
Decision Session - Executive Member for Neighbourhoods and Housing

19 October 2010

Report of the Director of Communities and Neighbourhoods

The Customer Service Excellence Award

Summary

1. To inform the Executive Member of the outcome of an external review of the Customer Service Excellence Award for Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services.
2. To seek the approval of the Executive Member to expand the scope of the services covered by the Award to include Registry Services.

Background

3. Customer Service Excellence, which replaced the Charter Mark, was developed by government to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisation. The foundation of this tool is the Customer Service Excellence standard (the standard), which tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.
4. Customer Service Excellence is designed to operate on three distinct levels:
 - **As a driver of continuous improvement**
By allowing organisations to self assess their capability, using an online self assessment tool, in relation to customer focused service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement.
 - **As a skills development tool**
By allowing individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services.

- **As an independent validation of achievement**

By allowing organisations to seek formal accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence standard, demonstrate their competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate their success.

To achieve the Customer Service Excellence standard organisations must demonstrate that they meet the requirements of five criteria:

- Criterion 1: Customer Insight
- Criterion 2: The Culture of the Organisation
- Criterion 3: Information and Access
- Criterion 4: Delivery
- Criterion 5: Timeliness and Quality of Service

The criteria contain a total of 13 sub criteria and 57 elements.

5. In June 2009 Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services underwent an independent assessment and were successful in their application for the Customer Service Excellence Award.
6. The assessor found three elements were best practice and assessed them as 'Compliance Plus'. These were in relation to the use of letter templates (to ensure that customers are advised of officers' understanding of the issues raised, the legal position, best practice and the next steps where appropriate and how staff will keep them informed); excellent partnership working (in particular the co location of the police licensing officer and the council licensing staff ensures a high degree of co-ordinated working, sharing of intelligence, whilst retaining clear lines of responsibility and accountability) and advising customers of the timescales necessary to resolve their issue.
7. The assessor commented on only two elements that he considered were areas of partial compliance. These were that there could be improvements in evaluating the routes that customers used to access the services and there was only limited evidence about benchmarking on performance in relation to timeliness and the quality of service
8. The services were compliant with the remaining 52 elements of the standard.

Continuous Compliance with the Standard

9. The first annual continuous compliance visit was carried out by the external assessor in June 2010. He found that further work was required on the two areas of partial compliance previously identified but there were no issues that would effect the certification.
10. The assessor did identify a further area of best practice. He found that the process of customer journey mapping was embedded in service planning and the benefits of this process were being actively promoted to other services in the council.

11. The assessor summarised his visit as:

“The City of York Council, Environmental Health, Trading Standards, Licensing and Bereavement Services have continued to develop and improve their services. They have sought feedback from residents within the City of York about their priorities gaining additional insight into what residents want from services. They have developed and improved their consultation and satisfaction levels have improved. There has been a focus on mapping that has helped to improve customer journeys leading to improved satisfaction levels.”

A copy of the assessor’s report is attached to this report as Annex A.

Corporate Priorities

12. It is a strategic theme of the corporate strategy to make the City of York Council an ‘Effective Organisation’ delivering what our customers want. Customer focus fundamental to the Customer Service Excellence Award.

Implications

- **Financial:**

13. There are no financial implications associated with this report.

- **Human Resources (HR):**

14. There are no HR implications associated with this report.

- **Equalities**

15. The process of Customer Service Excellence promotes equalities implications in service delivery.

- **Legal:**

16. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

- **Crime and Disorder**

17. There are no crime and disorder implications associated with this report.

- **Information Technology (IT)**

18. There are no IT implications associated with this report.

Property

19. There are no property implications associated with this report.

- **Other**

20. There are no other implications to consider.

Risk Management

21. There are no significant risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

22. That the Executive Member notes the report and approves that officers extend the scope of Customer Excellence Award to Registry Services for the next annual assessment in June 2011.

Contact Details

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Report Approved

Date 6.10.10

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

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Background Papers:

Customer Service Excellence The Government Standard – published by the Office of Public Sector Information

Customer Service Excellence Report – EMQC Ltd - June 2009

Annexes

All annexes to the report must be listed here.

Annex A: Customer Service Excellence Continuous Compliance Report –EMQC Ltd - June 2010