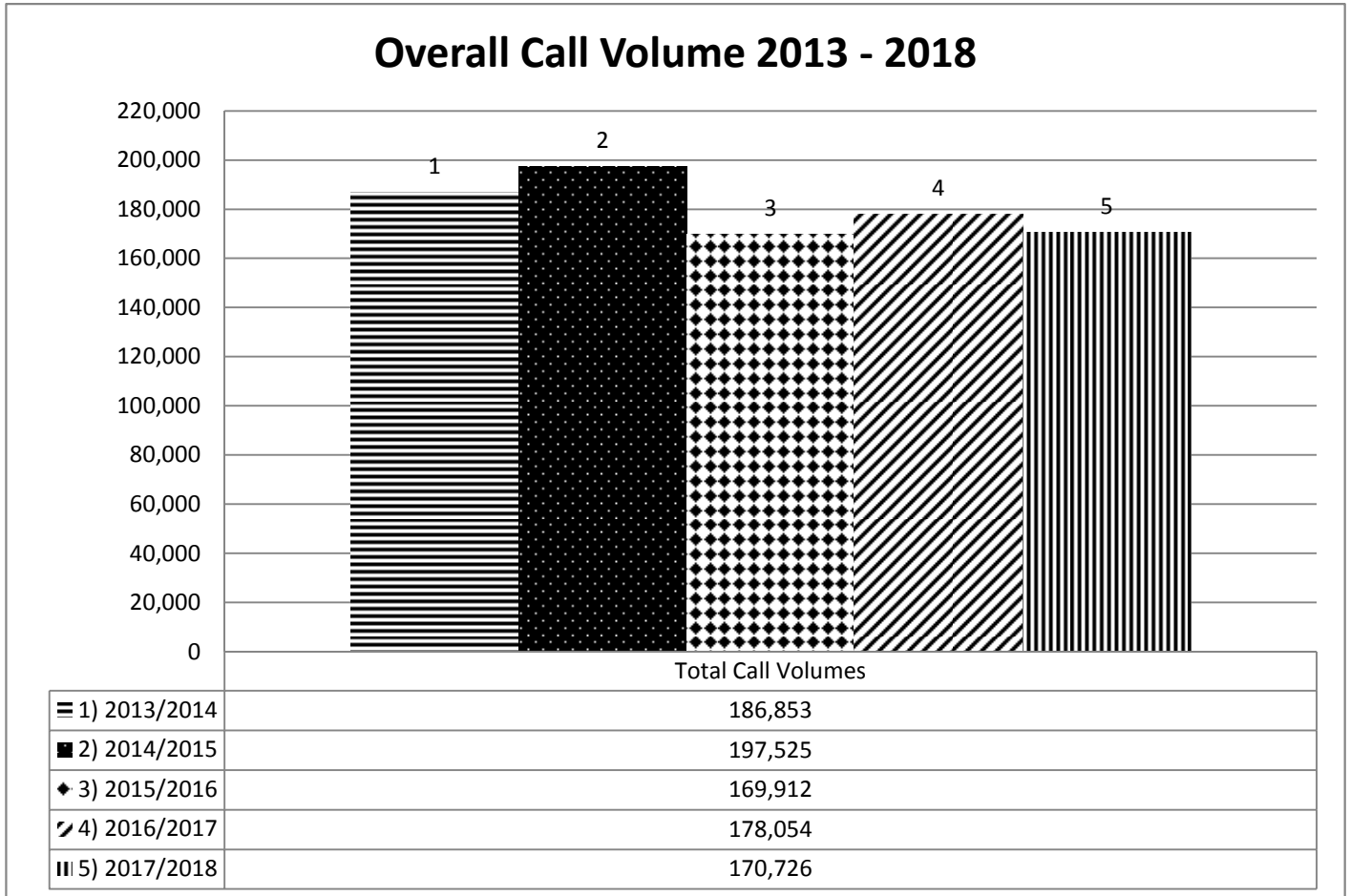
Members are requested to note the report

**8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:**

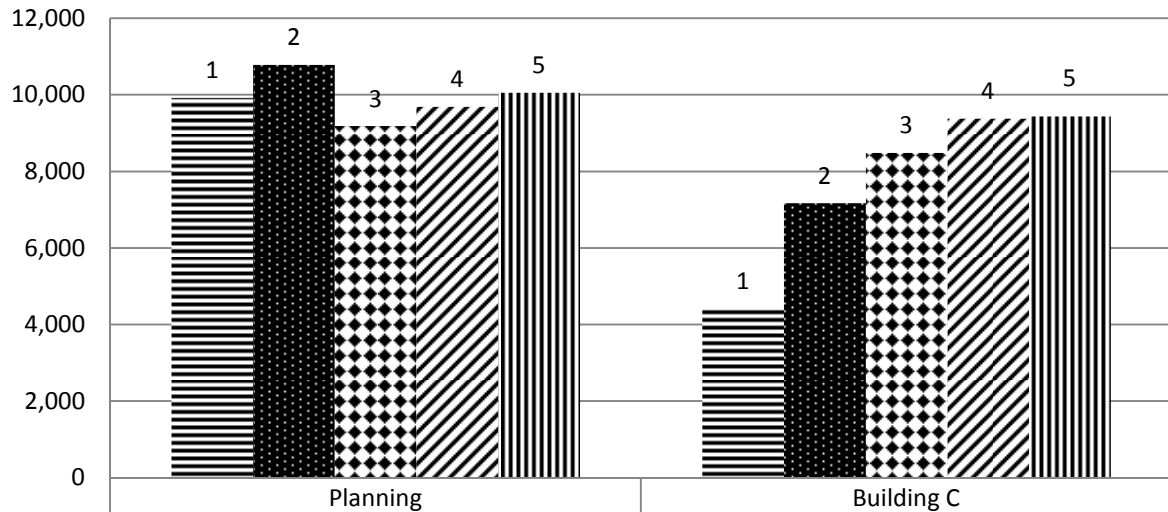
None

Appendix 1

**Arun District Council Telephony Figures 2013 - 2018**

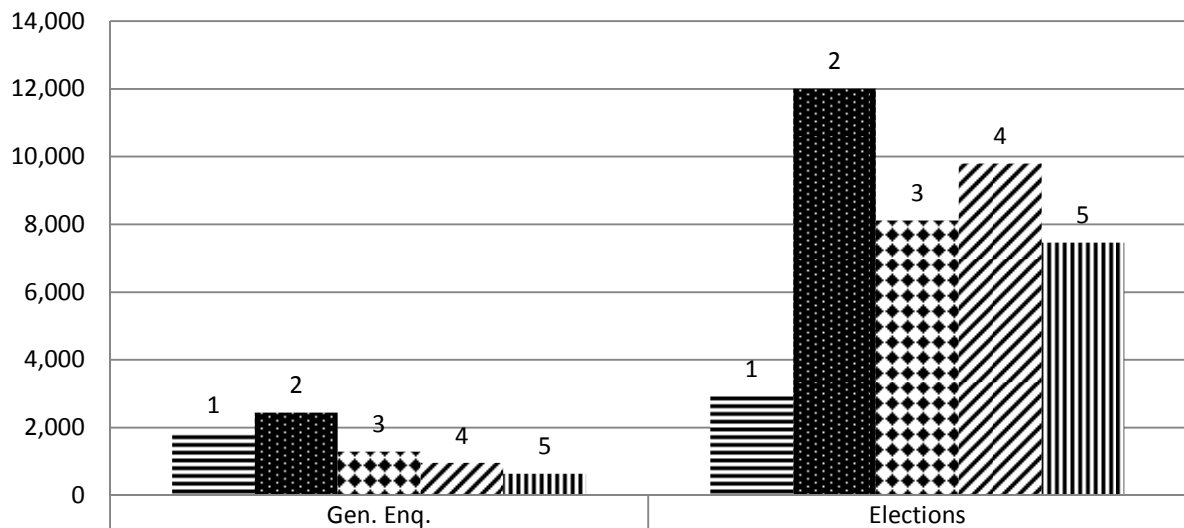


### Planning & Building Control Total Volumes 2013 - 2018



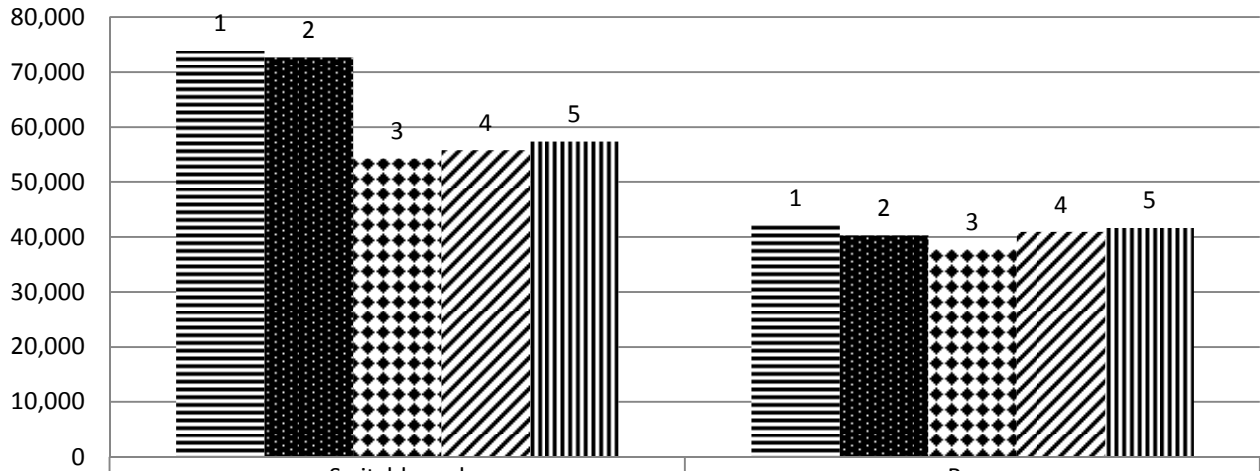
	Planning	Building C
1) 2013/2014	9,929	4,431
2) 2014/2015	10,793	7,182
3) 2015/2016	9,194	8,489
4) 2016/2017	9,694	9,389
5) 2017/2018	10,064	9,442

### General Enquiries & Elections Total Volumes 2013 - 2018



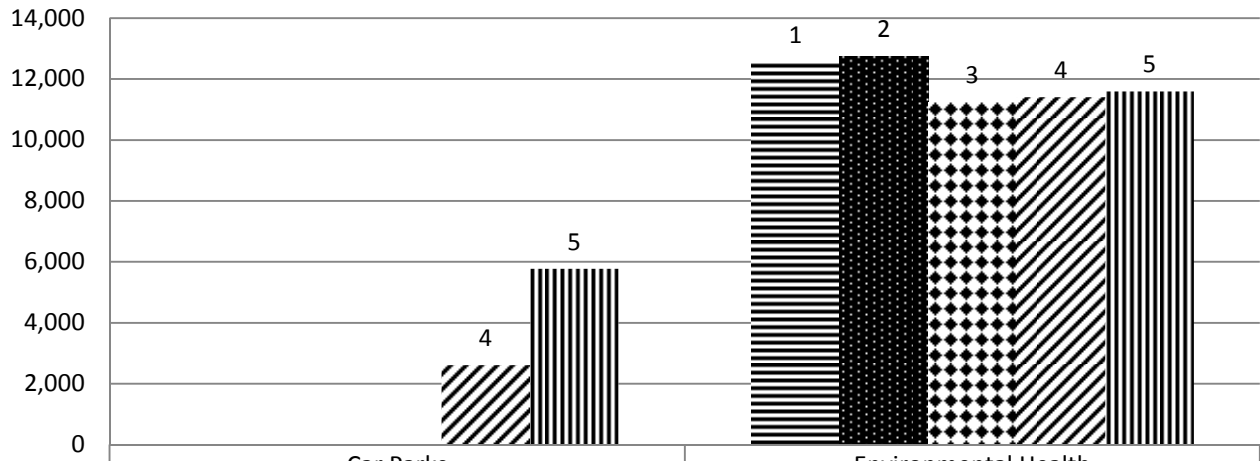
	Gen. Enq.	Elections
1) 2013/2014	1,850	2,934
2) 2014/2015	2,444	12,010
3) 2015/2016	1,293	8,112
4) 2016/2017	959	9,798
5) 2017/2018	640	7,461

### Switchboard & Revenues Total Call Volumes 2013 - 2018



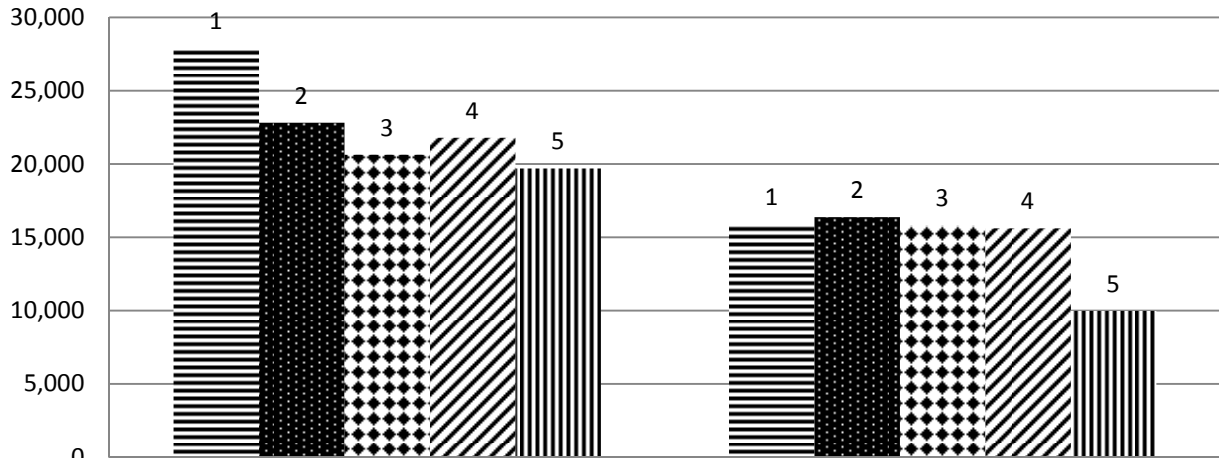
	Switchboard	Revs
1) 2013/2014	73,898	42,207
2) 2014/2015	72,761	40,373
3) 2015/2016	54,352	37,771
4) 2016/2017	55,834	40,969
5) 2017/2018	57,391	41,713

### Car Parks & Environmental Health Total Call Volumes 2013 - 2018



	Car Parks	Environmental Health
1) 2013/2014	0	12,554
2) 2014/2015	0	12,752
3) 2015/2016	0	11,230
4) 2016/2017	2,607	11,405
5) 2017/2018	5,770	11,594

### Benefits & Cleansing Total Call Volumes 2013 - 2018

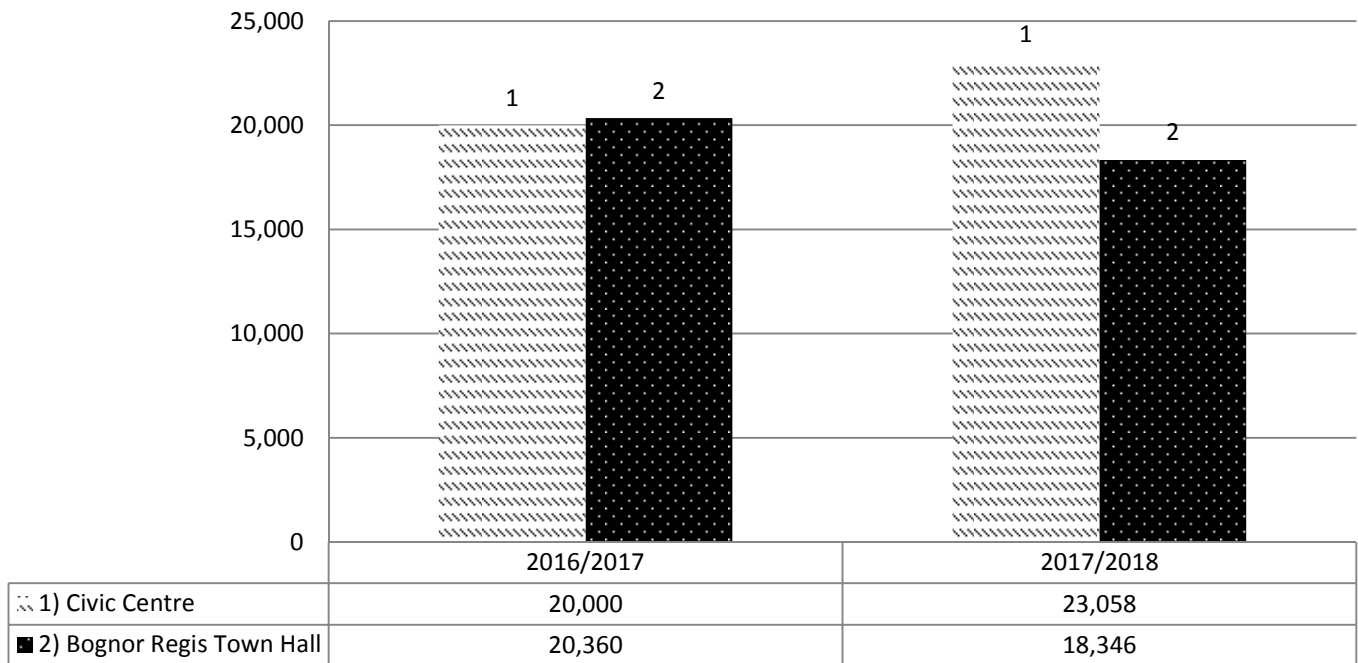


	Bens	Cleansing
1) 2013/2014	27,901	15,888
2) 2014/2015	22,821	16,385
3) 2015/2016	20,626	15,806
4) 2016/2017	21,788	15,611
5) 2017/2018	19,693	9,977

1. Figures for Car Parks start in 2016/2017 financial year - before this all calls were handled by the back office and not by Arun Direct.
2. There is a decrease in call volumes between 2014/2015 and 2017/2018, there has been significant investment in our website over the past 3 years and encouragement for customers to self-serve where possible. Direct contact with the back office staff by customers are also not reflected in statistics.
3. Outsourcing of our Clinical Waste to Medisort has reduced Cleansing call numbers.
4. Building Control also shows an increase in calls received - more back office processes are handled by Customer Service staff.
5. The EU Referendum in 2016/2017 and the 2014//2015 General Election saw an increase of Election calls.
6. Benefits related calls have steadily decreased over time. Going forward the decrease is expected to continue with the implementation of Universal Credit which is being administered by Department of Work and Pensions.

## Appendix 2

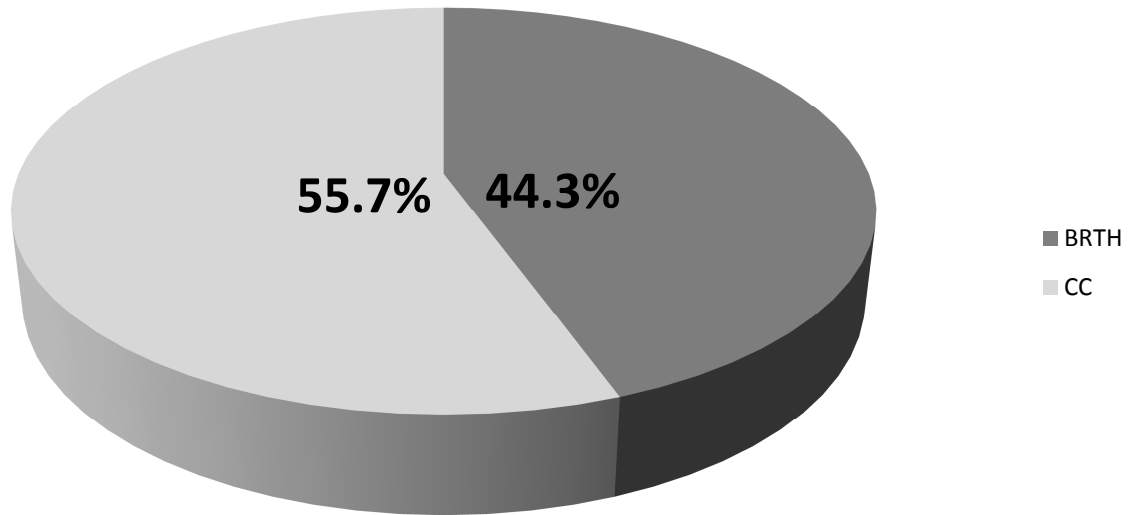
## Arun District Council Come In Figures 2016 – 2018



1. These figures exclude Revenues & Benefits as these are not services that are currently handled by Arun Direct and Customer Services in a face to face manner.
2. These figures include Housing, General Enquiries and Appointments across both sites.

## Arun District Council Come In Percentage By Service By Site 2015 - 2018

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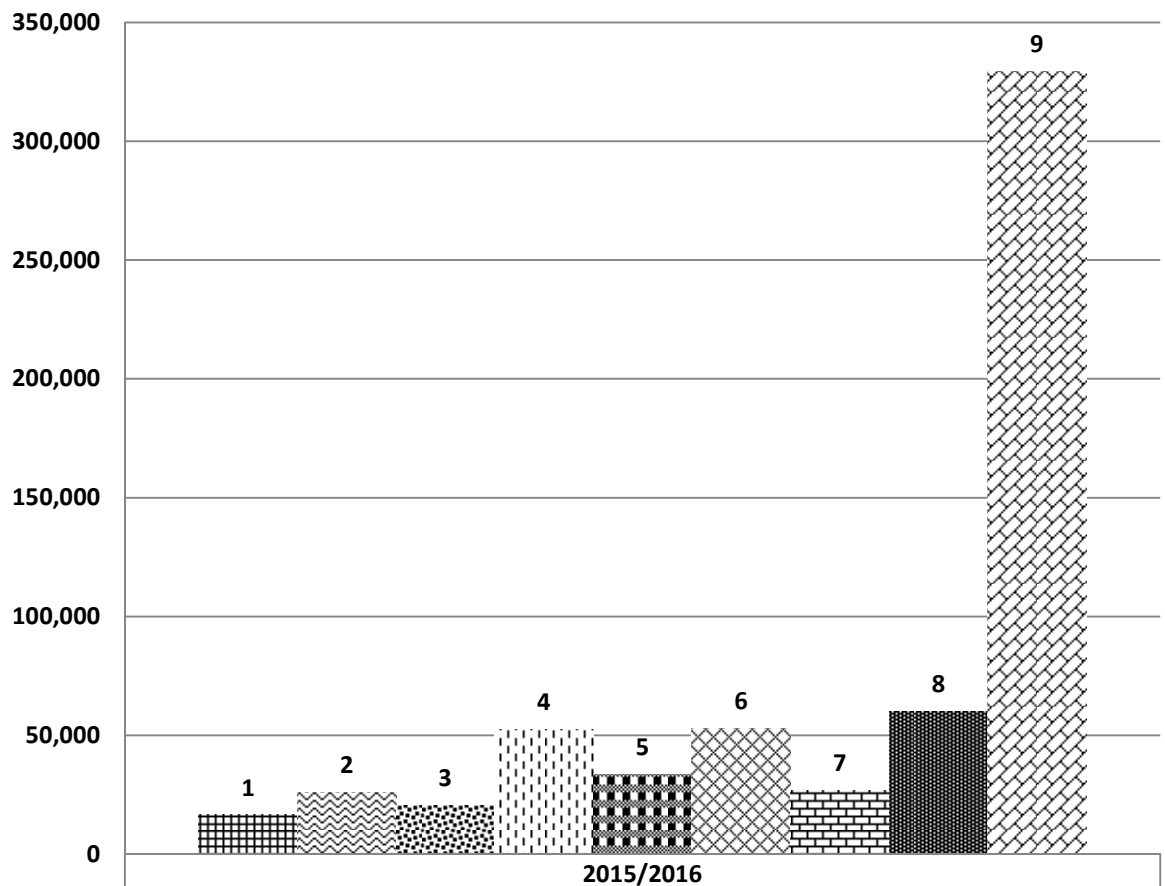
1. This is the percentage breakdown for 'Come In' customers across both sites. The statistical breakdown is as follows;
  - CC – General Enquiries – 13,796 Customers = 33.3%
  - CC – Housing – 7,856 Customers = 18.9%
  - CC – Appointments – 1,406 = 3.5%
  - BRTH – General Enquiries – 18,346 Customer = 44.3%
  
2. Currently it is not possible to further breakdown BRTH Gen Enquiries tickets - there is no option to take a Housing ticket so Housing customers must take a General Enquiries one. This is being reviewed to see if a Housing option can be added for more accurate reporting.



## Appendix 3

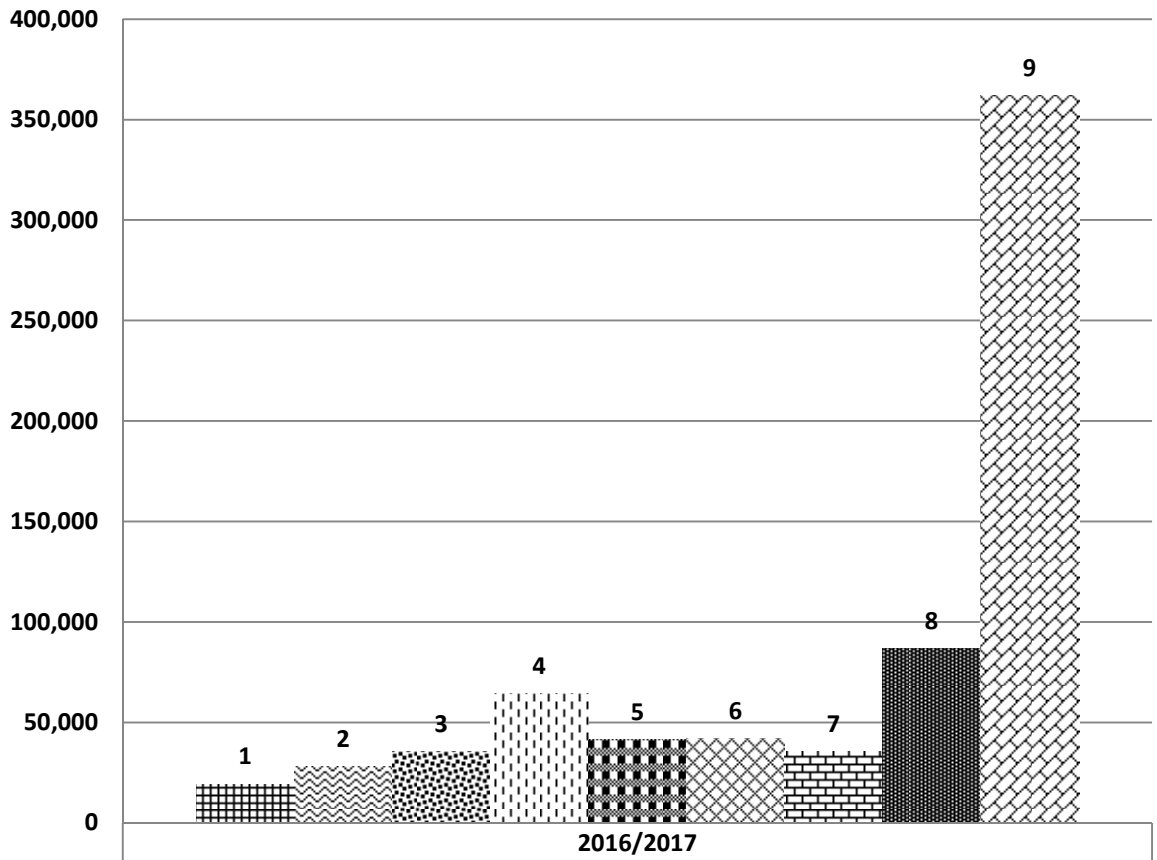
## Arun District Council Website Figures 2015 - 2018

### Total Website Figures 2015/2016



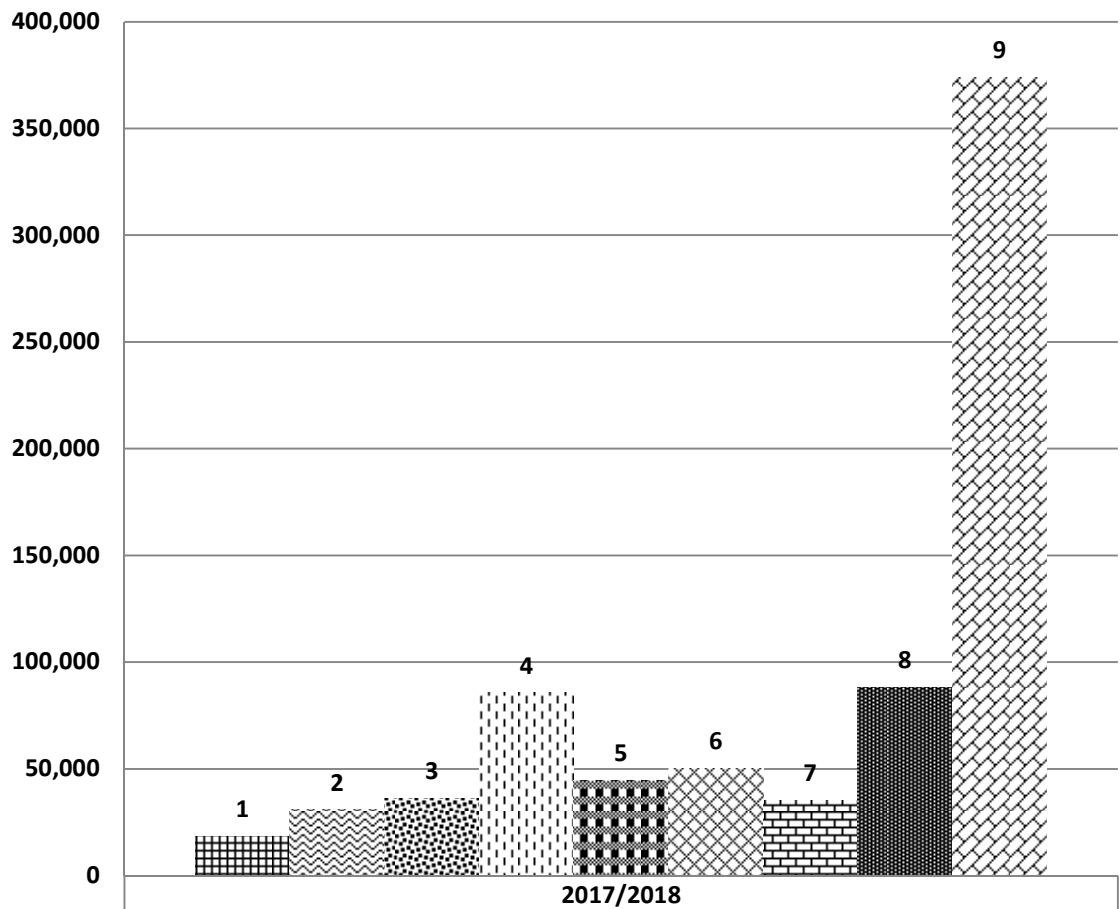
⌘ 1. Benefits	16,529
⊠ 2. Building Control	25,907
⊞ 3. Car Parks	20,661
⌚ 4. Cleansing	52,410
⌘ 5. Council Tax	33,467
⊠ 6. Elections	52,763
⊞ 7. Environmental Health	26,888
⌘ 8. Housing	59,985
⊠ 9. Planning	329,410

### Total Website Figures 2016/2017



# 1. Benefits	19,450
⌘ 2. Building Control	28,422
⌘ 3. Car Parks	35,508
⌘ 4. Cleansing	64,396
⌘ 5. Council Tax	41,590
◇ 6. Elections	42,348
⌘ 7. Environmental Health	35,484
■ 8. Housing	86,902
◇ 9. Planning	362,130

## Total Website Figures 2017/2018

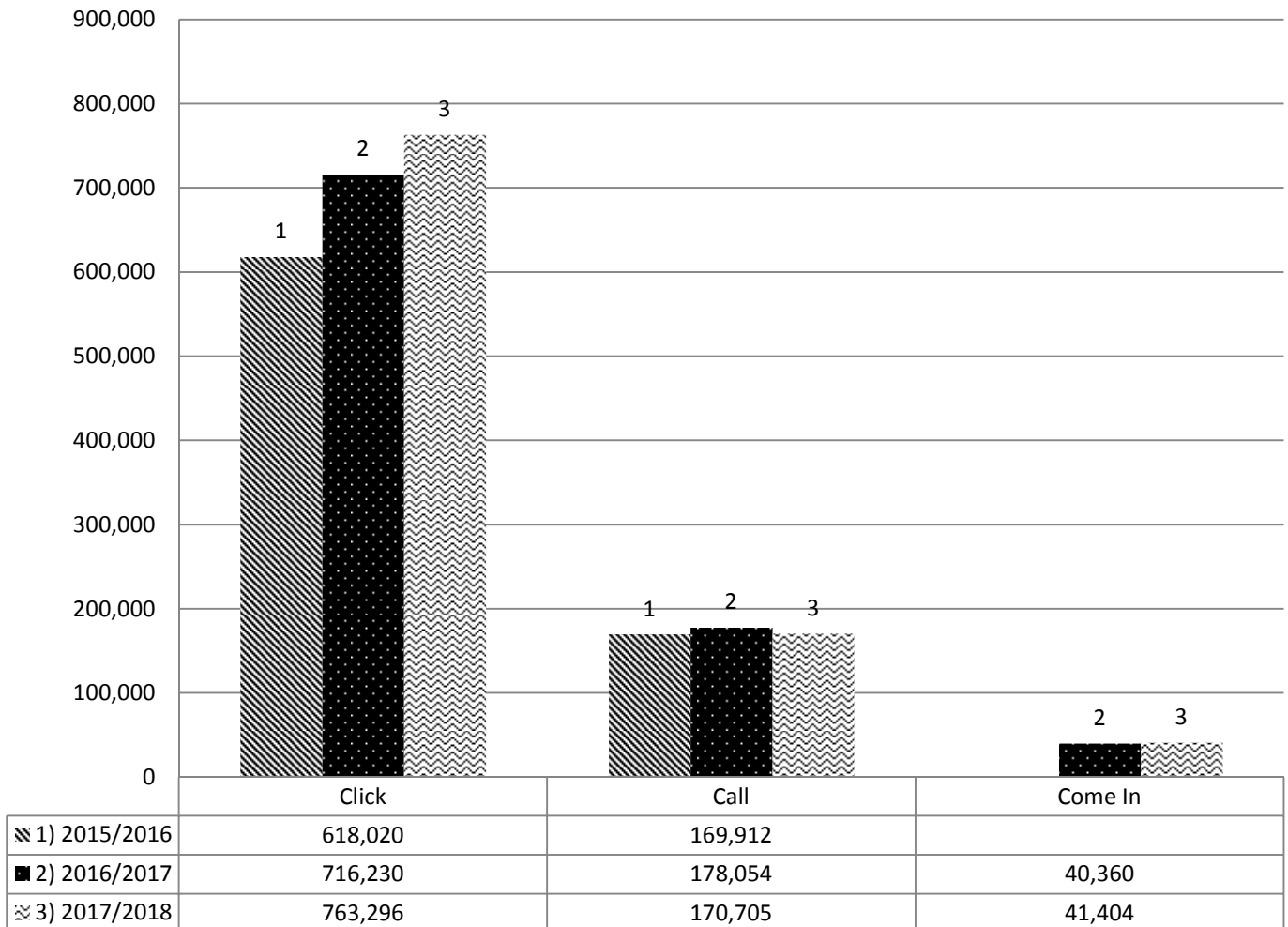


田 1. Benefits	18,501
☼ 2. Building Control	30,677
☼ 3. Car Parks	35,993
☼ 4. Cleansing	85,603
☼ 5. Council Tax	44,669
☼ 6. Elections	50,170
☼ 7. Environmental Health	35,333
☼ 8. Housing	88,360
☼ 9. Planning	373,990

1. This is representative of the total hits on the website per service per year.
2. The surge in Cleansing hits is believed to be due to changes to Christmas collection starting in the 17/18 financial year with many checking the website to confirm their new collection day.
3. As with the telephony statistics Elections saw a surge in Website hits for the 2015/2016 year with the EU Referendum.

## Appendix 4

### Arun District Council Click, Call & Come In Statistics 2015 - 18



1. These are the Click, Call & Come In figures for Arun District Council Customer Services from 2015 to 2018. They are broken down to via service.
  - Click – Total amount of Website hits per year.
  - Call – Total amount of calls received in our Telephony contact centre
  - Come In – Total amount of customers served Face to Face. Figures for 2015/16 are not available.

<b>Housing &amp; Customer Services Meeting</b>							
<b>Meeting Date</b>			<b>31-May-18</b>	<b>19-Jul-18</b>	<b>20-Sep-18</b>	<b>13-Dec-18</b>	<b>07-Feb-19</b>
<b>Item</b>	<b>Lead</b>	<b>Origin</b>					
Terms of Reference		ToR	*				
Work programme - set and review	Chairman		*				
Housing Annual Update	SK		*				
HRA Business Plan Update	SK		*				
Customer Services Annual Update	JRW/CB			*			
Stonepillow Update	SK			*			
Homelessness & Housing Strategy	SK				*		
ASB/Community Safety Update	GB				*		
Stock Condition Update	SK					*	
Amber House Update	SK					*	
Empty Homes Strategy Update	NS						*
Customer Services Strategy	JRW/CB						*
<b>Agenda Prep Timetable</b>							
Send to Gemma for CMT by 2pm Thurs			26-Apr-18	14-Jun-18	16-Aug-18	08-Nov-18	03-Jan-19
CMT Tues			01-May-18	19-Jun-18	21-Aug-18	13-Nov-18	08-Jan-19
Draft Reports to Committees by 9am Weds			03-May-18	21-Jun-18	23-Aug-18	15-Nov-18	10-Jan-19
<b>Agenda Prep Date 16:30</b>			<b>09-May-18</b>	<b>27-Jun-18</b>	<b>29-Aug-18</b>	<b>21-Nov-18</b>	<b>16-Jan-19</b>
<b>Room</b>			<b>CR2</b>	<b>CR2</b>	<b>CR2</b>	<b>CR2</b>	<b>CR2</b>
Final Reports to Committees by 9am Tues			15-May-18	03-Jul-18	04-Sep-18	27-Nov-18	22-Jan-19
Despatch Agendas by 2pm Thurs			17-May-18	05-Jul-18	06-Sep-18	29-Nov-18	24-Jan-19
<b>Date of Meeting 6pm</b>			<b>31-May-18</b>	<b>19-Jul-18</b>	<b>20-Sep-18</b>	<b>13-Dec-18</b>	<b>07-Feb-19</b>
<b>Room</b>			<b>CR1</b>	<b>CR1</b>	<b>CR1</b>	<b>CR1</b>	<b>CR1</b>
OSC Meeting Dates			17-Jul-18	18-Sep-18	20-Nov-18	22-Jan-19	12-Mar-19
Cabinet Meeting Dates			23-Jul-18	17-Sep-18	12-Nov-18	14-Jan-19	04-Mar-19
Full Council Meeting Dates			18-Jul-18	12-Sep-18	07-Nov-18	09-Jan-19	20-Feb-19