

Corporate Customer Services Charter

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To seek approval for a Corporate Customer Services Charter.

2. Recommendations

2.1 **That the Corporate Customer Services Charter is approved and adopted by the Council.**

3. Link to the Corporate Business Plan 2005/06

3.1 A Corporate Customer Services Charter has direct links to the following corporate priorities:

- Customer Focus
- Equalities & Diversity
- Partnership Working

3. Background

3.1 Many Local Authorities have adopted Corporate Customer Services standards and have a published Customer Service Charter.

3.2 The position across the Wiltshire authorities is mixed, but a number of individual services areas or departments have developed service specific charters. In North Wiltshire there is currently no Corporate Customer Charter, but there is a service charters for Planning and Environmental Health.

3.3 It is an aspiration of the Wiltshire wide Customer First Partnership that all Authorities deliver a consistent customer experience and service standard across the partnership. This will involve the development of a single Customer Charter and Customer Access Strategy across Wiltshire.

3.4 There are a number of drivers which make it appropriate for North Wiltshire to develop its own Corporate Customer Service Charter. These include:

- Priority Outcome R29 - The Priority Outcomes for local e-Government is a means of providing an operational focus for e-Government implementation and use of IEG capital grant money. Priority outcome 29 involves the Council agreeing and publishing corporate standards for response to letters and e-mails. The deadline for this priority outcome is the 31st December 2005.
- In its recent Customer Focus Inspection the Audit Commission highlighted the absence of corporate Service Standards as a provisional weakness.
- A Charter Mark application has been made in respect of the Council's front of house service. To achieve the Charter Mark it is mandatory that the service has publicised service standards which are measured and reported on a regular basis.

- The adoption of a Customer Service Charter is acknowledged to be standard Customer Service practice. The objective is to increase consistency of service delivery across the organisation; customers will know the level of service which they can expect, and employees will know the level of service that needs to be delivered.
- The Council has recently revised the Comments & Complaints system to ensure they are handled in a consistent manner. In this regard, the adoption of Corporate Service Standards would appear to be a logical and natural progression and would assist in Ombudsman Investigations.

5. The Proposal

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Council adopts a Corporate Customer Service Charter as set out in Appendix 1.
- 5.2 In developing this Charter, officers have looked at other Local Authorities, including those within the Customer First Partnership. In addition, a realistic approach has been taken to ensure all standards are achievable within current resource levels.
- 5.3 It should be noted that the Customer First Partnership will be looking to develop a common Charter for Wiltshire, following consultation with citizens after further benchmarking of service standards across all Local Authorities.

6. Human Resources Implications

- 6.1 It will be an ongoing requirement for officers to undertake appropriate training to enhance their Customer Care skills so that standards are maintained and improved over time.

7. Equal Opportunities Implications

- 7.1 The Corporate Customer Service Charter will provide consistent service standards to all citizens and endeavours to cater for specific needs where these are identified.

8. Financial Implications

- 8.1 There are no financial implications resulting from this report.

9. Community/Environmental Implications

- 9.1 A Charter Mark will provide a standard which is transparent to the Local Community.

REPORT OF THE STRATEGIC MANAGER CUSTOMER SERVICES TO THE EXECUTIVE - 1ST DECEMBER 2005

Report Author: J Tavener
Customer Contact Team Leader
Telephone (external) 01249 706226 or Ext. 1226 (internal)
E-mail: jtavener@northwiltshire.gov.uk