

To: City Executive Board
Date: 13 October 2016
Report of: Head of Business Improvement
Title of Report: Customer Service Excellence

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	To confirm the corporate Customer Service Excellence standard accreditation to the City Executive Board, and explain how we plan to embed the standard further. Also to report the first quarter's performance against the corporate comments and complaints scheme.
Key decision:	No
Executive Board Member:	Cllr Susan Brown, Customer and Corporate Services
Corporate Priority:	Efficient and effective Council
Policy Framework:	None.
Recommendation: That the City Executive Board resolves to:	
1. Note this report, and congratulates the City Council staff in achieving the Customer Service Excellence standard across the whole Council.	

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Summary of Comments, Complaints and Compliments received between 1 April 2016 and 30 June 2016

Introduction and background

1. The City Council has a commitment to delivering excellent public service thereby enabling us to make Oxford a world-class city for everyone. One of the intrinsic values that the Council has to this commitment is putting communities and customers first
2. Customer Service Excellence is a Government standard that offers a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within organisations. Organisations self-assess their capability, identifying areas for improvement and prompting individuals and teams to acquire new skills to improve customer focus and engagement. The

accreditation involves an independent assessment of achievement and competence and highlights both exemplary performance and key areas for further development.

3. The Council's Customer Service Centre was the first to receive the Customer Service Excellence accreditation in June 2013. A programme to roll out Customer Service Excellence across the rest of the organisation in four phases ensued. This culminated in the last assessment together with the corporate accreditation in July 2016.

Corporate Customer Service Excellence Accreditation

4. Oxford City Council met the 57 criteria within the standard in full, and has been successfully awarded corporate accreditation. The assessor noted in his report:

“The staff who were involved in the process share a great passion for making sure that the needs and expectations of customers are clearly identified and met wherever possible. This passion has been effectively communicated and shared across the organisation. Inevitably, some areas of the Council have taken this on board more effectively than others but overall the organisation is committed to developing and delivering effective customer service.”

5. There is scope within the standard to be scored as “Compliance Plus” against a criterion, which denotes being an exemplar. The City Council has scored three compliance plus awards for demonstrating:
 - a corporate commitment to put customers at the heart of service delivery, and leaders in our organisation actively supporting this and advocating for our customers;
 - that we have made arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for our customers; and
 - that we have developed coordinated working arrangements with our partners to ensure customers are clear about the lines of accountability for quality of service.
6. The assessor's reflections included in the report are as follows.
 - The culture is certainly a long way from the traditional public sector culture which dominated local authorities for many years. The leaders of the organisation provide a clear lead and effective role models for the behaviours they wish to see in their staff teams.
 - Many internal and external partnerships were evidenced and these deliver clear and effective impacts for customers.
 - We have developed coordinated working arrangements with our partners that ensure customers have clear lines of accountability for quality of service.
7. In addition, the assessor noted that as the Council has been working with the CSE Standard over a period of time, a number of other positive impacts could also be identified, including:
 - the development of work with the universities to confirm student data, so that students do not need to provide confirmation documentation for example for council tax exemption;

- the development of a lettings agent focus group;
 - closer working with the land registry regarding change of ownership;
 - empowerment of staff in the Licensing team to help them take ownership and responsibility for customer service.
8. The areas where further development has been recommended include the following.
- Setting more challenging targets where they are routinely met as it helps focus staff more clearly on how things could be improved. Consideration of moving to non-numerical targets, this could involve establishing a benchmark level of satisfaction then setting a target of 'maintaining or improving' on that level. This would avoid for example; the inference that by setting a target for 90% of customers to be satisfied that it is okay for 10% to be less than happy with services.
 - Consider how metrics might be used to measure and monitor performance and service delivery across all service areas. This can help identify changes in performance and establish trend data which can then be used to inform future service delivery.

Plans for the future

9. The accreditation lasts three years, although compliance is monitored annually with a surveillance visit. We will agree a plan with the assessor to cover all parts of the organisation over the period. The next visit is scheduled for July 2017 where in addition to certain parts of the organisation being assessed, we will need to discuss any substantial changes and progress with the development areas identified.
10. In order to ensure we continue to embed Customer Service Excellence across the organisation, tailored development plans are being established for each service area using the results from the accreditation to:
- challenge what we know about our customers, using demographic data, local systems, and MOSAIC;
 - ensure our customer interface is accessible and understandable, whether that is the information held on our website, letters we write or literature we disseminate, and that customer insight is used in that design;
 - minimise avoidable contact for customers, ensuring we set the right expectation at the outset when delivering services and keeping customers informed of progress;
 - improve how we get customer feedback, including the use of mystery shopping and ensure we use that insight to improve our services;
 - refresh our approach and promotion of the corporate service standards; and
 - maximise the data we gather from the corporate comments and complaints scheme, looking for trends, and taking the opportunity to improve through corrective and preventive action.

Comments, Complaints and Compliments

11. A critical part of achieving Customer Service Excellence is demonstrating how we achieve our aims, deliver our services, manage customer expectation and resolve issues. Listening to customer views about the services we provide can be just as important as achieving key performance targets. Customer feedback can help us to make vital adjustments to support better delivery.
12. The Council's Comments, Complaints and Compliments procedure gives our customers a way of delivering their feedback to our services. Appendix 1 gives an overview of the procedure and shows a summary of the comments, complaints and compliments received in the first quarter of 2016/17. Appendix 1 also contains details of the main trends we have identified in the feedback we have received, and explains the corrective and preventive action taken to prevent reoccurrence and so improve our services.
13. In future the reporting of comments, complaints and compliments will be included in the quarterly performance report.

Financial implications

14. The corrective and preventive actions that we implement as a result of the customer feedback we receive, improve our efficiency as an organisation.

Legal issues

15. There are no known legal issues.

Level of risk

16. There are no associated risks.

Equalities impact

17. There are no specific environmental impacts.

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Background Papers: None