

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Sustainability, Procurement and
Efficiency Portfolio Holder

AUTHOR/S: Customer Services Coordinator

24 September 2009

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE – THE GOVERNMENT STANDARD

Purpose

1. To provide information on and seek Portfolio Holder endorsement for the Customer Service Excellence Project.
2. To provide the Portfolio Holder with a position statement in relation to the project.
3. This is not a key decision.

Background

4. The Government wants public services for all that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering – with the citizen always and everywhere at the heart of public service provision. By indentifying customer service as a key value, the Council is supporting the Government's desire to place customers at the centre of service provision. Customer Service Excellence (CSE) provides a framework which supports the actions and approaches underpinning the Council values.
5. CSE replaces the previous Charter Mark and emphasises areas that research has shown are a priority for customers: delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis on understanding customers and the user's experience and the robust measurement of customer satisfaction.
6. CSE is designed to operate on three distinct levels:
 - As a driver of continuous improvement. By allowing organisations to self assess their capability in relation to customer focussed service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement
 - As a skills development tool. By allowing individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services
 - As an independent validation of achievement. By allowing organisations to seek formal accreditation, demonstrate their competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate their success.
7. Working towards CSE accreditation brings a number of benefits to the customer and organisation. The primary benefit for the organisation is increased efficiency and effectiveness by the bringing together of all service areas through joined up working, common best practices and shared understanding and experiences.
8. The benefits for the customer are extensive. The customer will benefit from a truly customer focussed organisation that places the public at the heart of service design and delivery. Key benefits will include:
 - Making the consultation of customers integral to the improvement of services

- Using customer journey mapping to reduce barriers and increase access
 - Improved range, quality and access of information
 - Reducing unnecessary and duplicated contacts
 - A can do, customer focused culture that exceeds customer expectations
9. In May / June 2009, a large section of customer facing services took part in a Council wide self-assessment against the 51 criteria of CSE. Service areas were asked to rate how their services met the criteria. Four options were available: 100%, >50%, <50%, 0%. Results indicate the level of meeting the criteria differs from service to service, but at least one service meets 50 of the 51 criteria in full. See **Appendix 1**.
 10. To gain CSE accreditation the Council must meet all 51 criteria (see **Appendix 2**) in full and be able to provide comprehensive evidence of doing so. The Service First Steering Group have reviewed the results of the self-assessment and have concluded that the standard is achievable and both Council and customer would benefit from a commitment to gain formal CSE accreditation.
 11. There were three options available when considering working towards CSE:
 - (i) Seek Council-wide formal accreditation
 - (ii) Seek formal accreditation by specific service area
 - (iii) Use CSE as an improvement tool but not seek formal accreditation
 12. The Service First Steering Group discussed all three options and carefully considered which option would bring the most benefits to the organisation and customer. The group recommended that the Council seek Council-wide accreditation within the next financial year 2010/11.

Considerations

Position Statement

13. On 10 September 2009 Cabinet agreed the achievement of CSE as a 2010/11 Council action. Consultation and research has indicated 18 months as a realistic timescale for this project which includes initial preparation. As a result the Service First Steering Group have started work on the project to ensure the action is achieved on time.
14. The CSE project is currently in the planning phase and good progress has been made preparing to work towards CSE accreditation. The Customer Service Coordinator is in the process of arranging meetings with the five assessment centres detailed by the standard, which is on schedule with the draft project timeline detailed in **Appendix 3**.
15. The chosen assessment centre will play a large role in structuring the project to ensure the Council is working towards a structure that supports CSE accreditation within our timescale. The draft project timeline will be finalised after meeting and selecting the assessment centre.
16. The Service First Steering Group are in the process of developing a draft project structure detailed in **Appendix 4** and are approaching staff for key roles in the project. The draft project structure will be finalised after meeting and selecting the assessment centre.
17. It is anticipated that work on meeting the CSE criteria will begin no later than December 2009.

Implications

18. Financial	The Service First Steering Group have estimated the cost of achieving CSE at £20,000 which will be met from the 2009/10 & 2010/11 combined budget of £24,600. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • £600 Pre Assessment Check • £15,000 Formal Assessment • £3,000 CSE Training • £4,000 Meeting CSE Criteria e.g. Customer Service Training, Licensing of Mosaic Database
Legal	None
Staffing	The Customer Service Excellence project will require an estimated total of 864 work days. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 Days Project Sponsor • 104 Days Project Manager • 72 Days Project Assurance Group • 104 Days Project Support • 154 Days Work Stream Leaders • 418 Days Work Stream Members
Risk Management	Project risks are detailed in Appendix 5 .
Equal Opportunities	The Customer Service Excellence Standard will support the Council's statutory Equality and Diversity requirements.

Consultations

19. The Service First Steering Group has been consulted and is centrally involved in the planning and preparation of the CSE Project.
20. A summary of CSE and the self-assessment has been reported to EMT on 22 July 2009 and the Lead Member for Customer Service Cllr Tom Bygott on 23 July 2009.
21. CSE information has been provided to Cabinet on 10 September 2009.

Effect on Strategic Aims

22.	Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.
	CSE supports and encourages the Council to engage, consult and listen to its customers and use this information to improve performance and access to services.
	Commitment to ensuring that South Cambridgeshire continues to be a safe and healthy place for all.
	None
	Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.
	CSE supports services that place the customer at the heart of service planning and delivery. Tailoring services in this way will bring increased customer satisfaction and further improve Council reputation.
	Commitment to assisting provision for local jobs for all.
	None
	Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.
	CSE promotes engagement of public in a variety of ways that ensure all cross sections of the community have a voice.

Recommendations

23. That the Portfolio Holder support and endorse the achievement of Council-wide CSE accreditation within the next financial year 20010/11.
24. That the Portfolio Holder note the current position of the project.

Background Papers: the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

None.

Contact Officer: Paul Knight – Customer Service Coordinator
Telephone: (01954) 713309

Appendix 1 – Self-assessment overview

Appendix 2 – CSE Criteria

Appendix 3 – CSE Project Gantt Chart

Appendix 4 – CSE Project Structure

Appendix 5 – CSE Project Risks