



emqc

assessment report



CHARTER MARK CONTINUOUS COMPLIANCE REPORT



Client:

Environmental Services, Neighbourhood Services Directorate,
York City Council

Ref No:

07/2157

Assessor:

Nigel Hunt

Location:

Head Office, Hazel Court, York

Date:

26th November 2007

Assessor's findings

▪ Front line service delivery

Environmental Services have reshaped their services over the last twelve months to provide improved front line delivery. This is particularly so with the introduction of the Neighbourhood Pride Service, the front line street cleaning service, which has seen the re-introduction of barrows. An initial review and feedback from the public indicates that there has been a significant improvement in the street scene environment. The reorganisation has also brought together the waste collection and waste strategy services with improved links between the two. The recycling service has also continued to develop and achieve higher rates of recycling, largely through an increase in the green recycling.

▪ Levels of complaints and satisfaction with the service.

There are still a number of complaints about the refuse collection service, primarily centred on 'missed bins', but the number has reduced and strategies have been put in place to ensure that 'missed bins' are dealt with more speedily. The development of GPS planned routes will help further in the longer term. The anecdotal feedback about the revised new Neighbourhood Pride Service is highly positive about the impact that is having on communities. Feedback indicates that, generally, satisfaction levels are continuing to rise.

▪ Progress made by the Charter Mark holder in respect of partial compliances or areas for improvement which were identified during the previous assessment.

Environmental Services have undergone a number of fundamental changes over the last twelve months, including the upheaval of moving offices and depot. They have been able to address a number of key areas, but there remain some areas of partial compliance, primarily in promoting standards and performance reporting. There are some issues around complaints reporting and service monitoring which may need to be reviewed in the light of the introduction of the new Customer Contact Centre and its front facing role on behalf of Neighbourhood Services.

▪ Issues which may affect certification.

There are no issues that may affect certification.

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Criterion 1 – Set standards and perform well

Some of the Service Standards within the Environmental Services team are set nationally as Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPIs), for example the Waste Collection and Recycling targets and those for the Neighbourhood Pride Service (formerly Streetscene). These cover activities such as targets for dealing with missed bins, local street cleanliness and other activities such as the removal of graffiti. The service works within York City Council's Customer First standards for responses to phone calls. Your Services have developed Customer Service Standards that relate to the specific needs of their users. Where services are provided to specific organisations, for example cleaning of schools and other buildings, the standards the service works to are set out in specific service specifications and service level agreements with individual schools. These standards have been agreed in general with the Leisure, Culture and Children's Service (LCCS).

Each of the services within Environmental Services is active in reviewing and monitoring its standards, for example, the standards relating to cleaning service provided to schools have been completely revised and based around the needs of individual schools. The Service Standards for Neighbourhood Pride Services have been developed following the reorganisation of the team and the re-introduction of neighbourhood street cleaners using barrows. These, and the standards relating to schools, have been based around service outcomes rather than processes and are therefore more meaningful to the people using the services.

Each of the services are active in monitoring performance against the BVPIs and other standards and targets, The school cleaning service, for example, receives regular reports from the LCCS. Inspectors who monitor the performance on behalf of the schools. The BVPIs are also monitored from outside the service. Overall, performances are good, for example, most of the schools cleaned reach the 95% target and there are regular meetings with the LCCS to ensure agreed remedial action is taken where there are any shortfalls in performance. Performance is monitored regularly against the BVPIs and it is clear from information to date that the reintroduction of the street cleaning barrows has led to fairly significant improvements in street cleanliness.

There have also been improvements in the performance of dealing with missed bins, and an increase in recycling performance. This has meant that performance in comparison with other authorities has improved raising you into the higher quartiles. You have made use of APSE to benchmark data, but have found realistic comparators difficult and are now working with PSNET to develop more realistic benchmark data. Alongside this quantitative benchmarking, you recognise the value of process benchmarking and have met with comparative authorities such as Chester and visited other authorities, such as South Tyneside and benefited from those experiences. The Audit Commission carried out a Comprehensive Performance Assessment of the Waste Management Service in June 2007 and reported positively that significant improvements had been made in performance in all areas and that there were effective improvement in the performance management arrangements. You have also had ENCAMS carry out audits of your services.

You have involved staff in the identification of standards and customers have been involved in the development of some of the standards within the other areas of service delivery. Comprehensive, new service standards have been developed for schools through the involvement of customers and staff which have been welcomed by individual schools. There are individual meetings with trade customers where standards in respect of their individually tailored services are discussed and which form part of their specific contracts with you. Performance against standards is closely monitored and reviewed monthly and any dips are readily identified, for example, staff meet regularly with Liaison Officers in LCCS to discuss

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improvements where cleaning standards may, for whatever reason, dip.

Partial Compliance

Element 1.3.2

There is limited information in the wider public domain about the Customer Service Standards that have been adopted.

Element 1.3.3

Some information about performance is available through the Council's Best Value Performance Plan but this is not widely available nor does it specifically cover performance against the Service's standards.

Areas for Development

There is scope to review how you can provide information about your Customer Service Standards more widely, perhaps building onto using of existing communication processes, for example, including information in existing waste collection and management information that is delivered to all homes, or making better use of the web site and the 'Your Ward' publication (1.3.2).

There is scope to review how and where information about your performance against standards is available and how it can be more widely available to the full range of your customers, perhaps making use of some of the methods outlined above (1.3.3).

Many of the initial calls in respect of the Environmental Services activities are now directed through the Customer Contact Centre. As this arrangement is new, there is scope to review the performance monitoring processes you have in place to ensure you are receiving adequate feedback about how many front line calls are being dealt with first time without follow up calls or having to be referred to your team (1.2.2).

Criterion 2 – Actively engage with your customers , partners and staff

The various services are active in consulting with and receiving feedback from customers. One mechanism for this is through the Council's 'Talk About' Panel which provides feedback about the service generally. There was considerable consultation and discussion with the LCCS and individual schools, making use of the Head Teacher Forum, on the introduction of the new cleaning standards as well as consultation and feedback about other services through attendance at Ward Meetings, Parish Council meetings and surveys, particularly in respect of green waste collections. You are currently piloting the introduction of recycling collections in areas of terraced housing and flats and are consulting widely as part of that process. You also consulted the public and particularly staff on the re-introduction of the barrow system of street cleaning.

There have been a number of changes over the last twelve months, including the move to the new premises that have involved staff and there is a continuing dialogue through team meetings and Service Forums with representatives of staff. A Council wide Staff Survey was completed earlier in year and showed an improvement in satisfaction levels from staff and involvement in the organisation. The layout of the new premises has helped to improve communication with, and the involvement of, staff. Feedback from the customers and from front line staff helped to identify the need for changes in the street cleaning services and this has led to the introduction of the new Neighbourhood Pride Service and the return to the use of street cleaning barrows. You have also listened to customers in terms of the changes made to the

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green waste collection which has resulted in that service now being maintained throughout the year. Feedback from customers about the public toilet provision has led to discussions about the future provision and opening of new facilities in the City Centre. Whilst feedback from customers is sought, there is scope for feedback to be developed.

Information about your services to the general public is widely available both through specific literature aimed at customers or through general Council publicity. For example, you provide information to all householders at Christmas, and other Bank Holidays, about the revised timings of refuse collections. You are active in promoting environmental campaigns as part of the waste strategy. For schools, information concerning specific services is set out in individual service level agreements. Otherwise, information is available through the Council's web-site, its offices and in general Council information. You opened your new offices to the public which, alongside the environmental issues, helped provide information about a range of your services, about which people hitherto had little awareness. The web-site contains helpful 'Frequently Asked Questions'. The commercial waste aspect of your service provision is promoted to potential customers. Information on costs of the services are summarised in the authority's 'Your Council Tax Explained' that is distributed to every property. Details of charges for the trade waste collection service are distributed to all customers and potential customers. The charges are negotiated individually to meet the needs of individual local businesses. The Waste Strategy team produce positive information about recycling and waste minimisation activities. The Household Waste Recycling Centres are well advertised with clear signage. The Service works within Council guidelines on accessible communication. Where appropriate there are one-to-one discussions about service level agreement arrangements. The Waste Collection service is strong on using terminology that customers understand. Within the cleaning service you have recognised that a number of front line staff do not have English as their first language and have produced cleaning specifications in Polish.

The Services work closely in partnership with external organisations and internal services within the authority, for example, LCCS and wider waste partnership meetings. For example, the Waste Collection Service works very closely with Waste Strategy and this relationship has developed since the Waste Strategy Team was integrated into Environmental Services. The links with the Customer Contact Centre have been a major new partnership for you. Neighbourhood Services work in close partnership with Jewson and ABRO, who lease the remainder of the site, and through which you operate your vehicle servicing. The Service also works in partnership with York University and has entailed particularly close working in introducing new technological innovations. These partnership arrangements are evidenced through a mix of formal contractual relationships, service agreements, regular partnership meetings, informal meetings and contacts and minutes of meetings. The Partnership working with schools has enabled you to provide an improved and, in the longer term, more cost effective service for some schools. The move into Neighbourhood Services has enabled a closer working relationship between Waste Strategy and Waste Management to develop. Information provided on recycling and the waste disposal sites provide good examples of how customers can access services operated in partnership with others and receive a seamless service.

Partial Compliance

Element 2.1.5

Although there is some degree of feedback to customers on the outcome of consultations there is, overall, little evidence that this is an embedded process.

Element 2.3.2

You do not seek feedback on the information you provide and the effectiveness of that information.

Areas for Development

You may wish to consider developing a consultation strategy to identify the most appropriate ways to seek feedback from, and consult with, the wide variety of your customers ensuring that you get effective feedback from the full range of service users and the full range of your activities. There is scope, for example, to develop the use of telephone feedback and text messaging (2.1.1).

Although there has been an improvement in your approach to involving employees and seeking their contributions to the development of your services and encouraging suggestions and comments on the service, the most recent staff survey suggests that there is still room to further develop these processes and opportunities for staff (2.1.2 & 2.1.3).

There is scope to review the mechanisms the Service has for feeding back after consultations and for these to be effective across all your services (2.1.5)

There is scope to seek feedback from customers on the specific information you provide, how it is used, whether it meets their needs and, if and how, it can be improved (2.3.2).

Criterion 3 – Be fair and accessible to everyone and promote choice

The services provided can be accessed in a number a number of ways, telephone, email and through the internet where some services are available 'on-line' for example the reporting of 'missed bins'. The York Pride number is the key access point for information about services, as this is now the Customer Contact Centre for Neighbourhood Services. Customers can email York Pride Action Line direct. The web-site also contains helpful information about how the services provided.

Staff are clearly identifiable through corporate clothing and front line staff have undergone customer care training. Customer surveys have found staff to be polite and courteous. The Service is able to offer a range of choices, through different size 'wheelie bins' depending upon needs and circumstances, or can be provided with plastic sacks where that is more convenient. A 'wheel-out' service is available for customers with special needs. Similarly, trade refuse customers are able to choose the size of skip suitable to their needs and the service offered to trade waste customers is designed to meet their specific needs. Service Level Agreements for school cleaning are based on choice of each school in terms of the standards of cleaning they require. All your public services are provided free of charge to customers, but where there are specific charges, for example, commercial waste collection or cleaning contracts these are clearly specified. The Service works within the Council's framework of equality and disability policies and procedures. There is the facility for information to be available in different formats and languages, should there be requests. The Service is active in ensuring that the needs of specific customers are supported through, for example, the provision of larger or smaller wheelie bins where they may be required because of family size or those with special needs, a 'wheel out' service is available for customers with special needs and there is also a clinical waste collection service for those with specific requirements.

Partial Compliance

Element 3.3.4

Although you work within the Council's policies and train staff on equality issues, you do not seek feedback from customers about whether they consider themselves to have been treated fairly and sensitively.

Areas for Development

You may wish to review the access routes through which people access your information and services, for example, the web site to see if they are effective channels and meet your customers' needs, for example, those who may have disabilities (3.1.1).

You may wish to seek support corporately in reviewing the web site to ensure that it is easily accessible to people with disabilities, making use of technology to change font sizes, contrast and browse readers and placing these on the Home Page (3.3.3).

You review your feedback mechanisms and consider how best you can ask customers about whether they have been treated fairly and equally (3.3.4).

Criterion 4 – Continuously develop and improve

The Neighbourhood Services Directorate is developing a three year plan from 2008/9 to 2010/11 that brings together service objectives and performance indicators and linking these into the Council's wider corporate objectives taking account of short term imperatives, medium term priorities and the longer term vision. It outlines current and future provision, proposed service developments, with action plans, taking resources into account. This includes an action plan against issues raised by the Audit Commission.

The services provided have continued to improve over the last three years and this has been confirmed by the Audit Commission in their most recent review. It is also evident in the feedback from customers about the services and the BVPI indicators that show significant improvements in street cleanliness and the levels of recycling, particularly in green waste and kerbside collection. You are piloting an extension of the recycling scheme to residents of terraced properties and flats who, hitherto, have not been able to access services available to other residents. The development and introduction of the Customer Relationship Management system is a further example of improvements in service delivery as is the new household waste recycling service at Hazel Court. Feedback from the most recent satisfaction surveys is not yet available, but the most recent satisfaction levels are over seventy percent level and increasing. Feedback from schools indicates that there is also over 70% satisfaction with the standard of cleaning.

Technology is being used to improve the services provided such as the use of GPS to better plan refuse collection rounds, and the use of technology to pinpoint 'hotspots' for example, of missed bins or complaints about litter, which will assist in the future management of the services.

The Council has a corporate complaints system, which is available through its web-site with a three stage system, clear timescales and recourse to the Local Government Ombudsman if customers continue to feel aggrieved. Residents of York also know to make use of York Pride to contact the Service if they have a complaint or comment and this number appears on all the refuse collection vehicles. There is a clear differentiation between complaints made through York Pride and other issues around service delivery reported through York Pride. Although the first point of call is now the Customer Contact Centre, all formal complaints are passed through to Neighbourhood Services. There is comprehensive corporate guidance on complaints and appropriate staff have received training on complaints handling. A large number of complaints are successfully resolved at the first stage. The service provides the opportunity for comments, compliments and suggestions which are logged onto the system.

Details of complaints and actions taken are centrally recorded and, complaints, formal

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complaints and compliments are recorded. Information about complaints is reported to Council members and complaints for the whole Council are reported in the annual performance report. There is a formal process for seeking feedback from complainants. Staff and customers were involved in the most recent review of the complaints process. Access to complaints procedure and reporting on the internet has improved over the last twelve months.

Partial Compliance

Element 4.3.4

There is insufficient evidence to show that you are able to monitor informal complaints effectively.

Element 4.3.5

The Council publishes information about complaints corporately, but not by individual service.

Areas for Development

There is scope to introduce into your satisfaction surveys questions about the importance of services as well as satisfaction levels, to provide you with a gap analysis that will help you develop your services (4.2.2).

There is scope to review the questions you ask in your satisfaction / feedback surveys with a view to seeking more information about the reasons behind the satisfaction levels so as to be able to use those to develop the service (4.2.4).

You may wish to review your satisfaction / feedback surveys, looking to extend the range, perhaps making use of telephone surveys and distributing questionnaires through street cleaning staff (4.2.4).

A number of complaints on your new reporting system were 'out of time' for response. There is scope to review how you monitor that to ensure that complaint responses can be brought within the target time (4.3.1).

The introduction of the new Customer Contact Centre means that first line enquiries are responded to outwith your Service. This means that informal complaints may not be recorded or come to the attention of your staff. There is scope to review this to ensure that you are able to pick up informal complaints through your new procedures and processes (4.3.4).

You may wish to explore how you can promote information about the number of complaints you have received, how you have dealt with them and any improvements you have made separately from the corporate reporting of complaints (4.3.5).

Criterion 5 – Use your resources effectively and imaginatively

The Service has well developed processes for managing and reviewing its revenue and capital budgets including monthly monitoring and variance reporting. It monitors the cost of waste collection and is able to compare this annually with the Service's own costs and to benchmark it with other organisations. The budget process is comprehensive. The Service has responsibility for managing the complex arrangements for landfill tax and has in place arrangements to monitor and review this aspect of financial management.

The Service is cost conscious and is aware of the need to ensure that it provides value for money. There has been an historic deficit on the school cleaning service, but the service is

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required to break even this year and is taking action to manage this process. The Service makes good use of the commercial waste vehicles using them on both morning and evening collections. The development of the Customer Contact Centre have enabled you to make more effective use of staff with first line calls now received in the Contact Centre. The Cleaning Service has reviewed specification which is now based on outcomes, rather than detailed schedules, providing a more cost effective service to meet the needs of customers. The introduction of the Neighbourhood Pride Services and the barrow rounds has meant that you have been able to better tailor the services to meet the areas of highest demand.

All services are aware of the need for efficiency and cost savings and improving the use of resources and have been required to make Gershon and other savings in recent years. Each of the services is aware of the need to benchmark its costs and do so, for example, the cleaning service making use of comparators through the British Cleaning Council. The Waste Service has recently received an Audit Commission Assessment that indicates that it provides good value for money. The Services have in the last year moved to a new depot and service area that have been partially procured on innovative long term partnership arrangements with ABRO and Jewson. Staff are well aware of the need for value for money and cost effectiveness and finance and budget matters and for the need for longer term efficiency gains and effectiveness of the service.

Partial Compliance

There are no areas of partial compliance.

Areas for Development

No areas for development have been identified

Criterion 6 – Contribute to improving opportunities and quality of life in the communities you serve

The Council has adopted a number of strategies that cover a range of community issues including the development of the local economy, safer communities through the reduction of crime and disorder, and addressing wider community disadvantage and improving environment. The sustainable city that seeks to reduce the impact of the environment on current lifestyles, coupled with taking pride in environment and improving the quality of the environment are central to the City's Vision. The Service has in the last twelve months moved to a new depot is very eco-friendly, being the largest straw building in Europe and, for example, using recycled rain water to clean vehicles as well as generating 40% of the electricity it needs. The Waste Strategy team work in partnership with a number of agencies and promotes recycling in the community and through educational work.

The Service has considered how it can implement these strategies and its Directorate Plan has been based around the longer term vision of the Council and its corporate proprieties, particularly those that relate to the community, for example, reducing the environmental impact of its policies and waste minimisation. Your central involvement in York Pride means that you play an important role in improving the environment. Staff are committed to supporting York Pride initiatives and are all aware of the Council's vision in this area and work to sustain improvement in the environment. It has been involved with the community for a long period and has worked with PACY volunteers for many years. The work of the Waste Strategy team in working on educational and promotional activities also provides valuable input into the wider community and neighbourhood strategies.

The feedback from the Yorkshire Pride scorecard indicated that the performance in the

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community is monitored and that the impact and improvement can be demonstrated. The Service has clearly learnt from its involvement in the community and developed its programmes to respond to needs of the community in respect of the York Pride initiative. The launch of York Business Pride alongside York Pride reflects that.

Partial Compliance

There are no areas of partial compliance.

Areas for Development

No areas for development have been identified

Outcome

Following this visit I am able to inform you of my decision that Environmental Services, Neighbourhood Services Directorate, York City Council continue to meet the Charter Mark Standard, and based on my findings I can confirm the next surveillance will be due in November 2008.

Although I have indicated when your next visit is necessary, if you feel you would benefit from an assessment before this date, you are able to opt for a **certification review** at any time. This can be done by simply completing and submitting one of our assessment request forms which can be found on our website www.emqc.co.uk, if successful your certificate will be re-issued for a further 3 years, subject to ongoing monitoring. This will form a '**rolling certification**'.

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Compliance against the Charter Mark Standard

| Criterion | Sub-Criterion | Element | Best Practice | Full Compliance | Partial Compliance | Major Non-Conformance | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 1 | 1.1 | 1.1.1 | | X | | | |
| | | 1.1.2 | | X | | | |
| | 1.2 | 1.2.1 | | | X | | |
| | | 1.2.2 | | | X | | |
| | | 1.2.3 | | | X | | |
| | | 1.2.4 | | | X | | |
| | 1.3 | 1.3.1 | | | X | | |
| | | 1.3.2 | | | | X | |
| | | 1.3.3 | | | | X | |
| | | 1.3.4 | | | X | | |
| | | 1.3.5 | | | X | | |

| Criterion | Sub-Criterion | Element | Best Practice | Full Compliance | Partial Compliance | Major Non-Conformance | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 2 | 2.1 | 2.1.1 | | X | | | |
| | | 2.1.2 | | X | | | |
| | | 2.1.3 | | X | | | |
| | | 2.1.4 | | X | | | |
| | | 2.1.5 | | | | X | |
| | 2.2 | 2.1.6 | | | X | | |
| | | 2.2.1 | | | X | | |
| | 2.3 | 2.2.2 | | | X | | |
| | | 2.3.1 | | | X | | |
| | 2.4 | 2.3.2 | | | | X | |
| | | 2.4.1 | | | X | | |
| | | 2.4.2 | | | X | | |
| | | 2.4.3 | | | X | | |
| | | 2.4.4 | | | X | | |
| | | | 2.4.5 | | X | | |

| Criterion | Sub-Criterion | Element | Best Practice | Full Compliance | Partial Compliance | Major Non-Conformance | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 3 | 3.1 | 3.1.1 | | X | | | |
| | | 3.1.2 | | X | | | |
| | 3.2 | 3.2.1 | | | X | | |
| | | 3.2.2 | | | X | | |
| | | 3.2.3 | | | X | | |
| | | 3.2.4 | | | X | | |
| | 3.3 | 3.3.1 | | | X | | |
| | | 3.3.2 | | | X | | |
| | | 3.3.3 | | | X | | |
| | | 3.3.4 | | | | X | |

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| Criterion | Sub-Criterion | Element | Best Practice | Full Compliance | Partial Compliance | Major Non-Conformance | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 4 | 4.1 | 4.1.1 | | X | | | |
| | | 4.2 | 4.2.1 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.2.2 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.2.3 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.2.4 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.2.5 | | X | | |
| | 4.3 | | 4.3.1 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.3.2 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.3.3 | | X | | |
| | | | 4.3.4 | | | X | |
| | | | 4.3.5 | | | X | |
| | | | 4.3.6 | | | X | |
| | | | 4.3.7 | | | X | |

| Criterion | Sub-Criterion | Element | Best Practice | Full Compliance | Partial Compliance | Major Non-Conformance | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 5 | 5.1 | 5.1.1 | | X | | | |
| | | 5.1.2 | | X | | | |
| | | 5.1.3 | | X | | | |
| | | 5.1.4 | | X | | | |
| | | 5.1.5 | | X | | | |
| | 5.2 | | 5.2.1 | | X | | |
| | | | 5.2.2 | | X | | |

| Criterion | Sub-Criterion | Element | Best Practice | Full Compliance | Partial Compliance | Major Non-Conformance | |
|-----------|---------------|---------|---------------|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|--|
| 6 | 6.1 | 6.1.1 | | X | | | |
| | | 6.1.2 | | X | | | |
| | | 6.1.3 | | X | | | |
| | 6.2 | | 6.2.1 | | X | | |
| | | | 6.2.2 | | X | | |
| | | | 6.2.3 | | X | | |
| | | | 6.2.4 | | X | | |