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Customer Service Strategy

2008 to 2013

1 Introduction

One of City of York Council's core values in its current Corporate Strategy is to 'deliver what our customers want'.

The objective of the draft Customer Strategy contained in this document is to:

- explain what we mean by this customer value
- demonstrate what we are committed to delivering for our customers
- communicate a clear vision to guide the development of improved Customer Service across all Council services
- set out design principles to drive the transformation and improvement of services
- set a high level delivery plan for the implementation of the Customer Strategy

The council's customers may be internal or external, but ultimately all our services are delivered for the benefit of the people of York. Our customers are those people for whom we work to commission, contract, deliver, and enable services. They may be local citizens, or people coming in to the area to work or visit. They may be direct service users, employees of the council, employees of other organisations, elected members or partners.

This document is for:

- Customers
- Staff
- Council Members
- Partner organisations

All of the above groups will be consulted on the Customer Service Strategy and their views and feedback reflected in the final version.

The Strategy will set the framework for the physical, organisational and business process design that will be developed to identify and respond to customers needs and deliver high quality customer-focused service across all Council services in the Customer Centre at the Council's new HQ.

The Strategy will be a living document and during its lifetime it will be refreshed to reflect progress towards the objectives and respond to new requirements.

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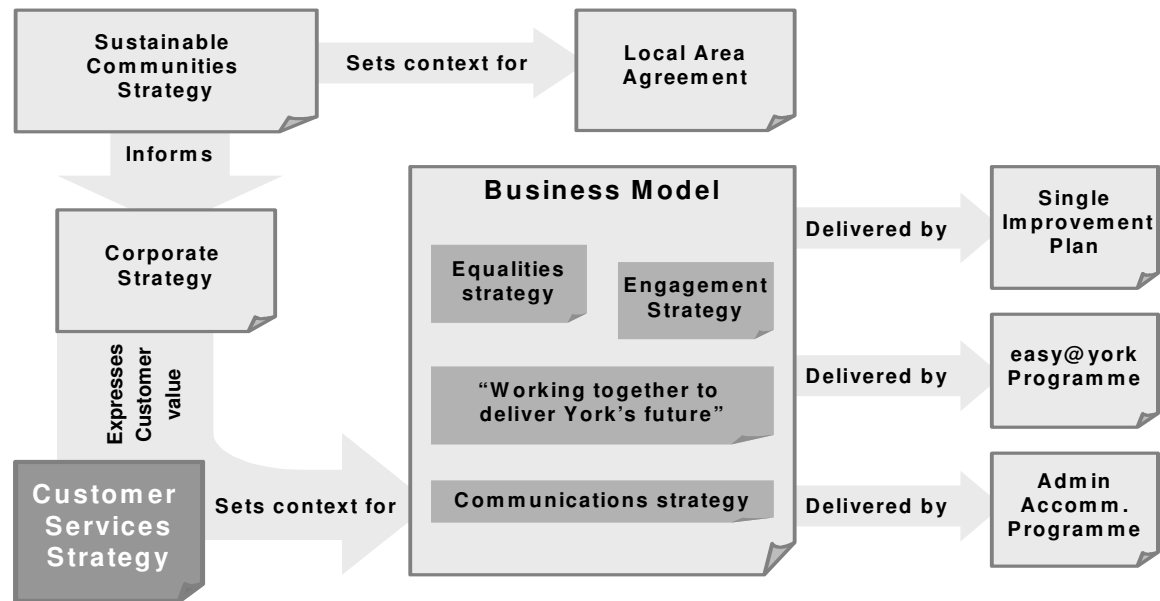
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2 Where are we now?

2.1 Where does the strategy fit within the Council's corporate strategy framework?

This may need revising when the Corporate Strategy is revised in the next few months



The refreshed Corporate Strategy 2007–2011 sets out the council's vision and provides us with clarity about where we want to go as a Council and the changes we will make to the way we deliver services. Having this clear sense of direction is important for setting out our intentions and ensuring we remain in control of steering change towards them. The corporate Vision consists of two elements:

- The Values that we hold as a council and that will underpin change
- The Direction Statements which show where we are going

Our Values show what we believe in and also set out the priorities for improving our internal business. They focus on four key things which are central to what we are trying to achieve across the whole organisation. Each of the values has a chief officer champion responsible for delivering a programme of improvement.

The customer value 'delivering what our customers want' is the first of these values. The Customer Service strategy further articulates the council's vision for customer service and the customer values that will underpin change. Together with the corporate strategy, these set the context for other customer-related strategies in the Business Model.

Implementation of the Customer Service Strategy will be through:

- Embedding a customer focused approach into all the strands of the Single Improvement Plan and into service planning and performance management
- Delivering specific customer improvements through priority service projects including the new Headquarters project and the easy@york programme.

2.2 What is Customer Service like now?

City of York Council has a long track record of good customer services. Its performance record speaks for itself in that it delivers a wide range of top quality services to the people of York. For many years we have applied and monitored our Customer First Standards, designed to ensure that all services focus on the end point of their services – their customers.

In 2003 The Council launched an extremely successful programme of Customer Service transformation - easy@york which has established the York Customer Centre (YCC), which provides a single first point of telephone contact for all Council services and delivers a full service for

- Revenues
- Benefits
- Street Services such as refuse and cleansing
- Planning

The Service has recently been accredited under the national “Putting the Customer First “ initiative. The Programme has already delivered major improvements in the customer experience,

- More joined up services
- More channels of access – e.g web
- More efficient and cost effective services
- Faster services
- More consistent services

Other service areas are also providing excellent customer services and initiatives such as; - - *need to insert list of innovative initiatives and service excellence e.g*

Neighbourhood Pride Unit – ward budgets

Personalisation of social care

Environmental Health, Trading Standards & licensing – Charter mark from Cabinet Office

The Easy@york Programme was driven by customer research and consultation - addressing many of the problems they identified and involving customers in designing new services. The Programme developed a Customer Access Strategy which set out how the Council would seek to offer

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more choice of access, and join services up in the customers' eyes. The strap line for this strategy was "The Customer is never in the wrong place". This was an effective driver for change but many aspects of this strategy have now been delivered and its focus primarily on access no longer sums up the larger objectives that the organisation has for delivering excellent customer services. We need to join together our Customer Access Strategy and our corporate Customer standards into one strategy that supports the delivery of the customer value in the corporate strategy. A new Customer Strategy is required for the Council which sets out our vision for delivering excellence to our customers.

Though standards in York are generally high we still have the following challenges and there are still major improvements that can be made. :-

- We do not understand enough about the specific profile and makeup of our localities and communities
- Some services are not designed with the customer as the primary focus
- We are still partially shaped by our organisational structure rather than customer need
- Though customers are satisfied with individual services, satisfaction with the Council as a whole needs to improve. This suggests that we are seen as less than the sum of our parts.
- Some services can be made more efficient and removing failure and making services more direct for the customer to access will reduce cost
- We have a primary point of phone contact (the York Customer Centre or YCC) but only certain services are handled in depth
- Increasing volume of web transactions which betrays latent demand for this method of accessing services. The web could be exploited by more services in the future
- Improved web site but some content wanted by customers is still not available
- We have multiple points of face-to-face contact around the City centre. Customers still have to be signposted between sites and there are some accessibility issues
- We do not use text messaging as a contact channel
- We have a lot of email contact which is unstructured, inefficient and difficult to track and report
- Our handling of white mail is fragmented and we have not yet implemented corporate Electronic Document Management System (EDMS)
- A full choice of channels is only available for services that have been redesigned by easy@york
- We have made good efficiencies where we have transformed services but this is partial – many services have not been reviewed in the light of changing customer requirements and patterns of behaviour
- We still have customer information in many places – we have no single view of the customer
- Limited hours of phone or Face to face contact

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- It is likely that we will be relocating into a single headquarters where face-to-face contact will have to be joined up, as we cannot run individual receptions for each service. It would be inefficient and entirely inadequate for our customers.

With these challenges in mind we have developed a new Customer Strategy that will set out our vision for Customer Service delivery in City of York Council in the future. To develop this strategy we have looked at national drivers and trends, local customer research, best practice as applied in other leading authorities and we have learnt from our own success and weaknesses.

3 What are the drivers for change?

Customer Expectations

The expectations of customers are increasing. Customers want to access services at times that are most convenient to them, as well as in places and in ways that most suit their needs. They expect the council to use technology to make things easier and quicker, to join services up where relevant and to deliver value for money. They expect council services to be delivered in physically accessible, modern, fit-for purpose buildings with professional, polite and friendly staff. They want the Council to respond quickly, get it right first time, treat them as individuals and not make them jump through hoops.

Local Drivers

The Council is committed in the Corporate Strategy to deliver 'what customers want' and this value demonstrates our belief that customer service should be a priority focus that drives the improvement of services across the Council.

The improvement in customer service that has been achieved to date (described above in *Where are we now?*) was reflected in the 2008 Resident's Opinion Survey by a 17% increase in overall customer satisfaction with the Council in the last two years. But with 65% of customers satisfied overall we still have room for improvement to meet our customers' expectations and we must ensure that our services address the needs of *all* sections of the community.

To fulfil our community leadership role effectively, the council needs to further strengthen its relationships with customers and communities and create more opportunities to engage and involve local communities in the way we develop and deliver our services. This is the way we will ensure that we offer the right services in the best way possible.

The council's reputation in the local community and nationally depends on our ability to do this whilst ensuring that we are increasing the efficiency of our

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organisation and processes in order to deliver the value for money services that our citizens deserve.

National and External drivers

There are a plethora of National Agendas that reference customer satisfaction, consultation and feedback as future targets. These national initiatives increasingly recognise the importance of improving customer services.

- From April 2009 the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) will provide:
 - a catalyst for better local outcomes, more effective partnership working, more responsive services and better value for money;
 - a source of independent assurance for citizens, service users and taxpayers;
 - an independent evidence base for central government on progress against national priorities; and
 - a means of focusing, rationalising and co-ordinating inspection.

CAA will have two main elements, which will inform each other (under consultation until 20th October 2008):

- an area assessment that looks at how well local public services are delivering better results for local people in local priorities, such as health, economic prospects and community safety, and how likely they are to improve in the future; and
 - organisational assessments of individual public bodies. For councils, these will combine use of resources and managing performance themes into a combined assessment of organisational effectiveness.
-
- The Local Government Reputation Project which addresses the current poor perception of local government.
 - The Efficiency/Value for Money Agenda which drives councils to deliver improvements in service delivery both internally and externally
 - The Choice Agenda which advocates the need for high quality public services that are flexible, accountable and personalised.
 - The drive towards e-enablement of public services which should allow better access to services at lower cost
 - The Varney Report which sets the direction and objectives required to deliver world class services
 - Strong and Prosperous Communities which significantly strengthens the requirement on councils to offer choice and consult and engage with residents to deliver improved services.

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- Technology – new technologies enable all organisations to deliver and manage customer contact more effectively. They provide opportunities for transformation that were never before possible. Customers are becoming increasingly skilled and aware of the potential of technology and are now demanding a wider range of access channels and service standards. Their rising expectations are being fired by the effective use of technology in all sectors of society.

4 Our Customer Service Vision

The Council's corporate customer value is to 'deliver what our customers want'. We believe that to deliver what our customers want we must promise that:

“Our services will be:

- **Easy to access**
 - **High quality and efficient**
 - **Effectively managed**
 - **Designed for you** ”

Easy to Access

- All of our customers will be able to easily access the services they need through a choice of channels and at a time that is convenient to them

High Quality and efficient

- Our customers will experience services which are delivered consistently, of high quality, efficient and ensure equality of outcomes

Effectively Managed

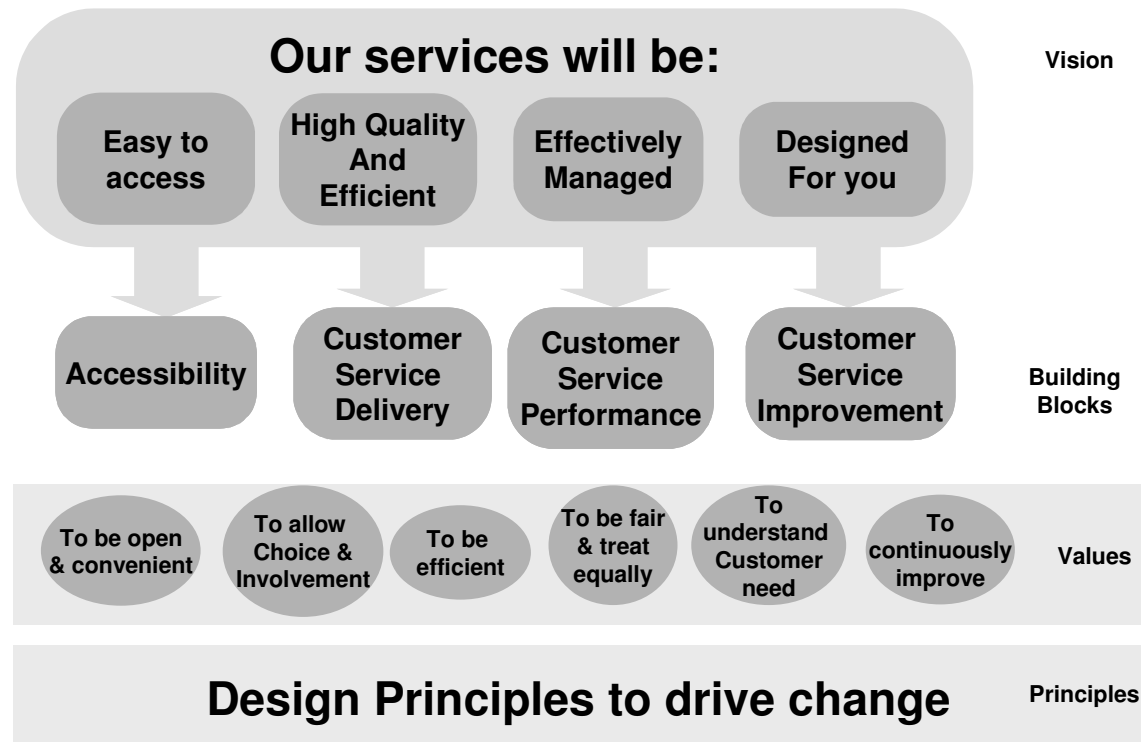
- Our customers will know what service standards to expect; the standards will reflect what matters to our customers; and we will actively manage performance to achieve these standards so that our customers get what they are promised

Designed for you

- We will engage with our customers and involve them in the design of services, use customer insight and business intelligence to achieve transformational and continuous service improvement

5 Delivering the Vision

These objectives map in to four building blocks which will be delivered by applying a set of design principles to the way on which we deliver and develop our services. Running across these building blocks are a series of core values that services will strive to apply at all times. The diagram below shows how these four layers inter-relate.



5.1 The Building Blocks

To support the delivery of the Customer Service Vision we have identified the four building blocks of the strategy. These will all be underpinned by a series of design principles which will be used to shape services for the future.

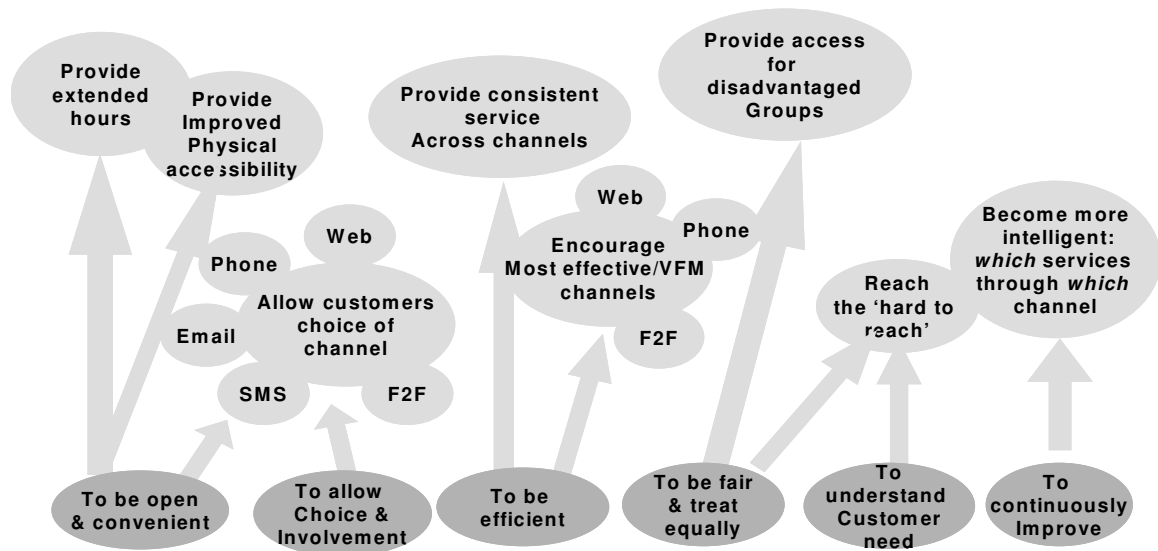
The 4 building blocks are:

- Accessibility – how we make sure all customers can access the services they need
- Delivery – how we make sure that the services we deliver are consistent, high quality, efficient and ensure equality of outcomes
- Performance – how we make sure that customers know what service standards to expect, that the standards reflect what matters to our customers and how we monitor and manage this performance
- Improvement – how we make sure that we use customer insight and business intelligence to achieve service transformation and continuous service improvement

5.2 Design Principles

The customer service design principles will be used as the design template when re-engineering customer service delivery both in transformational change programmes such as easy@york and also in ongoing service improvement delivered through the annual service planning mechanism.

5.2.1 Design principles - Accessibility



Services will be designed to ensure that:

Customers have a choice of access channels appropriate to the service and to their needs:

- The availability of all appropriate channels including phone, web, email, face to face, mail and SMS will be considered when designing services.
- Offer a mix of conventional and electronic channels

Channel access meets accessibility and diversity standards

- The physical design of the new Customer Centre will be fully accessible and DDA compliant.
- The website will satisfy W3C accessibility guidelines
- Customer information will be made available in different languages and formats

Channels will be available at times to suit our customers

- Extended opening hours for face to face and or phone channels will be developed in line with the demand from our customers to access services outside the existing core hours.
- A balance will be achieved between customer demand and cost effectiveness

The customer experience is consistent regardless of channel

- They get the same information and service regardless of channel and can use a mix of channels for the same request.

The use of value for money channels will be encouraged and promoted

- The availability of services through new channels (eg a new transaction on the website) will be promoted so customers know this service is available
- Staff in the YCC will support customers in the use of self-service facilities

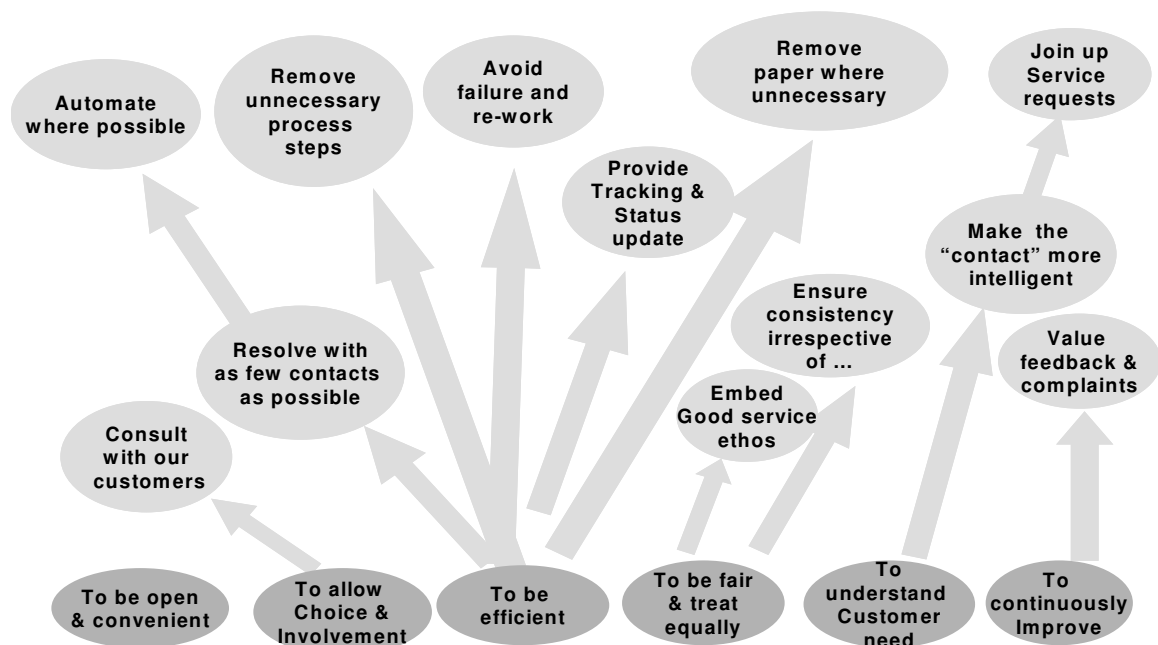
Intelligent use of channels to improve services

- Decide which channels are most effective for the service – no blanket assumptions. Sometimes face-to-face is the most efficient. Sometimes we need to take the service to our customer.

The needs of hard to reach and disadvantaged groups in the community are considered

- Make services available through partner organisations, third sector and community groups to increase accessibility
- Run proactive campaigns to promote services and target excluded groups
- Use of libraries and schools

5.2.2 Design principles: High quality and efficient services



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We will consult customers in the design of services

- When new service processes are being designed and build ongoing customer satisfaction consultation into processes so that we can actively seek input from customers about what works for them and whether we are delivering on our promises.

We will value feedback and complaints

- As a way to learn how we can continuously improve our services.
- A revised customer feedback policy has been developed (see Annex 1) and will be incorporated into all new process designs

We will design services to be efficient by:

- Automating processes where possible
- Resolving customers requests in as few contacts as possible
- Removing unnecessary steps from processes
- Making sure we get it right first time - avoiding failure and rework
- Remove paper from processes where it is unnecessary
- Provide self-service tracking for customers and service updates so that customer don't have to call us to find out what is happening

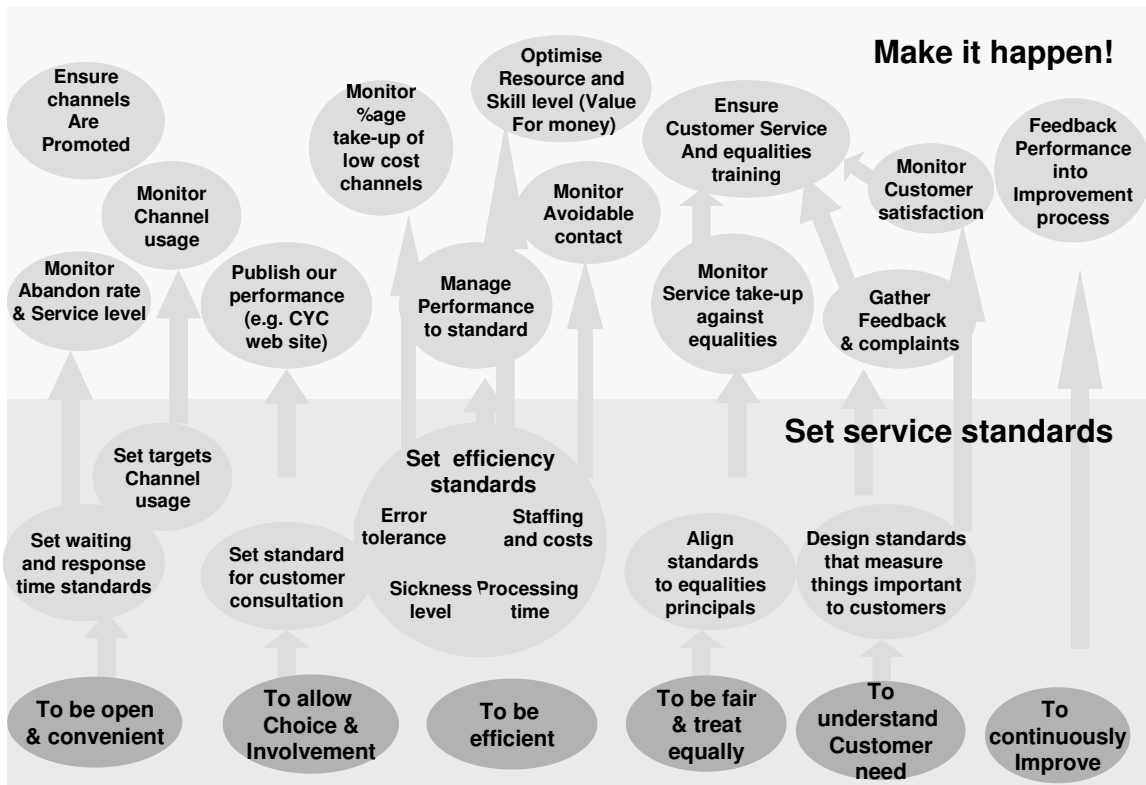
We will ensure that services are delivered fairly and equally:

- By embedding a customer service ethos through staff training and publishing our customer service standards (See Annex 2)
- By collecting equalities monitoring data from our customers

We will look for opportunities to join up our services

- In a way which corresponds to customers' needs

5.2.3 Design principles: Effectively Managed Services



What customers want most from the Council is for us to deliver on our promises. To do this we need to effectively manage the performance of our services.

We will set service standards that measure what our customers value

- So that when we report our performance it means something to them
- Draft measures and targets have been developed (see Annex 3)

We will set standards for customer consultation across services

- That ensure customers have a consistent opportunity to be involved in service design and comment on service delivery

We will publish our performance so customers can see how we are doing

- On the website, in the council's publications and in the Customer Centre

We will set efficiency standards

- That enable us to manage processing times, errors, costs and staff absence, to maximise the efficiency of service delivery

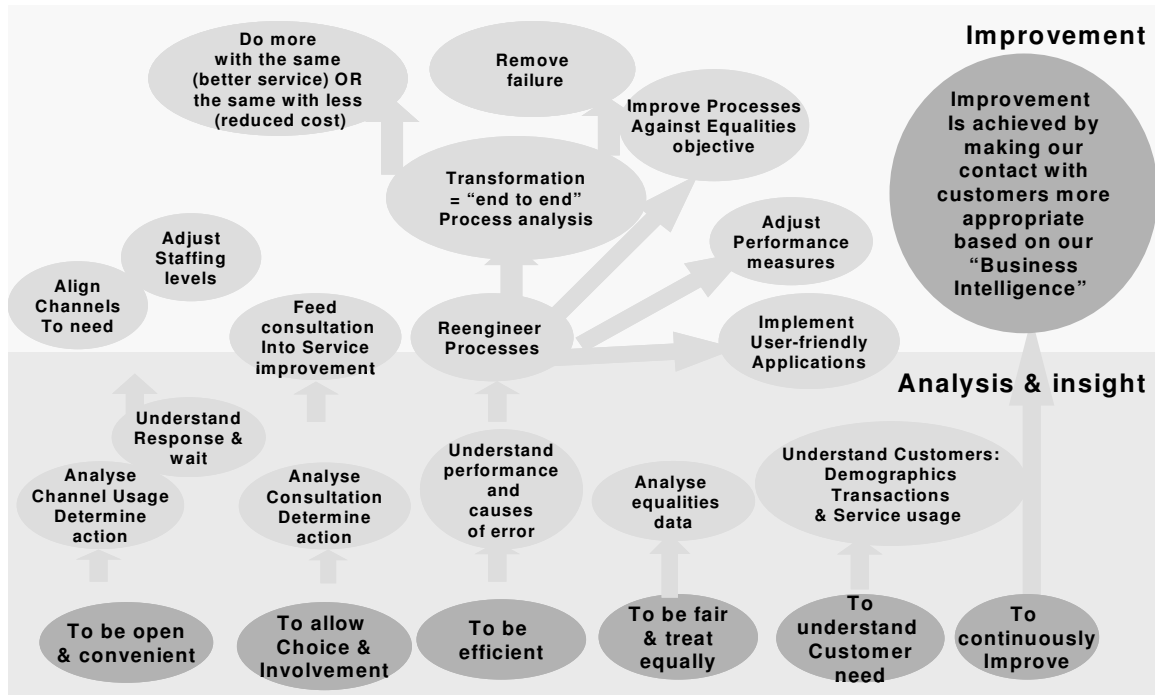
We will feed back our performance into the improvement process

- In order to continuously improve

We will implement NI14 as an improvement tool (see Annex 4)

- By identifying avoidable customer contact this indicator can help us target improvements in our performance where they are most needed.

5.2.4 Design principles: Services designed for you



No matter how well we are doing our customers will always want us to do better. Therefore a process for continuous improvement of services is a key building block for the delivery of our customer services vision. We believe in getting the best out of resources, in eliminating wasteful duplication or inefficient practices and processes and that technology should be used to support and enhance customer access and service delivery.

There are 2 stages in the improvement process: Analysis & Insight, and Improvement.

Analysis & Insight

We need to understand how and why our services are performing as they are and what the improvement opportunities are. We have a lot of data already but we do not have the capability to combine data to create a better understanding of our customers and our localities or the impacts of our service delivery. We need to build a business intelligence platform that will give us a single customer view and enable us to analyse channel usage, service performance, customer satisfaction, customer behaviour, customer profile and geographical data.

We also need to develop our approach to customer segmentation, which gives valuable insight into how to provide the best service for all our customers by focusing on their needs, motivations and choices. It will help services to move away from the idea that *'one size fits all'* for customers.

Improvement

The approach to improvement may be continuous or transformational depending on the degree of change required.

Both types of improvement will need to refer to the Customer Strategy design principles and take the following into account:

Re-engineering of processes

- To effectively transform processes you have to look at them end to end to identify and remove failure

Improvement in processes and accessibility to meet equalities objectives

- Processes must have appropriate choices of access and delivery methods to be effective for all sectors of the community

Use Business Intelligence

- What do our customers like?
- What is going wrong?
- What do we do well?
- What do our customers want?

Efficiency choices

- To provide better services – do more with less
- To reduce cost – do the same for less

Technology choices

- To implement user-friendly technology to support the process
- Make the most of our existing investment in technology – how can we make better use of existing systems?
- Will mobilising the process improve it?
- Automation - establish business rules and enable the technology to apply them

5.3 Customer Service Values

The design principles above will drive the change in our customer services consistently in the direction of our vision. We also need to ensure that we apply a set of customer service values to the 4 building blocks of the vision so that we are consistent in our approach. These values are: -

- **Openness and convenience**

We must make our services accessible and provide them in locations, at times and in ways, which ensure social inclusion and are convenient to our customers

We must clearly promote all of our services to ensure that those who are entitled or in need are made aware of services they may benefit from and are enabled to access them.

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- **Choice and involvement**

We want customers to have a choice of how, when and where they contact us. We are here to serve them.

We want to consult customers on their experience of our services and engage them in the design of services.

- **Efficiency**

Efficiency is important to us and to our customers. By striving for greater cost-effectiveness in the design and delivery of our services we can deliver better, or more services to our customers for the same cost. And by always pursuing better value for money we can maintain a rate of Council Tax which is as low as possible for all our citizens.

- **Fairness and equality of outcomes**

We recognise that our customers are not all the same. York has a diverse population and our customers have different and changing needs, circumstances and expectations and it is our responsibility to design and deliver services that are capable of responding to all of our customers as individuals. We want to ensure that the same service outcomes are available to all so that there is fairness and consistency inherent in our service delivery. All customers will be treated with respect, dignity and understanding, regardless of disability, race, faith, age, gender or sexual orientation.

- **Understanding customer need**

We need to provide relevant services by tailoring them to meet specific customer needs

- **Continuous improvement**

We will design and deliver high quality, reliable, flexible and responsive services which continuously strive to improve

6 What will Customer Service be like in the future? – A Blueprint

To bring the vision of customer services in York to life, the following section tries to set out how City of York Council might look when this strategy is delivered. It gives a view from a customer perspective and from an employee perspective and it tries to set a general direction of travel for the evolving design of the organisation. This, of course, will be shaped in more detail as we begin to design and implement our services in our new headquarters. This will provide a blueprint for the organisation to strive towards as it transforms and improves customer service delivery.



6.1 What the council will look and feel like to customers

The following statements represent a vision of the customer experience we want to deliver in future.

Accessibility

- I can get through to the council quickly by phone or go to one place for all services.
- I can get into the new Customer Centre in my wheelchair
- I have a choice of “paperless contact” – all documents can be emailed to me or are on the web.
- I can do most of my business with the council on the website.
- The Council is open at times that are convenient to me
- The council sends me a text to remind me what time my appointment is.
- I know what services the council offers and how to get in contact

Delivery

- Staff are always polite and try to help. They make things as simple as possible for me.
- Staff in the Customer Centre can deal with most things, or they can call in an “expert” there and then.
- Services and staff are consistent however I get in touch. I visited the Customer Centre and they knew that I had phoned and they had an electronic copy of a letter I sent in
- I can speak to one person and they can sort everything out for me quickly.
- I received a ‘Welcome to York’ pack which joined up the services I need

Performance

- I don’t have to wait long to be seen or get an answer on the phone
- I know when my service request will be completed and can track progress on the web site
- I can see how well the Council is doing on the website
- I have never had to chase things up or complain
- The information I get is always up to date

Improvement

- The web site and phone access has improved in the last 3 years
- The new Customer Centre is modern , comfortable and easy to use
- I was consulted on what I wanted to see in the new Centre
- I know that my feedback has been used to redesign services.



6.2 What the council will look and feel like from the inside

6.2.1.1 Accessibility

- More customers are using the website and the phone – this is quicker for the customer and costs us less
- More integrated web transactions saves staff time entering data into systems

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- Selected services promoted through SMS – less customers miss their appointments
- Outbound customer contact by email (where chosen) instead of letter – savings on paper and postage - greener, faster and less cost
- New Customer Centre meets physical accessibility criteria
- Staff can spend more time with vulnerable customers because most routine queries are done quickly on the phone or by customers using self-service

Delivery

- Multi-skilled, motivated, trained and empowered staff getting it right first time or fixing it first time – reduced cost, better service and promotes a better perception and reputation
- Re-engineered process for many services leading to low failure demand and error – reduced cost
- Automation where possible – reduced cost and convenience for the customer
- Flexible, mobile workforce –
- Accommodation designed to deliver excellent customer service

Performance

- Performance standards are aligned to what matters to customers in York
- We set clear targets for processing time in high volume services
- We understand the cost of transactions per channel
- We have a better understanding of Service and Staff performance
- We know the diversity profile and service take-up of our customers

Improvement

- We recognise complaints and feedback as a positive means to identify where we can make improvements
- We use customer insight to redesign services and have a Business Intelligence platform that provides a vehicle for continuous improvement
- We have mechanisms in place to ensure ongoing programme of transformational change and service improvement

6.3 Organisational design

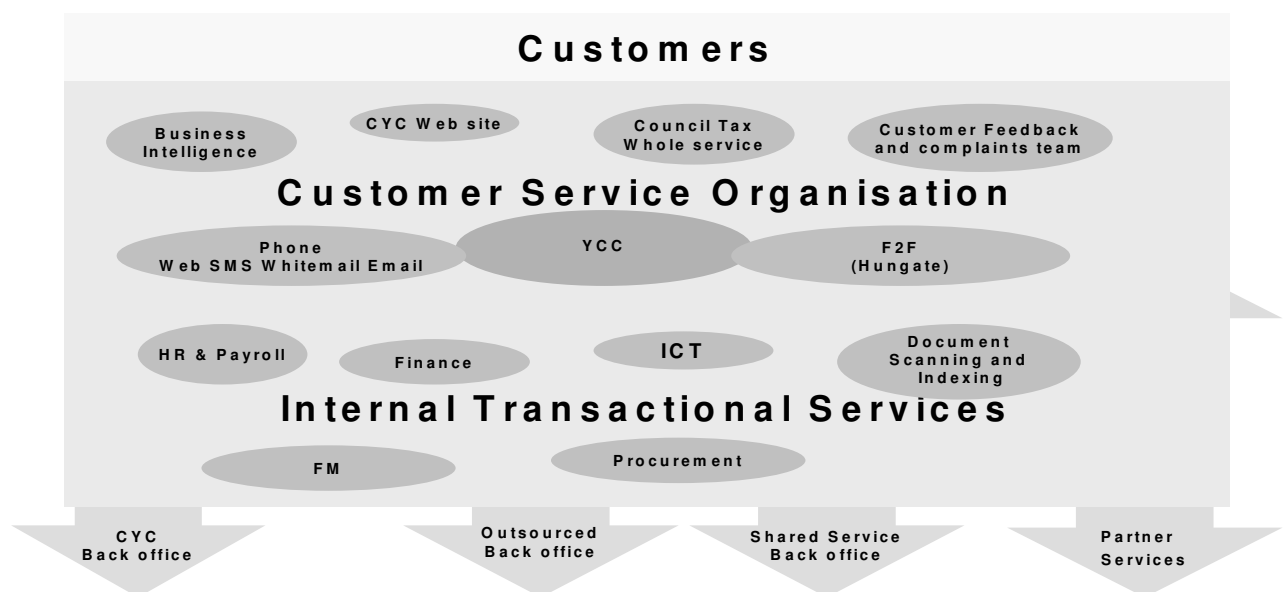
In order to deliver high performing, customer focussed services our business processes will change. This will also require our organisational structures to change. It is impossible to design these in advance but here we set out a direction of travel. We will move to an organisational structure that enables excellence in customer services where the following may apply: -

- There will be a single Customer Services Team with responsibility (over time) for:
 - Customer Service standards and monitoring adherence to the Customer Services Strategy

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- Running the York Customer Centre, which will manage customer contact across all channels, face to face, telephone, and web and email
- Customer complaints & feedback
- The development of Business Intelligence regarding our customers, their demographics and usage of our services.
- The Council Web site
- Delivery of whole services where appropriate (e.g. Revenues and Benefits Service)
- Specialist services will interface closely with the York Customer centre to ensure seamless delivery of end to end services
- All services will be structured around customer need
- The Council presents itself as one council. Silos of independent service delivery will no longer exist.
- The joins between front and back office will be completely invisible to the customer
- There will be strong lateral links between related services that enable us to deliver joined up services to customers
- The performance management of services will extend over both front and back office and may often relate to the work of more than one directorate
- Support services are structured in a way that enables seamless joined up working
- We will retain responsibility for our contact with customers irrespective of who delivers the service to them
- We will be able to share customer contact channels with partner organisations when this is appropriate

The following model shows how this mixed economy of delivery might work and how service boundaries between front and back office and between different delivery agencies might work.



7 How we will deliver change

7.1 Organisational and staff development

To realise our Customer Service Vision we need to further develop our organisation so that it is capable of delivering excellent and efficient services which are responsive to the needs and views of all residents. We need to achieve an ingrained culture of excellent customer service and access across the entire organisation.

The Council's most valuable resource in delivering excellent customer service is our staff. We depend on our committed and motivated workforce to put customer service first. To enable our staff to do this they must be involved at every level in the development and delivery of improved services and properly equipped to do the job.

We need to raise our expectations of managers to drive this forward in a way which delegates decision-making to the lowest possible level and empowers staff to pursue excellence. The introduction of leadership and management standards (LAMS) has begun our progress in this direction.

Staff will need to have access to high quality training, coaching and mentoring, systems, data and information if they are to be to deliver consistently the excellent standards of customer service to which we aspire.

This means that staff:

- Will be treated with respect, dignity and understanding
- Will be well-trained, well-managed and well-led
- Will be involved in the design of customer services
- Will be empowered to deliver high quality, responsive and efficient services to our customers

7.2 Service design and delivery

We have three methods or 'vehicles' that we can use to help us move towards our customer service values and implement our customer service design principles to deliver improved customer service:

1. Transitional Initiatives that we can ask all services to undertake now in order to align with the strategy.
2. Transformational initiatives – these are mainly undertaken by the Easy programme.

3. The approach to ongoing service planning and monitoring, assessment and improvement undertaken by the services.

7.2.1 How we will deliver change: Transitional Initiatives

We cannot implement our entire Vision across the whole Council at the same time. We need to identify a programme of transitional initiatives which will be implemented in all services over the next 5 years to align the Council's Customer Service with our Vision.

These initiatives are ones that can be implemented within our existing organisational structure and in our existing accommodation. They need to address:

- the embedding of a customer service culture
- the adoption of new customer service standards and measures
- a new approach to customer feedback

The purpose of the transitional initiatives is to move the whole organisation to a state of business-readiness for the transition to our new HQ building where we will be delivering Customer Service physically in one location to one set of standards.

Some transitional activities are already identified, agreed and planned. These are set out in section 8.

Following approval of the Customer Service Strategy a full programme of transitional initiatives will need to be identified and planned alongside the main transformational activities in the Delivery Plan to align customer service delivery standards across the whole council. This would include a programme of staff training.

The Customer Champion will lead the development and implementation of this plan.

7.2.2 How we will deliver change: Transformational initiatives

Transformational initiatives are those that review customer service areas and conduct a fundamental review of:

- Organisation structures, roles and skill sets
- Process and procedure
- Supporting technology, applications and the data that underpins the applications

In York this level of transformation has been successfully delivered by Phase 1 of the easy@york programme and Phase 2 of the programme will be

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responsible for the majority of the transformational initiatives in the Delivery Plan.

The easy programme designs more efficient business processes and procedures, opens up new access channels, designs and develops the supporting technology, designs and creates new organisational structures and supports the business through the successful implementation and embedding of these into the transformed business.

In Phase 2 easy is working alongside the New Headquarters project to achieve the transformation of 'Face to Face' access for customers. This will be realised by the inclusion of a single Customer Centre for all council services in the design of the new HQ building.

Currently the delivery plan for the easy@york programme extends to 2010/11 to coincide with the Council's move to its new HQ and for developing the delivery of Face to Face customer service for all Council services in the new Customer Centre. A further phase of the easy@york programme and potentially other transformational programmes will be required to deliver the full Vision.

The new HQ programme has responsibility for designing and delivering the new premises for the Customer Centre. Other transformational initiatives that support the delivery of the Vision are:

- The EDMS project which will allow all mail to be stored and managed electronically thus enabling greater automation and integration of processes
- The flexible working programme which will mobilise processes and create a new organisational culture enabling the flexible use of our workforce to meet our customers' needs.

7.2.3 How we will deliver change: Ongoing Service Improvement

The Council reviews the services it delivers every year in an annual planning cycle that is associated with the process for setting the following year's budget.

In this process each service area sets out a plan for what it will deliver particularly in term of the improvements that will be achieved.

It is proposed that in order to embed the Customer Value in the corporate culture, the Vision, Values and Design principles set out in this strategy are considered in this annual planning cycle and that services have a set of standards to refer to when deciding what customer service improvements they need to make.

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The proposed set of standards to form the basis of this service improvement checklist is the Cabinet Office customer Excellence Standards which are attached in Annex 5.

We want to join with our partners to act as One City in order to deliver the excellent services that our communities needs. We believe that partnerships are fundamental to delivering excellent services; that by working together we can make better use of resources and expertise; and that we will provide better access to services by working together to join up services at a local level and to remove service, geographical and professional barriers.

This means that we will:

- Work with partners towards achieving seamless customer service delivery that will signpost all York public services regardless of the service that has been accessed by the customer
- Build strong partnerships with business, community and voluntary organisations as well as other statutory agencies to achieve the best outcomes for our customers

8 The Delivery Plan: what we will deliver, when

At this stage it is not possible to set out a fully worked up delivery plan. Further work is needed to pull together the key strands of activity to deliver this strategy. However, there are significant blocks of work already identified and resourced and work is ongoing to develop the additional elements, with a view to achieving this plan largely within existing resources.

The Delivery plan will be split into the three strands set out in section 7 of this strategy and a high level view of the actions and timelines is set out below.

Transitional Activities

What	When
NI14: Record the cause of contact for selected services with a view to determining "Is this contact avoidable?" •Decide which services •Agree a reporting mechanism •Use NI14 to demonstrate service improvement in areas that have been reengineered (through Easy), and to indicate areas that need review	From Oct 2008
Implement the 2008 'Customer feedback and complaints policy'	From Jan 2009
Review customer data - what & where – Link to work of Equalities team &	To be planned

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performance team	
Adopt new Customer First standards and behaviours	From Jan 2009 following approval of Customer Strategy?
Adopt new Customer First measures and targets	From Jan 2009 following approval of Customer Strategy?

Transformational Activities

Customer Service transformation is the primary function of the **Easy@york programme**. Phase 2 will deliver end-to-end redesign and integrated customer service delivery for: -

Adult and Children's Social Services Advice Information and referral function
Neighbourhood Services – revisit phase 1 work to increase scope and depth of services currently delivered including Highways

Parking

Housing Management and repairs

Licensing

E-recruitment and internal HR transactions

Face to face contact point for all other services.

Mobile working to send jobs directly to the person doing the job

Easy@york phase 2 has a clear focus upon integrating our face to face contact from multiple reception points into one purpose built Customer Centre which will enable us to achieve the vision set out in this strategy. This means that the easy programme must work closely with the **New Headquarters project** to deliver high quality customer services in an effective setting.

Work is ongoing to design the new Customer Contact Centre, to deliver as many services as possible at this first point of contact and, for those services that are not yet redesigned, to ensure that services who have a large volume of customer contact are located close by. Projects are also ongoing to deliver the full potential of technology and ensure effective communication between front and back office services, seamless handover of customer requests and transparent tracking of transactions. Work is ongoing on these projects to identify the full extent of the resource requirement.

These are namely: -

An Electronic Document Management System (EDMS) - This new system is currently being implemented and will enable paper documents to be stored electronically and retrieved/moved around the organisation far more efficiently than paper. Workflow technology will enable us to push documents and transactions to each team/individual so that work is completed quickly and efficiently and progress can be reported at any time. A full roll out programme has yet to be worked up and resources may be needed to backscan historic or working documents.

Mobile working – A technology platform is being implemented that will enable secure mobile access to IT systems and data. This will provide an opportunity to deliver services to customers in their own homes and to deploy work to staff based in the field. Further work is needed to create an HR Policy framework and to pilot different mobile workstyles that might in future be used in the new Headquarters.

Service Improvement Activities

The desired outcome is to embed the Customer Strategy with its Vision, building blocks, design principles and values, into ongoing service delivery. In order to achieve this we need to build it into: -

- Directorate and service planning processes
- The council's corporate strategy - especially the organisational effectiveness and Inclusive City themes
- The council's corporate performance management framework.
- All 12 actions of the Single Improvement Plan
- The Equalities Delivery Plan

All of these are currently under review and the work to integrate the Customer Strategy into them will be undertaken in the next few months.

A full delivery plan will be worked up and delivered alongside the final version of the Customer Strategy in December 2008.

Engagement and Consultation Approach

We will work with the council's research team and the Easy Programme's marketing and communication function, and adopt approaches from the Corporate Engagement Strategy framework, which is currently being developed.

We will use the following methods to engage and consult with customers and residents; directorates and service areas; staff and unions: -

- Place Survey
- Talkabout Survey
- Phone survey
- Facilitated workshops/discussion forums
- Equalities Impact Assessments