

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

15 OCTOBER 2020

**REPORT OF CORPORATE
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET INFORMATION ITEM

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

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE

SUMMARY

Customer Service Excellence is a national quality mark that seeks to reward organisations that demonstrate a customer-focused commitment to all that they do. Certification to the Customer Service Excellence 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. 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 Customer Service Excellence since 2010 and has demonstrated continuous improvement through the assessment cycle. In the 2019 full assessment, the Council was awarded full accreditation with compliance plus in 13 elements.

The 12 month review took place in July 2020. Due to COVID19 the approach was quite different this year. Documentary evidence was submitted in the usual way but all meetings with the assessor were conducted over Microsoft Teams. Staff from a range of Council services contributed supporting evidence and participated in review meetings with the assessor.

The Council has retained full certification, achieving full compliance across all 57 aspects of assessment with compliance plus for 17 elements, 4 of which are in addition to the 13 achieved last year. The assessor was particularly impressed with the Council's response to the COVID pandemic and commented on the passion and dedication of the staff, the responsiveness to customer needs and the partnership working.

The 12 month review report is included in **APPENDIX A, Section C, Page 11**.

The Annual Staff Awards for Customer Service Excellence presents a great opportunity to recognise and celebrate the successes of staff and includes awards in a number of categories. This year the usual categories have been streamlined to allow for the addition of an apprenticeship award and two special categories to recognise the outstanding contributions of staff during the unprecedented challenges we've faced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

REASONS FOR PRODUCING THIS REPORT

The purpose of this report is to inform Cabinet of the outcomes of the Council's recent Customer Service Excellence review and the changes in categories for the Annual Staff Awards.

DETAIL

Customer Service Excellence 12 Month Review

1. The Customer Service Excellence 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. 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. Following 12 month review in July 2020 the assessor confirmed that the Council continues to meet the Customer Service Excellence standard with full compliance with all 57 aspects and awarded compliance plus in a further 4 aspects, bringing the total to 17, 5 (1) within Customer Insight, 6 (1) within the Culture of the organisation, 5 (1) within Information and Access and 1 (1) within Timeliness and Quality of Service. (The numbers in brackets are the new ones achieved from this review).
5. The report (**APPENDIX A, Section C, Page 11.**) acknowledges that over recent months, the Council has had to deal with the impacts of the pandemic and has been able to transform the way it works with residents quickly and effectively. The assessor observed that many commercial organisations would be envious of the agility and effectiveness that has been demonstrated and the way that partnership working has enabled complex delivery and logistical issues to be handled very effectively.
6. The assessment identifies the following examples that shone out that the Council should be really proud of: -
 - The continued passion and dedication of staff. There were many examples to demonstrate how staff are continuing to go above and beyond for customers.
 - Teamwork across the organisation has developed evening further during the COVID crisis and staff are hopeful that this will continue.
 - The offer to customers has developed over recent months and become ever more personalised and holistic. There is a real sense that staff consider the customer at every interaction and this focus helps them to think widely of the customers' needs and find ways to meet these.
 - The communication processes have evolved and developed through the COVID crisis to make sure that everyone both inside and outside the organisation have access to relevant, comprehensive and up to date information.
 - Partnerships with other organisations have developed in order to meet the challenges of COVID and meet the needs of customers.

7. The review of the areas identified for development at the 2019 assessment was positive, with progress acknowledged in most, including the rapid developments in digital delivery due to COVID and the identification of a further 4 points of compliance plus.
8. The new areas for development that were identified were related to learning from the COVID crisis, considering what could be preserved in permanent improvements and suggestions for the wellbeing of homeworking staff, including virtual staff rooms and separation of home and work life.
9. The 24 month review is due to take place in July 2021.

Annual Staff Awards

10. The usual categories for the Annual Staff awards are as follows:-

- **Star Employee Award**
An individual who has made a positive contribution at work for the whole Council.
- **Pride of Stockton Award**
An individual who has helped others and generated real trust which has enabled them to make a profound difference to the lives of those they have helped.
- **Extra Mile Award**
An individual who has worked hard, have demonstrated that they are not afraid to try something new and have gone above and beyond the call of duty.
- **Team Award**
This award recognises a team within our organisation which has made the most effective use of the individuals within it.

11. This year the categories this have changed to include an apprenticeship award and two awards to recognise the contributions of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic response. This year's categories are as follows:-

- **Star Employee Award**
An individual who has made an outstanding contribution at work for the whole Council.
- **Star Apprentice Award**
An apprentice who has demonstrated outstanding achievements and made a positive contribution to the Council's services to customers.
- **Pride of Stockton Team Award**
A team who has excelled in helping others and generated real trust which has enabled them to make a profound difference to the lives of those they have helped.

COVID Special Awards

- **Caring Colleague Award**
An outstanding example of an individual who has provided guidance and practical or emotional support to other colleagues through the COVID crisis.
- **Outstanding Contribution Award**
(*Special Recognition for multiple nominees*).
Teams or individuals who have made an outstanding contribution to the Council's COVID response work beyond the expectations of their day job,

12. Nominations are now open and the Awards are planned to take place as soon as it is feasible.

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