

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**13 December 2018**

**REPORT OF SENIOR  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET DECISION**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE**

**SUMMARY**

Customer Service Excellence is a practical tool to support public services to drive customer-focused change and to evaluate success.

Customer Service Excellence accreditation is achieved through an objective external assessment of the Council's Customer Service delivery measured against the Customer Service Excellence standard.

The Council achieved Customer Service Excellence accreditation for the first time in June 2010 and has been reaccredited twice, once in May 2013 and again in May 2016. Accreditation operates on a three year cycle with two interim annual surveillance visits with the current accreditation due to expire in May 2019.

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the benefits and costs of Customer Service Excellence accreditation and to gain approval to seek accreditation for a further three years from May 2019.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That Cabinet note the Council's achievements in Customer Service Excellence including the 2018 surveillance assessment.
2. That Cabinet approve the continuation of Customer Service Excellence accreditation for three years from May 2019.

**DETAIL**

1. Customer Service Excellence was developed to offer public services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change within their organisation. It is focused on delivering excellent public services that are efficient, effective and place the citizen at the heart.
2. The foundation of the tool is the Customer Service Excellence standard which tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus 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.
3. Customer Service Excellence is designed to operate on three distinct levels:-

- **As a driver of continuous improvement.** By allowing an organisation to self-assess their capability, using the online self-assessment tool, in relation to customer focused service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement;
  - **As a skills development tool.** By allowing individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, thus building their capacity for delivering improved services;
  - **As an independent validation of achievement.** By allowing organisations to seek formal accreditation to the Customer Service Excellence standard, demonstrate their competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate their success.
4. There are 5 criteria that must be satisfied with a number of different elements within the criteria. To achieve the Standard, organisations must achieve full compliance or Compliance plus in at least 80% of the elements contained in each of the criteria.
5. In our Customer Service Excellence submission in May 2016 we were fully compliant in all elements, carried forward 2 Compliance Plus from previous surveillance visits and obtained 9 additional Compliance Plus At the 2017 surveillance visit we received one further Compliance Plus bringing the total to 12. Our last surveillance visit took place in June this year and our accreditation will continue for the final year of this cycle. Although there were are no new compliance plus scores, the existing ones still stand. The assessor commented that there was a range of evidence to demonstrate ways in which the Council goes above and beyond what might normally be expected and it is this which has enabled us to retain the compliance plus scores. He noted that this is a fantastic achievement, particularly given the challenging times facing local authorities.

**Appendix A** contains a summary of the Criteria and the Council's current position.

Customer Service Excellence is widely used by Local Authorities and other major institutions across the UK. With 12 points of compliance plus at this year's surveillance visit we are confident that Stockton Borough Council's performance is among the highest.

6. The annual Customer Service Awards recognises staff who exemplify Customer Service Excellence in practice and provides an opportunity to celebrate success across the Council's workforce. Judging panels include the voice forum of the Catalyst group, Customer Service Excellence assessors and Stockton Council Officers who allocate one award in each of the following categories:-
- **Pride of Stockton Award:** To recognise individuals who the judging panel consider to have helped others and to show them they are valued, trusted and supported in their actions.
  - **Extra Mile Award** To recognise individuals who have worked hard and are not afraid to try something new and have gone above and beyond the call of duty.
  - **Team Award** To recognise a team within our organisation which has made the most effective use of the individuals within it.
  - **Shining Star Award:** One member of staff is nominated by each Service Director and Xentrall Shared Services and is then voted for by staff.

7. One of the actions resulting from recommendations of the recent IIP accreditation is for the SBF Culture work stream to consider the development of a Customer Culture Statement, tied into the performance achieved through the Customer Service Excellence accreditation. As a response to this action we intend to review the current Customer Charter with the SBF Culture work stream.

### **COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS**

8. No changes to policy or service delivery are proposed as part of this report.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

9. Continuation of Customer Service Excellence will cost around £14k over the 3 year cycle, provision is made for this level of expenditure within the MTFP.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10. There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

11. The Customer Services Excellence accreditation is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

### **COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES**

12. Delivering Customer Service Excellence potentially impacts across all Council Plan policy principles.

### **CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS**

13. Customer Service Excellence does not have any corporate parenting implications

### **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

14. None.

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Education related?

No

Background Papers

None

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

All

Property

None

