To: **City Executive Board**

Date: **21st March 2013**

Report of: **Head of Customer Services**

Title of Report: **CUSTOMER FEEDBACK**

<u>**Summary and Recommendations**</u>

Purpose of report: To analyse the customer feedback received by the organisation.

Key decision? No

Executive lead members: Councillors Price and Turner

Policy Framework:

Recommendation(s): The City Executive Board is recommended to agree to the following enhancements to how the Council deals with its customer feedback:

i) Ensure all service areas review their web content and literature by 30th September 2013, and where possible involve customers in sense checking how well we are explaining our services.

ii) Develop our policy to always explore the immediate actions required for the customer concerned and those actions needed to improve the process and stop a reoccurrence for other customers.

iii) Clarify what constitutes a complaint within our policy in order to provide more capacity and focus for genuine complaints and service improvement potential. This should be underpinned in our procedure, and staff supported to deliver this through training and on line guidance. Particular areas to be covered include:
   a) Service requests should not constitute a complaint
   b) Complaints about policies should be recorded and used to inform future policy direction.
   c) Letters from Members of Parliament requesting advice and information should not be logged as complaints.

iii) Amend our policy and procedure to ensure all service areas always make contact with the customer before closing any complaint on the system, use email whenever possible to allow this to be done electronically, and advise where appropriate of the corrective and preventive action taken as a result of any investigations.

iv) Include the ability to report customer feedback within the marketing strategy for the City Council's web site.

v) Capture the best practice that exists within the organisation for handling feedback reports in an efficient manner, and ensure this is rolled out to all service areas.

vi) Develop our processes and analysis tools to enable further insight into key themes; this could be within a service area or corporately.

Appendices

Appendix A – Risk Register

Introduction

1. This report analyses the feedback received by the organisation since April 2010. The last report on this matter covered the period from 1st April 2010 until 30th September 2010, but this report analyses trends across the three financial years (with data to December 2012 for 2013/14). All feedback data is recorded and analysed by service areas using the Lagan Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software. Customers can lodge their feedback by telephone via the contact centre, in person at our customer service centres and using the City Council's web site.

2. Training in how to update and amend the CRM system and to understand what constitutes different types of feedback has been provided across all service areas. This has been supported by having a champion in each service area, and by publishing self help guides on the intranet.

3. Improvements have been made to the forms used by customers and staff to report feedback, making more fields mandatory to ensure we gather more information of a higher quality and better consistency.

4. This report has also considered initial feedback from Heads of Service on a sample of complaints in their own service areas, and this has led to recommendations for improving the process.

5. Feedback from customers can help to make vital adjustments to the way any business is run, and as such they should be seen as a valuable tool for improvement. The Council needs to embrace and demonstrate that it listens, learns and improves as a direct result of the insight we get from our customers. The management of this valuable information is a cornerstone of the Customer Service Excellence standard, which sets out best practice for public sector organisations in how they interact with their customers. The improvements to our current process recommended in this report will help us on our journey to improving our customer service against aspects of that standard, but more importantly will assist in the improvement of the services we deliver to our community. As a result our customers will be more satisfied as we show ourselves to be responsive.

Overall Position

6. A total of 21,493 feedback reports have been recorded in the Lagan CRM System since the system was introduced in April 2010. The chart below shows the distribution of reports over this period.   .

Total Number of Comments, Complaints and Complaints Received per Quarter
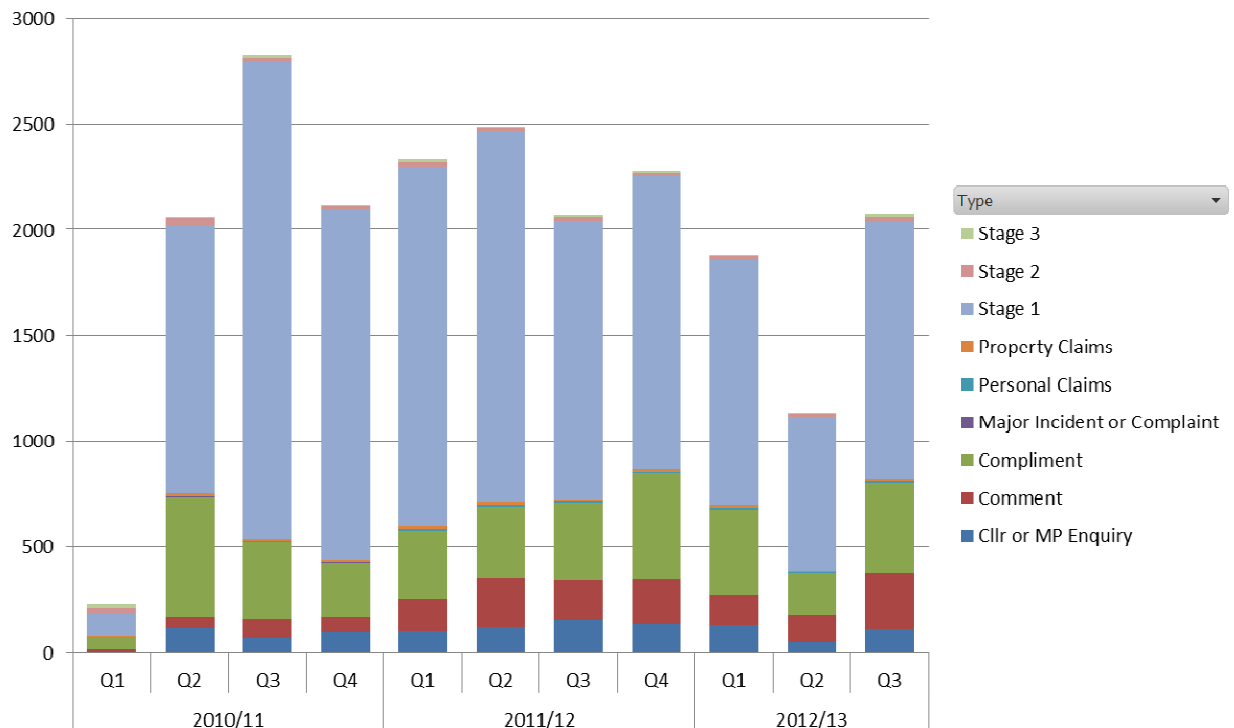
7. The following table compares on a percentage basis the type of reports received across the three financial years.

Case Type	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (part)
Cllr or MP Enquiry	3.9%	5.5%	5.6%
Comment	3.1%	8.6%	10.6%
Compliment	17.2%	16.6%	20.3%
Major Incident or Complaint	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%
Personal Claims	0.1%	0.3%	0.4%
Property Claims	0.6%	0.5%	0.6%
Stage 1	73.1%	67.3%	61.0%
Stage 2	1.3%	0.7%	1.2%
Stage 3	0.6%	0.4%	0.4%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

8. The majority of reports are stage 1 complaints, with compliments making the next highest category. The charts show that the percentage of stage 1 complaints has reduced across the three financial years from 73.1% to 61.0%. Additionally, the number of compliments has increased from 17.2% to 20.3% as has the number of comments (increasing from 3.1% to 10.6%).

9. The following table compares on a percentage basis how customers have reported their issues across the three financial years.
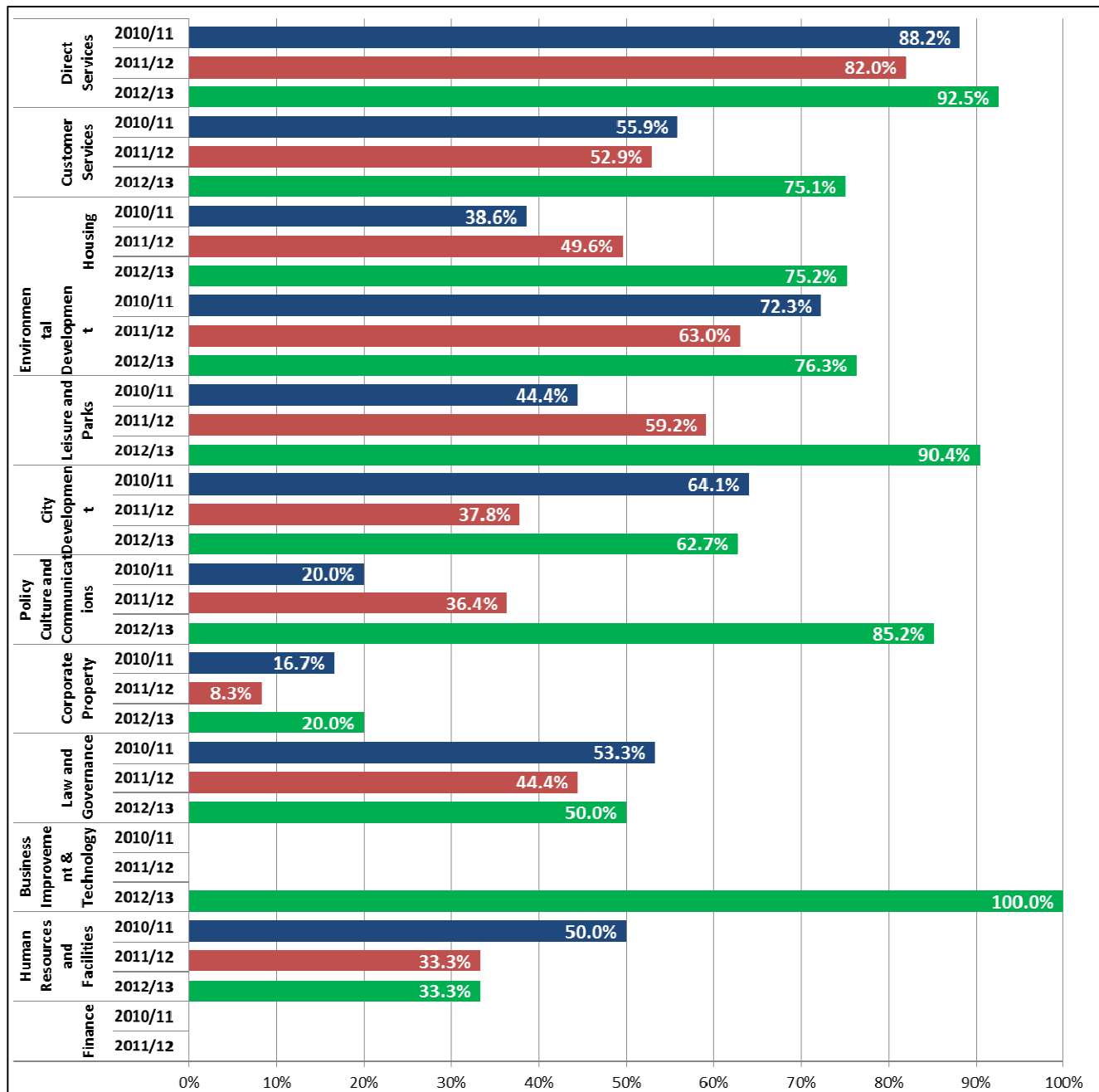
Channel	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (part)
Telephone	68.9%	57.5%	55.8%
Mail	23.7%	25.9%	30.3%
email	7.0%	6.1%	5.7%
Face to face	0.3%	6.5%	1.6%
Website	0.1%	4.0%	6.7%
Grand Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

10. This table shows that we are now receiving a lower proportion of reports by telephone, reducing from 68.9% to 55.8% across the three financial years. Reports by post have increased from 23.7% to 30.3%, and more reports are being made via our web site (increasing from 0.1% to 6.7%. This reflects some success in our marketing of the web as a means to do business with the Council, and demonstrates how as officers we are making better use of the software to record letters received as feedback.

Managing Feedback - Performance against Service Standards

11. Each feedback report is allocated a target response time. An analysis of performance against targets shows that overall performance has improved from 85% in 2010/11 to 90% in 2012/13 for reports being handled within the target response time. A comparative breakdown of performance by Service area across the three financial years is shown below. It is important to note that Service areas with small numbers of reports may show large variations in performance
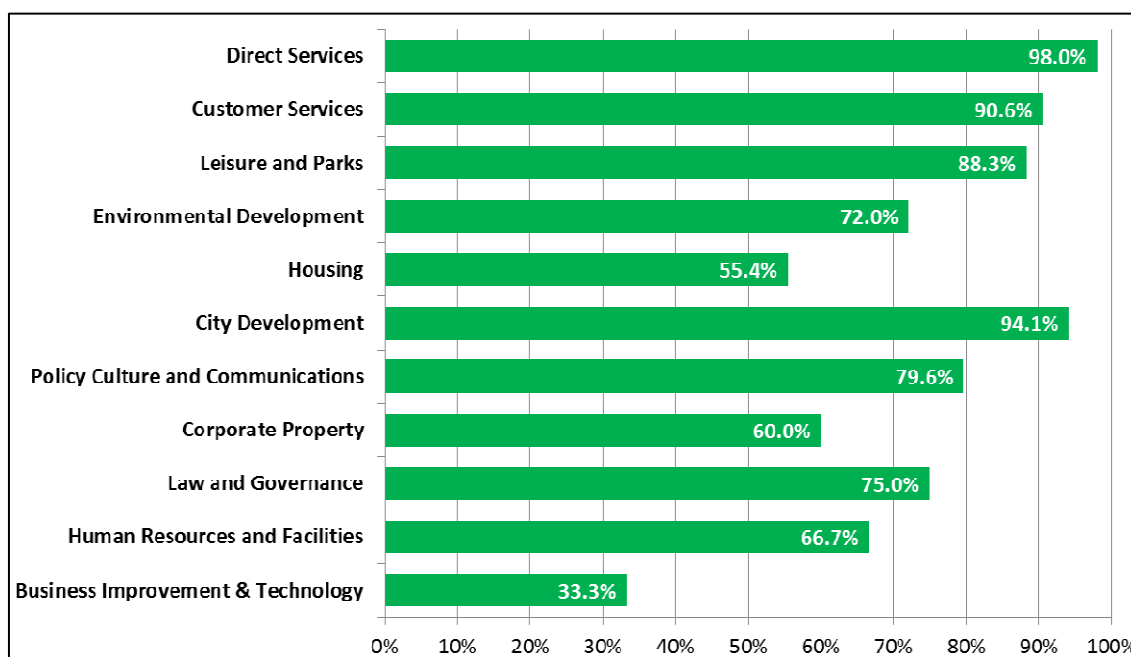
Performance against service standards in managing feedback

Division	Year	Performance
Direct Services	2010/11	88.2%
	2011/12	82.0%
	2012/13	92.5%
Customer Services	2010/11	55.9%
	2011/12	52.9%
	2012/13	75.1%
Housing	2010/11	38.6%
	2011/12	49.6%
	2012/13	75.2%
Environmental Development	2010/11	72.3%
	2011/12	63.0%
	2012/13	76.3%
Leisure and Parks	2010/11	44.4%
	2011/12	59.2%
	2012/13	90.4%
City Development	2010/11	64.1%
	2011/12	37.8%
	2012/13	62.7%
Policy Culture and Communications	2010/11	20.0%
	2011/12	36.4%
	2012/13	85.2%
Corporate Property	2010/11	16.7%
	2011/12	8.3%
	2012/13	20.0%
Law and Governance	2010/11	53.3%
	2011/12	44.4%
	2012/13	50.0%
Business Improvement & Technology	2010/11	
	2011/12	
	2012/13	100.0%
Human Resources and Facilities	2010/11	50.0%
	2011/12	33.3%
	2012/13	33.3%
Finance	2010/11	
	2011/12	

Closure of Cases

12. For reports raised during 2012/13 (up to December 2012), 95.7% had been dealt with and closed. The relative performance of each service area in closing cases is shown below, in order of the volume of reports each service dealt with.

Percentage of cases closed (April 2012 – Dec 2012)

Service	%
Direct Services	98.0%
Customer Services	90.6%
Leisure and Parks	88.3%
Environmental Development	72.0%
Housing	55.4%
City Development	94.1%
Policy Culture and Communications	79.6%
Corporate Property	60.0%
Law and Governance	75.0%
Human Resources and Facilities	66.7%
Business Improvement & Technology	33.3%

Case investigation and closure

13. The table below shows the outcomes from investigating the reports made by customers across all three financial years.

14. Reports regarded as "invalid" have been applied to those cases that are not the responsibility of Oxford City Council, or where information from customers has been incomplete. A high proportion of reports are compliments, comments, or MP's letters and this is reflected in the high proportion of reports classified as "case resolved"

15. An analysis of the reports recorded as "Justified with work being undertaken" show that over 90% relate to refuse or recycling, reflecting the high level of service request-type cases collected at present.

16. A very low number of reports have been recorded as leading to service review or change. This suggests that the Council has further to go in terms of using customer feedback to drive service improvement.

Case investigation and closure

Closure Reason	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13 (part)
Complaint not Justified	15.63%	17.51%	17.67%
Case is Invalid	12.31%	9.32%	7.56%
Case Resolved	28.63%	28.63%	29.85%
Complaint Justified - Apology or Explanation Given	5.92%	6.56%	7.38%
Complaint Justified - Compensation Paid	0.33%	0.32%	0.47%
Complaint Justified - Service Change	0.02%	0.04%	0.00%
Complaint Justified - Service Review	0.00%	0.01%	0.05%
Complaint Justified - Work Undertaken	35.74%	34.84%	26.27%
Miscellaneous	1.42%	2.76%	10.76%
Grand Total	**100.00%**	**100.00%**	**100.00%**

Breakdown of Reports by Service

17. The table below shows the number of reports made by service area across all three financial years. It can be seen that the vast majority (nearly 90%) of all reports are attributed to Direct Services, with most of these relating to Stage 1 complaints.

Breakdown of reports by service)

Service Area	Cllr or MP Enquiry	Comment	Compliment	Personal Claims	Property Claims	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Grand Total
Direct Services	813	1,383	3,471	55	125	13,430	111	34	**19,422**
Customer Services	57	57	83			462	31	9	**699**
Housing	115	16	16			221	29	13	**410**
Environmental Development	19	32	104			152	4	3	**314**
Leisure and Parks	8	25	72			159	8	10	**282**
City Development	42	15	14			57	23	13	**164**
Policy Culture and Communications	1	22	24			59	6	1	**113**
Corporate Property	12		1			9	3	4	**29**
Law and Governance	3	2	8			7	1	7	**28**
Business Improvement & Technology	1		5			3		1	**10**
Human Resources and Facilities	2	1	1			2	1	1	**8**
Finance	1					1			**2**

18. A further analysis of Direct Services reports shows the majority of these are Stage 1 complaints for recycling or refuse collection. Of the 13,430 Stage 1 complaints in Direct Services, 12,259 cases (91.2%) relate to recycling or refuse collection, and of these 8,120 cases (66%) relate to missed collections. Therefore, missed collections account for 38% of the total number of reports recorded for the organisation since the system was introduced.

Summary Findings from Service Area Analysis

19. A sample of recent reports in each service area has been examined, to provide assurance regarding the rigour with which customer feedback is investigated in

the City Council, and to understand whether the opportunities for service improvements are maximised.

20. 90 reports have been reviewed in total. Where appropriate, the necessary actions have been taken to resolve the matter for that customer, usually by explaining the rationale behind our processes, apologising where those processes have not been followed and putting a remedy in place.

21. To reduce the likelihood of repeating issues, where appropriate training has been given to staff, procedures have been improved and information available to customers has been amended.

22. However, to ensure we derive the maximum benefit from this valuable information and improve our services further, we need to develop a culture where we are not measured by the number of complaints that we log, but rather by how we respond and improve from what we learn. The following actions are therefore recommended:

- We should ensure our customers are fully aware of what to expect from our services. Our web site and associated literature need to be up to date and written in clear language. All service areas should review their web content and literature by 30th September 2013, and where possible involve our customers in sense checking how well we are explaining our services.

- We need to develop our policy to always explore the immediate actions required for the customer concerned and those actions needed to improve the process and stop a reoccurrence for other customers, i.e. corrective and preventive actions. This needs to be supported by the technology we use.

- We should clarify what constitutes a complaint within our policy, in order to provide more capacity and focus for genuine complaints and service improvement potential. This should be underpinned in our procedure, and staff supported to deliver this through training and on line guidance. Particular areas to be covered include:

  - Service requests should not constitute a complaint

  - Complaints about policies should be recorded and used to inform future policy direction.

  - Letters from Members of Parliament requesting advice and information should not be logged as complaints.

- We should amend our policy and procedure to ensure <u>all</u> service areas always make contact with the customer before closing any complaint on the system, and use email whenever possible to allow this to be done electronically. We should advise where appropriate of the corrective and preventive action taken as a result of our investigations.

- We should include the ability to report customer feedback within the marketing strategy for the City Council's web site.

- We should capture the best practice that exists within the organisation for handling feedback reports in an efficient manner, and ensure this is rolled out to all service areas.

- We need to develop our processes and analysis tools further to enable us to gain further insight into key themes; this could be within a service area or corporately.

Financial Implications

23. Feedback is invaluable information for improving Service delivery and can have a positive effect on the financial position of the council if processes are more efficient and streamlined as a result of implementation of the feedback. At the opposite end negative feedback can cause reputational damage to the Council and could ultimately have an adverse effect on council finances.

Risk

24. An evaluation of the risks associated with recording comments, complaints and compliments has been carried out. A detailed risk register is at Appendix A.

Climate Change/Environmental Impact

25. None.

Equalities Impact Assessment

26. Not applicable.

Legal Implications

27. None.

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List of background papers: None
Version number: 6

Risk Register

No.	Risk Description Link to Corporate Objectives	Gross Risk		Cause of Risk	Mitigation	Net Risk		Further Management of Risk: Transfer/Accept/Reduce/Avoid	
		I	P		**Mitigating Control:**	I	P	**Action: Reduce Owner:** :	**Outcome required:**
1.	Failure to log and resolve complaint(s) that may lead to serious consequences for the customer and the Council	3	3	Failure to use software to record and monitor 3Cs	Ensure adequate 3Cs training and support available for staff Ensure best practice in high performing areas in terms of managing complaints is replicated across organization Ensure 3Cs Champions established and empowered in each service area	3	2	Customer First Programme Manager	Robust 3CS process that picks up all reports and manages outcomes. Any critical issues resolved in a timely way. Increased levels of service improvements
2.	Failure to maximize opportunities to improve service delivery	2	3	Failure to examine each report with its potential for service improvement, and failure to identify trends in reports	Amend policy to identify corrective and preventive actions for each report raised. Amend software to enforce these actions to be recorded. Amend policy to advise customer as a result of each report of the corrective and preventive actions taken.	2	2	Customer First Programme Manager	
3.	Failure to achieve Customer Service Excellence	2	3	Comments, feedback and complaints from customers can help to make vital adjustments to the way the City Council is run. This is a fundamental lynch pin to achieving customer service excellence. If the Council's 3Cs process does not successfully feed this information back into the business then progressing with the Customer Service Excellence Standard will be difficult.	Adopt the recommendations in the accompanying report	2	2	Customer First Programme Manager	Achievement of Customer Service Excellence Standard