

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**12 SEPTEMBER 2019**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

**CABINET INFORMATION ITEM**

**Access Communities and Community Safety - Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Steve Nelson**

**CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE (CSE)**

**SUMMARY**

CSE is a national quality mark that seeks to reward organisations that demonstrate a customer-focused commitment to all that they do. Certification to the CSE standard is through a rigorous assessment process which includes a review of documents that demonstrate compliance against each element of the standard and an on-site visit to observe practical evidence.

There are 5 criteria that must be satisfied with a number of elements within each. To achieve the Standard, the organisation must achieve full compliance or compliance plus in at least 80% of the elements contained in each of the criteria. Compliance plus is awarded for elements where particular strength is demonstrated.

Accreditation operates on a 3-year cycle, with a full assessment in year 1 followed up by 2 annual reviews to ensure standards are maintained. Stockton Council has been accredited with CSE since 2010 and has demonstrated continuous improvement through the assessment cycle. In the 2016 full assessment, the Council was awarded full accreditation with compliance plus in 9 elements.

The most recent full assessment was in June and July 2019, where staff from a range of Council services contributed supporting evidence and hosted visits for the assessors to observe practical examples.

As a result of the assessment the Council received certification for a further 3 years, achieving full compliance across all 57 aspects of assessment with compliance plus for 13 elements. During the on-site visit, the assessors were particularly impressed with the collaborative approach, the commitment to customers and the energy and enthusiasm of staff.

The full CSE assessment report is included in **APPENDIX A**.

**REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT**

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the Council's recent CSE assessment.

## DETAIL

1. The CSE standard 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.
2. The framework consists of 57 aspects of assessment grouped across 5 criteria: -
  - Customer Insight
  - Culture of the Organisation
  - Information and Access
  - Delivery
  - Timeliness and Quality of Service
3. Following the recent assessment in July 2019 the Council was re-accredited, achieving full compliance with all 57 aspects. 13 points of compliance plus were awarded, 4 within Customer Insight, 5 within the Culture of the organisation and 4 within Information and Access.
4. The CSE report (**APPENDIX A**) acknowledges that the Council has always done well in identifying the needs of its customers, stating that the increasing number of points of compliance plus to the current 13 is especially impressive against the background of significant change and reducing resources.
5. The assessment identifies the following key areas of strength across the organisation: -
  - Promoting and ensuring equality in access and provision of services (e.g. the project to increase digital inclusion)
  - Effective use of the data that is collected about customers; many examples were provided to show how the data has a clear impact on the development of services
  - The commitment to identifying and meeting the needs of groups who are hard to reach
  - The degree of flexibility and variety in the methods used to engage and consult with customers
  - The corporate commitment to the customer is clear and effectively communicated; this is clear from talking to staff at all levels and in all areas of the Council
  - Staff are motivated and excited to deliver the highest quality services for their customers
6. Most of the areas identified for development are aimed at progression of developments that are underway, with the addition of the following: -
  - Evidence from staff shows that they often go beyond simply answering a customer's question. Consider whether it would add value to develop an explicit awareness in all staff of the difference between 'answering a question' and 'solving the problem'.
  - Review the impact of complaints training given to staff in May 2019. How has this made a difference? Also, has the new complaints procedure made any difference?
  - Think about different ways to get customer feedback, avoiding the over-use of surveys
  - Consider any other areas where further compliance plus scores might be achieved at the annual review, particularly in criteria 4 and 5.
7. The next annual review is due in July 2020 where progress against developments will be assessed.

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