

Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Customer First Task and Finish Group

Terms of Reference

Introduction

1. The Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee regularly considers customer services performance as part of quarterly performance reports. In 2012, the committee carried out a light touch review of telephony, but has remained interested in performance in relation to customer services. At the September 2013 meeting, the Chair of the Committee proposed that a task and finish group is set up to provide policy development support to the refresh of the Council's Customer First Strategy. These terms of reference set out the proposed objectives and focus for a Customer First Task and Finish Group.
2. The existing Customer First Strategy was developed and adopted in 2010. Its aim was to transform the way that customers access our services and the services themselves so that they are modern, efficient, effective and customer focussed.
3. The associated plan focussed on identifying and understanding the needs of our customers, measuring levels of customer satisfaction, creating a customer focussed culture within the council, making services accessible to all and to provide high quality services to our customers. The strategy was linked to the Accommodation Strategy and envisaged the expansion of face to face service provision through increased numbers of customer access points as well as harmonised and improved telephony.
4. The strategy has been partially successful and much improvement has been made including:
 - New Customer Access Points in Consett, Durham, Seaham and Crook
 - A single resilient customer services telephone system
 - Development and publication of the golden phone numbers
 - Additional mechanisms for access channels including 'Looking Local' & Durham Talk units.
 - The roll out of a council wide Customer First – Customer Care training package to ensure that our customers receive the highest level of customer care.
5. Along with these successes there have been other challenges, pressures and drivers impacting on the strategy that make it timely to review and update the direction of travel. These include the changing economic climate and the need for new service delivery models.

The Revised Customer First Strategy

6. The draft revised Customer First Strategy has an overarching vision to:

‘deliver customer services that provide value for money, flexibility and choice whilst placing our customers at the heart of everything we do’

7. Three overarching outcomes have been identified:

- Efficient and effective access channels
- Responsive and customer focussed services
- Using customer insight to improve services.

8. Achieving these key outcomes will require the council to undertake a transformation programme requiring commitment and resource from all council services. It is a transformation programme which will take some time to deliver and it is therefore important, that we set out the key projects and timescales which will need to be delivered as fundamental building blocks to the future success of the strategy.

9. It is also essential that the revised Customer First Strategy is adopted as a Council wide approach.

The Customer First Programme

10. The requirement for a programme to effectively manage the delivery of strategy has emerged from its development, recognising that it:

- is large and complex with many projects and interdependencies;
- is cross cutting across the entire Authority and will involve drawing on the skills, efforts and enterprise of a number of project teams, some of which are already engaged in improvement project work.
- requires strong engagement and leadership;
- requires significant transformational and cultural change across the business;

11. Additionally there are a number of concurrent projects that already exist that are working towards the same aims and that require effective coordination to deliver the changes and desired benefits.

12. Developing the strategy and combining projects into a programme provides a better chance of success by focussing effort, reducing duplication and providing the mechanisms and structures to ensure the effective resolution of conflict.

13. The projects will require strong governance and programme management arrangements to enable them to be delivered and to provide effective communications.

14. The Customer first programme is overseen by the Customer Focus Board, chaired by the Corporate Director for Neighbourhood Services and comprising members of each service grouping at Head of Service level. The Customer Focus Board has the responsibility to identify and initiate projects to deliver the Customer First

Strategy which are managed through the Senior Responsible Officer and the Customer Focus Working Group.

Objectives for the Customer First Task and Finish Group

15. The objectives for the customer first task and finish group will align to the Customer First Strategy and work programme:

1. Customer First Strategy

To consider and respond to the consultation on the draft revised customer first strategy on behalf of the Council's scrutiny function.

2. Efficient and effective access channels

To consider the ways in which customers can contact the Council and how these can be changed to increase both the efficiency of transaction and customer satisfaction. How can the effectiveness of these be measured internally and externally.

3. Customer standards

To review corporate customer standards in comparison to standards set in other local authorities/ organisations. What is good practice, and what can we learn from others?

4. Learning from customer feedback

To look at how the council collects and analyses customer feedback, and how this feedback is used to improve service delivery.

Membership

16. The Customer First Task and Finish Group will comprise of up to 10 councillors from the Corporate Issues Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Focus of the work

17. The Review should seek to identify outcomes and make recommendations in respect of:-

- (i) The proposed revisions to the Council's Customer First Strategy;
- (ii) The effectiveness of the Council's access channels for customers in terms of speed of transaction; ease of access and availability to customers and how the Council can measure this effectiveness both internally and externally;
- (iii) The development of customer service standards that improve the Council's ability to benchmark against high performing customer service organisations in both the public and private sector and how lessons can be learned to ensure continuous improvement in Customer services and the customer experience, and
- (iv) Demonstrating how the Council can collect and analyse customer feedback and the methods by which learning from this can be transformed into enhanced services.

18. A Project Plan is attached in Appendix 2 to identify how the Review Group will gather its evidence to support this Review.

Timescale

19. The task and finish group's review is to complete and report not later than April 2014.

WHEN Times/Dates/ Locations	DESIGNATED LEAD Member/ Officer	WHO Key Witness	WHAT Evidence/Information	HOW Meeting/Visit/ Correspondence/ Briefing Paper/ Research	OUTCOMES	WHY
Session 1 December 2013 CR TBC	Cllrs Lethbridge and Henig Stephen Gwilym	Alan Patrickson Mary Readman	To consider the refreshed Customer First Strategy document To assess the proposed changes to the strategy set against previous Telephone Answering Review learning	Working Group Meeting Briefing Paper	A refreshed Customer First Strategy that is customer focussed and builds upon previous learning from review activity.	To consider how the Customer First Strategy meets Councillor and customer aspirations.
Session 2 January 2014 CR TBC	Cllrs Lethbridge and Henig Stephen Gwilym	Alan Patrickson Mary Readman	To consider all available customer access channels including Telephone, Face to Face, Website based and those services that are deliverable across these channels How does the Council monitor the functionality and effectiveness of its access channels?	Working Group Meeting Briefing Paper	A list of those services that have the functionality to be accessible to Customers across a wide range of channels. Where the gaps in service accessibility are and the reasons for these gaps.	To assess the effectiveness of these access channels and how this is reported within the Council and to our customers
Session 3 January 2014 CR TBC	Cllrs Lethbridge and Henig Stephen Gwilym	Alan Patrickson Mary Readman Tom Gorman	What are the Council's service standards? How does the Council engage with Customers to develop service standards? Examples of high performing "Industry standards" from Public and Private sector and how the Council benchmarks performance in this area.	Working Group Meeting Briefing Paper	Service standards are SMART and understood by the customer. Service standards allow for performance to be benchmarked	To ensure responsive and customer focused services are delivered.
Session 4 February 2014 CR TBC	Cllrs Lethbridge and Henig Stephen Gwilym	Alan Patrickson Mary Readman	How the Council obtains Customer Feedback in respect of Customer services. How does feedback shape service improvements?	Working Group Meeting Briefing Paper	Customer services are systematically improved where customer feedback highlights outstanding issues.	To demonstrate how the Council learns from Customer feedback and develops its customer service to reflect that

APPENDIX 3

WHEN Times/Dates/ Locations	DESIGNATED LEAD Member/ Officer	WHO Key Witness	WHAT Evidence/Information	HOW Meeting/Visit/ Correspondence/ Briefing Paper/ Research	OUTCOMES	WHY
			Examples of service developments and improvements that have been implemented following customer feedback.			feedback where possible.
Session 5 February 2014 CR TBC	Cllrs Lethbridge and Henig Stephen Gwilym	Alan Patrickson Mary Readman	Site Visits – Council customer access points Contact centres/customer access points from high performing councils/ Private sector.	Working Group visits	Examples of best practice	To further develop customer services based upon examples of best practice.
Session 6 March 2014 CR TBC	Cllrs Lethbridge and Henig Stephen Gwilym	Stephen Gwilym	CIOSC – Presentation of Draft Report , key findings and Recommendations	CIOSC	Draft Report and Recommendations	Improve performance in these areas