

Committee:	Executive	Agenda Item No.:	8.
Date:	7 th September 2009	Status	Open
Category	2. Decision within the functions of Executive		
Subject:	Customer Satisfaction Policy		
Report by:	Customer Service and Access Officer		
Other Officers Involved	SMT Customer Excellence Group		
Director	CEO		
Relevant Portfolio Holder	Customer 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.

Having a formalised policy for measuring external customer satisfaction with council services will provide a framework for services to follow and enable consistent information to be obtained from customers on how satisfied or not they are with the way we provide services.

TARGETS

The production and implementation of the policy achieves one of the milestones contained within the Customer Service and Access Strategy 2009-11.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Implementation of the policy will enable the Council to make greater use of customer information to drive and measure performance. It will also help prioritise where improvements should be made.

THE REPORT

The Customer Satisfaction Policy is attached at pages 35 to 44.

The purpose of this policy is to formalise the Council's approach to customer satisfaction by setting out a framework on how often we should undertake measurement exercises, what measurement scales we should use and

clarifying responsibilities for the measurement activity. It is intended for the Customer Service and Performance Department to offer support to those departments seeking it by producing surveys, undertaking analysis and producing a report. This support will be offered to departments by way of a yearly programme whereby departments seeking assistance can book a slot. Support to be offered at a level which Customer Service and Performance Department can accommodate within existing resources. Supporting guidance has also been written to provide practical assistance to departments.

Implementation of the policy will enable the Council to make greater use of customer information to drive and measure performance, and shape its services.

The Council is also seeking Customer Service Excellence accreditation. This is the Government's national standard for excellence in customer service. Formally known as Charter Mark, the new standard places greater emphasis on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and having a robust system for measuring customer satisfaction. The adoption and implementation of this policy will help us formalise our approach to understanding the experiences that customers have when they receive services from us and how satisfied they are with those services. This is essential for achieving Customer Service Excellence.

The policy (and supporting guidance) has been developed following significant research into best practice and the running of three internal pilot projects during 2008 (Contact Centres, Sports Development and Creswell Leisure Centre).

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

ISSUES/OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

The production and implementation of a Customer Satisfaction Policy is a milestone within the Customer Service and Access Strategy 2009-2011. Achievement of the strategy's milestones is a key corporate plan target.

IMPLICATIONS

Financial: None specifically for the policy itself – the costs of undertaking customer satisfaction measurement activities to be borne by departments and will largely consist of printing and postage costs.

Legal: None

Human Resources: None specifically for the policy itself – CSPD will offer a programme of support to departments within their current resources.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Customer Satisfaction Policy be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION TO BE GIVEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE CONSTITUTION

To have an approved policy on Customer Satisfaction and to implement the framework contained within.

ATTACHMENTS: **Y**
(1) Customer Satisfaction Policy

FILE REFERENCE: N/A
SOURCE DOCUMENT: N/A

BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL
Customer Satisfaction Policy

This Policy addresses the following Corporate Aims:



The District of Bolsover Equalities Statement

The District of Bolsover is committed to equalities as an employer and in all the services provided to all sections of the community.

- ◇ The Council believes that no person should be treated unfairly and is committed to eliminate all forms of discrimination in compliance with the Equality Strategy.
- ◇ The Council also has due regard to eliminate racial discrimination and to proactively promote equality of opportunity and good relations between persons of different racial groups when performing its functions.

This document is available in large print and other formats from any of the Council Offices or by contacting the Chief Executives Directorate on 01246 242323. Please bear in mind we will need a few days to arrange this facility.

If you need help to read this document please do not hesitate to contact us.

Our Equality Improvement Officer can be contacted via [Email](#) or by telephoning 01246 242407.

Minicom: 01246 242450

Fax: 01246 242423

CONTROL SHEET

Details of Document	Comments / Confirmation
Title	Customer Satisfaction Policy
Document type – i.e. draft or final version	Final
Location of Policy	Internet and Intranet
Author of Policy	Customer Service & Access Officer
Member route for Approval & Cabinet Member concerned	Executive Councillor McGregor
Reviewed by Director of Strategy	Yes
Date Risk Assessment completed	25 th June 2009
Date Equality Impact Assessment approved	Undertaken 20 th May 2009
Partnership Involvement (if applicable)	
Date added to the Forward Plan	
Policy Approved by	
Date Approved	
Policy Review Date	September 2010 (and thereafter every 3 years)
Date forwarded to CSPD (to include on Intranet and	

Internet if applicable to the public)	
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1. Introduction

The significance of customer satisfaction has been recognised for some time at Bolsover and reflected in the Corporate Plan 2007 – 2011 as a target to ‘achieve overall satisfaction with council services to top 25% of local authorities by March 2010’ under the corporate aim of ‘providing excellent customer focused services’.

This approach has been strengthened by the addition of a number of local indicators for customer satisfaction for some customer facing departments.

Increasingly organisations like the Improvement Development Agency (IDeA), Audit Commission and Local Government Association (LGA) are stating that there is a significant opportunity for local government to improve its performance through more effective use of customer intelligence¹. It is unlikely that the council of the future will be regarded as performing well unless it is using customer information to drive and measure performance and shape its services.

The most useful set of customer information is:

- Customer satisfaction – measured for each service and by key customer segment
- Complaints, comments and compliments
- Mystery shopping results
- Service usage – customer numbers in total and by segment if available
- Customer views – obtaining, considering and using to improve services.

“People’s expectations of public services are rising and the financial climate is changing, putting pressure on authorities to deliver highly tailored services, without massive investment from central government, or excessive council tax increases”². It is therefore more important than ever to know whether we are meeting the expectations of our customers and residents and to demonstrate that we are delivering high quality services by the most cost-effective method. The use of customer intelligence helps us to achieve this.

The Council is also seeking Customer Service Excellence accreditation by March 2010. This is the Government’s national standard for excellence in

¹ IDeA (2006) Driving Improvement – a new performance framework for localities & IDeA (2006) Review of Customer Satisfaction Schemes

² The Local Government White Paper (October 2006) – Strong and Prosperous Communities

customer service. Formally known as Charter Mark, the new standard places greater emphasis on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and measuring customer satisfaction.

The purpose of this policy is to formalise the Council's approach to customer satisfaction. This will enable the Council to make greater use of customer information to drive and measure performance. It will also provide a good source of evidence for Customer Service Excellence.

2. Scope

For the purpose of this policy the term customer refers to external recipients of council services both mandatory and discretionary. It also relates to business organisations as well as individuals.

This policy applies to every department that provides services to external customers. Internal customer satisfaction is excluded from this policy. Separate arrangements and guidance are already in place for collecting and measuring internal satisfaction.

This policy also applies to those departments choosing to use the services of an external organisation to undertake their satisfaction exercise and measurement.

This policy refers to customer satisfaction surveys and measurement only.

Guidance supporting this policy will provide more practical information to assist departments.

2. Principles of the Policy

The following principles apply:

- Each (external) customer facing department to undertake a customer satisfaction exercise in accordance with this policy and proportionate to their service areas in terms of customer volumes and importance.
- Each (external) customer facing department to have relevant and meaningful local performance indicators and targets for customer satisfaction.
- Departments may decide to undertake other satisfaction exercises over and above the requirements of this policy.
- The adoption of a recognised satisfaction scale will enable the Council to produce a score by each exercise undertaken, which will enable departmental comparisons and some external benchmarking.

- It is essential that the information obtained through customer satisfaction exercises be used to improve services. This will be done through action/improvement plans.
- The collection of equalities monitoring data as part of the satisfaction exercise to be considered as to the relevance and benefit it would add to the information obtained. Where collected the standard equalities monitoring form will be used. Additional equalities and/or customer information may be sought with the agreement of the Customer Service and Access Officer.
- To provide opportunities for customers to provide additional comments and to be contacted by the relevant department where appropriate and/or beneficial.
- The results of satisfaction exercises to be publicised.
- To manage any personal data collected in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and appropriate departmental codes of practice.

4. Policy Statement

Satisfaction is determined by the quality of the customer's experience. It is therefore essential that only customers who have used a service are asked to rate their experience of it and in so doing provide a measure of satisfaction.

Quality is determined by a customer's **expectation** of a service and their **perception** of it once delivered. When a customer's expectation of a service is exceeded by their perception of the service the result is that they are usually satisfied/very satisfied with the service. Conversely if their perception of a service is less than their expectation of it then they are usually dissatisfied/very dissatisfied with the service. For example, it is reasonable for a customer ringing the Council to have their call answered within a reasonable time and for the person answering the call to be courteous and provide their name. If the call is not answered or takes a long time, if the person answering is off hand and gives no name then the customer is highly likely to be dissatisfied with the service.

Departments will need to consider which services this policy applies to and how best and how often the satisfaction exercise should be undertaken. For some services a 'by event' approach may be best, for example, issuing a survey form after an application has been assessed, for example, planning, benefit, grant. For services that are frequently used by customers, for example, Contact Centre service, refuse collection, then it is probably better to survey a sample of the customer database. (The supporting guidance will provide more information on sampling).The Citizen Panel may be a useful way to measure satisfaction with some universal services. It could also provide an audience of service users and non users to take part in in-depth discussions or surveys.

For key front line services it is recommended that satisfaction is either measured continually by event or annually, if sampling. There may be some exceptions to this, for example, a front line service may decide to undertake a comprehensive customer satisfaction survey every two years. However, the department would need to demonstrate that whilst formal measurement may only take place every two years that the service has other mechanisms in place to capture customer feedback on a regular basis, for example, customer comment cards, telephone interviews, on-line survey forms, focus groups.

For less frequently used services it is recommended that satisfaction is measured every two to three years. Once again it is important that departments have effective arrangements in place for capturing customer feedback.

Satisfaction measurement is an activity that asks customers to rate their satisfaction with the key aspects of the service in question (the customer journey) and from that produce an overall measure of satisfaction. This is to be done under this policy by either using a numerical rating scale (1 to 10) and producing a customer satisfaction index or by using a 5 point rating scale and adding together the very satisfied or satisfied scores to produce an overall score.

Careful thought needs to be given to the customer journey and typically will include access to the service, friendliness and professionalism of staff, understandable documents, clear service standards, being kept informed and delivering on promises. It is essential that we ask customers to rate their satisfaction with requirements that are important to them. Ideally this list of requirements should be informed by customers through focus groups or interview, however it is accepted that this may not be feasible in terms of resources for many services. However, this information can be captured through the satisfaction exercise by asking the customer to add any requirements which they felt were missing.

Two types of measurement will be allowed under this policy to enable departments to select the one most appropriate to their needs and to also provide some consistency of approach throughout the Council. The latter will enable departments to track their satisfaction scores over time and will also facilitate some internal and external benchmarking.

The first measure is known as a verbal scale – it is a five point scale as noted below:

	Very Satisfied	Satisfied	Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Very Dissatisfied
Question					

This scale is long established and used in the Place Survey³, which will enable some services to compare their satisfaction score with the Government's Biennial Survey.

The second scale is a 10 point numerical rating scale where 1 represents extremely dissatisfied or extremely unimportant and 10 represents extremely satisfied or extremely important. This type of measurement is also very established and is used to calculate a Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI). This is done by asking customers to first rate the importance of a set of requirements and then asking the customer to rate their satisfaction with the same set of requirements.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Requirement										

The methodology used to calculate a 'customer satisfaction index' or CSI is based on measuring an index of measures to reach a satisfaction score rather than asking one overall satisfaction question. As such it is considered to be a more accurate measure of satisfaction and also provides 'priorities for improvement' or the gaps between 'satisfaction' and 'importance' where we should be concentrating our efforts to improve the service.

Producing a customer satisfaction index will enable us to track progress year on year (or whenever the exercise is repeated) and enable the service to be benchmarked against the new UK Customer Satisfaction Index (CSI) collated by the Institute of Customer Service. This is the national measure of customer satisfaction with UK organisations, covering sectors such as transport, retail –food, utilities, government departments and agencies, and, local government.

Other measurement scales may be used with the agreement of the Customer Service and Access Officer. This will usually be for capturing customer feedback, for example short transactional surveys, which will support and complement the formal customer satisfaction measurement exercise.

The following methods can be used to measure satisfaction:

- Self completion methods, for example, postal surveys, web surveys, surveys on stand alone electronic devices.
- Interview methods by telephone, face to face.

The supporting guidance provides more information on survey methods.

All departments will need to complete a satisfaction proposal form for approval by the Customer Service and Performance Department prior to undertaking the survey. Corporate satisfaction exercises will be approved by the Customer Excellence Group.

³ A statutory consultation which replaces the 'Best Value General Satisfaction Triennial Survey'. The data from this survey informs many of the new national indicators.

The Customer Service and Performance Department is able to provide assistance and support in the form of survey design, analysis and reporting. This will be offered to departments in the form of a yearly programme of support whereby departments seeking assistance can book a slot.

5. Responsibility for Implementing the Policy

A good working knowledge of the policy and guidance will ensure that satisfaction exercises are carried out consistently throughout the Council.

The responsibilities and key actions for the Customer Service and Performance Department are:

- To provide advice and guidance on satisfaction matters to departments.
- To consider and approve routine satisfaction proposals.
- To provide a yearly programme of support whereby departments can book a slot for assistance with survey design, analysis and reporting.
- To liaise with Democratic Services over any scanning arrangements in connection with the yearly programme.

The responsibilities and key actions for Departments are:

- To undertake satisfaction activity in accordance with the policy and supporting guidance.
- To forward all satisfaction proposals to the Customer Service and Access Officer.
- To produce an action plan for improvement following the satisfaction exercise.
- To publicise the results of the satisfaction exercise to the target audience.

The responsibility and key actions for the Customer Excellence Group is:

- To consider and approve significant/corporate satisfaction proposals.
- To receive regular reports on satisfaction exercises undertaken and their results.
- To learn from best practice.

6. Supporting Guidance

The supporting guidance to this policy can be found on ERIC at