

CYNGOR SIR POWYS COUNTY COUNCIL

**County Council
22nd October 2014**

**REPORT AUTHOR: County Councillor Garry Banks, Portfolio Holder for
Customer Services**

SUBJECT: Question from County Councillor Russell George

Can the Cabinet member provide a link on the Council's website to the Council's Customer Services telephone contact numbers, and can he provide his view on how easy he believes it is to locate those numbers on the website. Does the cabinet member also agree with me that sometimes Powys residents need to have a telephone conversation with a member of staff, and that email and other forms of non-direct contact are not always the most appropriate way to support an enquiry?

Council services are provided by many departments of which Customer Services is only one. The council therefore provides an automated switchboard service which is shown on this web page:

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/contact-the-council>

That page can be reached as follows:

- On the bottom (footer) of every single web page including the home page
- By following the 'Contact Us' link half way down the home page.
- By using the site search to find, for example, 'phone numbers' or 'contacts'.

Additionally, a search for a department, eg: *Environmental Health* will lead to pages that hold phone numbers for that service.

The website supports the Council's agreed strategy to encourage take up of electronic services as much as possible in order to reduce demand through the phone, supporting Council-wide efforts to meet agreed efficiency targets. The website provides information and services which allow the customer to serve themselves without having to speak to anybody. When the customer wants to speak to a department, the department's contact details are shown on the relevant pages.

The website is not organised around departments because most people do not understand which department to contact. Therefore, telephone numbers are shown on pages that show the task that people are interested in carrying out. For example, people wanting to *Search, view or comment on a planning application* will visit this page (where they can carry out the task online or find the Planning phone number):

<http://www.powys.gov.uk/en/planning-building-control/search-view-and-comment-on-planning-applications/>

Our website is visited about 55,000 times a month. People using the website are supported with instant chat to immediately answer their questions, and with a feedback form on every page. A handful of people report some difficulty with finding contact details, but most are able to do so easily. Following feedback, changes were made to the site in September to make it easier to find contact numbers and addresses.

At any one time, there will be many people on the website, some of whom may be on the Contact Us page, but most of whom will be using the website to serve themselves or to find information, including phone numbers.

The website is available 24 hours a day for people to access our services, saving the Council money whilst providing an excellent out-of-hours service for the public.