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## **Customer Service Department 2021 Year End Results Information Report to Council**

Report Number: INFO-2022-07

Department(s): Customer Services

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Jamie Boyle, Supervisor, Customer Service Kiosks

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In accordance with the Procedure By-law, any member of Council may make a request to the Town Clerk that this Report be placed on an upcoming Committee of the Whole agenda for discussion.

### **Purpose**

This report provides Members of Council with the highlights, overall results, and trends for 2021 as well as the key areas of focus in 2022, for the Customer Service Department.

### **Background**

The Customer Service Department provides Members of Council with the quarterly and year-end results, which includes volumes, trends, key project updates, and highlights related to service delivery.

### **Discussion**

The attached graphics represent service requests as captured in our CRM system by either Customer Service staff or by staff in the Mayor and Councillors' offices.

Some of the highlights in the Customer Service department are as follows:

### **Overall Volumes and Trends**

- The Customer Service Department fielded over 8,500 inquiries related to the COVID-19 Pandemic in 2021
  - The highest volume of inquiries was related to Vaccination Clinic Inquiries (2,825) & Recreation Booking Assistance (2,285) which includes questions related to new protocols required for registering online to attend programming.

- Total contacts continue to trend downward while length and complexity of each contact continues to trend upward, as does the percentage of service requests;
- As a result of the pandemic, the overall volume of emails has increased substantially. Email volume to Customer Service increased by almost 4,000 emails in 2021 from 2020, with 2021 seeing a total of 9,163 email requests for information or service;
- Average Handling Time (AHT) significantly increased in 2021. The average length of each call rose from 2:59 minutes per call in 2020 to 4:01 minutes per call in 2021;
- Request for Parking Enforcement (1,163) is the highest type of service request across the whole Town of Newmarket in 2021, followed by Forestry service requests (977) and Property Standards service requests (923) respectively;
- Request for Parking Enforcement, Property Standards and Forestry service requests are the three top service request in every ward;
- A limited number of staff continued to work in the office to provide service where an on-site presence was required. These include issuing of marriage licenses, commissioning of documents, processing of various documents, and processing of payments
- Processes are continuously being evaluated and streamlined to ensure that all services are available in the most safe and efficient manner for our residents. All payments are processed by credit card over the phone and paper-reliant processes have been modified and moved to electronic means where possible.
- Customer Service staff at the satellite kiosks have been trained and continue to back up CSC staff. These staff at the Magna Centre, Ray Twinney Complex and Seniors Meeting Place, are the first line of contact for all payments; as well, they monitor and respond to emails and voicemails as appropriate. Over 22,000 payments were taken by phone and drop box in 2021 with the majority being processed by Customer Service staff, working out of the Magna Centre.
- Staff who are working in the office have been provided with appropriate materials and protocols to ensure safety. Protocols have been adjusted as necessary in accordance with Provincial regulations;
- Customer Services, IT Services and Communications launched a “live chat” application on the website in early 2021, on selected pages on the Town’s website. Customer Services received very few contacts since the launch. Throughout 2022, we hope to offer this option on more pages & increase the usage of this channel in order to decrease email volumes and telephone calls.

## **Revenue and Cost Saving Opportunities**

- Customer Service Supervisor, Jamie Boyle, continues to lead the “Enhanced Customer Service training for the Public Sector” program virtually. This program has been very well received and is available to all staff across the N6 municipalities. The course is considered ‘mandatory’ for Town of Newmarket staff

and 6 individual sessions were offered throughout 2021. Over 150 TON staff representing all levels across the organization and 70, N6 staff completed the course in 2021.

- In 2019, two partnerships were created with Seneca College's Public Administration Program and Government Relations Program. Workshops were created and delivered for both programs focusing on best practices in municipal service delivery, our centralized customer service model and career development panels with Town of Newmarket municipal professionals from across the organization.
- The Seneca College course titled "Excellence in Municipal Government" was well received and the partnership has continued to grow as the Town of Newmarket & Seneca College have entered a multi-year partnership whereby this program has been included in the post-graduate program curriculum . These workshops and courses were all developed internally and delivered by Jamie Boyle. Town staff from across the organization are involved in the program as Project Advisors, providing support to students as they work on one of several municipal challenges currently facing our leadership team .

## **Continuous Improvement – 2022 and beyond**

- Collaborate with other departments in order to move the Digital Strategy forward in a manner that best represents opportunities for improved efficiencies and more stream-lined service delivery.
- The next semester of the Seneca College/ Town of Newmarket Public Administration partnership commences in January until April 2022. Delivered weekly through Seneca College's learning platform, this partnership increases Newmarket's standing in the community as a learning organization, continually striving to share our practices and experiences with future municipal professionals.
- We continue to play a key role in the launch of the Smart Water Meter program, with mass deployment scheduled to commence in 2022.
- Continue the rollout of corporate-wide, and N6 municipalities' Enhanced Customer Service training.

Represent the customer through the ongoing pandemic by participating in discussions and decisions related to the re-opening and/or closing of facilities, amenities, and programs.

## **Conclusion**

The Customer Service Department remains committed to providing Council with the most recent trends and statistics by ward and the Town of Newmarket as a whole.

## **Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages**

Tracking and reporting on trends and customer feedback supports the Town's strategic directions of being Well-Equipped and Managed by demonstrating Service Excellence.

## **Consultation**

Detail the internal and external stakeholders that contributed to the content of this report.

## **Human Resource Considerations**

Not applicable to this report.

## **Budget Impact**

None

## **Attachments**

Overall Volumes and Trends Graphics (4 Pages)

## **Contact**

For more information on this report contact: Hannah Grant (hgrant@newmarket.ca or extension 2705), Jamie Boyle (jboyle@newmarket.ca or extension 2254) or Bonnie Munslow (bmunslow@newmarket.ca or extension 2251).

## **Approval**

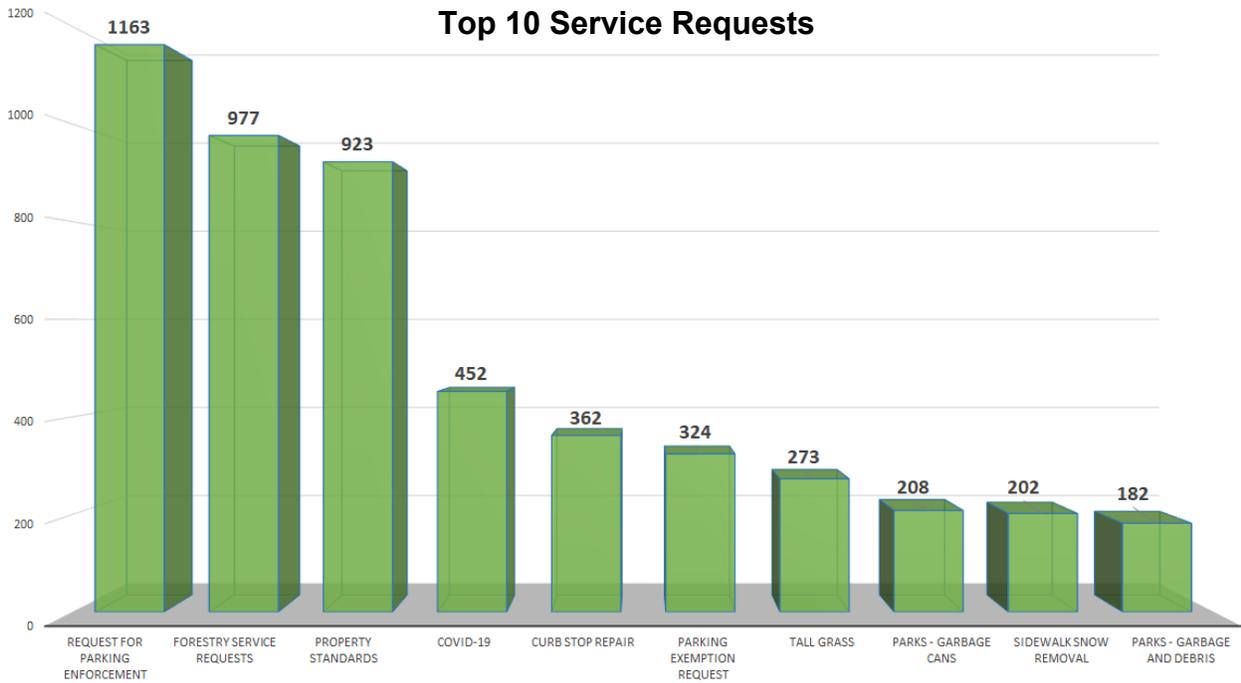
Hannah Grant, Acting Supervisor, Customer Service Centre

Jamie Boyle, Supervisor, Customer Service Kiosks

Bonnie Munslow, Manager, Corporate Customer Service

# Overall Volumes and Trends

## Top 10 Service Requests



Town wide, the top service requests in 2021 were for Parking enforcement, followed by Forestry service requests, and Property Standards investigations. For the most part, this is consistent with previous years data. The requests for COVID-19 related service were down from 682 in 2020, to 452 in 2021.

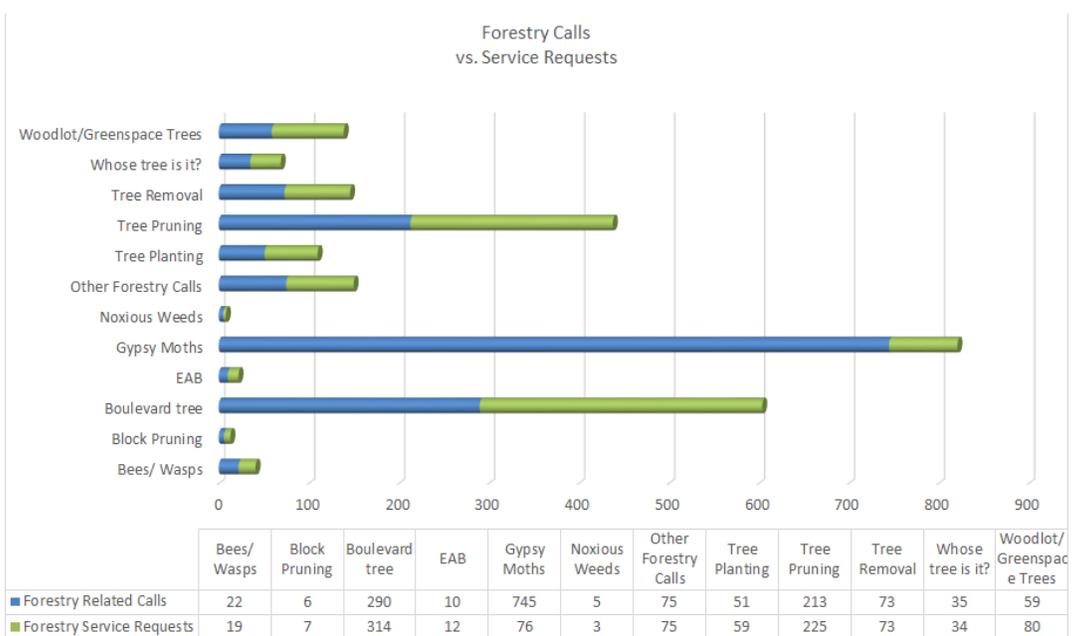
*Request for Parking Enforcement* remains the top service request each year. *Property Standards* related service requests jumped significantly in 2021, from 705 requests for service to 923 in 2021. This increase was due to a spike in reported 'Tall grass' and Garbage related reports to the Property Standards department.

## Forestry Related Service Requests at a New High

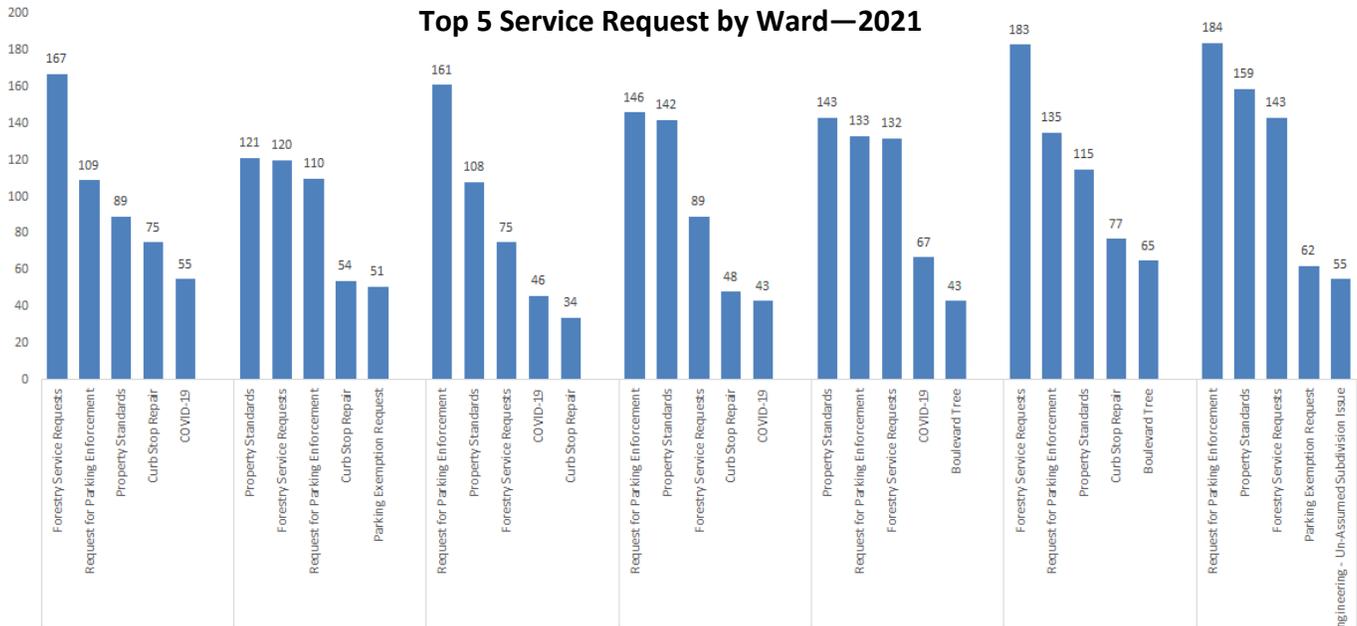
Of significant note, the 2nd highest service request in 2021 was *Forestry* service requests. This is the first time that the Forestry department had made it into the top 3 service requests by residents.

Forestry is normally in the top 10 overall service requests, yet with the emergence of Gypsy Moth related issues, the Forestry department, and Parks department had over 1,500 inquiries through Customer Service, as well as the Forestry crews had almost 1,000 service requests issued to them.

*Boulevard tree* and *tree pruning* requests remain the highest two service requests for Forestry crews at 314 and 225 requests respectively in 2021.



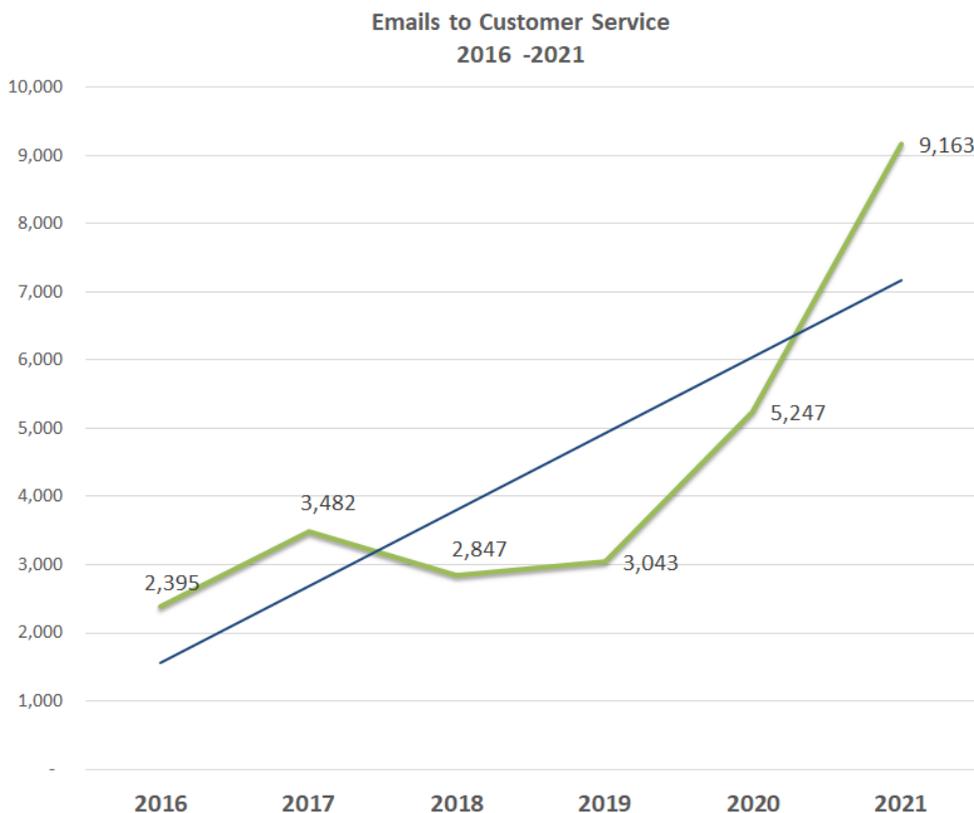
# Overall Volumes and Trends



COVID-19 related enforcement requests dropped in 2021. The majority of requests in 2021 in most wards were related to Property Standards complaints, Requests for Parking Enforcement & Forestry service requests. While still the top service request town wide, this is the first year that request for parking enforcement was not highest in each ward. A large increase in requests for Forestry work is attributed to requests for tree trimming and boulevard tree issues (225 & 314 respectfully).

In Ward 7 the service requests in “un-assumed” areas refer to complaints and inquiries mostly related to construction, grading/ drainage and fencing and are lower than reported in 2020.

## Emails Increasing Annually



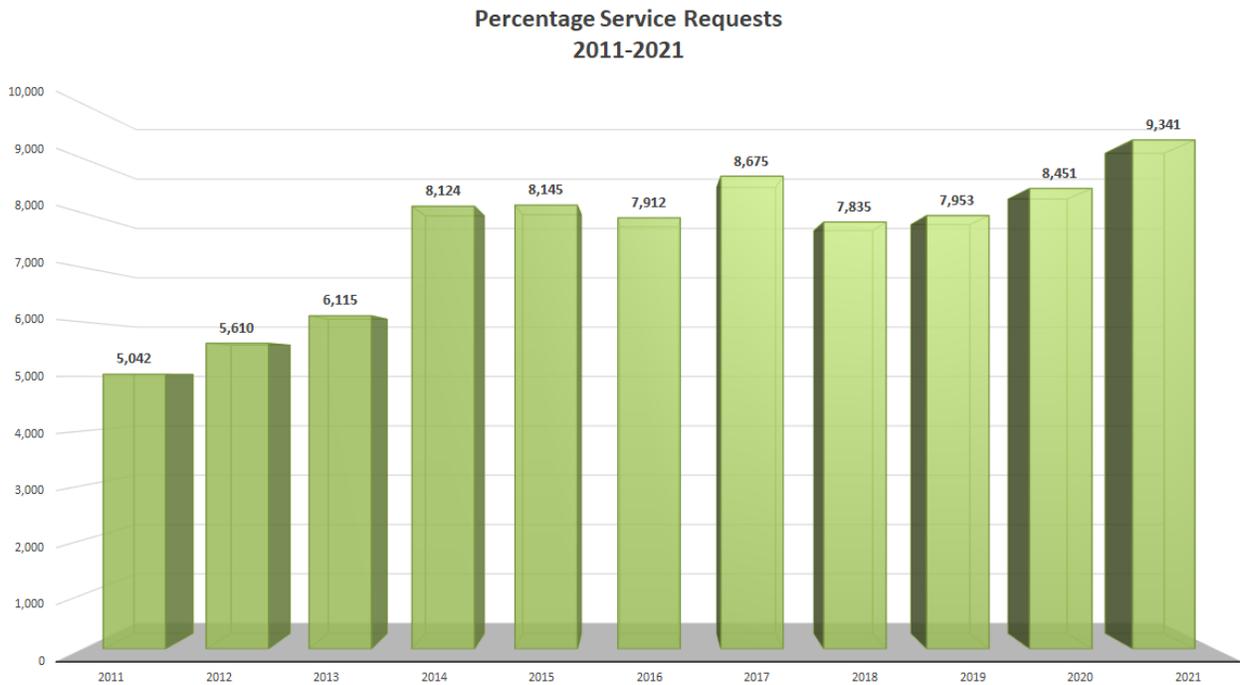
Due to the shutdown of the Town offices, the Customer Service department saw yet another significant increase in email contacts in 2021.

9,100 emails were received by Customer Service, which was an increase of almost 4,000 emails than 2020, and over 6,100 from that in 2019. Prior to the pandemic, Customer Service had seen a steady increase in email.

Each email is handled by a trained CSA, tracking it in our CRM. If required, a service request is issued and followed-up as appropriate.

# Overall Volumes and Trends

## Service Requests Increase



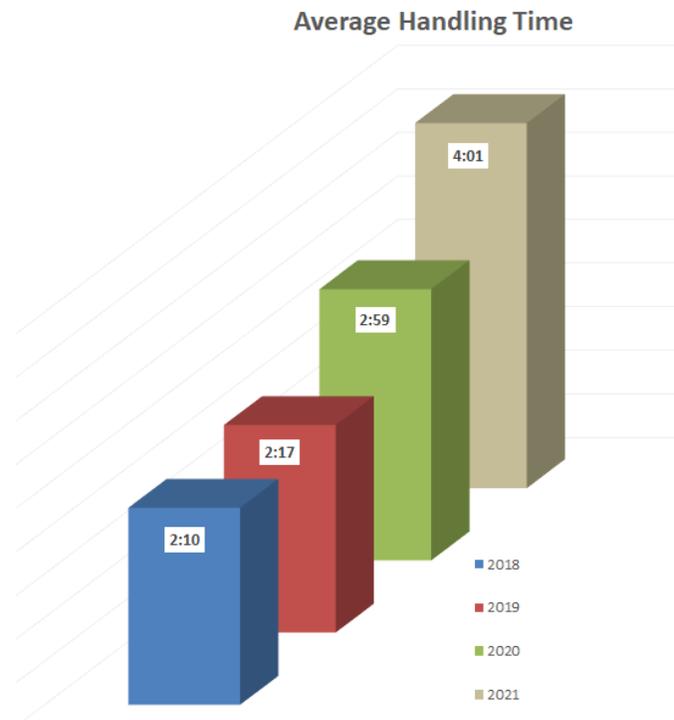
Each year, the amount of service requests to the Town continue to increase. Residents can contact the Town via the telephone, email, via our website's web-chat portal, or in person during business hours. Customer Service will answer questions of the customer, then if the matter needs to be investigated and/or looked into further, the issue is entered in our CRM software and a ticket is sent to the service department related to the issue, and its progress from acknowledgement to resolution are tracked and reported on. Once the service request is completed, the department updates the CRM ticket so that Customer Service can update the customer with the status and resolution details.

## Average Call Length Increasing Annually

Average Handling Time (AHT) is a metric that tracks the average amount of time spent each call answered by the Customer Service Centre. The higher the number, the great amount of time associates are spending with each caller.

With increased requests for service, more detailed information being provided to residents over the phone, more details regarding policy changes and pandemic related matters, the amount of time spent on average with residents each call has gone up significantly again in 2021, increasing by over 1:00 minute per call on average,

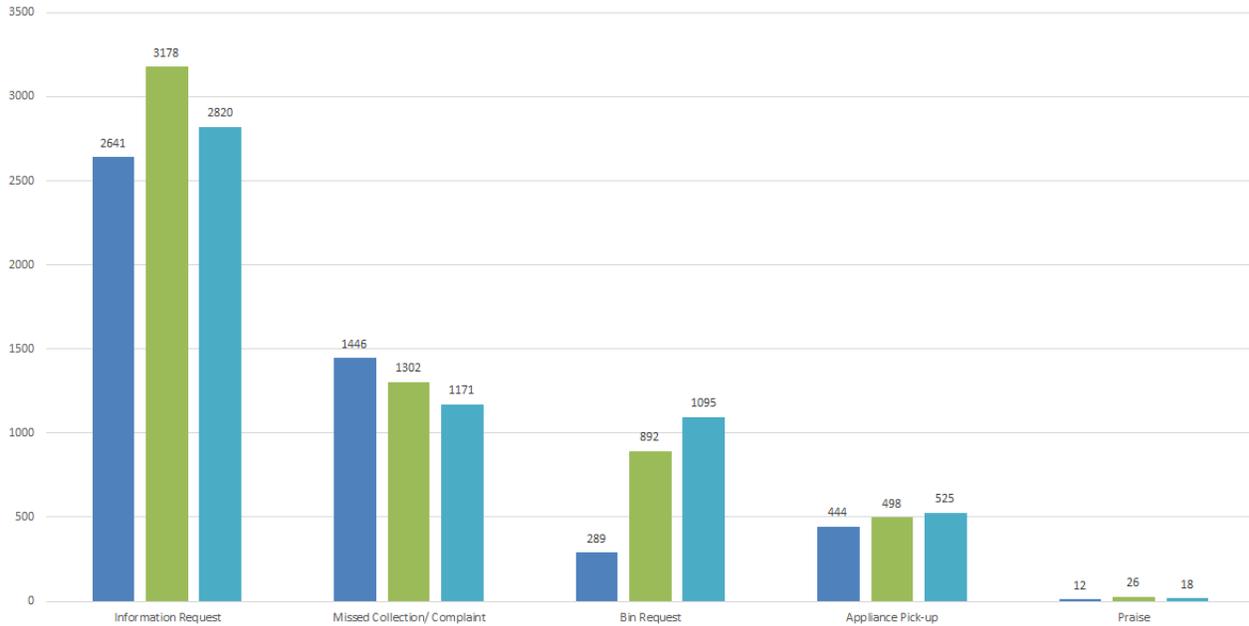
Customer Service Associates spent a great deal longer per call with customer than in previous years, and the highest average handling time to date.



# Overall Volumes and Trends

Green For Life Call Breakdown  
2021

Note: Greater than 27,000 residential locations collected 52 times a year



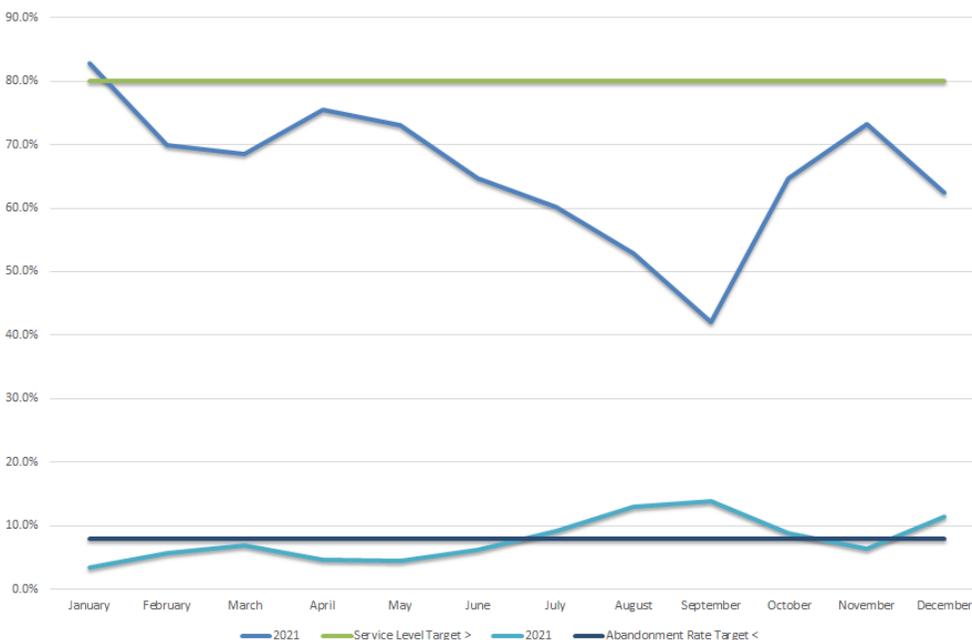
## Waste Collection

The town's waste collection is conducted by Green for Life. Equipped with their own customer Call Centre, GFL shares their reported data with all N6 municipalities including Newmarket.

Waste is collected at over 27,000 residential homes per week in Newmarket, 52 weeks a year. Each collection removes 3 streams, Blue Bin, Green Bin, & Garbage (yard waste also collected from April - October). These streams are collected using two different types of trucks to make collection more efficient. Missed collection/ complaints are down 131 complaints from 2020 and down 275 from 2019.

## Service Levels & Abandonment Rates

Telephone Service Levels vs. Abandonment Rates  
2021



The Customer Service Department aims to answer 80% of incoming calls within 20 seconds (Service Level) and have no more than 8% of callers hang up before reaching an associate (Abandonment Rate). Generally the department is able to perform within these parameters. Since the Pandemic began, the length of time spent with each call (on average) is increasing. Coupled with a continued increase in email volumes, this resulted in service levels dropping well below the established threshold. Abandonment rates were also affected. Callers were waiting

longer to speak with an associate which resulted in more residents hanging up prior to be served. Service levels are slowly starting to recover, as we see decreases in the volume of Covid related calls.