

# Report

**Subject:** : Review of Progress – Audit Commission Inspection: Customer Focus

**Report to** : The Cabinet

**Date** : Wednesday 15 November 2006

**Author** : Debbie Dixon

**Deputy Leader** : Cllr Fred Westmoreland

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### 1. Purpose of Report:

The purpose of this report is to:

- i) Update councillors on progress on the action plan agreed at Cabinet in October 2005 which was produced following the Audit Commission inspection;
- ii) Notify councillors of the Audit Commission's intention to undertake a follow up visit some time this winter.

### 2. Background:

- 2.1. As part of the Audit Commission's annual plan of work, an inspection of our approach to customer focus was undertaken in 2005.
- 2.2. The council submitted a self assessment against a nationally determined set of criteria and a wide portfolio of relevant documents.
- 2.3. The Audit Commission then undertook a range of 'mystery' shopping enquiries and reviewed our website. This was followed by a team of three inspectors spending 3 days with the council, interviewing councillors and staff, holding focus groups and assessing relevant strategies and plans.
- 2.4. The Audit Commission assessed the council as providing a 'good' two star customer focused service with promising prospects for improvement.
- 2.5. Following receipt of the Audit Commission report, an action plan was produced.



Awarded in:  
Housing Services  
Waste and Recycling Services



**3. Progress on the Action Plan:**

3.1. Solid progress has been made during the year to implement the plan. A summary indicating progress is attached as Appendix 1.

**4. Follow up Visit by the Audit Commission:**

4.1. The Audit Commission has indicated that a follow up visit will be made to the council this winter.

**5. Recommendations:**

Cabinet is asked to note progress and the anticipated return visit.

**6. Implications:**

- **Financial** : None
- **Legal** : None
- **Personnel** : None
- **ICT** : None
- **Community Safety:** None
- **Environmental** : None

## CUSTOMER FOCUS ACTION PLAN

Theme	Actions Undertaken	Future Actions	Lead
CUSTOMER FOCUS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extended opening hours agreed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pilot extended telephone hours to commence in Oct 07</li> </ul>	HF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Customer facing locations reviewed and standardised service introduced</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduction of Golden Numbers in June 07</li> </ul>	HF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Peripatetic clinic in Downton established</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek opportunities to develop partnership approach to rural service provision (e.g. mobile libraries)</li> </ul>	HF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Definitions of customer service indicators developed and implemented</li> </ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Set up panel of members of the public to advise on Customer Service Standards – to be undertaken via newly established on line panel (Dec 06)</li> </ul>	HF / SM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Significant ICT councillor training undertaken within framework of Customer Care Charter</li> </ul>		
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Future approach to telephony scheduled for Dec Cabinet</li> </ul>	HF / SA / LW
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Next revision of Customer Care Charter to incorporate councillors specifically June 07 (publication includes foreword by Leader of Council, therefore will be published after elections in May 07)</li> </ul>	HF
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Benchmarking of costs of customer services continuing through North West E-Government Group and Wiltshire Customer First project work</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Regular programme of team building and training events held for Customer Services staff</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Compulsory customer services training introduced for all staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Final sessions planned for Jan/Feb 07</li> </ul>	RB
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vision, objectives and work programme agreed with Customer First Partnership</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CRM introduced</li> </ul>		
COMMUNICATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Third tri-annual Public Satisfaction Survey currently underway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Target to be set for members of the public who consider themselves well informed about the council (Mar 07) and pro-active programme of work developed as part of the Local Government Association Reputations Project</li> </ul>	GG

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong corporate identify implemented for all new materials</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Withdrawal of unbranded material/signage by Dec 08</li> </ul>	GG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Intranet project scoped. Initial launch pre Christmas 06</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Future development of intranet to be considered in 07/08 Portfolio Plan</li> </ul>	GG
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Tenants compact strengthened with adoption of Tenant Empowerment Strategy in Feb 06</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Communication needs of young people assessed and a new website launched – Yeahbut.org.uk</li> <li>Focus group with young people in the Citizen planned for Nov 06</li> <li>Specific communications targeted at older people and other harder to reach groups to be considered in 07/08 Portfolio Plan</li> </ul>		GG
CONSULTATION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>3000 strong online customer panel (<b>VOICE&amp;CHOICE</b>) established and regular consultation commenced in Nov 06</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A two stage approach has been developed and agreed, which will see first umbrella organisations consulted on the needs of 'hard to reach' groups, followed by direct consultation with groups representing minority communities. This will see the groups receive funding to undertake research directly with individuals and report back to the council. The first phase of this consultation is to be completed by 1/4/07</li> </ul>		SM
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>New software procured to enable feedback newsletters to be sent to <b>VOICE&amp;CHOICE</b> panellists. Consultation web pages launched in 06 and consultation planner now in draft</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Web pages on consultation have been created and some recent consultation results have been mounted online. The new online panel <b>VOICE&amp;CHOICE</b> has dedicated pages where the results of every consultation will be posted</li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working to achieve accreditation with Market Research Society</li> <li>Increased resources applied to consultation within Democratic Services Team</li> </ul>		