
Executive Member for Corporate Services and Advisory Panel

21st October 2008

Report of the Assistant Director of Resources - Easy@york Programme Director

Corporate Customer Strategy

Summary

1. This report sets out the draft Corporate Customer Strategy for shaping by Members. It sets out a proposed Vision for how we will deliver customer focussed, efficient services to customers, improving upon work we have already commenced, to transform our services to customers, to design services around their needs and to embed customer focus within the regular mechanisms of service design, resource planning and performance management.
2. Members' views will be incorporated into the draft before it is then consulted upon with a range of customer groups over the Autumn. The final strategy will then be presented back to Executive for agreement in December 2008.
3. A revised Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy is also attached at Annex 1.
4. The report was considered by Executive on 7th October who agreed:
 - the corporate customer complaints and feedback policy
 - the draft strategy to be used to consult and engage customers as per the plan set out in para 16 of the report
 - the working up of a delivery plan as set out in section 8 of the strategy
 - that a report proposing a final version of the strategy be brought back to Executive in December 2008

Background

5. In 2002, CYC undertook a best value review of Access to Services which eventually resulted in the establishment of the easy@york Programme. This programme developed a Customer Access Strategy which set out our vision for improved customer services through joining up services and offering improved channels and hours of access. The strap line was "The Customer is never in the wrong place."
6. At the time, the strategic focus was primarily upon access. Since then the Customer Service agenda within local Government has matured and become

more all encompassing. We have also delivered a large proportion of our Customer Access objectives. It is therefore appropriate to update our Customer Strategy and restate our vision for the future of Customer Services in York.

7. The Strategy is comprehensive and ambitious but it is also achievable. CYC are well positioned to build on the work of easy@york and to exploit the opportunities for improvement offered by our move to a new Headquarters. We have the potential to achieve excellence in the field of customer services, to meet and exceed the expectations of customers.
8. The Strategy as drafted reflects our detailed ambitions and seeks to capture the ways we will deliver the vision. This is by necessity quite complex and the document is not a customer facing document. If Members agree the content of the strategy then it is recommended that a summarised, customer friendly version be developed to express the vision we foresee and the commitments we will make, in a format that Customers can readily grasp and relate to. There are many examples of how this has been achieved within the Council. A recent example of excellence is the Homelessness Strategy which is both rich in meaning, visually attractive and accessible to customers.
9. The delivery plan for the Strategy is still in development. If Members agree the content of the strategy then further work will be undertaken to
 - Define programmes of work to integrate the strategy into service planning, budget setting and performance management arrangements
 - Establish robust Performance management standards and targets for Customer Service delivery
 - Consult Customers
10. This will then be brought back to Executive in December for final agreement.

Customer Complaints and Feedback Policy

11. The current Complaints policy is outdated and does not reflect the importance of using customer feedback, be that positive or negative, to identify failure, express customer requirements and shape future service delivery. Over the last year, a working group has developed a revised policy to reflect the importance of handling customer feedback and complaints well, attempting to resolve problems and provide customer satisfaction whilst routinely capturing feedback and using it constructively to improve services for the future.
12. The revised policy has been rigorously assessed and developed by a cross Directorate staff group who are currently responsible for managing complaints and feedback.
13. Members are asked to agree this policy so that it can be implemented. The implementation will be supported by the development of e-forms to ensure all feedback is captured in a consistent way and progress can be easily tracked. This work will be undertaken as part of the easy@york programme.

Corporate Objectives

14. The Corporate Strategy contains a Customer value, to deliver what our customers want. The Customer Strategy is an articulation of what we mean and what we will do to deliver this element of the corporate Strategy.

Financial Implications

15. There are no specific financial implications of this draft strategy, though building a comprehensive delivery plan may involve further requests for funding which will be brought forward as part of the annual budget cycle or as specific reports for member decision.

Implications

16. The implications of Phase 2 of the easy programme are: -
 - **Financial** - None at this stage
 - **Human Resources (HR)** - Any changes to staff terms and conditions arising from increasing access to services would need to be separately discussed with Unions
 - **Equalities** – the Equalities team have been involved in the development of this strategy and a desktop EIA is being completed. Full EIA assessment will take place in November. Work is required to integrate the customer strategy into the Equalities Delivery Plan
 - **Legal** – No implications
 - **Crime and Disorder** – no implications
 - **Information Technology (IT)** – All incorporated into the Easy@york programme, the new headquarters project or individual IT development projects already agreed. Expansion of EDMS and Mobile working may need further consideration
 - **Risk Management** – no implications at this stage as this is a draft strategy

Consultation

17. We will use a mix of methods to engage and consult with customer on the content of this strategy, including postal surveys, face-to-face interviews, on-line surveys, focus groups, workshop and phone surveys. Our planned activities for engaging and consulting on the Customer Services Strategy include: -

Participate in the Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) fair	November 2008
Question in Place Survey on customers preferred method of contacting the council by type of request	Results due early 2009
Workshops/discussion groups with service areas	Ongoing
Phone survey(s)	October/

	November 2008
Mail survey e.g. Talkabout	October / November 2008
Workshop(s)/discussion group(s) with customers/residents (especially targeting those hard to reach sections of our community)	October/ November 2008
Putting the Customer First Engagement Group	Autumn 2008

EMAP input requested

18. Members of EMAP are asked for their views on the Draft Customer Strategy and the outline consultation plan.

Contact Details

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Report Approved **Date** 23rd Sept 08

Wards Affected: *List wards or tick box to indicate all*

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Customer Access Strategy 2005

Annexes

Draft Customer Service Strategy..... Annex A

(This includes the following Annexes:

Revised Customer complaints and feedback policy.....Annex 1
 Proposed Customer First standards and behaviours.....Annex 2
 Customer First measures and targets.....Annex 3
 NI14 roll-out plan.....Annex 4
 Customer Excellence StandardsAnnex 5)