

SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Policy and Performance Portfolio Holder's Meeting

16 November 2010

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

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE UPDATE

Purpose

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

Recommendation

3. That the content of the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) Project Report be noted, in particular the highlight report, project plan, project budget and expenditure and work plans (Appendix 1).

Background

4. The Council has committed to achieving accreditation as a provider of customer service excellence in 2011.
5. The CSE Standard has been developed by the Cabinet Office to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisations.
6. 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.
7. 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

Considerations

8. Stage one of the project organisational preparation and gathering evidence for completion of initial self assessment, was completed by the end of March 2010.
9. The Council is currently moving through stage two of the project: meeting, evidencing and reviewing criteria.

10. Following self-assessment, analysis data provided by the Assessor, each service area has been provided with a work plan, identifying criteria that the self-assessment revealed were not fully met. Completion of this stage is due by the end of November 2010.
11. Workstream leaders are liaising with staff within their service areas to uncover evidence of good customer service which may have been missed first time round, and to agree and implement actions which will fill the few remaining gaps.
12. However, there remains some concern that progress by Workstream leaders in addressing the gap analysis has been slower than preferred due to resource issues and lack of engagement in some service areas. This represents a risk to the successful completion of the project and has been reflected in issue and risk logs. This risk is mitigated through proactive work by the Project Manager to provide advice and support to Workstream leaders backed by senior management intervention where required.
13. The CSE PAG has agreed a corporate work plan of actions designed to meet criteria that were found to be non-compliant across substantial parts of the organisation. The Project Manager is leading on the implementation of the plan, which contains a number of initiatives to enable to whole organisation to demonstrate excellent customer service. The latest version of the corporate work plan is attached as **Appendix 2**. Examples of initiatives currently being developed are as follows:
 - National Customer Service Week Initiatives
 - Reception Satisfaction and Insight Surveys
 - Staff Recognition and New Ideas Scheme
 - Customer Service Training Programme
14. CSE PAG continues to meet monthly to receive updates from Workstream leaders to provide reassurance that progress is being made. Intervention by Senior Management will be requested if required to ensure this key corporate project is given an appropriate level of priority amongst services.
15. Stage three: Pre-assessment, gap analysis and correction is scheduled for December 2010.
16. On 6 December 2010 a documentary review day will be undertaken on-site by the Assessor. This will involve checking through the gap analysis evidence highlighted to be missing from the self-assessment carried out in March 2010. The Assessor will go through this additional evidence and match it with the hard copy evidence originally submitted at the self-assessment stage.
17. An on-site pre-assessment will then be carried out over a four-day period (13 – 16 December 2010). This will be an opportunity for the Council to showcase all its services to the Assessor. A daily schedule will be set up for the Assessor to attend: various focus groups with internal and exterior customers, meetings, visit our customers out and about on site in the District, speak with our Chief Executive, Project Sponsor, Workstream Leaders, the Leader of the Council, Members, contact centre, etc., to obtain evidence of compliance for the accreditation.
18. Following pre-assessment, the Assessor will write to the Council highlighting any gaps that still are to be addressed in meeting the CSE criteria. The outcome of the pre-assessment will determine the extent of further project work required and hence the timetable for final assessment.

Summary

19. The project is on schedule and within budget. Maintaining momentum has been extremely challenging given the uncertainties caused by restructuring and the pressure of competing priorities; however, following close liaison with the Assessor and proactive work by the Project Manager and CSE PAG the Council can be confident of achieving recognition during 2011 in accordance with the timetable set out in the Council action.
20. Through the development and implementation of the Corporate Work Plan, the project is moving to a stage where it is achieving positive outcomes for customer service and cultural stage influenced by initiatives to recognise outstanding customer service by staff and improve the Council's understanding of who its customers are, and their priorities.

Implications

21. 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 continues to be undertaken using existing staffing resources.
Risk Management	Project risks and issues have been identified in Appendix 1 and will be managed throughout the duration of this project.
Equality and Diversity	The CSE Standard reflects a number of key priorities and actions detailed in the Equality Framework for Local Government. Evidence gathered as part of the CSE self-assessment contributed to the Council's recent accreditation as an achieving authority within the Equality Framework for Local Government. The projects continue to complement each other in valuable ways.
Equality Impact Assessment completed	No. Information detailed in this report is for monitoring purposes only and an Equality Impact Assessment is not required.
Climate Change	None.

Consultations

22. The CSE PAG has been central to the development of the CSE project plan. The group receives highlight reports on a monthly basis. The October 2010 Highlight Report is attached as Appendix 1.

Effect on Strategic Aims

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 and 2).

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