

Bolsover District Council

Executive

1st December 2014

(Joint) Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards

Report of the Cabinet Member for Customer Service

This report is public

Purpose of the Report

- To present to Executive for approval a joint Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards which demonstrates how both Councils will meet best practice and provide excellent customer service.

1 Report Details

In order to make customer service effective across the Strategic Alliance we have identified the need to review our existing policies and procedures in relation to customer service. The Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy and Procedure have already been reviewed and approved. This particular report will focus on the Corporate Customer Service Standards.

Background

Bolsover District Council introduced a Customer Service Code of Practice and associated Standards in June 2005 in preparation for achieving Customer Service Excellence Status (formally Charter Mark). Customer Service Excellence was developed to offer all organisations nationally, a practical tool for driving customer focused change. The standard is a mix of research, management and operational models and practical experience of providing services. It focuses 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. Customer Service Excellence is designed to operate on three distinct levels:

- As a driver of continuous improvement
- As a skills development tool
- As an independent validation of achievement.

Standards are the promises that we make to service users about the level and quality of service they can expect when they contact us. At Bolsover District Council our aim is "to serve our customers as we would wish to be served ourselves". The Customer Service Code of Practice and associated standards details standardised formats for all methods of contact which provide a platform to deliver improved services to customers, provide clarity

for customers and employees, and give a sound basis for employee training. They formalise good practice ensuring that the principles are embraced and adopted by all employees. They enable us to respond to and communicate with our customers in a consistent manner, no matter whom they contact.

Bolsover District Council currently sets targets against the Corporate Customer Service Standards and reports on performance to Improvement Group on a quarterly basis and also the Budget, Finance, Risk and Performance Quarterly Directorate Meetings (BFRP). Compliments, Comments and Complaints are also reported to Executive. In addition to this Contact Centres have their own operational procedures and PI's they work to.

In addition to the Corporate Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards Bolsover District Council has also produced a Customer Service Standards leaflet, an Employee Guide to Customer Service at Bolsover District Council and also delivers corporate mandatory Customer Service training to new starters and refresher training for existing staff.

The proposed joint Corporate Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards has been produced as a result of consultation and feedback from officers and members. It was agreed by Strategic Alliance Joint Committee in October that the new joint standards should be approved at both Councils.

2 Conclusions and Reasons for Recommendation

To assist and support joint working and standardise procedures across both authorities it would be beneficial to implement and work to one set of Customer Service Standards and Code of Practice. This joint approach has been welcomed by managers delivering joint services to the public.

The standards are required at Bolsover to ensure Customer Service Excellence accreditation is maintained. It may be appropriate timing, with the development of the new Corporate Plan, for North East Derbyshire to consider exploring accreditation against the national Customer Service Excellence standard. This would ensure officers at both Councils are working to the same national standard.

Subject to the Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards in Appendix 1 being approved the following will be developed:

- One standard Customer Service Standards leaflet with the same look and feel for both authorities
- Monitoring and reporting on the same standards will be established with comparable targets set for both authorities.
- Same sample periods for face to face monitoring set for both authorities, 1 week period twice a year
- Reporting on performance against the key Customer Service Standards on a quarterly basis to Improvement Group at Bolsover District Council and the Budget,

Finance, Risk and Performance Quarterly Directorate Meetings (BFRP) at both councils

- Due to low numbers received cease monitoring letters (written communication) at Bolsover District Council
- Deliver joint mandatory Corporate Customer Service Training in order to ensure consistency of Customer Service across joint services
- Report on performance against targets on PERFORM and align PI's.

The proposed joint standards and targets are:

Joint Strategic Alliance Corporate Customer Service Standards and Targets	
Service area	Service area
Telephones	Incoming calls to be answered within 20 seconds (5 rings)
Emails	To be acknowledged within 1 working day
Emails	To be replied to within 8 working days
Emails – if the subject is complex and or involves multiple service enquiries	To be replied to within 20 working days
Written communication (letters)	To be replied to within 10 working days
Written communication – Letters or faxes which are complex and or involves multiple service enquiries	To be replied to within a maximum of 20 working days
Face to Face (Contact Centre) excluding appointments	Not to be kept longer than 20 minutes
Face to Face (Contact Centre and departments)	Not to be kept waiting longer than 10 minutes for appointments, Meet & Greet, reception and visitors

These will replace all existing standards.

3 Consultation and Equality Impact

The standards have already been developed by a number of officers in the Customer Service and Improvement Department to ensure that they are fit for purpose. SAMT and SAJC have been consulted as well as representatives on the Improvement Group.

Data from an external consultation event on the existing Customer Service Standards at Bolsover has been used to form the new standards based on customer feedback.

A joint EIA has been carried out on the revised standards. The standards include equality information.

4 Alternative Options and Reasons for Rejection

In preparing the new standards consideration has been given to providing a consistent approach to customer service across the Strategic Alliance.

5 Implications

5.1 Finance and Risk Implications

A review of the standards is required but no finance or risk implications have been identified. Any changes to publicity will be achieved within existing budgets.

5.2 Legal Implications including Data Protection

The standards have been reviewed and no legal implications have been identified. The standards are in line with the Data Protection Act 1998.

5.3 Human Resource Implications

Once the revised standards have been approved all revised standards and documentation will be made available on the intranet for staff. Briefings will be delivered for internal staff and mandatory training for all new employees will be introduced.

The standards will be monitored and reported within existing staffing resources.

6 Recommendation

That Executive approve the joint Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards.

7 Decision Information

Is the decision a Key Decision? (A Key Decision is one which results in income or expenditure to the Council of £50,000 or more or which has a significant impact on two or more District wards)	No
District Wards Affected	Not applicable
Links to Corporate Plan priorities or Policy Framework	BDC - Customer Focused Services

8 Document Information

Appendix No	Title
1	Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards
Background Papers (These are unpublished works which have been relied on to a material extent when preparing the report. They must be listed in the section below. If the report is going to Cabinet (NEDDC) or Executive (BDC) you must provide copies of the background papers)	
Not applicable	
Report Author	Contact Number
Assistant Director – Customer Service and Improvement	BDC – 2343 NEDDC - 7029

Report Reference – Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards