

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder's Meeting

20 July 2010

AUTHOR/S: Chief Executive / Corporate Manager, Community & Customer Services

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE UPDATE

Purpose

1. To provide the Portfolio Holder with a current position statement in relation to the project (**Appendix 1**).
2. This is not a key decision. The report is for the Portfolio Holder's information and comment.

Recommendations and Reasons

3. That the content of the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Project Report be noted, in particular the highlight report, project plan, project budget & expenditure and work plans (**Appendix 2**).

Background

4. The CSE Standard has been developed by the Cabinet Office to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within its organisation.
5. The CSE framework is a government standard that demonstrates an organisation is placing the customer at the heart of its service provision. For the Council to be recognised as achieving the CSE standard, it must be successfully assessed against the criteria of the standard by a licensed certification body.
6. There are five criteria to the CSE framework and they are:
 - Customer Insight
 - The Culture of the Organisation
 - Information and Access
 - Delivery
 - Timeliness and Quality of Service.
7. Each criterion is comprised of a number of factors, each of which requires examination and, in many cases, supporting evidence.
8. For the Council to gain accreditation each service area must have been assessed to meet no less than 46 of the criteria in full and no more than 11 criteria in part. Accreditation cannot be achieved if the Council is assessed to be non-complaint against any of the criteria.
9. The Council has agreed a corporate action to reach a position to achieve CSE accreditation during 2011.

Considerations

10. The project document details how the Council will achieve its commitment to CSE accreditation. This document may be subject to further changes as the Council progresses through the project and through consultation with the Assessor, CSE Project Assurance Group and the Executive Management Team.
11. Stage one of the project was completed by the end of March 2010. The majority view shared by Workstream Leaders was that the Council had underestimated the amount of time and effort it had taken them to complete the self assessment but, upon reflection, all agreed it had been an interesting and knowledgeable experience.
12. The self-assessment process paints a detailed and accurate picture of the quality of customer service across the Council. This exercise was extremely valuable and lessons were learnt by all services relating to who their customers were and what their expectations were. This information gathered can be used to review best practice within the Council and has helped inform other work including the Equality & Diversity Framework and Tenant Services Authority (TSA), reviews in the Affordable Homes services.
13. A Communications Strategy has been agreed, setting out communication actions to keep staff, councillors and other stakeholders engaged and informed as the Council works towards CSE accreditation.
14. The Council is currently moving through stage two of the project: Meeting, Evidencing and reviewing criteria. Following full self-assessment analysis data provided by the Assessor, each service has been provided with a work plan, identifying criteria which the self-assessment revealed were not fully met (example attached at Appendix 2). Completion of this stage is due by the end of November 2010.
15. Stage three: Pre-assessment, Gap analysis and correction is scheduled for December 2010. Stage four: On-site assessment, verification and feedback sessions during January to March 2011. Full report, decision and accreditation expected by end March 2011.
16. The project is on schedule and within budget. Delays in the self-assessment analysis stage one have resulted in a two months slippage. This will not effect the project end date although there is no further contingency planned within the project.

Implications

17. Financial	The project is being resourced from the combined 2009/10 and 2010/11 Service First Budget of £24,600. A detailed breakdown of costs can be found in Appendix 1 under 'Project Budget & Expenditure).
Legal	None.
Staffing	The project has initially estimated it will require a total of approximately 946 workdays over a 16 months duration sourced from existing resources. A detailed breakdown of staff resources can be found in Appendix 1 under 'Highlight Report' and 'Stage 2 Work Plan'.
Risk Management	Project risks and issues have been identified in Appendix 1 and will be managed throughout the duration of this project.

Equal Opportunities	The CSE Standard reflects a number of key priorities and actions detailed in the Equality Framework for Local Government.
Climate Change	None.

Consultations

18. The CSE Project Assurance Group has been central to the development of the CSE project plan. The group receives highlight reports on a monthly basis. The June 2010 Highlight Report is attached as Appendix 2.

Effect on Strategic Aims

19. **Commitment to being a listening council, providing first class services accessible to all.**
 The CSE Standard supports the Council's commitment to provide first class services accessible to all. Through consultation and engagement, the standard puts the customer at the heart of service design and planning, allowing the Council to establish customer journeys, characteristics, expectations and priorities.
- Commitment to making South Cambridgeshire a place in which residents can feel proud to live.**
 Improving service design and delivery will result in increased customer satisfaction and further improve the Council's reputation.
- Commitment to providing a voice for rural life.**
 Increasing community engagement and consultation will provide residents further opportunity to communicate with the authority and in turn will assist the Council provide a voice for rural life.

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

CSE project report, highlight report, project plan, project budget & expenditure and work plans (Appendix 1 & 2).

Communication Strategy (Appendix 3).

Contact Officer: Rachael Fox – Customer Service Coordinator
 Telephone: (01954) 713017