

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	9.
Date:	13 <sup>th</sup> July 2009	Status	Open
Category	2. Decision within the functions of Executive		
Subject:	Customer Service and Access Strategy 2009-2011		
Report by:	Customer Service and Access Officer		
Other Officers Involved	Head of Customer Service and Performance		
Director	Chief Executive Officer		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Customer Focused Services		

## **RELEVANT CORPORATE AIMS**

**CUSTOMER FOCUSED SERVICES** – Providing excellent customer focused services

**SOCIAL INCLUSION** – Promoting fairness, equality and lifelong learning.

**STRATEGIC ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT** – Continually improving our organisation.

The Customer Service and Access Strategy is the Council's key document for providing excellent customer focused services and becoming a truly customer focused organisation. In order to deliver the strategy effectively it will require individuals and departments to improve the way they deliver their services to all customer groups.

### **TARGETS**

The production of the strategy itself partially achieves one of the Council's corporate plan targets for customer focused services. The Customer Service and Access Strategy also contains an implementation plan, which has a number of targets noted under the outcome column.

### **VALUE FOR MONEY**

The production of a cross cutting strategy to deliver significantly against one of the Council's corporate objectives provides an effective and joined up approach for both the Council and its customers. In addition the implementation plan highlights a number of activities, which will lead to more efficient working practices and provide increased value for both the Council and its customers.

## **THE REPORT**

The production of a Customer Service and Access Strategy and the achievement of its milestones by 2011 is one of the priorities for Customer Focused Services in the Corporate Plan. Members may recall that it was decided in 2007 to produce a strategy over a two year period (2007-2009) and within that period undertake a Best Value Review of Customer Service and Access. In addition it enabled the implications of the White Paper, "Strong and Prosperous Communities", October 2006, to filter through also.

This strategy builds upon the significant achievements made under the previous three strategies covering the period 2005 – 2009 and continues with the work to become a truly customer focused organisation.

The previous Customer Service and Access Strategy 2007-2009 has been reviewed and evaluated. The long term vision and workstreams are still valid and important today. As such, and to enable future strategies to dovetail with the Corporate Plan, this strategy will run upto March 2011 and concentrate on achieving further improvements under the respective workstreams.

The following documents are attached for Members' consideration:

- Customer Service and Access Strategy 2009-2011
- Implementation Plan for 2009-2011

Regarding the 2007-2009 strategy, an evaluation of the implementation plan is attached for Members' information. Overall, 86% of this strategy has been completed with work continuing on the remaining tasks. Some key improvements and outcomes for customers are noted below:

- Customers now know how the Council is performing against its key customer service standards as this information is publicised through the Contact Centres and on the website.
- Customers receive a better level of service when they contact the council:
  - More telephone calls are answered within 20 seconds (85% in 2008/09, an increase of 6% on 2007/08)
  - More written complaints responded to within 20 working days (91% in 2008/09, an increase of 2% on 2007/08)
  - All email enquiries from customers acknowledged within one working day (99% in 2007/08) and 92% responded to within 8 working days (91% in 2007/08).
  - Customers being served more quickly at our Contact Centres (99% waited less than 15 minutes and 92% waited less than 10 minutes in 2008/09 compared to 98% and 93% respectively in 2007/08).
  - More customers are making Freedom of Information requests (an increase of 83 requests or 56% when compared to 2007/08) and more customers are receiving a response within 20 working days (98% in 2008/09, an increase of 6% on 2007/08)

- More choice of services available at the first point of contact through our Contact Centres. Contact Centres successfully retain Charter Mark (now known as Customer Service Excellence) demonstrating to an external assessor improvements made to customer service.
- More choice of services available on-line at [www.bolsover.gov.uk](http://www.bolsover.gov.uk) with the most popular services - payments, planning enquiries, abandoned vehicles, dog fouling, missed bins and litter – being improved to enable customers to report on line.
- More customers using the website for enquiries and service requests (2928 email enquiries and requests received in 2008/09, an increase of 9% on 2007/08).
- More customers and residents feel that the Council keeps them well informed through the variety of communications it uses – In Touch newsletter, website, A to Z of services, promotion at events (72% in 2008 (Citizens' Panel November 2008), an increase of 6% when compared to 2006)
- More young people engaged with the Council through its Young Voice project. Various projects and events have been undertaken.

Regarding the 2009-2011 strategy, as it essentially builds upon the work undertaken in the previous strategy, the main activity has been to cross reference it to any gaps identified in the corporate gap analysis for Customer Service Excellence and build into the implementation plan where appropriate. Achieving Customer Service Excellence by March 2010 is a key Corporate Plan target.

Regarding consultation, the strategy has been taken to Senior Management Team. Heads of Service and Customer Excellence Group members have been given an opportunity to comment also.

The strategy retains the same aim to 'improve the quality and consistency of services received by its customers and to deliver such services in the most effective manner possible', and long term vision that the strategy supports as set out below:

- Services meet the needs of customers. Service users can identify where services have improved.
- Increases levels of access to, and, satisfaction with, council services.
- Empowers its employees to manage and respond to customer contact positively.
- Improves access to services for hard to reach and minority groups.
- Continues to evaluate and progress joint working opportunities with partner organisations where this is mutually beneficial to the Council and its customers.

In delivering against the aim and the vision, and given the work undertaken to date, the strategy focuses on six main areas:

- a. Improving customer data collection and performance measurement.

- b. Embedding customer service standards and achieving national recognition.
- c. Reviewing and recommending how best to deliver customer service and access.
- d. Continuing to design and deliver services to meet the needs of customers.
- e. Continuing to improve internal and external communication.
- f. Expanding user engagement and consultation.

Activities have been assigned under each area within the implementation plan to deliver continuous improvement.

### **ISSUES/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION**

The production of a Customer Service and Access Strategy (and achievement of its milestones) is a key corporate plan target.

### **IMPLICATIONS**

Financial: None specifically for the strategy itself – any potential financial implications have been noted in the implementation plan and will be sourced through existing budgets or be subject to a revenue bid.

Legal: None

Human Resources: None specifically for the strategy itself – any potential staffing implications have been noted in the implementation plan and will be conducted in accordance with usual procedures. Training and development needs have also been noted within the strategy.

### **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

**That the Customer Service and Access Strategy 2009 – 2011 and its implementation plan be approved in line with the corporate plan target.**

### **REASON FOR DECISION TO BE GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION**

To have an approved Customer Service and Access Strategy to cover the period July 2009 to March 2011.

ATTACHMENTS:            **Y**

(1) Customer Service and Access Strategy 2009 – 2011

(2) Customer Service and Access Strategy – Implementation Plan 2009-2011

(3) Review and Evaluation of Implementation Plan 2007 - 2009

FILE REFERENCE:        N/A

SOURCE DOCUMENT:    N/A