

REPORT TO THE FINAL ACCOUNTS AND AUDIT COMMITTEE		Report No. 12
Date of Meeting	25 th September 2007	
Title of Report	Customer Focus Inspection Report	
Link to Corporate Priorities	Customers – to put our customers at the heart of everything we do	
Public Report	Yes	

<p>Summary of Report</p> <p>To present to the Committee the findings of the Audit Commission's Customer Focus inspection report.</p>
<p>Officer Recommendations</p> <p>Option 1: To note the findings of the report and endorse the need to continue work to effect the improvement action plan.</p>

Other than those implications agreed with the relevant Officers and referred to below, there are no other implications associated with this report.				
Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Community & Environmental Implications	Human Resources Implications	Equality & Diversity Implications
None	None	None	None	None

Contact Officer	Jackie Tavener Head of Customer Relations 01249 706226 jtavener@northwilts.gov.uk
------------------------	--

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to the Committee the findings of the Audit Commission's examination of progress made in relation to recommendations made from their original Customer Focus inspection report published in October 2005.

2. Options and Options Appraisal

- 2.1 Option 1: To note the findings of the report and endorse the need to continue work to effect the improvement action plan.
- 2.2 Option 2: To recommend another course of action.

3. Background Information

- 3.1 Improving Customer Focus was seen as a key improvement priority following the Council's Comprehensive Performance Assessment in 2004. As a consequence, the Audit Commission carried out an inspection of the Council's approach to customer focus in May 2005, in conjunction with studies in the other councils in Wiltshire, and published its final report in October 2005 (Appendix A). The Audit Commission assessed that North Wiltshire District Council provides **fair** customer focused services that have **promising** prospects for further improvement.
- 3.2 The report highlighted key recommendations to the Council arising from the inspection. The Council used the report and recommendations as the basis of an improvement action plan (Appendix B) to bring about the required improvements set out in the report.
- 3.3 The Audit Commission re-inspected the Council's Customer Focus on the 10th October 2006 and used the recommendations from the original report and the Council's improvement action plan as a basis to establish progress. This is reflected in the headings used in the detailed report published July 2007 (Appendix D). The audit approach involved a review of key documents (Appendix C) and interviews with staff.

4. Summary of Findings

- 4.1 The main conclusion from the Audit Commission's Customer Focus report is that the Council is making good progress in carrying forward its customer focus agenda. In arriving at this conclusion, the Audit Commission found and highlighted specific areas of improvement in relation to each of the key recommendations arising from the original report. These are set out in the detailed report section of Appendix D.
- 4.2 In summary, the Audit Commission concluded that the Council has:
- taken effective action to support and improve customer focus and access to services and information;
 - ensured that customer focus has been given a higher corporate profile;
 - established improved arrangements for communication and consultation;

- improved its understanding of customer needs through better use of surveys and introducing clear processes to support improvements in customer focus across the Council; and
- continued to work actively with neighbouring authorities to improve access and support better customer focus.

4.3 The Audit Commission made no further specific recommendations beyond those in the original report and recommended that the Council should continue to develop its approach to customer focus to give effect to those recommendations in line with the improvement action plan. However, it should be noted that the improvement action plan needs to be updated with progress since the Audit Commission's inspection and modified to reflect the recent unitary decision and associated impact on the Council's priorities. This work will be undertaken once the transitional corporate plan has been approved.

5. Implications

The Audit Commission is satisfied with the progress made in relation to their key recommendations and that the Council's action plan will give effect to those recommendations. As a consequence, the Council will need to develop and deliver the actions set out in the improvement action plan.

6. Risk Analysis

Failure to effect the recommendations would in turn have serious implications for any future audit assessment and would undermine the Council's ability to bring about the actions set out in the corporate plan.

Appendices:	Appendix A – October 2005 Customer Focus Inspection Report Appendix B – Customer Focus Improvement Action Plan Appendix C – Audit Commission Customer Focus Inspection Evidence Log Appendix D – July 2007 Customer Focus Performance Detailed Report
Background Documents Used in the Preparation of this Report:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit Commission Reports Appendix A & D

Previous Decisions Connected with this Report

Report	Committee & Date	Minute Reference
None	N/A	N/A