

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee** Cabinet

**Date of Committee** 26th February 2009

**Report Title** Review of Customer Focus

**Summary** A panel of elected Members from the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee has undertaken a review of the extent to which this authority is customer focused. The panel's recommendations have been endorsed by the committee and are now before Cabinet for adoption.

**For further information please contact:** Paul Williams Overview and Scrutiny Officer  
Tel: 01926 418196  
paulwilliamscl@warwickshire.gov.uk

Cllr David Booth  
Tel: 01926 640728  
cllrbooth@warwickshire.gov.uk

**Would the recommendation decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]** No.

**Background papers** None

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-**

Details to be specified

- Other Committees  Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 13th January 2009
- Local Member(s)  N/A
- Other Elected Members  .....
- Cabinet Member  Councillor Heather Timms
- Chief Executive  Jim Graham
- Legal  Jane Pollard
- Finance  .....
- Other Chief Officers  All Strategic Directors

District Councils  .....

Health Authority  .....

Police  .....

Other Bodies/Individuals  .....

**FINAL DECISION YES**

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:**

Details to be specified

Further consideration by this Committee  .....

To Council  .....

To Cabinet  .....

To an O & S Committee  .....

To an Area Committee  .....

Further Consultation  .....

## Cabinet - 26th February 2009.

### Review of Customer Focus

#### Report of the Chair of the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

##### Recommendation

That Cabinet adopts for implementation the recommendations of the Review of Customer Focus.

1. During the summer of 2007 Warwickshire County Council hosted an IDeA peer review. The report resulting from that review contained a series of observations one of which was that the council was not sufficiently outward looking. In response to this statement the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee agreed to undertake a review looking at the extent to which the authority was customer focused.
2. The committee agreed to establish a working party of five County Councillors that would gather a range of evidence, develop its conclusions and propose a series of recommendations. The Members selected were Councillors Booth, Cavanagh, Haynes, Shilton and Smith. Councillor Timms, the Portfolio Holder, was invited to attend the panel meetings and did so as time permitted. Councillor Booth was elected to the Chair of the panel.
- 3 The panel first met in April 2008. From that meeting the aims and objectives of the review were identified. These were to,
  - I. Produce a series of recommendations leading from the current position to one of excellence in terms of customer service.
  - II. Agree a series of recommendations for actions that would,
    - Lead to improved public satisfaction with the County Council's service delivery.
    - Result in improvements to the systems the council operates for the benefit of our customers.
    - Produce a more responsive organisation that places our customers at the centre of everything the council does.
    - Facilitate the Council's achievement of the Customer Excellence Standard (replacing Chartermark)
    - Increase the amount of joined up working done with our partners.

4. Throughout this review the panel learned a considerable amount about what makes good customer service, the actions and processes that are needed to satisfy our customers and the opportunities available to us for future customer care development.
5. The panel's report was considered by the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2009. The committee resolved, "That subject to a slight amendment to recommendation 16 the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee endorse the panel's recommendations for adoption by the Cabinet." The amendment referred to is the addition of a reference to borough and district councils to the recommendation in question.
6. Strategic Directors Leadership Team (SDLT) considered the report on 21<sup>st</sup> January. SDLT made the following comments requesting that they be noted by Cabinet.
  - I. Recommendation 12- to be changed to include training for all Members, and not just newly elected Members.
  - II. Recommendation 15 – to be strengthened to increase officer ownership of calls from the public.
  - III. Recommendation 18 – to be expanded to clarify the term "new technology-based initiatives.
7. For ease of reference the panel's recommendations can be found in Appendix 1 to this report. The main report containing background information, evidence, conclusions and recommendations is Appendix 2.
8. Appendix 3 sets out in a table the recommendations with associated timescales and responsible officers. Whilst the Strategic Director of Performance and Development is cited in at least half of the recommendations it should be noted that, as stated in the main report, the collective responsibility for the successful implementation of the recommendations rests with all Strategic Directors, Members and other officers.
9. The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee is conscious that the target deadlines for some of the recommendations are challenging. It is also sensitive to the current financial position that the Council finds itself in. In considering this report Cabinet may take the view that it will be necessary to relax timescales slightly although failure to implement any of the recommendations would be regrettable.
10. In the light of the identified need to sharpen the authority's customer focus Cabinet is requested to adopt this review's recommendations for implementation.

CLLR DAVID BOOTH  
Chair of the Resources, Performance and  
Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Shire Hall, Warwick

## **Review of Customer Focus Recommendations**

### **Culture**

#### **Recommendation 1**

By June 2009, the Chief Executive should introduce a policy that requires that in any twelve-month period the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service will spend at least two full days working on the frontline of their service. As part of their performance monitoring process these managers will report back to their manager on their experience and any changes they have made as a result of their experience. Where appropriate, Heads of Service will introduce this requirement to other managers.

Once a year SDLT will consider a report produced by Strategic Directors outlining the key lessons learnt and actions taken. Responsibility for the production of this report will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development. The first annual report will be considered by SDLT in June 2010.

#### **Recommendation 2**

That following the June 2009 election Group Leaders ensure that all their Members undertake to spend the equivalent of at least one day a year helping in the direct provision of service. At end of the municipal year in April 2010 a report will be presented to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing the way in which Members have fulfilled this requirement and setting out the learning points from their experience.

#### **Recommendation 3**

That at the end of the municipal year, the Corporate Services Portfolio holder be required to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on their actions to improve customer service across the authority. As County Council elections are to be held in June 2009 the first report should be made in September 2009 and in the May of subsequent years.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the County Council should, on the successful completion of the trial by the Customer Service and Access Team, push ahead with achieving Customer Service Excellence status by the whole authority. Responsibility for this will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development although all Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive will be expected to make a full contribution.

## Recommendation 5

That by June 2009 all Strategic Directors to have identified one member of staff, below Head of Service level, from their respective directorate to act as a customer service liaison officer. These officers should form a panel that will specifically consider customer service across the authority, share good practice and co-ordinate work to avoid duplication and resource wastage. The panel will hold its inaugural meeting and agree its terms of reference before October 2009. Responsibility for ensuring the establishment of this panel will rest with the Head of Customer Service and Access although each directorate will be required to contribute to its ongoing operation.

## Recommendation 6

A. That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be required to ensure that customers' accessing services via the Contact Centre continue to be greeted by a person and not a recorded message offering options.

B. That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development and the Strategic Director of Resources give consideration to the introduction of clearly legible and visible name badges for staff.

## Training and Recruitment

### Recommendation 7

That by March 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development has ensured that as many members of staff as possible have received via e-mail or Lotus Notes an electronic version of "Putting our Customers First". A statement explaining the importance of good customer care to staff should accompany the circulation of this document and reference to it should be included in the "core brief" given to all staff.

### Recommendation 8

By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have modified the appraisal process to take account of the need to provide excellent customer service. All staff should be required to account for their role in providing excellent customer services whilst managers should assist staff in recognising training needs and ensuring that they are familiar with the customer service guide "Putting our Customers First".

### Recommendation 9

That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that by September 2009 customer service orientation is included in the person specification for all staff and assessed as part of the recruitment process.

## Recommendation 10

That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have developed a series of options for:

- a) enhancements to the new staff induction process to increase the emphasis on customer service and
- b) the introduction of biennial customer service training for all staff and Members  
Options to be brought to Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

## Recommendation 11

That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development explores opportunities for Members and officers to participate in the training offered by the Institute of Customer Service.

## Recommendation 12

That by June 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, working with equality and diversity officers, to have reviewed equality and diversity training for new elected Members ensuring that it is given a prominent position in the overall new Member induction and on-going training package.

## Recommendation 13

A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that relevant staff have briefed all directorate management teams on the role and availability of the translation service.

B) That a review be undertaken by September 2009 of the processes used to ensure that translation services (both written and verbal) are easily accessible to members of staff and customers. This review should include consideration of the best way of using the language skills of staff across the authority and wider public sector.

## Recommendation 14

A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be requested to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the issues facing the Council and its partners resulting from equality and diversity- related issues.

B) That the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee gives consideration to undertaking further work on equality and diversity issues.

## **Processes**

### **Recommendation 15**

All Strategic Directors to require that where possible their staff avoid passing customers from one place to another. During published business hours, customers ringing frontline service phone numbers should be given one hand-off at most. If the customer does not come through to the correct service area the second officer should give the customer the choice of taking full details or ensure a call back from the correct area.

### **Recommendation 16**

By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development gives consideration to the production of a welcome pack to be distributed to estate agents and housing associations for the use of new or re-locating residents to Warwickshire. The outcome of discussions on this matter should be reported to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

### **Recommendation 17**

Consideration should be given to modifying the Council's website to facilitate feedback from customers. A specific and clearly identified area of the homepage should encourage customers to report good and less than satisfactory customer service. This facility should be repeated elsewhere in the website where specific services have been offered.

### **Recommendation 18**

That the Strategic Director of Resources report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2009 on progress with new technology-based initiatives for the reporting of problems by customers, case-load tracking, feeding back progress and the completion of the customer service cycle.

### **Recommendation 19**

That by September 2009 SDLT has agreed standards for customer service follow-up with a view to annual reports being made to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## **Partnership**

### **Recommendation 20**

That as part of his regular reporting on progress with the development of the customer service and access agenda the Strategic Director of Performance and Development updates the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress towards greater collaborative service delivery



between agencies including the Police, Primary Care Trust district and borough councils and county council.

### Recommendation 21

That consideration be given by the Strategic Director of Performance and Development of ways in which customer service related training can be developed in conjunction with partner agencies.

### Recommendation 22

That Strategic Directors undertake to ensure that when the authority commissions services and lets new contracts there is a requirement within those contracts that people working under them abide by the County Council's customer service ethos.

APPENDIX 2 ITEM 5

**WARWICKSHIRE COUNTY  
COUNCIL - REVIEW OF  
CUSTOMER FOCUS**

DECEMBER 2008



## INDEX

Section	Page
Foreword	2
Executive Summary and Recommendations	
1.0 Introduction	3
2.0 Main Findings of the Customer Focus Review Panel	4
3.0 Recommendations of the Customer Focus Review Panel	6
Main Report of the Customer Focus Review Panel	
4.0 Introduction	11
4.2 Background	11
4.3 The Review Panel and its Remit	12
4.4 The Process Followed	13
4.5 Customer Service and Customer Focus	14
4.6 Customer Service in Warwickshire County Council	16
4.7 Council-wide Initiatives	17
4.8 The Experience of Directorates	19
4.9 Challenges Facing the County Council	23
5.0 Examples of Good Practice from the Private Sector Around the County	27
6.0 Further Opportunities for Development	30
7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations	33
Appendices	44 (available to view on website)

## Foreword by Councillor David Booth, Chair of Review of Customer Focus Panel



Local authorities exist to serve the people and communities in their area of responsibility. The vision statement of Warwickshire County Council is:

*Working in partnership to put customers first; improve services and lead communities*

It follows that the council must have a strong customer focus. To achieve this focus officers and Members must look at the delivery of services from the customer's point of view. Services provided must be determined by customer need, tempered by the resources available. The delivery of a service should meet or surpass customer expectation; when this is not possible the customer must be informed of the reasons why and told what other options are available to them.

In recent years Warwickshire County Council has worked hard to make our services more accessible. We have invested in: one-stop shops, for face-to-face enquires; a customer contact centre, for telephone enquiries; Internet access and a limited phone texting service. The council is more accessible than it has ever been, but good service is more than making contact with the council. The people, resources and processes need to be in place to deliver the services requested, keeping the customer informed of progress and ensuring that the customer is satisfied with the service delivered – the completion of the customer cycle.

This review goes beyond one-stop shops and the contact centre. It is about the culture, processes and training of the organisation, and its partners, to provide the customer with a good, friendly, timely and helpful service.

The panel's five members have reviewed information from the private and public sector. We heard from the council's officers about good practice and many of the on-going projects to improve service delivery that are being developed by our teams and departments. We have looked at reviews of customer satisfaction and drawn on our own experience with the council's customers from surgeries and casework.

I believe that we have we have developed a set of robust recommendations that when implemented will make a major contribution to the council's quest for customer service excellence.

This report would not have been possible without the work and dedication of many of the council's officers. On behalf of the panel I thank them all for the hard work and co-operation.

# Executive Summary and Recommendations

## 1.0 Introduction

1.1 In the summer of 2007 Warwickshire County Council hosted an IDeA peer review. The report resulting from that review was published in October 2007. The report contained a series of observations one of which was that the council was not sufficiently outward looking. In response to this statement the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the council agreed in January of 2008 to undertake a review looking at the extent to which the authority was customer focused.

1.2 The committee agreed to establish a working party of five County Councillors that would gather a range of evidence, develop its conclusions and propose a series of recommendations. The panel first met on 8<sup>th</sup> April 2008. From that meeting the aims and objectives of the review were identified. These were to,

1. Produce a series of recommendations leading from the current position to one of excellence in terms of customer service.
2. Agree a series of recommendations for actions that would,
  - Lead to improved public satisfaction with the County Council's service delivery.
  - Result in improvements to the systems the council operates for the benefit of our customers.
  - Produce a more responsive organisation that places our customers at the centre of everything the council does.
  - Facilitate the Council's achievement of the Customer Excellence Standard (replacing Chartermark)
  - Increase the amount of joined up working done with our partners.

1.3 Throughout this review the panel learned a considerable amount about what makes good customer service, the actions and processes that are needed to satisfy our customers and the opportunities available to us for future customer care development.

1.4 In developing the recommendations below the review panel has been keen to ensure that anything it is proposing is realistic and achievable. This is not to say that the panel has been conservative in its outlook. On the contrary it believes that if Warwickshire County Council is to deliver a truly excellent service to its customers so it must explore and push the boundaries of what is possible.

## **2.0 Main Findings of the Customer Focus Review Panel**

### **2.1 General**

- 2.2 Whilst the delivery of excellent customer care is not of itself difficult, in a large organisation such as a county council it does depend on every person and process involved performing to the optimum.
- 2.3 Processes can be changed relatively easily although such changes may require new investment. The greater challenge is in changing the culture of the organisation to the extent that every person working for it places their customers at the heart of what they do.
- 2.4 Public sector organisations such as local authorities can learn a great deal from the approach adopted by many private sector companies. Sometimes the profit-driven culture of a private organisation will lead to innovations that appear alien on first acquaintance to the public sector. However, a few moments reflection will often reveal the facets of the private sector customer service ethos that can be exploited for the benefit of public customers.
- 2.5 The private sector, like the public sector, is characterized by good and bad examples of customer care. In recent years the importance of good customer care has been increasingly recognised. Business and public organisations are more accountable for the quality of the service they provide and in addition the expansion of electronic communication (e-mails, websites, texts, mobile phones etc) means that cases of good or bad customer service can be broadcast globally at the touch of a button. Reputations that have taken years to develop can be destroyed in moments through the failure of one individual or process and in addition the potential financial cost in terms of lost custom or litigation can be huge.
- 2.6 Definitions of good customer service do vary from one organisation to another. Some agencies will consider that rapid answering of phones, e-mails or other means of communication is proof of good customer service. Others will regard high levels of what is known as “avoidable contact” as being evidence of poor service. Many organisations (including local authorities) seek to gather the opinions of their customers. However, some will choose to act on what they learn whilst others will choose to ignore the information they gather.

### **2.7 Customer Service and Warwickshire County Council**

- 2.8 Warwickshire County Council is already working to improve its levels of customer care. Every directorate in the authority is striving to ensure that key aspects of their service are tailored to meet the needs and expectations of their customers.
- 2.9 The size of the organisation, the range and diversity of the customers it serves and the diverse nature of its employees does, however, mean that on occasions levels of customer care do fall short of that which most people would consider acceptable. To some extent, such failures are understandable. The key is to

ensure that a culture exists within the organisation that will seek to learn from service failings and work to improve the situation for the future. This is something that aside from the work of this panel the authority is working to ensure.

- 2.10 Warwickshire County Council monitors response times to letters, telephones and e-mails. Performance is reported regularly to Overview and Scrutiny Committees and when it falls short of targets, work is undertaken to isolate and address them. The County Council also undertakes customer satisfaction surveys. These go some way to furnishing it with evidence of good customer care. Nevertheless, these surveys only give a limited picture and can be skewed by the nature of the service being provided.

## **2.11 The Scope for Developing a Customer-Focused Ethos in Warwickshire County Council**

- 2.12 The panel has established that the variety of the council's customers and the breadth of the services provided preclude the establishment of a single model of customer care. The answer is to have in place a range of tools and processes that can be marshaled in response to the specific needs of the customer, the service required and the officers and Members delivering that service.
- 2.13 The challenge for the authority is to be certain that it has in place the processes that underlie and will enable the development of this responsive approach.
- 2.14 This review has considered a range of different initiatives for improving customer care and engendering a customer-based culture. Some of these involve small changes that can potentially bring about major cultural shifts. Others may require longer and some serious investment.
- 2.15 The panel has recognised that customer service can be enhanced by the appropriate use of new technologies. Only by tracking caseloads can we be certain that the customer service cycle is being completed. That tracking process and the communication to our customers of the results of our efforts can be aided by new software and methods of communication.
- 2.16 The panel has explored the role of management and leadership in customer care. Some of its conclusions and recommendations relate specifically to managers within the authority. Within Warwickshire County Council the shift to customer care excellence most certainly need to be led from the top.
- 2.17 It is important to have regard to the role of partnerships in the development and delivery of good customer service. The panel has heard of the potential of closer engagement with partners and Members have shared their experience of working with partners, contractors and out-workers. Clearly ensuring a customer-focused ethos amongst those over whom the council has no direct control can be challenging. Nevertheless it is seen by the panel as essential for the delivery of a seamless service.



### **3.0 Recommendations of the Customer Focus Review Panel**

**Note - It is the collective responsibility of all Members, Strategic Directors and other officers to ensure the implementation of the recommendations below. Whilst an individual (such as a specific Strategic Director) may be identified in a recommendation, this is to ensure that someone has oversight of its implementation rather than sole responsibility for it.**

#### **3.1 Culture**

##### **Recommendation 1**

By June 2009, the Chief Executive should introduce a policy that requires that in any twelve-month period the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service will spend at least two full days working on the frontline of their service. As part of their performance monitoring process these managers will report back to their manager on their experience and any changes they have made as a result of their experience. Where appropriate, Heads of Service will introduce this requirement to other managers.

Once a year SDLT will consider a report produced by Strategic Directors outlining the key lessons learnt and actions taken. Responsibility for the production of this report will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development. The first annual report will be considered by SDLT in June 2010.

##### **Recommendation 2**

That following the June 2009 election, Group Leaders ensure that all their Members undertake to spend the equivalent of at least one day a year helping in the direct provision of service. At end of the municipal year in April 2010 a report will be presented to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing the way in which Members have fulfilled this requirement and setting out the learning points from their experience.

##### **Recommendation 3**

That at the end of the municipal year, the Corporate Services Portfolio holder be required to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on their actions to improve customer service across the authority. As County Council elections are to be held in June 2009 the first report should be made in September 2009 and in the May of subsequent years.

##### **Recommendation 4**

That the County Council should, on the successful completion of the trial by the Customer Service and Access Team, push ahead with achieving Customer Service

Excellence status by the whole authority. Responsibility for this will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development although all Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive will be expected to make a full contribution.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That by June 2009 all Strategic Directors to have identified one member of staff, below Head of Service level, from their respective directorate to act as a customer service liaison officer. These officers should form a panel that will specifically consider customer service across the authority, share good practice and co-ordinate work to avoid duplication and resource wastage. The panel will hold its inaugural meeting and agree its terms of reference before October 2009. Responsibility for ensuring the establishment of this panel will rest with the Head of Customer Service and Access although each directorate will be required to contribute to its ongoing operation.

#### **Recommendation 6**

A. That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be required to ensure that customers' accessing services via the Contact Centre continue to be greeted by a person and not a recorded message offering options.

B. That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development and the Strategic Director of Resources give consideration to the introduction of clearly legible and visible name badges for staff.

### **3.2 Training and Recruitment**

#### **Recommendation 7**

That by March 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development has ensured that as many members of staff as possible have received via e-mail or Lotus Notes an electronic version of "Putting our Customers First". A statement explaining the importance of good customer care to staff should accompany the circulation of this document and reference to it should be included in the "core brief" given to all staff.

#### **Recommendation 8**

By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have modified the appraisal process to take account of the need to provide excellent customer service. All staff should be required to account for their role in providing excellent customer services whilst managers should assist staff in recognising training needs and ensuring that they are familiar with the customer service guide "Putting our Customers First".

#### **Recommendation 9**

That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that by September 2009 customer service orientation is included in the person specification for all staff and assessed as part of the recruitment process.

#### **Recommendation 10**

That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have developed a series of options for:

- a) enhancements to the new staff induction process to increase the emphasis on customer service and
- b) the introduction of biennial customer service training for all staff and Members. Options to be brought to Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.

#### **Recommendation 11**

That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development explores opportunities for Members and officers to participate in the training offered by the Institute of Customer Service.

#### **Recommendation 12**

That by June 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, working with equality and diversity officers, to have reviewed equality and diversity training for new elected Members ensuring that it is given a prominent position in the overall new Member induction and on-going training package.

#### **Recommendation 13**

A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that relevant staff have briefed all directorate management teams on the role and availability of the translation service.

B) That a review be undertaken by September 2009 of the processes used to ensure that translation services (both written and verbal) are easily accessible to members of staff and customers. This review should include consideration of the best way of using the language skills of staff across the authority and wider public sector.

#### **Recommendation 14**

A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be requested to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the issues facing the Council and its partners resulting from equality and diversity- related issues.

B) That the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee gives consideration to undertaking further work on equality and diversity issues.

### **3.3 Processes**

#### **Recommendation 15**

All Strategic Directors to require that where possible their staff avoid passing customers from one place to another. During published business hours, customers ringing frontline service phone numbers should be given one hand-off at most. If the customer does not come through to the correct service area the second officer should give the customer the choice of taking full details or ensure a call back from the correct area.

#### **Recommendation 16**

By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development gives consideration to the production of a welcome pack to be distributed to estate agents and housing associations for the use of new or re-locating residents to Warwickshire. The outcome of discussions on this matter should be reported to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### **Recommendation 17**

Consideration should be given to modifying the Council's website to facilitate feedback from customers. A specific and clearly identified area of the homepage should encourage customers to report good and less than satisfactory customer service. This facility should be repeated elsewhere in the website where specific services have been offered.

#### **Recommendation 18**

That the Strategic Director of Resources report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2009 on progress with new technology-based initiatives for the reporting of problems by customers, case-load tracking, feeding back progress and the completion of the customer service cycle.

#### **Recommendation 19**

That by September 2009 SDLT has agreed standards for customer service follow-up with a view to annual reports being made to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

### **3.4 Partnership**

#### **Recommendation 20**

That as part of his regular reporting on progress with the development of the customer service and access agenda the Strategic Director of Performance and Development updates the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress towards greater collaborative service delivery between agencies including the Police, Primary Care Trust district and borough councils and county council.

**Recommendation 21**

That consideration be given by the Strategic Director of Performance and Development of ways in which customer service related training can be developed in conjunction with partner agencies.

**Recommendation 22**

That Strategic Directors undertake to ensure that when the authority commissions services and lets new contracts there is a requirement within those contracts that people working under them abide by the County Council's customer service ethos.

## **Main Report of Customer Focus Review Panel**

### **4.0 Introduction**

4.1 This report sets out the purpose of the review into customer focus. As well as providing the reader with an account of the background to the review it discusses in some detail a number of the initiatives already being pursued by the County Council, describes examples of good practice from the world of business, looks at what we could and perhaps should be doing and ends with the panel's conclusions and recommendations.

#### **4.2.0 Background**

4.2.1 Until relatively recently bodies such as Warwickshire County Council tended to regard the people they served as "the public". The public was almost regarded as a single entity that absorbed those services that the local authority either chose or was statutorily required to provide it. Over the last few years, however, public bodies have been evolving towards a state where the service they provide is tailored as much as possible to meet the needs and expectations of the people they exist to serve. Whether this transformation has been the result of greater accountability and transparency (or vice versa) is open to debate. The reality is, however, that the public who we now regard as "customers" recognise increasingly the level and quality of service that they have a right to expect. Now, as highlighted in the foreword to this report, the vision of Warwickshire County Council is,

**"working in partnership to put customers first;  
improve services and lead communities".**

4.2.2 By definition, a vision is something that is being aimed at. Warwickshire County Council recognises that it has yet to realise that vision, a point emphasised in October 2007 with the publication of a peer review report. The background to the report can be summarised thus.

4.2.3 In April of 2007 the then Strategic Directors' Management Team (SDMT) of Warwickshire County Council agreed to undertake a Corporate Peer Review through the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) in preparation for the CPA Corporate Assessment in 2008. Additionally the Children, Families and Young People Directorate agreed to undertake a pre Joint Area Review (JAR) Health Check in preparation for the full review to be held at the same time.

4.2.4 In response to this decision, in early Autumn 2007 the council hosted a visit by a local improvement team from the (IDeA) to undertake the Corporate Peer Review for the Council. The aim of a Peer Review is to help Councils to assess their current achievements and to identify those areas in which they are doing well and those where they could improve. The approach has been

successfully delivered by the IDeA in over 160 local authorities and is now frequently used by authorities in advance of a CPA Corporate Assessment by the Audit Commission.

4.2.5 The review involved the gathering of information from a range of sources and the production of a Self Assessment using the CPA Key Lines of Enquiry (KLOE) which concentrated on five main themes: ambition for the community, prioritisation, capacity, performance management and achievement and improvement.

4.2.6 As noted above the IDeA review team published its report in October 2007. The report contained a series of observations. Whilst it commented on the emerging one stop shop and customer service agenda the report also stated that the council was not sufficiently outward looking.

4.2.7 SDLT and elected Members turned their attention to the comments of the peer review panel and developed an action plan to address the concerns raised. Clearly the review had served to stimulate further thought on the customer service issue as it was agreed amongst other things that a review of the customer ethos of the council should be undertaken. The Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee of the council agreed in January of 2008 to undertake this review.

### 4.3.0 The Review Panel and its Remit.

4.3.1 A panel of five County Councillors from the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee was established. These Councillors were.

				
Cllr David Booth	Cllr Tom Cavanagh	Cllr John Haynes	Cllr Dave Shilton	Cllr Ian Smith

4.3.2 At its first meeting the panel agreed its terms of reference. These terms of reference are reproduced in full at **Appendix A** to this report. In summary, the objectives of the review are to agree a series of recommendations for actions that will,

- Lead to improved public satisfaction with the County Council's service delivery.

- Result in improvements to the systems we operate for the benefit of our customers.
- Produce a more responsive organisation that places our customers at the centre of everything we do.
- Facilitate the Council's achievement of the Customer Excellence Standard (replacing Chartermark)
- Increase the amount of joined up working we do with our partners

#### 4.3.3 Initially the review set out to consider

1. How effective are the arrangements for customer service within the council
2. How well our current links with our partners are working
3. Examples of good practice particularly of working with our partners
4. The effectiveness of the new processes now being put in place,
5. The customer service ethos of staff.
6. Barriers to excellent customer service
7. How services are publicised
8. Equality issues

4.3.4 As evidence was gathered and the review progressed so the list was amended to reflect the panel's priorities. The review did not seek to map or re-engineer every customer process used by the council. Processes are being examined under the New Ways of Working initiative.

### 4.4.0 The Process Followed

4.4.1 Having scoped the exercise it was to undertake and produced its terms of reference the panel resolved to meet for a series of meetings through 2008. The aim of these meetings was to gather evidence from a number of different sources and then to distil the knowledge gained into a series of recommendations.

4.4.2 Written evidence was sourced from

- Sheffield City Council
- Sunday Times (Customer Experience Awards)
- Customer Service Excellence
- Newspaper articles,
- Nottinghamshire City Council
- Institute of Customer Service

4.4.3 Examples of good (and bad) practices in terms of customer service were explored by panel. The work and initiatives of the following companies and individuals were considered. (**See Appendix B**)

- Daimler/Chrysler Financial Services
- Bromford Housing Group
- Dr Mike Chester, Consultant Cardiologist
- Eaga
- National Express



- Pret a Manger
- Ritz-Carlton Hotels
- First Direct
- Jaguar Cars
- Brighton and Hove Bus Company

4.4.4 Verbal evidence and presentations were received from the following officers of Warwickshire County Council

Dr Graeme Betts – Strategic Director of Adult Health and Community Services  
 David Carter – Strategic Director of Performance and Development  
 Marion Davis – Strategic Director of Children, Young People and Families  
 Kushal Birla – Head of Customer Service and Access  
 Vikkii Chamberlain – Frontline First Project Manager  
 Tonino Ciuffini – Head of ICT  
 Renata Conduit – Corporate Consultation Officer  
 Tejay de Kretser – Equalities and Diversity Team Leader  
 Hugh Disley – Head of Division for Young People  
 Tim Dumbleton – E-Communication Manager  
 Phil Evans – Head of Facilities Management  
 Oliver Garvey – Strategy Adviser  
 Chris Lewington – Carers and Customer Engagement Service Manager  
 Balbir Singh – Head of Policy and Performance  
 Karen Smith – Customer Relations Manager

4.4.5 The panel members reflected on their direct experience with their constituents. These experiences along with some of the challenges faced in obtaining a good service for customers were shared at the panel meetings. Where appropriate, those experiences have been captured and used to inform the development of the panel's recommendations.

## **4.5.0 Customer Service and Customer Focus**

**4.5.1 Customer Service** - During the course of this review the Member Panel that has undertaken it has encountered the statement, "Companies don't give good service, people do". The same mantra can equally be applied to public bodies such as County Councils. It is not intended in this report to reflect on what we mean by "customers". The nature of a local authority such as Warwickshire County Council means that just about everybody that has any form of contact with any element of it is a customer. This embraces people within the organisation and outside of it.

4.5.2 This panel's view is that customer service is about treating the people you come into contact with as you yourself would expect to be treated. This is not a difficult concept to comprehend and yet this entire review has been prompted by a perception that whilst the council's investment in customer contact centres and one stop shops has brought dividends in terms of accessibility, there are still occasions when the customer experience cycle is not completed satisfactorily.

4.5.3 There are many facets to customer service. The process begins even before an individual has made contact with a company or public body. As noted above Warwickshire County Council has set out to make access to its services as easy as possible. **Appendix C** of this report details the present and future arrangements for customer call centres and one-stop shops. Customers will seek to engage with the council through many different means and again considerable time and effort is being given to managing those communication channels.

4.5.4 The real challenge for the authority comes when that contact is made. There are a number of pitfalls that service providers can and often do make. These often include a failure to:

- Listen to the customer
- Attempt to understand the customer's needs
- Remain attentive to the customer
- Have any real desire to assist the customer in realising their expectations
- Follow-up robustly on any commitments made to the customer
- Go out of the way to ensure that the customer receives good service.

4.5.5 From the list above the reader can begin to develop further their understanding of what makes good customer service. They illustrate personal or behavioural characteristics. However, even if the individual officer or elected Member is striving to provide good customer service they may be thwarted in their efforts if the processes and systems required to ensure delivery do not exist.

**4.5.6 Customer Focus** – It is reasonable to summarise that a fair proportion of people employed in the public sector have a desire to serve. The majority of these people will have an awareness of and an ability to deliver excellent customer service. Others, however, may be less able or willing to deliver that level of service. This inability may be down to a number reasons.

4.5.7 The person in question may not believe they have,

- the knowledge or experience to help the customer.
- the time to help the customer
- a mandate to help the customer

4.5.8 They may not perceive the person in front of them (or on the phone or as the author of a letter) as a customer.

4.5.9 For whatever reason that officer or elected Member simply does not wish to provide the level of service needed.

4.5.10 To ensure that excellent customer service is provided by every officer and Member all of the time it is important to ensure that they are totally customer-focused. This means that the customer is at the very centre of everything they do. Further, it is suggested that it is not enough for individuals to have to

make a conscious decision to provide good service, the desire to do so needs to pervade the culture of the organisation to the extent that it is second nature.

4.5.11 One issue for the county council is where people are working for the authority but are not its employees. Some people are contracted to the council whilst others out-workers who may not regard themselves as part of the organisation. In these instances it is important to ensure that customer focus is at the forefront of these people's minds as well.

4.5.12 This is the overall objective of the recommendations contained in this report. To have an organisation with a customer-focused culture and the processes in place to allow the effective delivery of our services.

#### **4.6.0 Customer Service in Warwickshire County Council**

4.6.1 Across the whole of Warwickshire County Council, officers and Members are already working to ensure excellent customer service. This means that the panel has not only benefited from not having to start from scratch it has been able to learn of experiences from all directorates. This part of the report comprises a number of sections that summarise at least some of the initiatives being undertaken or challenges faced by Warwickshire County Council. That customer service is a cross-cutting and complex issue is reflected to some extent in this section. For example, the reader may find that some of the stated challenges are repeated or that initiatives are not confined to the work of one directorate. Because of the wealth of the information available to the panel, appendices have been used where appropriate to ensure that it is available to the reader. This section is divided into the following,

- Council-wide Initiatives
  - New Ways of Working
  - Front Line First
  - Staff Customer Care Guide
- The Experience of Directorates
  - Environment and Economy
  - Resources
  - Community Protection
  - Adult, Health and Community Services
  - Children, Young People and Families
  - Performance and Development

- Challenges facing the County Council
  - The use of new technology
  - Equalities and Diversity

## **4.7.0 Council-wide Initiatives**

### **4.7.1 New Ways of Working**

4.7.2 New ways of Working (NWOW) is an initiative that commenced in November 2005. This was shortly after the council was restructured from nine departments to six directorates. It is lead by Marion Davis, the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families and is regarded as a long-term change programme for the council. NWOW is now in its third phase.

4.7.3 Phase 1 was aimed at addressing practical issues and resulted in the establishment of ten workstreams. These include HR, Finance, access and neighbourhoods and communications. Phase 2 was concerned with improving and reshaping services to the public. This involved a greater emphasis on customer service and access. Efforts were made to ensure that services joined up.

4.7.4 This latest phase, phase 3 was started in May 2007. It is much broader than the previous two phases and sets out a series of programmes aligned to the council's customer service vision. Within NWOW there is an awareness that a stronger focus is needed on people and performance and the effectiveness of two-tier working is being examined.

4.7.5 The IDeA review of summer 2007 presented a new set of challenges and resulted in the appointment of a Member champion, Councillor Cockburn. The next task for the Board is to consider the actions resulting from the CPA and JAR assessments.

4.7.6 To address the kinds of challenging issues that customers experience NWOW has led to a series of changes to customer service standards and a reconfiguration of some directorates to ensure that they are even more joined up. Children's centres provide a good example new initiatives that personalise the services provided.

4.7.7 Phase 4 of NWOW will be the implementation of changes stemming from CPA and JAR. Because the initiative is seen as very much a long-term project it is likely that it will run to further phases.

### **4.7.8 Front Line First**

4.7.9 Front Line First (FLF) is an initiative based around the belief that for organisations to be successful they must invest in leadership and their front line managers. Managers need to be responsive, they must understand who their customers are and recognise that the front line is the public face of the organisation they represent.

4.7.10 For the County Council, the initiative, which began 18 months ago, is led by Dr Graeme Betts, the Strategic Director of Adult, Health and Community Services. The Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate has over 200 front line managers. The approach being taken within the directorate is to empower them. This, however, can prove challenging. Some managers are “risk averse” whilst others are process driven or lack ambition. In some instances they operate in an over-bureaucratic way whilst skills gaps can present further barriers. Front Line First is seen as a means of addressing these challenges. Certain key skills are to be addressed. These include:

- Proactive Marketing of Services
- Engagement with Customers
- Appraisal of Staff
- Coaching

4.7.11 Strategic Directors Leadership Team (SDLT) is seen as having a key role to play. Delegation is key. For example some managers are not allowed to change a care package if the cost of that package varies by £10. These managers need to be given the authority to decide for themselves what is appropriate. It is recognised that levels of delegation need to be different across the authority. However, a framework is needed to provide guidance.

4.7.12 FLF recognises that people need to be effectively signposted to services. It has been found that people are often ill informed about services until things go wrong and they need them. For example carers often state that they do not know what help and support is available to them.

4.7.13 The initiative is closely linked to Customer Service Excellence. Engagement sessions have been held with 250 front line managers. These sessions have considered best practice, barriers and opportunities.

4.7.14 Work is being done to improve interaction between front line managers and elected Members whilst the “Managing for Warwickshire” initiative enables managers to learn from each other.

4.7.15 It has been found that front line managers are keen to be involved in the design of services. They want to see positive outcomes but it is recognised that time and space are required to develop teams.

4.7.16 Sessions have been held with directorates to explore opportunities for empowerment. Front line managers have been given the challenge to make a change over 100 days.

4.7.17 Champions and Ambassadors have been identified. Champions are spread across the authority. However, it is recognised that some middle managers will attempt to resist change. To address this ambassadors have been identified at Head of Service level. Secondments are used to get people out of their silo way of thinking whilst learning and development through the academy is regarded as important.

4.7.18 There is no definition of what constitutes a front line manager. The focus is on the role not the salary. Front line team members benefit from the initiative through osmosis. However, in order that the authority does not overstretch itself it needs to be linked in with the Workforce Planning Strategy.

#### **4.7.19 Staff Customer Care Guide**

4.7.20 In September 2008 the Warwickshire Direct Partnership (WDP) published its staff customer care guide "Putting our Customers First". **(See Appendix D)** The WDP comprises Warwickshire County Council and the five district and borough councils across the county. It is the umbrella organisation for initiatives such as the customer contact centre and one-stop shops.

4.7.21 Putting our Customers First is intended for use by all staff and elected Members. It sets out why customer care is so important before providing guidance on how letters, e-mails and telephone calls should be answered. Finally the guide explains how best to help visitors.

4.7.22 It is important to note that a key objective of the guide is to ensure a degree of consistency of approach across the whole of the partnership.

4.7.23 In Warwickshire County Council, the document was, on publication, advertised on the intranet before being lodged in the electronic library.

### **4.8.0 The Experience of Directorates**

4.8.1 As noted above all Directorates are striving to improve customer satisfaction. The way in which they are doing this is determined largely by the nature of the services they provide and the customers they serve. The following is a brief summary of some of the good practices being followed and the challenges currently being faced. For further information please refer to **Appendix E**.

#### **4.8.2 Environment and Economy Directorate**

4.8.3 The Environment and Economy Directorate (EED) has arguably one of the larger customer bases of the authority. Its role with regeneration, waste disposal and highway maintenance (to name but a few) means that the directorate has a high profile amongst most people in Warwickshire. Examples of good customer service include,

- The refurbishment of all household recycling centres in the County
- The provision of an effective and safe home to school transport service for 13,000 students everyday.
- The regeneration of the Camp Hill area of Nuneaton.

4.8.4 These three examples are all characterised by effective communication, consensus building and the effective management of crises when they arrive. An example of this latter was seen in Summer 2007 when flooding compromised the home to school transport service. Despite delays, all children were safely conveyed home.

4.8.5 EED faces some challenges in terms of customer service. One example of this is the management of the Council's "van ban" at its household waste sites. This is an example of environmental and financial considerations leading to negative perceptions by some customers. The challenge has been to manage people's expectations whilst at the same time communicating the restrictions placed on users.

4.8.6 Consultation plays a major role in EED whilst the quality of customer service is measured through customer satisfaction surveys, mystery shoppers and the Citizen's Panel.

#### **4.8.7 Resources Directorate**

4.8.8 The Resources Directorate is one which on first consideration might be regarded as solely inward facing. That is, its customer base sits entirely within the County Council. However, this is not the case. The directorate has five services (Facilities Management, Finance, ICT, Property and Strategic Resource Development). Its customers can be broken down by WCC staff, schools and school based staff, school pupils, elected Members, the public accessing WCC buildings and partner agencies such as the Police and Probation services.

4.8.9 The Directorate has a long history of customer-focused activity. Much of this is based around consultation and customer satisfaction surveys. One of the principal concerns is to ensure that services continue to be delivered even at difficult times. It is also keen to pursue new innovations to enable services to be delivered more effectively.

4.8.10 In common with other parts of the council, the Resources Directorate does face a number of challenges. It is keen to embed customer service principles in its business planning and it feels it should sell itself and its services more effectively.

4.8.11 The Directorate regards elected members as some of its key customers for this reason it makes efforts to engage with them as fully as possible. This is done through practices such as a dedicated Member Survey, Cabinet and committee consultation, pre-briefings and dedicated ICT support including workshops.

#### **4.8.12 Community Protection Directorate**

4.8.13 The Community Protection Directorate (CPD) embraces fire and rescue services and community safety (ie crime reduction). The customer base for this directorate is significantly different from the two highlighted above. In terms of fire and rescue the provision of an emergency service is effectively only provided in a crisis. Customers do not necessarily choose to use the service, nevertheless when it is provided they expect it to be of the highest quality. To ensure this is so the CPD undertakes a Quality of Service Survey which is sent to service users.

- 4.8.14 As well as responding to emergencies the CPD is working to help avoid them arising. This is done through Home Fire Safety Checks. Again, satisfaction with these is surveyed. Result results show a 99.9% satisfaction rating.
- 4.8.15 The crime reduction and community safety service provided by the CPD has a different set of customers. These range from local residents and employers through to the people who may be perceived as anti-social or criminal. In Rokeby a project has been pursued that has engaged a wide range of customers to increase youth engagement and reduce anti-social behaviour. By working with customers a number of schemes have been introduced including “drop and play” sessions, environmental cleaning and regular meetings with key players.
- 4.8.16 CPD faces a number of challenges regarding customer focus. Response times to letters and e-mails are below targets whilst improvements to the service to victims of domestic fires could be improved by the provision of safety checks.

#### **4.8.17 Adult, Health and Community Service**

- 4.8.18 Adult, Health and Community Service (AHCS) incorporates Adult Social care, Trading Standards and Libraries, learning and Culture. Like EED it is a principally outward-looking service and with an aging population it is seeing its customer base increasing year on year.
- 4.8.19 AHCS has put in place a number of different initiatives of which it is pleased and which it feels demonstrate ways in which it serves its customers. These include,
- 4.8.20 Transforming Social Care – Putting People First. Whereby the service has sought to roll out the personalisation agenda and place customers at the centre of service delivery.
- 4.8.21 Individual Budgets Programme. This ensures that customers who do and do not use Direct Payments can learn about the positive outcomes from the personalisation agenda.
- 4.8.22 Changes to the rules regarding library membership. These have been relaxed to encourage more customers to join a library. In addition, the lending period was reduced from four to three weeks in response to customers’ comments.
- 4.8.23 Rapid response to rogue traders. Trading Standards places the highest priority on calls from customers concerning rogue traders who it is felt might be about to return.
- 4.8.24 AHCS faces a number of challenges which it is working to address. Some carers have expressed concern that they are unaware of the services available to them. Efforts are being made to address this through a workshop and resultant carers strategy.



4.8.25 The prioritisation by Trading Standards of some customers as “vulnerable” has resulted in complaints from those not so classified. The Consumer Advice Policy will now need to be reviewed.

4.8.26 The Library Service is looking to introduce new technology to assist its customers. The challenge will be to ensure that the service offered is what a constantly changing customer base desires or needs.

#### **4.8.27 Children, Young People and Families Directorate**

4.8.28 Children, Young People and Families (CYPF) is another strongly outward facing, frontline service. It works with its Children's Trust partners to provide information and services to children and young people aged 0 - 18 and their families. Many of these services are universal and others are targeted at a range of vulnerable groups. The largest directly customer facing parts of the Directorate are the Council's 250 schools.

4.8.29 The directorate is engaged in a number of initiatives aimed at providing good customer service. These include the Family Information Service which is a form of one stop shop for information, advice and guidance, Pupil and Student Services which provide support and information concerning student grants and loans, admissions policies for schools, and complaints.

4.8.30 One area of particular interest to CYPF is the provision of services to people with disabilities. Parents and carers have their own focus and support groups whilst young people with special needs have a forum that allows them to raise their concerns.

4.8.31 CYPF acknowledges that work remains to be done with hard to reach groups. In addition the use of new methods of communication need to be exploited further. These include text messaging, targeted promotion and web-pages.

4.8.32 Finally the directorate feels that there is a tension between the need to promote in a professional manner the services it provides with that to reduce costs. The production of “glossy” documents gives the impression of professionalism and effectiveness but it does attract some criticism from those who consider that it is an unnecessary extravagance.

#### **4.8.33 Performance and Development Directorate**

4.8.34 Performance and Development Directorate (P&D) comprises a number of different divisions ranging from Law and Governance through communications, change management, Human Resources and Improvement and Support. Traditionally this directorate would have been very inward looking. It was originally the Clerks Department and then the Chief Executive's Department; names which conjure up an image of a support function. In recent years, however, the role of this Directorate has changed significantly and as a result its customer base has become much broader.

- 4.8.35 Customer relations now have a key role in the work of the department. There is an awareness of the need to be responsive (ie in case of child protection) and the need to give customers the time they need to express their concerns.
- 4.8.36 The starting point of this review was an acknowledgment of the role of the Customer Service and Access Agenda. This is the investment that has been made to ensure that council services can be readily access in a way and at a time that suits the customer.
- 4.8.37 As referred to above the Directorate has recently produced a Customer Care Guide (**See Appendix D**).
- 4.8.38 A series of challenges now face the directorate. There is concern that equality issues are not given the attention they deserve, there is a general lack of awareness of Corporate Customer Care Standards and the Intranet operated for the staff and Members of the County Council still requires some development.
- 4.8.39 Members are regarded as key customers of the Directorate. However, it is acknowledged that further work is required to ensure that they are not only kept abreast of developments but also that they have received the right training to deal with customers and the media.

## **4.9.0 Challenges facing the County Council**

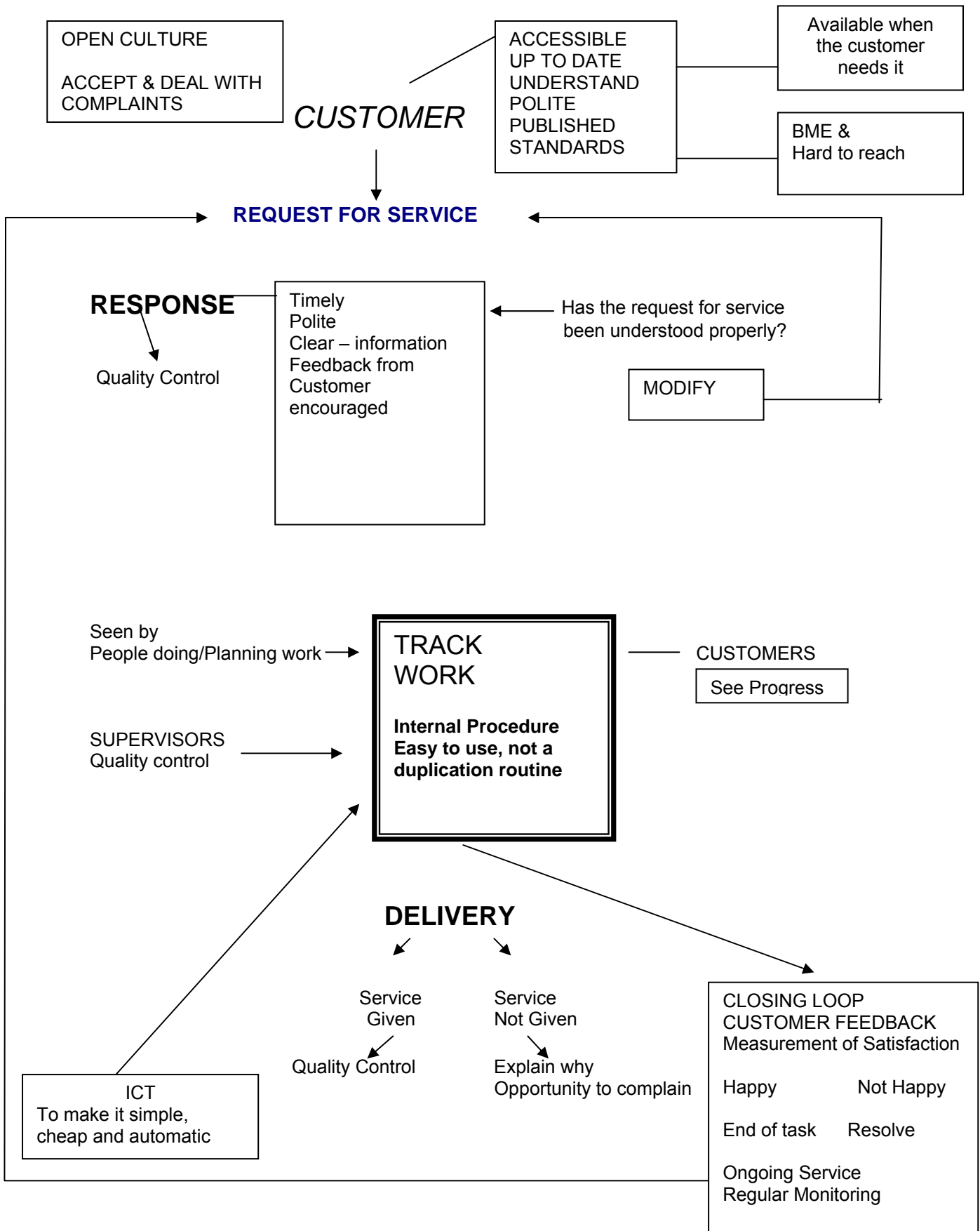
### **4.9.1 The Use of New Technology**

- 4.9.2 The panel has learned of the scope for the use of new technology in enhancing the delivery of services to our customers. The point has been well made that customer service should remain the focus whilst technology should be subservient to it. Between 2000 and 2005 the government promoted e-government. The emphasis was on web site development and the use of the Internet for transactions. More recently the emphasis has moved more towards the development of customer contact centres and one-stop shops. The aim of the new arrangements is to streamline the initial contact process as well as the activity that occurs after that initial contact.
- 4.9.3 New technology can reduce the amount of direct contact with staff. For example the Me@WCC website allows customers to log onto their account and either report a problem or check on other issues.
- 4.9.4 Within Warwickshire County Council technology is regarded as having the potential to greatly assist the authority in meeting its NI 14 target. NI 14 is a new and controversial indicator concerning the need to reduce avoidable contact. Avoidable contact refers to contact been customers and providers that could be prevented by making things clear in the first instance, contact that is required to clarify a point of information or contact for an update on progress.
- 4.9.5 One of the keys to effective use of the new technology is effective channel management. This is the processing of requests for service or information in

the most appropriate way and is determined partly by the means of contact and partly by the service required.

- 4.9.6 The panel has been interested to explore the way in which technology can be used to track particular cases. It has learned that problems with highways can be reported through the council website. Nevertheless the panel has a vision whereby the person reporting them can track matters. This way they will know when, for example, a pot hole will be repaired or a streetlight reinstated.
- 4.9.7 Diagram 1 below provides a possible model, devised by the panel for the management of customers' caseloads using technology. The challenge will be to exploit the technology appropriately without allowing it to determine the direction the authority takes.

# Diagram 1 – Managing Customer Caseload



## 4.9.8 Equalities and Diversity

4.9.9 Equalities and diversity impacts on all aspects of customer service. A series of challenges have been identified for the council. These can be summarised thus,

### 4.9.10 Customers

- Can we be certain that we can accurately assess customer satisfaction rates across specific groups e.g. on the grounds of gender, ethnicity, age etc. If only 1% of our customer satisfaction feedback comes from people from BME communities yet across Warwickshire BME communities total approximately 5% of our population does this suggest that BME communities are less likely to use our services? From a customer focus perspective this may then lead to a range of questions, which need to be asked about accessibility, responsiveness and appropriateness of provision. From an equality and diversity background it is known that some groups of people should use our services but don't. This is a major concern that may require work over and above this review.
- Do customers feel that they are treated with dignity and respect?

### 4.9.11 Elected Members

- There is a question of how well elected members understand equalities and diversity? From a constituency perspective how diverse are Members individual wards and how well do they understand this and seek to meet people's needs? The ethnicity mix in Nuneaton & Bedworth may be very apparent but data from central government suggests that the total number of migrant workers from Eastern Europe in rural communities is growing. Is this recognised?

### 4.9.12 Staff

- As with Members, there is a question of how well staff understand equalities and diversity? How should they be equipped not only deliver a service but recognise where there are access issues or indeed understand the profile of their customers and how diverse this is or isn't?

### 4.9.13 Access

- Access should be recognised as more than physical access to buildings. It is about communication channels, it could be about the communication channels used to publicise service provision or about the appropriateness of the delivery of services. Access also encompasses translation and interpretation services across a broad range of languages including British Sign language, text phones etc.

4.9.14 To address these issues the County Council has embarked on an ambitious programme of initiatives. For example, it has adopted the Equality Standard

for Local Government. This is a comprehensive tool which helps us to assess the progress it is making towards equality of treatment in the way services are planned and delivered, and in the way in which the council recruits, promotes, develops and treats its staff.

4.9.15 The Equality Standard focuses on race, gender, disability, faith, sexuality and age issues, but is flexible enough to incorporate other developments in equality legislation as they arise. The Equality Standard has 5 levels, and currently the County Council has reached Level 2. As part of the process of progressing through each Level, the council has developed a Single Equality Scheme and is aiming to achieve Level 3 by March 2009, and it is conducting a series of equality impact assessments on all key policies and services to ensure that it is not discriminating unfairly in any aspect of employment or service provision.

## **5.0 Examples of Good Practice from the Private Sector Around the Country**

*“Customer service is not something you suddenly achieve and then stop. It is constantly evolving and whatever the size of your company you will always be compared with the best in your sector. There are no excuses for getting it wrong and customers can be very unforgiving” – Paul Cooper, Director, Institute of Customer Service*

*“Providing good customer service is like being an actor. You are only as good as your last performance”*

5.1 In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the potential for customer service the panel set out to learn from practices in both the public and private sector. The practices followed by some companies appear on first appearance to be too far removed from public sector experience to be of any merit. However, the panel is of the opinion that any practice that demonstrably improves customer service merits consideration.

5.2 The evidence considered by the panel can be found at Appendix B.

## **5.3 Examples of Good Customer Service from the Public Sector**

### **5.4 Nottinghamshire City Council – Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards**

5.5 In 2001 Nottinghamshire County Council (NCC) published its first Customer Service Code of Practice and Standards. The council set out to implement it but a subsequent IDeA peer review, CPA assessment and Connecting with Communities Review served to make it clear that further work was needed to develop the council's effectiveness. In June 2003 NCC published its second code of conduct. This was produced with input from staff across the council and seeks to provide guidance for those staff rather than a set of rigid rules to be adhered to regardless of circumstances.

5.6 Discussions with officers from Nottinghamshire has revealed that the council has taken out membership of the Institute of Customer Service. Two Councillors have undertaken training in the Institute's Awards scheme and plans are being developed to work with four of the seven districts in the county to roll training out on a partnership basis.

## **5.7 Sheffield City Council**

5.8 Sheffield City Council (SCC) undertook a Best Value Review into customer focus in 2005 when it was deemed an "Excellent Authority" under CPA. (In December 2007 the council was given 4 stars). Some aspects of the Sheffield Review have already been shared with Members. However, as few local authorities appear to have looked at customer service in such detail it is considered worth expanding on it.

5.9 SCC's starting point for the review was that the concept of "customer care" was inadequate. What was needed was a focus that places the customer at the centre.

5.10 The relationship with customers is complex and depends largely on what they are seeking and in what capacity. Not only does that relationship change over time, it also embraces those services delivered by partners.

5.11 Satisfaction levels do not necessarily provide an adequate reflection of the quality of the service provided. This is in part due to the fact that customers' expectations continue to rise.

5.12 SCC believes that a strong customer focus depends upon a number of key factors, namely,

- Strong leadership from the top
- Simple clear values shared and understood by everyone and aligned to customer requirements.
- Being aware of and responsive to customer needs
- Engaging staff enthusiasm for and commitment to excellent customer service
- Effective systems which achieve a high degree of operational efficiency
- Effective use of technology (as the servant, not the master)
- A firm grasp of costs
- Information hungry, with an attention to detail.

5.13 The review looked at three aspects of customer service. These are set out below.

### **a. Easy to do business with**

There are two facets to this. The first is the appropriate use of technology to make it easier for customers to access services. It encompasses the telephone (and customer service centre) one-stop shops and e-enablement. The second is the way in which the council

ensures a high degree of equality so that people are not disadvantaged on racial grounds or through disability.

### **b. Customer Focussed Systems.**

This is about the development of a strategy that will embed excellent customer service systematically into the council's planning, performance management and resource management. Charter Mark is regarded as a good measure of customer service and SCC set itself a target of achieving this across the whole organisation.

The review considered the extension of the opening hours of certain council offices. It also looked at how complaints were managed and sought to address people's concerns that the information they gave or services they requested were not adequately recorded.

It also explored the management of performance information seeking ways in which it can be made more effective and visible. Finally it looked at the government's agenda regarding choice and service personalisation.

### **c. Customer focused people**

The review acknowledges the benefits that have accrued from the combination of its customer service functions into a single section. It considers the limited resources available for customer service developments and calls for those resources to be used to maximum effect.

- 5.14 Importantly in this section of the report it is stated that customer service, "should be at the heart of everyone's job". To this end it believes that customer service orientation should be central to the way that staff are recruited and inducted.

## **5.15 Sheffield City Council's Key Recommendations**

- 5.16 The report arrives at almost 100 recommendations. This is a lot by any standard but they do give a clear indication of the direction that SCC was looking to travel at that time. Of course, recommendations alone will not secure improvement. SCC was aware of this and as a result produced an implementation plan. Discussions with officers from Sheffield indicate that the plan is being acted upon. However, to give the panel a flavour of the recommendations some are summarised at **Appendix F**.



## **6.0 Further Opportunities for Development**

### **6.1 Customer Service Excellence**

6.2 Introduced by Central Government in March 2008, the new Customer Service Excellence (CSE) quality standard is available to organisations in both the public and private sector, and provides official recognition that an organisation has the highest standards of customer service embedded throughout its culture. Replacing Charter Mark (which remains in existence until June 2011), the new quality standard operates on three levels:

- As a driver for continuous development.
- As a skills development tool.
- As an independent validation of achievement.

6.3 An organisation working towards achieving CSE will first be required to assess its existing customer service capabilities to see where improvements can be made. Following this, individuals and teams work together to explore and then acquire new customer service skills. By involving the whole team or organisation, it means people can build their own capacity for delivering improved services.

6.4 Finally, an organisation will seek formal accreditation to the CSE standard to demonstrate its competence, identify key areas for improvement and celebrate its success. Depending on existing customer service processes in place, this could be a relatively short process, but will take longer in other cases. The experience is designed to have a real positive outcome on a service with tangible benefits at the end.

6.5 All organisations that succeed in gaining the standard must work towards, then meet, the following criteria:

- Customer insight – the importance of developing an in-depth understanding of customers.
- The culture of the organisation – how those who work within the organisation demonstrate the necessary values and understanding, as well as how the operations and procedures meet customer needs and expectations.
- Information and access – ensuring that customers consistently receive accurate and detailed information.
- Delivery of an organisation's main business aims.
- Timeliness and quality of service – a more detailed look at the standards organisations have in relation to how they carry out their main business.

6.6 The standard has been designed to test, in detail, the areas that research highlighted were a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. It encourages and

rewards organisations that deliver services based on a genuine understanding of the needs of their customers and communities.

6.7 Warwickshire County Council has already taken some early steps towards achieving Customer Service Excellence. The Customer Service and Access team is piloting the process. If it is successful it is likely that it will be rolled out to other parts of the organisation

## 6.8 The Institute of Customer Service Professional Awards

6.9 Institute of Customer Service (ICS) member organisations have access to three ICS Professional Awards in customer service. These are,

- ICS Communications Award
- ICS Solutions Award
- ICS Innovations Award

6.10 The Awards are designed to help customer service practitioners develop personal effectiveness in a way which will improve their performance in delivering customer service.

6.11 They are achieved by those who can demonstrate in their day-to-day work that they are able to meet the Institute's requirements in four key areas:

- You and Your Customer
- You and Your Organisation
- You and Your Colleagues
- You and Your Development

6.12 The ICS **Communications** Award requirements focus on the key behavioural skills needed to build relationships with customers, the wider purpose of the practitioner's work and the way this interacts with the needs of the organisation, and team work.

6.13 The ICS **Solutions** Award requirements build on those of the Communications Award in relation to solving customers' problems including those requiring one-off solutions. To obtain the Solutions Award, practitioners need to demonstrate how they inspire confidence in their ability, are proactive and alert to service trends and customer feedback. They need to show that they are a team player who gives practical support to others to help them improve their performance.

6.14 The ICS **Innovations** Award requirements build further on those of the other two Awards. Practitioners must demonstrate that they understand the key importance of customer loyalty and retention to the future success of their organisation, are proactive, flexible and creative, and continually seek new ways of delivering improved customer service. They must be able to give examples of how they have identified new ways of doing things and recommended service delivery improvements. They must also be able to show how they motivate and influence others.

- 6.15 Practitioners use the **Passport to Learning and Achievement in Customer Service** to build a picture of how they meet the Award requirements in association with a designated coach who also undertakes part of the assessment process. A final assessment, which focuses on the individual's ability to deliver a fully rounded service to customers, is carried out by an ICS accredited assessor.
- 6.16 Member organisations may wish to use the Awards towards achieving Approved Centre Status. This process is designed to be as streamlined as possible and to map easily with each organisation's existing management systems and processes.
- 6.17 Practitioners working towards an ICS Professional Award become student members of the Institute and ICS certificates those who successfully achieve an Award.
- 6.18 Achievement of an award entitles practitioners to join the Institute as an individual member and receive full recognition as a Customer Service Professional.
- 6.19 Over 10,000 customer service professionals have worked towards an ICS Professional Award.

## 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations of the Customer Review Panel

7.1 The following section details the conclusions of the Member panel along with the panel's recommendations. For the sakes of clarity the section has been divided into four sections.

- Culture
- Recruitment and Training
- Processes
- Partnership

**Note - It is the collective responsibility of all Members, Strategic Directors and other officers to ensure the implementation of the recommendations below. Whilst an individual (such as a Strategic Director) may be identified in a recommendation, this is to ensure that someone has oversight of its implementation rather than sole responsibility for it.**

### 7.2 Culture

#### Conclusion 1

The panel recognises that many senior managers within the organisation spend time with colleagues and customers at the front line of their service. However, evidence suggests that some managers, driven by performance targets and everyday concerns do not feel able or are unwilling to spend their time in back offices or working directly with customers. The panel is convinced that the investment made in getting "back to the floor" can reap dividends in terms of service improvement and staff morale. Going "back to the floor" should not be seen as a one-off exercise nor should it be regarded as something to be taken lightly. For the investment in time to be worthwhile, managers will need to make notes of their visit and be fully prepared to undertake follow-up actions on lessons learnt. To ensure that this activity is undertaken evidence and learning points should be incorporated in the appraisal process.

#### Recommendation 1

By June 2009, the Chief Executive should introduce a policy that requires that in any twelve-month period the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service will spend at least two full days working on the frontline of their service. As part of their performance monitoring process these managers will report back to their manager on their experience and any changes they have made as a result of their experience. Where appropriate, Heads of Service will introduce this requirement to other managers.

Once a year SDLT will consider a report produced by Strategic Directors outlining the key lessons learnt and actions taken. Responsibility for the production of this report will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development. The first annual report will be considered by SDLT in June 2010.

## **Conclusion 2**

The panel recognised the time spent by elected Members working with members of the public. However there will be occasions when a Member's awareness of the challenges facing the authority in terms of service delivery can only be enhanced through direct experience. For this reason the panel considers that just as senior officers should go "back to the floor" then so should Members. Member development is an area highlighted for attention by the summer 2008 CPA inspection. It is considered that time spent by Members gaining direct experience of service delivery will contribute to this. Group Leaders have a role to play in ensuring that their Members make the time for this.

### **Recommendation 2**

That following the June 2009 election, Group Leaders ensure that all their Members undertake to spend the equivalent of at least one day a year helping in the direct provision of service. At end of the municipal year in April 2010 a report will be presented to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing the way in which Members have fulfilled this requirement and setting out the learning points from their experience.

## **Conclusion 3**

The panel notes the creation of a Corporate Services Portfolio and appreciates the engagement of Councillor Heather Timms in this customer focus review process. The responsibility for the provision of excellent customer service rests with the Portfolio Holder and as a result it is considered important that that person provides regular reports to the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee. These reports should explain to the committee the actions being taken to improve customer service both across the council and in partnership.

### **Recommendation 3**

That at the end of the municipal year, the Corporate Services Portfolio holder be required to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on their actions to improve customer service across the authority. As County Council elections are to be held in June 2009 the first report should be made in September 2009 and in the May of subsequent years.

## **Conclusion 4**

Customer Service Excellence (CSE) has replaced Chartermark. The panel has examined the CSE criteria and process and is pleased to note that a pilot CSE exercise is underway in Warwickshire County Council. It is hoped that the experience gained from this pilot exercise will be useful and considers that unless a good case can be presented for not pursuing this matter further the Customer Service Excellence model should be rolled out across the whole of Warwickshire County Council.

#### **Recommendation 4**

That the County Council should, on the successful completion of the trial by the Customer Service and Access Team, push ahead with achieving Customer Service Excellence status by the whole authority. Responsibility for this will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development although all Strategic Directors and the Chief Executive will be expected to make a full contribution.

#### **Conclusion 5**

The panel met officers from the six directorates to learn about the work that was being undertaken by the council and the challenges being faced. As well as proving an effective method of gathering information, the panel and the officers involved stated that it was an effective means of sharing good practice between directorates. The panel has concluded that whilst ad hoc sharing of good practice appears to happen a more structured approach should be taken. Through this means, work can be co-ordinated between directorates and experience and good practice could be shared effectively. It is appreciated that there are officers in post whose role is founded on customer service or satisfaction. Nevertheless evidence of cross-directorate work is required.

#### **Recommendation 5**

That by June 2009 all Strategic Directors to have identified one member of staff, below Head of Service level, from their respective directorate to act as a customer service liaison officer. These officers should form a panel that will specifically consider customer service across the authority, share good practice and co-ordinate work to avoid duplication and resource wastage. The panel will hold its inaugural meeting and agree its terms of reference before October 2009. Responsibility for ensuring the establishment of this panel will rest with the Head of Customer Service and Access although each directorate will be required to contribute to its ongoing operation.

#### **Conclusion 6**

Drawing on their personal experience and that of the private sector in particular the panel has concluded that for service delivery to be effective it needs to be kept at a personal level. The County Council's Customer Contact Centre does not rely on recorded messages or sequences of options and the meet and greet at Shire Hall presents a professional but welcoming aspect of the authority. The panel welcomed this and wishes to lend its support to the continuance of this practice. The panel discussed other ways in which the officer/customer interface could be enhanced and concluded that the badges currently worn by staff for security reasons do not help to personalise that interaction. There are many instances particularly in the service sector where frontline staff wear a prominent badge that clearly shows their name and in some instances their role. The panel concludes that consideration should be given to such arrangements being made for, in the first instance, all front line staff and then, if effective, all remaining staff.

### **Recommendation 6**

A. That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be required to ensure that customers' accessing services via the Contact Centre continue to be greeted by a person and not a recorded message offering options.

B. That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development and the Strategic Director of Resources give consideration to the introduction of clearly legible and visible name badges for staff.

## **7.3 Training and Recruitment**

### **Conclusion 7**

The panel has been impressed with examples of customer care guides such as that produced by Nottinghamshire County Council and more recently by the Warwickshire Direct Partnership. Whilst the panel is aware that the Warwickshire Direct Partnership Customer Care Guide "Putting our Customers First" has been widely circulated its importance does not appear to have been appreciated by some staff. The panel believes that for customer care to be ingrained in the culture of the organisation, any guide such as this should be widely broadcast and extensively used.

### **Recommendation 7**

That by March 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development has ensured that as many members of staff as possible have received via e-mail or Lotus Notes an electronic version of "Putting our Customers First". A statement explaining the importance of good customer care to staff should accompany the circulation of this document and reference to it should be included in the "core brief" given to all staff.

### **Conclusion 8**

Evidence from the public and private sector strongly supports the role of effective and appropriate recruitment, staff management and training in developing a clear customer focus. The panel is convinced that the appraisal process as operated by the County Council has the potential to place customer service at the forefront of staff development.

### **Recommendation 8**

By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have modified the appraisal process to take account of the need to provide excellent customer service. All staff should be required to account for their role in providing excellent customer services whilst managers should assist staff in recognising training needs and ensuring that they are familiar with the customer service guide "Putting our Customers First".

## **Conclusion 9**

The panel has reached the conclusion that every member of staff employed by Warwickshire County Council has a range of customers they serve. These customers may be members of the public, elected councillors or colleagues. Regardless of who they are and where they come from, all customers deserve to be treated well. Panel members are aware that the criteria by which job candidates are assessed usually centre around technical and professional qualifications. This is understandable and clearly needs to continue. However, if the culture of the County Council is to move towards a greater customer focus it is important that all staff are not only technically proficient but also customer orientated. One way of helping to achieve this is by ensuring that the person specification for all jobs contains a reference to customer service orientation. Whether this will be an essential requirement or a desirable one will depend on the position. At the very least, however, it is desirable for all.

Everybody involved in recruitment must be aware of the need to assess customer orientation amongst candidates.

The inclusion of customer service orientation in person specifications has a link to the appraisal process.

### **Recommendation 9**

That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that by September 2009 customer service orientation is included in the person specification for all staff and assessed as part of the recruitment process.

## **Conclusion 10**

The recruitment and selection process can assist greatly in ensuring that staff are recruited that possess a clear customer service ethos. Nevertheless to further embed that focus in staff it will be necessary to ensure that they undergo further training. Induction training is provided for all staff members and in addition customer service training courses are available to staff at various levels within the organisation. Nevertheless, because of the importance of customer service, the recognition that it applies to all members of staff and its clear links with Customer Service Excellence, it is felt that greater emphasis should be placed on customer service in the induction process and in ongoing training programmes.

### **Recommendation 10**

That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have developed a series of options for:

- a) enhancements to the new staff induction process to increase the emphasis on customer service and
- b) the introduction of biennial customer service training for all staff and Members. Options to be brought to Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.



### **Conclusion 11**

The panel was impressed by the role of the Institute of Customer Service and the training schemes that it offers for staff and Members. Given the importance that this authority attaches to customer service, the panel considers that opportunities for greater engagement with the ICS and in particular its training opportunities merit further consideration.

#### **Recommendation 11**

That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development explores opportunities for Members and officers to participate in the training offered by the Institute of Customer Service.

### **Conclusion 12**

The panel has, through this review, been made aware that a major barrier to effective customer focus can be a lack of awareness by staff of how the diverse nature of the people we serve can determine their wants and needs. Because of time constraints with this review it has not been possible to engage with customers from different backgrounds or with different needs. However, the panel does recognise the need to ensure that all staff and Members are made aware of this important issue. It has heard that a range of new courses is being developed around diversity and equality and will wish to monitor the effectiveness of these courses over time. In view of the fact that County Council elections are scheduled to be held in June 2009 the panel considers that training for new Members on this issue needs to be as thorough as time will permit. The panel also considers that refresher courses on this matter should be provided to all members on a regular basis.

#### **Recommendation 12**

That by June 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, working with equality and diversity officers, to have reviewed equality and diversity training for new elected Members ensuring that it is given a prominent position in the overall new Member induction and on-going training package.

### **Conclusion 13**

Language barriers can present a challenge to staff and Members in delivering services. The panel is concerned that whilst translation services are available to assist staff in delivering services they may not be aware of them or how to access them. There also appears to be a lack of clarity around the processes to be followed to access written and verbal translation services.

At the same time, a significant number of staff are able to speak more than one language. Their skills could be used across the authority but in many instances they are not. Efforts have been made in the past to encourage these staff to register their language skills but the panel feels that more can be done.

The panel has concluded that whilst the council's intranet can be used to broadcast the existence of the translation service and encourage multi-lingual staff to volunteer their skills there is a need to take the message direct to management teams.

#### **Recommendation 13**

A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that relevant staff have briefed all directorate management teams on the role and availability of the translation service.

B) That a review be undertaken by September 2009 of the processes used to ensure that translation services (both written and verbal) are easily accessible to members of staff and customers. This review should include consideration of the best way of using the language skills of staff across the authority and wider public sector.

#### **Conclusion 14**

The information on diversity and equality brought before the panel has highlighted a number of issues and questions that it has not been able to address. The panel feels that because of the importance of this issue for the authority it will be necessary to undertake further work to answer the points raised. This review has focused solely on customer service but Members are aware that diversity and equality issues impact on many different aspects of the County Council's work. These range from access to buildings, to employment profiles and to access to services by some communities.

The panel, therefore, has concluded that further work is needed to explore in greater detail equality and diversity issues. At this stage, the panel considers that rather than proposing a particular process to be followed it can only recommend that further consideration be given to this matter.

#### **Recommendation 14**

A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be requested to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the issues facing the Council and its partners resulting from equality and diversity-related issues.

B) That the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee gives consideration to undertaking further work on equality and diversity issues.

### **7.4 Processes**

#### **Conclusion 15**

Companies and organisations that are considered to provide good customer service often operate effective telephone handling procedures. Members of the panel have shared experiences of being passed from one department to another or being held on the phone for an unreasonable length of time. The panel has concluded that this is unacceptable and that every effort should be made to avoid it happening within the

County Council. This should be addressed through enhanced customer service training and through the expected cultural shift. However, the panel recognises that there will be a need to reinforce this message on a regular basis. It will expect managers to do this through the appraisal process and through regular supervisory sessions.

#### **Recommendation 15**

All Strategic Directors to require that where possible their staff avoid passing customers from one place to another. During published business hours, customers ringing frontline service phone numbers should be given one hand-off at most. If the customer does not come through to the correct service area the second officer should give the customer the choice of taking full details or ensure a call back from the correct area.

#### **Conclusion 16**

Publications such as Warwickshire View serve to advertise the County Council and the services it provides. This document is circulated widely. However, the panel is concerned that people moving to the area will not necessarily have ready access to information concerning council services on their arrival. It is considered that there may be merit in producing a welcome-pack for new or re-locating residents. This pack could be passed to estate agents and housing associations for distribution to house hunters. To avoid it going out of date quickly, it would need to be focused on key long-term council services.

#### **Recommendation 16**

By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development gives consideration to the production of a welcome pack to be distributed to estate agents and housing associations for the use of new or re-locating residents to Warwickshire. The outcome of discussions on this matter should be reported to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee

#### **Conclusion 17**

If the County Council is serious about improving service provision it needs to be more proactive about gathering customer feedback. The panel was disappointed to note that the County Council website does not clearly and expressly invite comments on customer service. This is something that should be addressed. Of course, it is pointless inviting people's comments if they are not acted upon. It will be necessary therefore for comments to be relayed to the appropriate officer or elected Member.

#### **Recommendation 17**

Consideration should be given to modifying the Council's website to facilitate feedback from customers. A specific and clearly identified area of the homepage should encourage customers to report good and less than satisfactory customer service. This facility should be repeated elsewhere in the website where specific services have been offered.

## **Conclusion 18**

The panel has concluded from the evidence it has received that the new technology that is available to the County Council needs to be exploited fully to ensure the completion of the customer service cycle. The technology now exists for caseloads to be tracked and customers kept informed of progress. It is acknowledged that progress is being made in Warwickshire towards this, an example being the opportunity for residents to report potholes or faulty streetlights via the web. However, opportunities need to be explored as to how this can be made more effective through GIS mapping. As well as tracking workloads, new technology should be used to reduce the number of hand-offs of information from the initial report of a problem to its solution. Again, the panel acknowledges the work being done and in particular the creation of the GIS Management Board and innovations being introduced in the customer contact centre.

### **Recommendation 18**

That the Strategic Director of Resources report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2009 on progress with new technology-based initiatives for the reporting of problems by customers, case-load tracking, feeding back progress and the completion of the customer service cycle.

## **Conclusion 19**

This review has explored many different aspects of customer service. The panel is clear on the actions that this authority should take to ensure that every member of staff and elected Member is aware of the need to provide an exemplary service. However, we also need to be confident that the customer service cycle is being completed and that our customers are satisfied. Whilst the Citizen's Panel and customer satisfaction survey are a means by which we can gauge the quality of our services we feel that more specific follow-up of certain services is required. To this end the panel is suggesting that where, for example, a care package has been agreed for an elderly resident, the question should be specifically asked of that person and/or their carer of whether the service they have received has been acceptable. The same principle can be applied to many council services with the extent of follow up enquiries reflecting the type of service. Therefore, it would not be necessary to contact every person who has reported a pothole but it may be desirable to contact a high proportion of care package customers.

### **Recommendation 19**

That by September 2009 SDLT has agreed standards for customer service follow-up with a view to annual reports being made to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

## 7.5 Partnership

### Conclusion 20

The panel has concluded that if the County Council is to optimise the service it provides for its customers it can only do this if it identifies and exploits every opportunity for working in partnership with others. Whilst there are services for which the County Council is solely responsible, the number of these is decreasing as we engage more closely with our partners and re-engineer our processes and structures.

The evolution of the customer contact centres and one-stop shops illustrate how the front line of customer service in Warwickshire is being enhanced. However, the panel notes that whilst the five local district and borough councils are to a varying degree supportive of these initiatives the extent of engagement by other arms of the public sector is less apparent. The Public Service Board is now regarded as a key mechanism for the enhancement of joint working. The panel considers that this body should take every opportunity to identify ways in which, through collaborative working, the quality of customer service can be improved.

### Recommendation 20

That as part of his regular reporting on progress with the development of the customer service and access agenda the Strategic Director of Performance and Development updates the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress towards greater collaborative service delivery between agencies including the Police, Primary Care Trust district and borough councils and county council.

### Conclusion 21

The panel feels that a number of its recommendations contained in this report can be implemented in partnership with others. For example, if equality training is to be delivered to County Council staff this can be offered to partners if it is not already being done. Similarly, a “back to the floor” exercise could involve a degree of cross-agency working if appropriate.

### Recommendation 21


That consideration be given by the Strategic Director of Performance and Development of ways in which customer service related training can be developed in conjunction with partner agencies.

## **Conclusion 22**

Not all people who work for the County Council are directly employed by the authority. Members of the panel consider that contractors' and out workers' behaviour reflects on the council and that consequently this should be of a standard that is expected of staff. At the risk of offending some, the panel considers that if anyone is to be employed by the council their temporary role as ambassadors of the authority should be stressed.

## **Recommendation 22**

That Strategic Directors undertake to ensure that when the authority commissions services and lets new contracts there is a requirement within those contracts that people working under them abide by the County Council's customer service ethos.

 <b>CUSTOMER FOCUS REVIEW</b>	<b>Date: 7 May 2008</b>
<b>Background</b>	
<p>Warwickshire County Council has in recent years invested heavily in its Customer Service and Access Strategy which seeks to ensure that people are able to easily access and benefit from the services we and our partners provide. This initiative has involved the establishment of two customer contact centres and a number of one-stop shops across the county. In 2007 however, an IDeA peer review observed that whilst those initiatives are working to enable people to access our services the County Council as a whole is not sufficiently outward looking. That is, there is a need for the council to ensure that once our customers have contacted us we are able to meet their expectations. In addition to the IDeA review Members and officers have identified the following reasons to undertake the review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To explore how our organisation deals with casework for Councillor's as they too are acting as Customer Access Agents,</li> <li>• Concerns expressed to Members by the public about shortcomings in customer service,</li> <li>• A desire to build on good examples within the council, building on the knowledge of those people on the front line,</li> <li>• The need to ensure the completion of the “customer service cycle” from first contact to closure,</li> <li>• The opportunity that this challenge presents to bring about a significant cultural change within the authority.</li> </ul>	
<b>Objectives</b>	
<p>The overall objectives of the review are to agree a series of recommendations for actions that will,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lead to improved public satisfaction with the County Council’s service delivery.</li> <li>• Result in improvements to the systems we operate for the benefit of our customers.</li> <li>• Produce a more responsive organisation that places our customers at the centre of everything we do.</li> <li>• Facilitate the Council’s achievement of the Customer Excellence Standard (replacing Chartermark)</li> </ul> <p>Increase the amount of joined up working we do with our partners</p>	

### **Where are we now? - Key Lines of Enquiry**

The review will consider

1. How effective are the arrangements for customer service within the council
2. How well our current links with our partners are working
3. Examples of good practice particularly of working with our partners
4. The effectiveness of the new processes now being put in place,
5. The customer service ethos of staff.
6. Barriers to excellent customer service
7. How services are publicised
8. Equality issues

The review will not seek to map and re-engineer every customer process used by the council, as this would be too detailed. It may however, identify some process for consideration within directorates.

### **Where do we wish to be? – Key Lines of Enquiry**

What are our aspirations/vision for excellent customer service?

What steps do we need to take to achieve our vision, what is achievable in the short, medium and long-term?

How far are the changes we wish to see dependant on the views/actions of our partners?

What current initiatives are taking place/planned to address areas for improvement?

Identification of best practice

Identification of any areas of continuing concern/improvement.

### **Critical success factors**

- A reduction in repeated complaints
- Increased satisfaction with the way complaints are handled
- Customer first is an integral part of the staff culture
- Increase in public satisfaction
- More efficient services
- Satisfaction with the staff training programme

### **Methodology - How do we intend to undertake this review?**

The review will draw on the following sources of written material

- Sheffield City Council's Customer Focus work and report
- Public satisfaction survey
- Sunday Times customer experience awards
- 'Wow' awards



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Customer excellence standard and toolkit (Replaces Chartermark)</li> </ul>	
<b>Potential Contributors and Site Visits</b>	
<p>Front line staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Libraries</li> <li>Social Care Services<sub>1</sub></li> <li>Divisional Surveyors<sub>1</sub></li> <li>Receptionists / Call centres</li> <li>Trading Standards</li> </ul> <p>Clients –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Social Care Users</li> <li>Community &amp; voluntary groups,</li> <li>School leaders and admin. staff</li> <li>User groups,</li> <li>Carers,</li> <li>Hard to reach groups,</li> <li>Level 1 &amp; level 2 complainants</li> </ul>	<p><b>Councillors</b></p> <p>Support or second-line staff</p> <p>Services that have already undertaken consultation</p> <p>Exemplars of best practice in the public and private sectors</p>
<b>Potential Consultation if Considered Appropriate</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Citizens Panel - include questions in next appropriate wave around customer experience</li> <li>Focus Groups -possibly including externally facilitated group for staff. Members not attending necessarily but results being fed back. Also walk around chats with staff.</li> <li>Focus Groups - possible younger and older people focus groups - facilitated - with members attending</li> <li>Website consultation - seeking feedback</li> <li>Youth parliament possible consultation</li> <li>Also put questionnaire for staff on intranet</li> <li>Community/voluntary groups</li> <li>Trade Unions</li> </ul>	
<b>Publicity</b>	
<p>Work with internal and external media providers to</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote awareness of the review</li> <li>Encourage public and staff feedback on issues related to the review</li> </ul>	
<b>Barriers/Risks/Dangers</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exceed resources, time and money etc by failing to keep tight grip on focus and direction of the review</li> <li>Willingness of staff to share views in front of managers</li> </ul>	

- Generating sufficient interest and involvement
- Availability of others

### **Panel Membership**

Councillors	David Booth (Chair), Tom Cavanagh, John Haynes, Dave Shilton Ian Smith
-------------	--

### **Timetable**

The panel will gather its evidence over the summer of 2008. It will report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in Autumn 2008 with the very latest date being January 2009

### Examples of Good Practice from the Private Sector

#### A. Winners of the Sunday Times Customer Experience Awards

Every year the Sunday Times sponsors a series of awards for exemplary customer service. In 2007 there were over 350 entries in categories such as financial services, manufacturing and engineering, leadership, the public/charity sector, small businesses and the retail sector.

##### **Daimler/Chrysler Financial Services (DCFS)**

DCFS arranges loans and finance for the purchase of vehicles from the Daimler/Chrysler range. The company took the view that as customer service was of such importance it would not be put off by the cost of putting the right processes in place. “The problem with spending on customer service is that it is a long-term investment, which doesn’t generate a rapid return”. DCFS has been highlighted as following good practice because it satisfies what is considered to be a key indicator; that is, “Does customer service have a director on the board? If that person is not at the top table then you know the focus isn’t greatly on the customer”. The firm operates an open door policy which enables staff at all levels to communicate any customer satisfaction concerns they have up and down the company. In addition, motivational speakers visit the company to remind staff of how important customers are. Staff receive extensive training on customer service skills and are able to call up experts around the business to answer customer questions quickly.

Staff incentives include having the annual bonus levels linked to the level of customer satisfaction while employees are encouraged to support each other to deliver better service. The company runs social events and allows employees to drive high value vehicles.

##### **Dr Mike Chester – Consultant Cardiologist**

Dr Mike Chester is an advocate of asking patients what they want at the end of their journey. He recognised early on that it is important to give patients (customers) enough time to articulate what matters to them. When he meets a new patient (on a first consultation) Dr Chester goes through an elaborate “tea ceremony” asking them whether they want tea or coffee, whether they want it with or without milk, how much sugar they want and whether they would prefer a sweetener. This process gets the patient used to answering his questions and to expressing their needs to him. A dialogue is established which is contrary to the frequently found parent/child approach whereby the doctor tells the patient what is right for them. By giving sufficient time to the patient it is possible to tease out what is concerning them and their family. At the same time the doctor who invests time in discussing lifestyles can often find ways of improving their health without the need for expensive surgery.

Dr Chester’s approach has placed him at odds with some of his professional colleagues. This is because he has chosen to concentrate on listening to patients’ concerns rather than spend time operating on them.

Although Dr Chester receives very few complaints he is keen to ensure that if he does he always apologises and asks them what needs to be done to make things better.

## **Bromford Housing Group**

The Bromford Housing Group (BHG), based in Wolverhampton is engaged in the provision of affordable housing and associated care and support services. It employs 1000 staff.

BHG's strength in terms of customer service is its policy of encouraging feedback (both good and bad) from them. The firm has recruited a team of its own customers who have the training and skills to inspect its services in detail and provide feedback on how well they are performing. The customers it targets for inclusion in the inspection team are its frequent complainers (the ones who in many organisations might be written off as a nuisance and a distraction). Paul Taylor from Bromford says, "we give them customer service training and bring them into the office to shadow particular jobs in the organisation, so that they have a clear understanding of what we are doing". The reports go to the group's board of management so they can keep a track of improvements in the service and also to government regulators. Taylor adds, "it's important that the team themselves make the decisions. They will choose what seems to be an area of weakness and then summon the executive in charge of that area for an interview. Then they can inspect it on their own account and give us a detailed report".

## **Eaga**

Eaga, based in Newcastle upon Tyne specialises in large-scale programmes to create warmer and more energy efficient homes. Its customers include government departments and local authorities as well as private sector companies. Annette Rowe, Eaga's Director of Service Excellence says, "Customer service should be a habit, something that comes to you naturally. If we recruit the right people with the right personality and talent, then customer service is their default option".

The nature of Eaga's work means that staff have to enter around 100,000 homes a year. Rowe adds "The basics are there anyway, such as communication and quality product, but you can't teach someone to be nice and to care – they've just got to want to do it. That's why we do personality profiling when recruiting to ask "is this person a good fit for our company". Although a lot of Eaga's customers are on government benefits they are all treated as paying customers. This is considered to drive up the level of service. "Its about respect. We often deal with a customer group that might not always have experienced good customer care. They still deserve the best service".

## **National Express**

The National Express Group employs over 40,000 people worldwide and in 2006 had a turnover of £2.5billion. It operates a fleet of trains and coaches. The size of the company means that it has had to be decentralised into five divisions each with its

own Chief Executive. It has a head office comprising a small team of about 50 people. The important relationship and the reason why this case study has been included in this report is the relationship between the head office and its five divisions. David Bird, the Group Customer Services Director states, "We know that to deliver to the travelling public requires a joint collaboration, working with our customers, our staff and key stakeholders. We have given a lot of autonomy to our people out in the businesses, so that decision-making is at the lowest possible level. That enables them to react quickly to the customer, whereas in many organisations a lot of decision-making is held centrally".

In addition to the decentralisation of decision-making National Express attaches a lot of importance to its people. Bird says, "It is actually the people that make the difference – people providing information when things do go wrong, people focused on what the customer needs, explaining things in a way they understand, and identifying what is important to customers so that they get sold the right services".

Bird has encountered some resistance to his approach. All staff were consulted on what they think of the management, how customer-focused the company is and what needed to be done to improve its customer focus. A robust action plan has been developed and managers are given bonuses based on their contribution to its delivery. The company has invested heavily in employee training programmes and technology such as blackberries and mobile ticketing to communicate more effectively and improve service to customers.

Technology is utilised in real time. For example, if the toilet is not working on a coach, a customer can text this through to a particular number and there will be someone at the next stop waiting to fix it.

## **B. Other Examples from the Private Sector**

### **Pret A Manger**

Pret A Manger is a chain of 150 fast food outlets based in the UK. It has a turnover of around £150million a year and was founded 22 years ago. Its speciality is healthy sandwiches which are made on site. The following bullet points summarise the approach adopted by the company to ensure excellent customer service.

- On hiring, all staff (including head office staff) have to complete two weeks work in a shop.
- Each team in a shop makes its own sandwiches and because they are on a bonus system all team members have a say in the selection of new team members. Underperformers stand out and teams don't want them.
- The culture of frequent objective feedback is very strong. (It is regarded as a corporate humility and restlessness).
- Managers receive annual 360 degree appraisal and feedback. This is not related to pay but is seen as a means of self development.

- Everyone in head office works at least one day in sixty making sandwiches and serving customers.
- Staff are recognised as individuals. It is expected that that personal touch is reflected in the staff's attitude to its customers. Because they are regarded as individuals staff are also given a degree of autonomy. This extends to store managers having spending authority to resolve problems. In addition staff can discard substandard ingredients or even completed but unsatisfactory sandwiches.
- Staff salaries and bonuses are above the national average in food retail. Whenever a staff member graduates through one of the training programs they are given £50 to give to other team members who helped them in their training.
- Each person on the team helps new staff with their training. This helps the team to gel together.

## **Ritz- Carlton Hotels**

Ritz-Carlton is an international hotel chain. It consistently scores highly in customer satisfaction surveys and employs 19,000 in fifty properties worldwide. The company operates clear often repeated "gold-standards" of service. These are

- The Ritz-Carlton Hotel is a place where the genuine care and comfort of our guests is our highest mission.
- We pledge to provide the finest personal service and facilities for our guests who will always enjoy a warm, relaxed, yet refined ambience.
- The Ritz-Carlton experience enlivens the senses, instils well-being and fulfils even the unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.

The company also has a motto. This is,

At The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company, L.L.C., "We are Ladies and Gentlemen serving Ladies and Gentlemen." This motto exemplifies the anticipatory service provided by all staff members. It also has three steps to service and a series of service values, namely,

### **Three Steps Of Service**

1. A warm and sincere greeting. Use the guest's name.
2. Anticipation and fulfilment of each guest's needs.
3. Fond farewell. Give a warm good-bye and use the guest's name.

## **Service Values: I Am Proud To Be Ritz-Carlton**

1. I build strong relationships and create Ritz-Carlton guests for life.
2. I am always responsive to the expressed and unexpressed wishes and needs of our guests.
3. I am empowered to create unique, memorable and personal experiences for our guests.
4. I understand my role in achieving the Key Success Factors and creating The Ritz-Carlton Mystique.
5. I continuously seek opportunities to innovate and improve The Ritz-Carlton experience.
6. I own and immediately resolve guest problems.
7. I create a work environment of teamwork and lateral service so that the needs of our guests and each other are met.
8. I have the opportunity to continuously learn and grow.
9. I am involved in the planning of the work that affects me.
10. I am proud of my professional appearance, language and behaviour.
11. I protect the privacy and security of our guests, my fellow employees and the company's confidential information and assets
12. I am responsible for uncompromising levels of cleanliness and creating a safe and accident-free environment.

Finally, Ritz-Carlton operates an employee promise.

### **The Employee Promise**

- At The Ritz-Carlton, our Ladies and Gentlemen are the most important resource in our service commitment to our guests.
- By applying the principles of trust, honesty, respect, integrity and commitment, we nurture and maximize talent to the benefit of each individual and the company.
- The Ritz-Carlton fosters a work environment where diversity is valued, quality of life is enhanced, individual aspirations are fulfilled, and The Ritz-Carlton Mystique is strengthened.

Whilst the above “standards” may appear somewhat unusual, even extreme, they do display a series of principles that it is hard to argue against.

In order to ensure that these “Standards “ are adhered to the company ensures that it employs the right staff. To assist this two employees from the candidate’s

prospective department join the interview and, as with Pret A Manger they get a significant say in the appointment. Employees are guaranteed 250-300 hours of structured formal training in their first year. They are trained in “aggressive hospitality” eg saying “good morning “ or “good afternoon” instead of “hi”.

### **First Direct**

First Direct is a telephone banking company. The nature of its business means that it has no face-to-face contact. Its first concern is to “appoint the right people”. They target people with good communication skills because they reason that whilst you can teach banking to people it’s more difficult to teach them to be nice.

No scripts are used. Rather staff are trained to recognise body language over the phone. For example some customers will be in a hurry and will give signs to that effect.

As well as ensuring the company employs the right people the company is keen to introduce “proactivity” where online systems intelligently pre-empt the customer’s needs. For example people can use First-Direct’s website to ask the company to text them on a mobile phone when their account drops below a certain level or when funds are received.

### **Jaguar Cars**

Jaguar Cars works hard to maintain its reputation for quality. It recognises that its customers are successful and expect a high standard of service. A small example of this is the fact that tea and coffee is served to customers with cups and saucers rather than plastic cups.

Beyond the use of the right crockery Jaguar has started measuring the “spiritual” elements of its relationship with its customers by measuring feedback on honesty.

Stibbes summarises his review by saying ““get the right people in; set clear, ambitious standards; train them properly; give them constant, objective feedback; link their rewards to long-term quality service but, above all, to respect them as individuals and let them be themselves. After all, companies don’t give good service, people do”.

### **Brighton and Hove (Bus Company)**

Roger French is the Managing Director of Brighton and Hove. He has produced 10 top tips for delivering excellent customer service. These are,

1. Establish a culture for customer service that dictates operational requirements. Not the other way round.
2. Walk the job. Breathe the air a customer breathes
3. Learn from other and share “worst practice”.
4. Signpost that you are in touch with customer needs. Its reassuring.
5. Empower customer facing staff. Its impressive and saves money.
6. Use the media as an asset.
7. Be friends with all the key people.



8. Quickly admit when things have gone wrong. People like honesty and accept that mistakes can be made.
9. Respond to complaints quickly, efficiently and caringly.
10. Use complaints and feedback to set the future business plan.

### Warwickshire County Council – Customer Service and Access

#### 1 Background

- 1.1 On 27 June 2006, Cabinet approved the Customer Service & Access Strategy 2006-2009. The Strategy outlines Warwickshire County Council's vision for customer service and aims to put the customer at the heart of everything the Council does. It recognises the importance of customers' needs and attempts to ensure that our services are driven and shaped by all those who live, work and visit Warwickshire by embedding a passion for customer focus across the organisation.

#### 2 Introduction

- 2.1 The Customer Service & Access agenda sits at the very core of the New Ways of Working Programme. Although the workload has been encapsulated within the associated workstream, the principles and requirements are visible in both the direction and content of the majority of workstreams which together comprise the Programme.
- 2.2 The Customer Service and Access Programme Board was formed on 19th December 2006. The Programme Board consists of representatives from all Directorates and meets on a six weekly basis. A review of the key deliverables of the Customer Service and Access Strategy 2006 – 2009 and the focus of the Programme Board was undertaken in September 2008. A piece of work is now being undertaken to pull together the portfolio of projects to deliver the customer and organisational outcomes beyond 2009 in a single programme managed in an holistic manner. It is envisaged that the revised programme and its supporting arrangements will be presented to the Customer Service and Access Programme Board in December 2008

#### 3 Progress on the development of the One Stop Shops/Kiosks and the Customer Service Centre

##### 3.1 North Warwickshire

- 3.1.1 The One Stop Shop, Warwickshire Direct – North Warwickshire was officially opened on 9<sup>th</sup> May 2007. The registration of births, marriages and deaths service was introduced in June 2007 and the first marriage ceremony at the Council offices was conducted on the 7<sup>th</sup> July.
- 3.1.2 The benefits of working with the Borough on this Scheme include:
- Pooling resources to improve services to customers
  - Joined up service delivery for both authorities through a common front door, seamless and transparent.

- Opportunity to review our joint Customer Relationship Management approaches with a view to reducing transaction costs.
- Removal of customer confusion on 'which Council does what'
- Sharing of skills and knowledge in the development of One Stop Shop processes, removing service, geographical and professional barriers.
- Provision for the registration of births, marriages and deaths service

3.1.3 Kiosks – Preliminary site visits were undertaken on the 11<sup>th</sup> July with a view to establishing the potential location of a kiosk in the North Warwickshire Area. Work is currently underway to extend the services provided by the kiosks to include bus timetable information and this work needs to be concluded before the roll-out of the kiosks can be progressed.

## **3.2 Nuneaton & Bedworth Area**

- 3.2.1 Warwickshire Direct – Bedworth opened to the public on the 24<sup>th</sup> November 2006 and has managed over 6974 visitors and enquiries during the first six months of 2008. We have taken a proactive approach to developing the customer base which has included visits to: the local CAB, Bedworth Civic Hall, Pensioners Ex Service Club, Bedworth Volunteer Bureau, Bedworth Carers Group, Bedworth Widows club and the Bedworth Health Centre. Since June 2008, Maxine Bennett, a Financial Inclusion Advisor from Coventry and Warwickshire Co-operative Development Agency, has held a surgery at Warwickshire Direct – Bedworth every Monday morning. She works closely with the local Credit Union. Councillor Surgeries are also now taking place once a month on Saturdays
- 3.2.2 At November 2008 discussions are ongoing with Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council to look at the possibility of Borough Council services being offered at Kings House.
- 3.2.3 The Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council One Stop Shop, based in the Nuneaton Town Hall was launched on the 10<sup>th</sup> October 2007 and the County has a presence. The One Stop Shop has been branded Warwickshire Direct – Nuneaton and Bedworth.
- 3.2.4 Following early discussions with the Extended Services in Schools Team, it was recommended that the existing infrastructure and service provision at Stockingford Early Years Centre and Library would provide an opportunity to develop the first One Stop Shop in an Early Years setting within Warwickshire.

- 3.2.5 On 15<sup>th</sup> November 2007, the County Council's Cabinet supported the development of a One Stop Shop at the Stockingford and Manor Park Cluster extended services site. The building works were completed on the 1<sup>st</sup> September. This is the first example of a front line integration between three services.
- 3.2.7 Opportunities to provide improved access to services are also being explored in the Camp Hill and Bedworth Heath areas.

### **3.3 Rugby Area**

- 3.3.1 On 27 June 2006, Cabinet supported a multi-site pilot of interactive kiosks.
- 3.3.2 The kiosks were officially launched on the 4<sup>th</sup> May 2007 and provide local council, transport, Crimestoppers, community information, free e-mail, job finding services, and access to BBC news information. The kiosks also provide an outdoor controlled broadband service and access to the Customer Service Centre. There were 2627 users of the free Wi-Fi between April and September 2008 who have used the service for an average of 31.83 minutes each.
- 3.3.3 There were 16,226 users of the kiosks for the period of April to September 2008. The e-government channel is where the content jointly created by Rugby Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council sits, for example the A-Z of Council Services, Who's My Councillor and Council feedback. Some comments made by users of the kiosk include *"this is great you can send email when you are in town"* – **Market Place, Rugby** and *"from Danielle this is very useful"* – **North Street, Rugby**.
- 3.3.4 The Newbold and Ken Marriott Leisure Centre kiosks were made operational in December 2007.
- 3.3.5 The introduction of bus timetable information is being considered for addition to the list of services provided by the kiosks.
- 3.3.6 Support has been given to the development of a One Stop Shop at the Rugby Art Gallery Museum and Library subject to further evaluation of costs following the development of the detailed specifications and return of tenders and agreed that a further report containing a fully costed business case being submitted in April 2009.
- 3.3.7 Discussions are also taking place with Rugby Borough Council on having a County presence at the Brownsover Community Centre.

### **3.4 Stratford Area**

- 3.4.1 Stratford and Alcester – The development of One Stop Shops in Elizabeth House Stratford and Globe House Alcester by June 2008 has been agreed.
- 3.4.2 Warwickshire Direct – Southam opened to the public on the 31st March 2008.
- 3.4.3 Shipston - on-Stour - Draft report on the proposal to open Warwickshire Direct Shipston in SDC offices at Telegraph St., on a one-year pilot basis, was agreed by the Joint Member Officer group on 2nd September. Should funding be approved, the target opening date is 30th March 2009.
- 3.4.4 Kiosks – Preliminary site visits were undertaken on the 9th May with a view to establishing the potential location of a couple of kiosks in the Stratford District Area. At November 2008 work is currently underway to extend the services provided by the kiosks to include bus timetable information and this work needs to be concluded before the roll-out of the kiosks can be progressed.

### **3.5 Warwick Area**

A range of integrated services are being and will be delivered with Warwick District Council:

- 3.5.1 Warwickshire Direct – Kenilworth (WD-K) delivers Warwickshire County Council and Warwick District Council services as a single service offering.
- 3.5.2 Warwickshire Direct – Whitnash opened in December 2007 bringing county, district and town council services as well as the Whitnash Safer Neighbourhoods Team together under one roof in Whitnash Library. A team of customer service advisors are on hand to answer queries on a range of subjects, from how to apply to go on the electoral register to apply for a disabled parking badge or a bus pass and claim housing and council tax benefit.
- 3.5.2 One Stop Shop in Warwick, Shire Hall - Work commenced on site on 8<sup>th</sup> October 2007 and the handover of the building to the OSS delivery team took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> April 2008. A new OSS and Meet and Greet area opened for business on the 21<sup>st</sup> April 2008.
- 3.5.3 The new Warwickshire Direct branded facility incorporated a number of firsts:
  - The introduction of the Changing Places Changing Room designed for those with severe learning disabilities

- The introduction of TV Media that takes live BBC feeds for news and weather as well as presenting dynamic video footage and local events information
- The introduction of an audio and visual queuing system that give real time measures of customer activity and waiting times
- The integration of the old reception into a new Meet and Greet function that is manned by well trained generalist advisors who deal with a broad range of County, Warwick District and other partner enquiries
- The creation of a customer centred environment that took it's design cues from customers and other user consultation, in particular the New Ideas Disability Group and the Staff Disability Network Group

3.5.4 The Nationality Checking service commenced on 12<sup>th</sup> May and operates every Monday between 9am – 5pm. PHILLIS surgeries were introduced on the 1<sup>st</sup> July which help promote health and independence for the over 50's. Also in July the Credit Union surgeries commenced and now take place every Thursday between 10am – 1pm.

3.5.5 It has been agreed that the development of an integrated Customer Service Centre should be created with Warwick District Council. Work has now commenced on achieving co-location of the two Customer Service Centres the delivery date for which will be dictated by our telephone numbering strategy for the operation.

3.5.13 One Stop Shop in Leamington Spa – Two design proposals with costs awaited.

3.5.14 One Stop Shop in Lillington – The development of a One Stop Shop within the Lillington Library is well under way and is due to open early 2009.

## 4.0 Performance Targets

4.1 The Customer Service Centre has supported the following business since 2005:

Year	Switchboard enquiries	CSC enquiries	Disabled Parking Badges processed
2005	619635	166912	7808
2006	555827	183895	9627
2007	519610	180660	9850
2008 (to Nov)	390914	142786	8120

4.2 The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the Customer Service Centre are:

- 5% or less abandoned call rate (i.e. 5% or less customers will hang up

before speaking to a person)

- 90% of calls to be answered within 20 seconds,
- 80 % of calls are answered at first point of contact (POC) (i.e. 80% or more calls will be answered by a member of the Customer Service Centre team without the need to transfer the caller to the back office environment)

Year	CSC enquiries	Answered in 20 seconds	Resolved at Point of Contact	Percentage abandoned
2005	166912	Not available	Not available	Not available
2006	183895	70.5%	70.61%	5.78%
2007	180660	73.70%	75.41%	5.78%
2008 (to date)	142786	82.67%	82.24%	8.63%

4.3 2008 saw fluctuating levels of service largely attributable to the network issues experienced during May and June.

4.4 The following processes are now offered through the identified channels. Clearly the integration of the WCC and WDC Customer Services Centres offers significant opportunity for increased service provision:

Services Offered	CSC	OSS
Checking books / multimedia in and out		√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Books on loan	√	only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Book Search	√	Redirected to LED only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Library renewals	√	√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Internet access in libraries	√	√ would direct customer to simply log on to PC – other enquires to LED only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Library opening times	√	√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Community information database	√	√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
How do I join the library	√	√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Library Membership		√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Updating Cards – Patron Accounting		√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Library Fines		√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Other information about Libraries – call transferred only when necessary	√	√ only Kenilworth/Whitnash
Returning Not at Homes		√ only

		Kenilworth/Whitnash
Contact Assessments for adults- Social services assessment for adults, updating of referrals for adults, change of circumstance for adults.	√	Paper form for contact assessment
Disabled Parking Badges enquiry or application	√	DPB form issued & advised. Form checked & payment taken
Disabled Parking Badges application processing	√	N/A
Vintage-Services for over 50s not covered in other processes.	√	X
Freedom of information- First point of contact for telephone requests under the Freedom of Information Act 2000.	√	√-could potentially receive a face to face request.
Abandoned Vehicle reporting	√	√ Introduced since last report.
PHILLIS (low level care)	√	Presently available in paper format, electronic format currently being developed.
Police Customer Satisfaction Testing	√	N/A
Kiosk telephone enquiries	√	N/A
Registrations – appointment booking	√	N/A
Registrations - FAQs	√	can get info. off WCC website
Registrations – copy certificate enquiries	√	can get info. off WCC website
Free School Meals	√	can get info. off WCC website
Bus Timetables and information		√
Tourist Info and Local Info		√
Street Lighting	√	√
Residents Parking Now WDC, not WCC		√
Highways	√	√
Trading Standards		√
WCC General		√ Would download any appropriate info / forms from web
Benefits – Council Tax and Housing New claims, issuing forms and receiving completed forms Checking claim form and verifying required proofs Review forms Change of circumstances Claim progress Local Housing Allowance, replaced pre-tenancy determinations Use of IBS application on WDC line		√ All
Council Tax and NNDR Payment method enquiries, ordering of Allpay cards, new channels, Direct Debit		√ All



Banding and Valuation Enquiries Death Notifications Discounts Exemptions Occupying and Vacating Payment arrangements General enquiries Use of IBS application on WDC line		
Housing Payment method enquiries, ordering of Allpay cards, new channels, Direct Debit Disabled adaptations House Exchanges Homelessness Garage applications Household insurance Home Choice Info, what's available and how to bid Key Fobs Keys returned – House and Garage Medical Assessment New Housing Applications Property Maintenance Enquires Rent account Enquiries Repairs Right to Buy Services for the Elderly Older Peoples Accommodation Vacating a Notice to Quit a Property Lifeline Enquiries		√ All
Environmental Health Blocked Drains Dog Wardens Dog Fouling Food Safety Concerns Pest Control Pollution – noise, smoke etc		√ All
Waste Management Refuse Collections, missed bins and info Recycling Enquiries and Collection Info Special Collections – info and arranging Street Cleansing Needles and Syringes Graffiti		√ All
Assisted Travel Scheme Bus Pass Information and Applications Communitaxi Information and Applications		√ All
Leisure and Amenities Car Parks, season ticket info, fees and charges, excess charge tickets CCTV Cameras Cemeteries and Crematorium Enquiries Grass cutting Parks and Open spaces		√ All

Public Toilet Enquiries and Cleaning Pump Rooms and Art Gallery Spa Centre Enquiries Sports and Leisure Facilities Tree Maintenance Town Centre Management Enquiries and Local Events Residents parking permits, now WDC, not WCC		
Members Services Who is my Local Councillor? Councillor and MP's surgeries Committee Information Council Meetings; Agendas and Minutes Election Enquiries Electoral Registration View Electoral Register Voting info – Postal and Proxy Licensing Enquires – Taxis, Hackney Carriage, Alcohol, Small Lotteries etc		√ All
Planning Appeal Enquiries Building Control Conservation Areas General Enquiries and Leaflets Make Views Known and Objections Planning Application Forms Street Name Signs Site Visit Information Tree Preservation Order Enquiries View Planning Applications Use of Planning system – web based		√ All
Kenilworth Town Council Kenilworth Castle Pass Applications Councillor Information Committee Information, agendas and minutes		√ Kenilworth only for Kenilworth Town Council
DWP Range of booklets / leaflets Advice on benefits available and how to apply		√ Complete electronic form for Pension referrals
Age Concern Range of Leaflets Advise customers how / who to contact		√ All
Police Surgery Info Community Beat Info Assistance when station closed – will phone HQ for customers		√ Police based at Whitnash
CAB Surgery		√ Kenilworth hold Surgery
Credit Union surgeries		√ All
Meet and Greet function for Shire Hall Includes:		Warwick Only

Visitor passes Tenders Contractors Post/Parcels OSS Room bookings P&D Room bookings Shire Hall Committee Room bookings Directions & local information Smart board/Video conferencing Book customers on to PCs/wi-fi All other WCC information Use Q-Matic to record all customer transactions		
--	--	--

## APPENDIX D

### Putting our Customers First - staff customer care guide

*Note – This document was originally published in a PDF format with photographs. The version below is the text from the document.*

#### Foreword

Warwickshire County Council, Warwick District Council, Rugby Borough Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Stratford District Council are committed to providing a high quality standard of customer service. When you receive a phone call, letter, email or visit from a member of the public, the way you handle the enquiry will shape customers' opinion of our councils.

This Customer Care Guide provides all staff with guidance about delivering excellent customer care.

These standards have been adopted by all of the above Councils so we have a consistent approach across the whole of Warwickshire.

This guide will help us to deliver customer services that customers appreciate and to respond to customers in an appropriate and timely way.

**Our aim is to offer our customers the quality of service we like to receive ourselves.**

#### Why bother with customer care?

All of the councils in the Warwickshire Direct Partnership are committed to providing a high quality standard of customer service.

Have you ever felt ....

- So impressed with an organisation's customer service you have gone away and told everyone about it?
- That an organisation has gone out of its way to deliver what you have asked for?
- Overwhelmed when you asked an organisation to keep you informed and they did exactly what they said they would and more?

If you can answer YES to any of these questions then you have received an excellent standard of customer service. We want to deliver this to our customers.

When you receive a phone call, letter, e-mail or visit from a member of the public, the way you handle their enquiry will shape their opinion of our organisations.

Have you ever....

- Been kept waiting on an unanswered telephone?
- Been promised a call back – that never came?
- Written a letter or email and not received a response?

If you can answer YES to any of these questions then you have received poor customer service.

It is widely accepted that a dissatisfied customer will tell around 11 other people

The Warwickshire Direct Partnership was formed in order to work together to improve customer service across Warwickshire. To help customers by making it easy for them to deal with 'the Council', particularly when services are split between the county and district authorities. We believe customers do not need to know how we are structured, just that we are able to support, help and deliver quality services, listening and acting on complaints or compliments.

**The quality of internal customer service will be the same as that passed onto the external customer**

**What is excellent customer care?**

Customer care standards will help us to give a consistent approach to the way we treat customers, recognising that, we are unable to cover every situation. The main principle is to respect everyone equally, while recognising they have different needs. Remember to treat people the way you would like to be treated. These standards have been developed with all customers in mind, including internal customers.

We want our customers to know they can expect:

- To be treated fairly, honestly, respectfully and in a polite and courteous manner
- Services to be easily accessible in ways and at times that suit them, wherever possible
- To get help accessing or understanding our services
- To be listened to when they are talking with us
- To have services explained in a way they can understand
- To be made aware of our decisions and the reasons for those decisions fully explained
- To have their personal information kept safely and securely and to have confidence in our ability to maintain confidentiality
- Any comments or complaints they give us to improve standards to our services.

It is our No. 1 priority to answer the phone as quickly as possible. The target we want to achieve is within 7 rings or 20 seconds

Helping customers on the telephone

### **Tips on handling the call**

- Greet the customer and tell the customer your name and where you work, such as the name of the service, section or directorate.
- Remember internal callers are customers too and deserve the same courtesy.
- Ask for the caller's name, listen and understand their enquiry. Check the caller understands and is satisfied with your response.
- At the end of the call ask if you can offer any further help. If further action is required (e.g. a call back or some information to be sent in the post), check that you both agree when it will happen and make sure you fulfil the agreement.

### **What if the call is not for me?**

- If you are certain you know who the right person is to respond to the caller,

then transfer the call. Remember, when you transfer the call, pass on as much of the information you have been told as you can to the person you are transferring the call to, so the caller doesn't have to explain their query all over again.

- If you are not sure who should take the call, do not transfer the call. Tell the caller you want to find someone you know can respond fully and take a message. Make sure you pass this on to the right person quickly.  
What if I'm away from my desk?

- Remember if you are going to be away from your desk for some time make sure you activate your voicemail making sure any message lets people know when you will be able to respond to callers and gives an alternative contact for urgent calls.

- Return a call, voice mail or answer phone message as quickly as you can and no later than the next working day.
- Get to know how to pick-up calls from other extensions within your office or group and always pick up calls for colleagues who are away from their desks.

**We aim to respond to letters as quickly as possible. The target is to provide a full response within 5 working days**

### **Helping customers who send letters or faxes**

We want to answer letters in 5 working days.

If we know this is not possible, then an acknowledgement must be sent within 5 working days from the date of the original letter, setting out how the enquiry will be handled and when the customer can expect to receive a full answer.

The 5 working days timescale refers to the time it should take for the customer to receive a response, so allow time for posting your return letter. Responses to letters and emails can be made by telephone as well (keep a record of phone call responses).

The standards we want to achieve are:

- Your name, job title, address and telephone number clearly stated so the customer can get back in touch if needed. Use the standard letter template if you need help.
- Use 12pt Arial for the text. Include a completed compliments slip if sending information or printed material only.
- Check your document carefully for spelling and grammar. (Your computer can do this for you).

- Use language the customer will understand. Have you used specialist terminology or jargon? Put yourself in the customer's shoes – check that your letter really answers their enquiry as simply, openly and honestly as possible.
- If it is a complex enquiry consider whether a phone call to the sender would be appreciated and useful.
- The envelope is the first impression the customer will get of your letter. Ensure the envelope has the correct name and address information.
- If you are away from the office make sure you have arranged for someone to check and respond to your correspondence in your absence.

As with all written correspondence, our standard is to provide a full response within 5 working days

### **Helping customers using emails**

Acknowledge all e-mails as quickly as possible.

As with all written correspondence, our standard is to provide a full response within 5 working days. However, if this is not possible then an acknowledgement must be sent within 5 working days from the date of the original email, setting out how the enquiry will be handled and when the customer can expect a full answer.

Customers who contact us by email will expect to be responded to by email, unless they state otherwise.

However, if this is not possible, a response must be sent within 5 working days, setting out how the enquiry will be handled and how long it will take to provide a full answer.

Please ensure these standards are achieved:

- Always reply with the original e-mail attached (this is the 'reply with history' option on your PC).
- Use 12pt Arial for the text.
- Address the email 'Dear Mr Smith' and sign off using the standard email signature template which includes your full name, job title address and telephone number.
- If referring to other officers by name, give their post title and where they are from, i.e. directorate.
- If referring the customer to another authority, find out the right e-mail contact for that organisation.
- If absent for more than a day, set up the 'out of office' agent facility on your PC to inform users that you are not in and offer an alternative email contact

and a full telephone number.

- If you are away from the office, delegate responsibility for responding to e-mails.

## **Our target is that visitors are seen within 10 minutes of arrival**

### **Helping customers who visit us**

To make it clear you work for the Council, please wear your name badge whenever you are at work. These badges feature the corporate identity, the officer's name in large print and must be clearly visible.

These are the standards we want to achieve for all visitors:

- Please see customers promptly. We want to ensure that visitors are seen within 10 minutes of arrival.
- Welcome the visitor as soon as possible. If there are lots of people, acknowledge their presence and let them know you will help them as soon as you can
- Confirm the name of the visitor and the nature of their enquiry. If the enquiry is sensitive and requires privacy, take them to a private room
- Deal with the enquiry fully, checking the customer is satisfied they have all the information they require.
- If the enquiry requires another member of staff, contact the appropriate person and get them to come and help the visitor
- If the visitor has come to the wrong office, contact the correct person to let them know the customer is with you, and then re-direct the customer to the right building.
- Make welcoming customers easy for your colleagues. If you arrange for visitors to attend an appointment then inform reception in advance. Give reception your contact number so they can contact you promptly when your visitor arrives.
- When meeting visitors, smile and introduce yourself (using full name or first name if there is a concern with security)

### **Promoting equality and respecting diversity**

#### **Treating customers fairly?**

Our services are available to a wide range of people with different needs. We need to ensure we are easy to contact and accessible to all.



All printed material must include the following statement offering the information in alternative formats “If this information is difficult to understand, we can provide it in another format, for example, in Braille, large print, on audio tape, in another language or by talking with you please contact *insert the document author* if you require this service”

## **Promoting equality and respecting diversity**

### **Measuring customer service?**

We regularly check the service our customers are receiving through Mystery Shopping and customer satisfaction surveys. We also monitor how quickly we respond to customers and other aspects of our service.

These are just some of the ways we check we are keeping our customers satisfied and this information on quality and performance is reported to Officers, Councillors and the public regularly.

It is well known that a customer who has complained and had the problem sorted well, will be more satisfied and loyal than a customer who never has to complain in the first place

### **Putting things right for customers**

We welcome comments, compliments and complaints about our services and they are seen as an opportunity to transform and improve the way we deliver services. It also offers us the opportunity to improve the way complainants think about the council and our services.

We aim to deal with complaints helpfully, fairly and quickly, and to remedy all problems to the customer's satisfaction, wherever possible.

We record complaints so that we can evaluate the quality of the services we provide and make improvements. For more information about the complaints procedure please contact your complaints or customer relations team.

### **Access to information**

Our approach ensures that we comply with the Data Protection Act 1998, the Human Rights Act 1998, the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004. We seek to meet our obligations in law and in spirit and to achieve an appropriate balance between our resources, confidentiality, other people's rights to privacy and the purpose for which the information is held. We aim to be transparent in the way we use and share information by agreeing sharing protocols with our partners and issuing privacy notices to inform the public.

In addition to our contact standards the Council must comply with statutory response times to answer requests for information. For environmental information this request can be verbal and information should be supplied within 20 (or 40) working days, subject to exceptions. An individual has the right to request what personal information is held about them under the Data Protection Act, and subject to exemptions, to be supplied with that information within 40 calendar days. For other information under the Freedom of Information Act, a formal request should be responded to within 20 working days, subject to exemptions.

## **APPENDIX E**

### **Good, Practice and Challenges from Warwickshire County Council Directorates**

This appendix sets out the work of the six county council directorates. It provides examples of good customer service and considers areas for improvement and challenges to be faced. It does not attempt to provide a comprehensive picture of all customer service across the authority but seeks to give the reader a flavour of what is being achieved.

#### **Environment and Economy**

##### **What has gone well?**

Areas that in E&E that are considered to be going well revolve around partnership working, information & communication & consultation. The following three areas of work have been selected to reflect this.

##### **Household Waste Recycling Centres:**

The County Council's nine recycling centres are a key element in managing waste in Warwickshire and in encouraging the public to reduce the amount of rubbish entering the waste stream in line with government targets. Three recycling centres have been refurbished whilst the remaining six are programmed for refurbishment. In addition work has been undertaken with partners to introduce kerbside recycling that reduces journeys to recycling centres, CO2 emissions and congestion. Customers and partners have helped shape the policy and the design of the recycling centres

Via the website and other communications residents have been able to inform the council of their desire to reduce their impact on the environment and that they are pleased that the Council led initiatives make this practicable and easy.

### **Home to School Transport**

The Council conveys up to 13,000 students every day to school and colleges across the county.

Network planning ensures students are carried reliably and safely in a manner expected by schools and parents while delivering best value. Route changes, particularly for students with special needs, follow detailed consultation with users and schools. The Directorate responds to more than 20,000 telephone enquiries per annum, as well as substantial amounts of letters, emails and Internet enquiries. To provide good customer service it is necessary to co-ordinate operate over 200 buses and nearly 600 taxis every day

Regular customer satisfaction forums and surveys ensure that the services delivered meet customers' expectations. Communication is fundamental to the success of the relationship between operators, the authority, school and parents and carer

During the floods of summer 2007, every student was carried to their destination, albeit very late in some cases. Whatever the implications, safety of passengers is never compromised.

### **Pride in Camp Hill Partnership**

Pride in Camp Hill is a major regeneration project in an area of major deprivation in the north of Warwickshire. The directorate sought feedback from the local community to enable people to inform the development proposals, including developer selection process. It established a resident led editorial panel for the Camp Hill News to ensure that news is relevant, informative, responds to issues, and engenders a sense of community.

There is extensive community support for the overall development, people are looking forward to the new Camp Hill, and are excited about the forthcoming village centre.

Feedback surveys from the Camp Hill news have been positive. People like both the content and format and it is clear from public engagement that it is being read.

### **Challenges for the Environment and Economy Directorate**

Being a high profile front line service provider, the directorate does sometimes find itself needing to manage customers' expectations. The following are examples where the directorate faces major challenges

- **Explaining the Van Ban Policy** - The directorate has received an increasing number of complaints from customers whose vehicles have been excluded from recycling centres. The policy is being reviewed and arrangements are being made to promote and explain it better.

- **Highway Management** - The County speed limit policy for all limits has always been difficult for customers to understand and national criteria, used to apply them, gave little opportunity for local people to influence their application. County policy has now been revised so that, while maintaining a technical criteria public concern now has a significant influence on the decision making process at Area Committees.
- **Consultations** - Numerous consultations are undertaken during any given year both on behalf of Government and the County Council. However, in many instances it is virtually impossible to respond to people individually to feedback how their contribution has influenced the outcome. Although people can generally find out the results from press releases or via committee reports, a personal response is currently unavailable.

### **Activity Initiatives in E&E on Customer Engagement**

1. Focus Groups are used for specific issues and results fed back
2. Community surveys are carried out and results published
3. Public Consultation Events have been carried out in Camp Hill re Phases 1 & 2, Health Impact Assessment,
4. Consultation on Planning/ Transport/ Economy / customer facing activities
5. Public meetings/ Exhibitions
6. Through carrying out Equality Impact Assessments
7. Web self service and via transactions
8. Citizens Panel
9. Via corporate publications 'The View', Inform, the Directorate's Annual Review, which is also available on the web and via the media

### **Ensuring the Customer Cycle is Completed**

1. Web transactions automatically provide this outcome
2. Use of Mystery Shopper feedback
3. Citizens Panel members are always acknowledged for their contributions and feedback given. Where someone requests further information on an issue this is always provided
4. At a Camp Hill PACT meeting to set policing priorities in the area, local people influenced changes to the Camp Hill news to make it more informative about the village centre proposals as part of the detailed planning process. Feedback was given individually and through the obvious changes to Camp Hill News.

### **Resources Directorate**

The Resources Directorate consists of 5 diverse Services (Facilities Management, Finance, ICT, Property & Strategic Resource Development) – It has a gross budget of some £48m and employs approx 900 full time equivalent members of staff. Approx 560 staff are based within the Facilities Management Service and are deployed

within the Catering and Cleaning Groups. These staff are locally based (usually at schools) with the remainder of staff being based at Shire Hall and Kings House.

The Directorate serves a variety of customers broken down into the following categories:

- i) WCC directly employed staff receiving in the main professional direct services of advice and guidance
- ii) WCC directly employed staff receiving a payroll service
- iii) Members of the LGPS, receiving payments and advice/guidance
- iv) WCC schools and school based staff receiving catering, cleaning, property maintenance and development services.
- v) Schoolchildren (and their parents and carers) receiving direct services from cleaning and catering
- vi) Members receiving a range of services including direct delivery and professional advice/guidance
- vii) The general public who access Council buildings are likely to receive a service from Resources who are responsible for the safe stewardship of the Council's buildings.
- viii) Partner agencies of the Council, notably the Police Authority, the Probation service and the Police Force receive professional services from the Resources Directorate

This therefore provides a mixture of internal/external customers and clients. It is interesting to note that there is normally a mixture of service recipients with a different relationship with the Directorate –

e.g. 1)The catering service may provide a function to the school who is the client, the actual food however is consumed by the pupil and the meal is paid for by the parent/carer.

e.g.2) A member of the public entering Shire Hall to enquire at the OSS will be in premises maintained and controlled by the Resources Directorate.

The Directorate (and its predecessors) has a long history of undertaking customer focussed activity including;

- WES Customer (Headteacher/Bursar) Annual Survey
- SOCITM Annual Survey
- Annual Members Survey
- Annual Resources (internal) customer survey
- Annual Staff Survey
- Point of Use Feedback cards
- Support for Customer Insight project
- Support Corporate Customer Complaints
- Chartermark awarded to teams/units
- Management/Support/Delivery of major elements of the change process including:
  - Delivery of One Stop Shops
  - Corporate Business Process Improvement project

- Improving the Customer Experience Capital Allocation
- DDA programme management
- Bespoke customer based activities
  - e.g. Avon Valley Cleaning Exit Interview
  - Property project completion reviews

Things the Directorate considers it does well:

- Seek views of customers / clients
- Acknowledge different aspirations of customers/stakeholders and different requirements of internal/external customers / clients
- “Sees the bigger picture” and contributes to the work of others including internal and external partners and lets them “sell the story” so that a consistent message is provided to customers
- Achieves high levels of customer satisfaction
- Responds proactively to emergency/difficult situations to enable services to be delivered
- Innovates and trial new methods of delivering services/functions

Things the Directorate considers it could do better:

- Embed fully customer service principles within Business Planning processes and seek to ensure consistent planned improvement
- “Sell the story” – make better use of communication tools to highlight our successes as a Directorate.
- Get better at sharing information easily about our services – we do it but we could make better use of IT to get information out there.

Examples of the Directorate applying a universal approach to customer service:

- Shared Business Planning across Services
- Co-working with other Directorates
- “Buying into” shared outcomes with partners and supporting accordingly
- Embracing corporate service standards
- Long history of consulting stakeholders
- Support for Front Line First
- Customer care training as part of Directorate’s formal induction
- Recognise centrality of role of customers in projects through PRINCE2 role for senior supplier
- Principles of seeing things from customer angle is a cornerstone of lean systems thinking ideas which Resources are responsible for leading in the authority

Areas where the Directorate has acknowledged the needs of Members as Customers

- Dedicated Member survey
- Engagement with members on issues raised by customers
- Successful Cabinet/O&S consultation
- Pre briefings for Cabinet/O&S

- Regular briefing sessions with Portfolio Holder
- Full participation with Members for budget process
- Dedicated ICT support including workshops etc

## **Community Protection Directorate**

### Positive Aspects of Customer Service

#### 1. Quality of Service Survey

The survey has been in existence within Warwickshire Fire and Rescue Service since 2000. This paper survey is sent out to Service users when we have attended a fire in domestic and non-domestic properties, a sensitive approach is taken so we do not cause any unnecessary anxiety to the respondents.

The questionnaire is designed to measure service users' satisfaction with various aspects of the handling of the incident, including the initial handling of the call, how they felt the incident was handled at the scene of the fire and then the after incident service. Service users are then asked to rate their overall satisfaction of the service received.

The completed questionnaires are sent directly to Opinion Research Services who then collate the results question by question. In May each year these results are sent back to WFRS for detailed analysis and a full report including recommendations for service improvement is produced for SMT consideration. As part of the ORS contract a benchmarking report is compiled so that WFRS can compare their performance against other participating Fire and Rescue Services.

Over the last three years the Service has achieved a 98% customer satisfaction. Some of the key findings this year are that as far as satisfaction with the initial call handling Service users were 95% satisfied. In the 2007/08 only 85% of respondents received any general fire safety information at the scene and only 40% of respondents indicated that they had been offered any information booklets. In domestic properties only 42% were offered a home fire safety check. Once a full report has been written a recommendation will be included that all domestic property fires attended should receive a follow up Home Fire Safety Check and that all properties should be offered advice and written information at the scene. Overall satisfaction levels are comparable with other Fire and Rescue Services.

#### 2. Home Fire Safety Check Survey

Home Fire Safety Checks are a key part of fire safety education across the County, they are targeted at the 'at risk' population groups. WFRS commissions the Home Fire Safety Check Survey to measure customer satisfaction with this service. This is the third year that the home fire risk assessment survey has been sent out to those people receiving a risk assessment. Again it is a paper-based survey and is sent to all homes receiving a home fire risk assessment.

The completed questionnaires are sent directly to Opinion Research Services who then collate the results question by question. In May each year these results are sent

back to WFRS for detailed analysis and a full report including recommendations for service improvement is produced for SMT consideration.

Key findings from the 2007/08 survey is as follows 99% of respondents expressed their satisfaction with the initial contact with the Fire and Rescue Service. 99.6% thought that the information given during the visit was useful and as a result 63% of respondents have adopted new fire safety measures within their home. During 80% of the visits smoke alarms were fitted in the home. Overall satisfaction with the Home Fire Safety Check was 99.9%. Overall satisfaction levels are comparable with other Fire and Rescue Services.

### **3. Safer Neighbourhood Team / Locality Based Project - Rugby - Kingsway stores, Rokeby**

Sgt Haydn Farrow of Rugby West SNT asked the Community Safety project officer, Paul Collett to assist with the locality panel (Rugby's PACT forums) priority surrounding the anti social behaviour outside the Kingsway stores, Rokeby. Following a joint site visit, an action plan was constructed and is now being implemented. It is a long term project with a holistic approach to the situation. To date the action plan is running well with early actions completed. It has been a partnership approach involving Rugby Borough Council, Probation, Warwickshire Police, Warwickshire County Council Highway and Community Safety Teams, as well local landlords, tenants and businesses. Elected member support has been good and all parties are working towards a positive outcome.

Youth related ASB in the Kingsway area is a Locality Panel priority with the local Youths claiming that they have nothing to do. The area is a magnet to them as it is lit and reasonably safe. The area has multiple attractions. The shops area, including a newsagents and chip shop are obvious location them. It shows signs of vandalism- namely to the bins. Behind the shops is an alley way where the bins are stored and the shops receive deliveries. It is a poorly lit, secluded area; perfect for the committing of criminal damage. The action plan aims to look at the problem and solutions to bring these youths back in to the fold and positively engage them in the solution. It should be viewed as a Holistic approach to a priority area. It is the aimed to reduce the issues through prevent and deter, target hardening and youth engagement through positive outcomes. It should deliver reductions in the overall reporting of crime, ASB and lead to an improvement into the area as a whole. It is also focused on the reduction of the Fear of Crime through positive reporting of actions.

#### **Core factors**

- High ASB calls from residents to police and Community safety wardens.
- Shops reporting reduced trade (Down 40% after dark)
- High fear of crime.
- Local youths 'bored'
- High level of commitment from partners to resolve the issue
- Locality Priority for 2 consecutive meetings.

#### **Key actions delivered so far**



- Deep clean by Rugby Borough Council in area behind the Shops, as well a clean of the street area out side the shops.
- Conversion of nearby lamppost to accommodate a Domehawk CCTV camera
- Investigation into the site for a Youth shelter.
- Delivery of 'drop and play' sessions form the Easter holidays
- Meetings between police, council and local business.
- Return visits by key staff to ensure and evaluate progress.

### **Key points of project**

- Holistic approach to the Problem, not just enforcement.
- Partnership approach core to plan.
- Involvement of the youths in decision making and fund raising.
- Plan to be linked to new CDRP Safe and Clean neighbourhood group.
- Locality panels kept updated on progress.

### **Areas for Development**

#### **1. Letters and Emails**

WFRS measures the responses to letters and emails in a couple of different ways. Firstly both are subject to Mystery Shopper contacts twice a year. WFRS designs scenarios and then asks the commissioned company to make contacts to various locations via different types of customer contact including letters and emails. We also have a letter log which randomly picks incoming letters to SHQ and tracks them to see whether it is responded to within corporate standards. Emails can also be tracked through the feedback system.

It has been apparent that particularly with the letters service standards are very different between the external and internal tracking, with the internal tracking giving a much better overall result. Responses to letters (95%) and emails (39%) within the designated customer service standards has been below standard and improvement is necessary for ongoing customer satisfaction. Performance in the last quarter of 2007/08 was affected by the Atherstone on Stour incident.

#### **2. Quality of Service**

A recommendation will be included to the Senior Management Team that all domestic property fires attended should receive a follow up Home Fire Safety Check and that all properties should be offered advice and written information at the scene.

#### **3. Safer Neighbourhood Team / Locality Based Projects - Stratford**

Implement appropriate local working arrangements and delivery mechanisms.

#### **Using Customer Feedback for Service Improvement**

- Home Fire Safety Check survey implemented following feedback
- Warwickshire Car Clear – regular / continuous feedback from customers and partners

- Complaints for WFRS mainly about the driving of appliances and can result in the re-education of drivers

### **Learning from Customer Experience**

- FLARE programme developed following the success of the Firebreak scheme

### **Additional**

- WFRS has the Chartermark accreditation since 2000
- Number of complaints in 2007/08, 12
- Number of compliments in 2007/08, 83
- Performance in the last quarter of 2007/08 was affected by the Atherstone on Stour incident.
- Service users engaged in all stages of service planning and performance management (DAAT).
- Young persons services being engaged by increasing numbers (DAAT).

## **Adult, Health and Community Services Directorate**

Adult Health and Community Services have three customer facing services;

- Adult Social Care
- Trading Standards
- Libraries, Learning and Culture

### **What we do well**

Adult Social Care:

### **Transforming Social Care – Putting People First**

Central Government have set out the agenda for social care reform in the Putting People First concordat. Warwickshire Adult Health and Community Services local commissioning teams have already established a leading role through an ambitious programme of change. This includes:

- Looked at what we do now
- Establishing a series of projects/portfolios to take the personalisation agenda forward
- Put people, our customers, are the heart of these changes for example, customers are involved in:

**The Act Project** – 12/15 customers helping to design and ‘test out’ the “My Assessment” and “My Review” tool.

**Individual Budgets Programme** – as many as 60 customers who use Direct Payments, and some that don’t, have come together and joined in a highly

participative workshop using theatre presentations from people with a learning disability and older people to illustrate the positive outcomes to the personalisation approach to social care.

Customers are involved in every aspect of the personalisation agenda. This includes regular invites to be part of developing and monitoring ongoing and continuous improvements in the strategic, commissioning and service delivery of the transformation agenda.

**Assessment and Care Management Business Improvement Exercise** - Adult Social Care are currently undertaking a business process improvement exercise to improve 'end to end' care assessment services. The central focus will be the customers experience throughout the assessment process

The exercise incorporates a 'questioning' methodology, at all key stages of the business process, and asks questions about areas that do not 'add value' for the customer.

This means that within this process there will be plenty of scope to strip out duplication and/or reduce waste within the process. The outcome of this will be an efficient, much improved experience for customers and greater job satisfaction for staff.

### **Libraries, Learning and Culture**

A reflection of customer service can be measured from the scores received from the Public Satisfaction Survey, a survey that WCC undertakes annually and is a statutory requirement every 3 years. There are 2 measures that reflect customer satisfaction with services within LLC – satisfaction of Libraries and Satisfaction with Museums. Results from the 2006 survey put WCC Libraries (score of 76.2% from all respondents) and WCC Museums (score of 53.8% all respondents) in the top quartile for single tier and counties (75.5% and 53% respectively) and Museums in the top quartile for Counties (47.3%) also.

The satisfaction of users of these services over the past 7 years is consistently 10% to 20% higher than 'all respondents' scores for libraries and up to 30% higher with regard to the Museum service.

Changes in policy have been customer led, for example:

- The rules regarding Library Membership have relaxed over the last few years to make it easier for the public to join – recently WCC have made it easier for those with no fixed address and refuge residents to join the library and now grandparents can be guarantors for those under sixteen.
- In January 2006 WCC Library Service revised the loan period for books and spoken word to 3 weeks from 4 weeks. The shorter loan period means that WCC will offer greater choice to customers, a shorter waiting time for items in demand and a better turnover of stock.

## Trading Standards

Providing 'rapid response' support or assistance to victims of doorstep sales or rogue trading:

- Any complaints we receive where doorstep rogues are present at a consumer's house or expected to return imminently are treated as the highest team priority and we aim to provide immediate advice and assistance.
- We work in partnership with Police Community Support Officers and utilise press releases, community alerts and door to door leafleting, wherever possible, to discourage local residents from employing the same rogues. We also share intelligence with relevant partner agencies, including Scam busters.

In 2007/08, there were

- 9 successful 'rapid response' interventions;
- 14 'rapid response' door-to-door leafleting exercises to warn other local residents about door stepper activity;
- 2 ongoing investigations under the Fraud Act ; and
- more than £16,000 was saved for Warwickshire residents (this represents either payments not made or money which was returned as a result of successful intervention by Trading Standards officers).

## What we are improving

### Adult Social Care

- Customer Service Centre responds to customers queries based on a set of criteria or processes that were developed 4/5 years ago. We need to focus much more about delivering customer satisfaction at the frontline and because of the changing expectations of society and the way it works.
- Some carers have expressed concerns at the lack of knowledge and awareness of the type and range of services available to them. Carers have recently led a workshop with other carers to identify how this and other issues can be taken forward at a local level. The outcome of this workshop will form the basis of the Carers Strategy for Warwickshire.

### 2.2 Trading Standards

- First tier consumer advice via the telephone is provided in Warwickshire (as in the rest of the country) by Consumer Direct. Second stage consumer advice (more in depth assistance to resolve consumer problems) is provided by Warwickshire Trading Standards who also follow up breaches of criminal law identified by the complainant.

- To cope with demand a consumer advice policy was introduced which prioritised advice to 'vulnerable consumers'. In practice this has meant that in the main only 'vulnerable consumers' have access to this service.
- Analysis of complaints about our service indicate that this has caused dissatisfaction amongst consumers not classed as 'vulnerable', and difficulty for Consumer Direct to easily assess if a consumer is 'vulnerable'. In turn this has led to confused messages from Consumer Direct staff about eligibility for second stage advice services in Warwickshire.
- The Consumer Advice Policy now needs to be reviewed in the light of experience over the last 2 years to ensue it reflects current needs of service users and is practical to use for staff. This policy will need to be put before members for approval.

### 2.3. Libraries, Learning and Culture

- We are working within LLC, particularly within Libraries and Heritage Services to transform our service delivery to better meet the needs of our customers.
- We are developing and enhancing our virtual service/on line offer as this form of service delivery has increased in usage by 97% in the last 3 years.
- New technology –Considering the use of new technology - Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) which will include self service for customers.
- Accessibility and the geographic spread of our services is another priority for LLC delivering the service customers want where they want it. LLC services are currently based in buildings that may not now be the best location for our customers. Work will be undertaken to investigate alternative means of service delivery.

In all of these cases there will be consultation with members and the public.

### **1. The Member panel would in addition like to know what activity/initiatives take place in your directorate in relation to:**

**(a) using customer feedback for Service Improvements**

**(b) Hard to Reach Groups**

Adult Health and Community Services has a strong reputation in customer engagement. This is reflected in the development of a dedicated team, the Customer First Team, and the recent appointment of a service manager who will ensure that a systematic approach to engagement is further embedded within the Directorate.

Outlined in 1 and 2 above provides valuable evidence of how customer feedback improves service performance.

The Adult Health and Community Services, within the Customer First Team have a number of staff appointed as Customer Engagement and

Equalities officers. They have developed and facilitate the north and south BME Forum, of which over 70 members attend on a regular basis. These forums advise, support and inform the work of the Directorate.

## **Children, Young People and Families**

Our key aims are:

- To seek high ambition for all children and young people
- Greater participation by children, young people and families in designing managing and monitoring services.
- Have a skilled and effective workforce.

Examples of good practice particularly of working with our partners.

### **The Family Information Service:**

This is the Directorates Information Service providing a free and impartial information and signposting service for Warwickshire families, children and young people (aged 0-20), schools and practitioners. It is our 'one-stop shop' for information, advice and guidance. It includes:

- Themed support for the different age-groups or particular issues.
- Local Service Access
- School Transfer Support Service
- Information and advice about childcare careers

This inclusive service includes all the modern e-communication ways including text phone and a well used web-site: [www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis](http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/fis)

### **Pupil and Student Services:**

This Service handles sensitive and emotive issues especially around school admissions and student loans. This means working with parents, young people, schools, other Local Authorities and internal stakeholders in the Directorate. All are customers.

- We do a very good job in responding to Young People and their families who are seeking information about grants and student loans. Student Loans - Student Finance have continually met the DIUS target of processing applications (received on time) so that payments can be made before a student starts at University. Consistently we have exceeded targets and generally offer I believe a high standard of service.
- Similarly I think that we manage the admissions process with relatively few issues and problems. This is a huge logistical exercise with 6,000 young people involved in Secondary School transfer alone; plus entry into Reception; plus casual admissions; plus transition from infant to junior school. Admissions - Since 2005 Admissions have carried out centralised Primary School admissions as well as Secondary School. Colleagues liaise with neighbouring Local Authorities to ensure one secondary offer per child across the country at secondary transfer. There were about 14,000 offers made in February and March. Since 2007 Admissions now send out 11+ results with Secondary offers to reduce telephone queries. We also have around 700 appeals per year.

- We provide a thorough complaints service to schools and parents. He can provide any specific information if needed.

### **Integrated Disability Service:**

To integrate services supporting disabled children, young people and their families enabling cohesive service delivery, the best use of available resources and supporting the five Every Child Matters outcomes for children. 'Warwickshire County Council recognises the diverse community we serve and we aim to provide a service that does not discriminate and more importantly that promotes equality of opportunity. Wherever possible we aim to provide a tailored service to meet the needs of minority groups, who may not otherwise be able to benefit from the service provision.'

The growing national and local evidence shows that an uncoordinated and fragmented service provision can have a detrimental impact for disabled children and their families. The Integrated Disability Service seeks to make a difference by:

- Challenging barriers to opportunities
- Providing seamless and connected routes to service
- Working on a locality basis and delivering services locally
- Listening and reflecting the views of those we work with
- Working together in effective partnerships
- Making changes and developments based on what works

Their success is built on their particular work with parents and carers who also have their own steering group and supporting groups such as the Wacky Forum, a forum for young people with special needs who meet to support each other and raise their issues.

In short this is a customer led service, heavily involved in the management of all activity, always seeking to adapt and change to meet the needs of the families and carers.

### **Barriers to excellent customer service**

#### **Hard to reach groups:**

There remains the issue of wanting to make available services for all yet failing to locate, engage, persuade and support those children, young people and families that need us most. It is both a cultural and physical issue as you are dealing with pockets of communities or groups who are either suspicious; fearful of negative outcomes; or antagonistic towards anything perceived as 'authority'.

#### **The right connection:**

As a Local Authority we lag behind in the modern communication methods that are common to many. Besides difficult to navigate web-pages there is a lack of use of such things as text-messaging; targeted promoting of our services on the right media

to the right age-range; and creating appropriate responses / environments that take account of where people are coming from.

### **Professional Promoting of Resources:**

We are all very aware of the cost implications regarding the production of high quality resources and how these are viewed with regards to value for money. The irony is that we need high quality promotional resources to advertise what we do as we are competing with the more sophisticated messages created by advertisers wanting us to buy products. This is a sophisticated science and we need to undertake more market research into how our customers want to be informed, or would feel they could engage with us because we talk to them in a language they feel comfortable with. It includes the ability to be age/community/group specific and not merely reliant on general information for 'all'.

## **Performance and Development Directorate**

### **1 Introduction**

The Performance & Development Directorate comprises the following Divisions:

- Change Management which has responsibility for Corporate Planning & Performance, Information Management, Partnership & Communities, Business Consultancy and Organisational Development
- Communications & Media which has responsibility for Branding & Marketing, Media & Public Relations and Design2print
- Customer Service & Access which has responsibility for Customer Service Centres, One Stop Shops, Customer Relations, Registration and Coroners, Corporate Consultation and Interpreting and Translation
- Human Resources which has responsibility for Employee Relations, Policy & Performance and Learning & Development
- Improvement & Support which has responsibility for Financial Services, Business Improvement, Business Support, Personnel, Health & Safety and Strategic Support
- Law and Governance which has responsibility for Young People, Community and Environmental and Corporate Legal Services, Overview & Scrutiny, Member Services and Internal Audit & Risk Management

### **2 Aspects of Good/Excellent Customer Service in the Directorate**

#### **Customer Relations**

- Promptness of processing customer feedback, and in particular pulling out the stops if there are particular issues which may need urgent resolution - for example, a complainant phoned us the day she was due to bring a child to supervised contact with the father. She was concerned that the contact had been arranged in an unsuitable room, and worried about her safety, as father was known to be potentially violent (her complaint, which was upheld, had been the unsuitability of earlier contact arrangements). The Customer Relations Officer immediately contacted the relevant team



Time is also given to customers to actively listen to their concerns and understand what they want to happen, which builds rapport and "mends fences" where otherwise relations could be further damaged. The personal interaction is effective in helping customers to articulate clearly their issues and their hopes for resolution, and enables staff to respond more effectively.

The Service is also responsive to the needs of vulnerable children, young people and adults - not only does the Service automatically assess the potential need of customers for additional advocacy, translation, or other types of support, it is very mindful of the need to consider the over-riding importance of safeguarding children, young people and adults, and take urgent action if there is a risk to the complainant, or anyone else who might also be receiving services. For example, a recent contact from a councillor concerned about a person in a care home on the borders of this county - minimal information was provided - urgent action was taken to identify whether the home or individual was known to us, information was sent to Commissioning in case the County Council had residents there, contact was made with the relevant social work team for the local area, cross-border colleagues and referral to Commission for Social Care Inspection.

### **Partnership and Locality Working**

- The joined up work with districts and boroughs on service provision in one stop shops, contact centres, kiosks, consultation and engagement activities, localities work and customer care standards is a tremendous advert for working together to deliver excellent services to the citizens of Warwickshire. It removes confusion on "which Council does what". Most Directorates have also been involved in the development of services being delivered in the One Stop Shops and the Customer Service Centre.

For example officers from different Directorates/Divisions have done an excellent job on the project management, branding and the creation of customer teams in the flagship One Stop Shop in Shire Hall.

Another example is the One Stop Shop in North Warwickshire which brings together the Borough and County services including the Registration Service under one roof. Customers who come to register a death have given feedback that having the services together is easier for them at a distressing time in their lives.

- Professional support is also provided to individual directorates and to members on press support, and legal advice.

- Results of surveys conducted by Law & Governance Division include Internal Audit – rating of 86% as good or excellent, and Legal – rating of 97% as good or excellent. Results of a recent member survey are currently being analysed.

### **3 Customer service needing improvement in the Directorate**

- There should be better use of Equality Impact Assessments to ensure the principles for customer care are embedded within all services, and that there is explicit consideration of these issues, for example in relation to mandatory customer care and Equality and Diversity training - which should be for ALL staff across the council, including senior managers, and non "front line" staff.
- There is a need to continue to raise awareness of Corporate Customer Care Standards. There is a lack of consistent approach in letter response collection and generally, knowledge of the standards. Implementation of a template to collate responses to letters would ensure a consistent approach, also promotion of the standards on mouse mats and coasters for staff. There is a need to have a Corporate customer charter so the public know what to expect from the County Council too.
- The intranet meets the needs of customers throughout the organisation. Even though it has made progress and continues to be a lively newsy and interesting channel - it needs to become more of a comprehensive and an indispensable working tool for staff and members. It should contain everything people need to do their jobs. This is not being offered at the moment, but need to do so.

#### **4(a) Members as Customers**

- Active steps have been taken in social care services to ensure that there is a proper interface between Member/MP enquiries and the complaints process. This ensures that Members have a clear route for understanding what is happening, and that Data Protection and confidentiality issues are properly addressed. In addition, the team has offered one to one sessions with a number of Members, and have good relations with Members. Within Childrens Services there has been a Member task and finish group looking at the way complaints are handled, which reported positively back to O&S in February 2008. This relationship requires further development in relation to corporate complaints, and a starting point has been providing a joint session with legal to Regulatory Committee on the Local Government Ombudsman, and the Local Government Ombudsman providing a workshop session for Members and senior officers on their role and expectations.
- Members have access to the Consultation database so they can see what consultation is going on and the results from previous consultation. Annual reports are also taken to Cabinet highlighting the results on Customer Care Standards and Consultation results and improvement

- Members are supported in their dealings with the media as far as it can be done legally. Media training and direct support is offered - more to the Cabinet than the other Members, it has to be acknowledged, as the driver at the moment is to support the corporate priorities and promote the leadership role of politicians.
- Initiatives to improve services to Members include: Creation of a dedicated O&S team to support members in their O&S role; Jan Purcell's new post to provide additional support to the Cabinet; individual development plans for members; reviewing the committee process system to see if it can be made slicker with the use of IT enabling members/public to find and access information more readily; reviewing the induction processes for new members and also candidates for election.

NB Members should not be seen as a separate customer group they should simply be 'a customer' and given an excellent customer experience.

#### **4(b) How you publicise services to customers**

- With respect to the Customer Relations Service, services are poorly publicised. Leaflets are provided to all social care service users, and there are web pages providing information and contact details. There is also a dedicated phone line for calls. However, this is very much a "minimum" set, and could do with considerable improvement, particularly in relation to corporate complaints.
- The internet is the primary way consultation and Corporate Customer Care Standards are publicised to customers.
- Colourful hard copy leaflets about registering a birth or death are available and there is a demand for these. A high quality brochure for ceremony clients (weddings, naming, civil partnership) is also provided. All of these are produced free of charge by the company that does the brochure as the advertising it attracts pays for them all. There are also web pages. In addition stakeholders are contacted with any essential information on changes for example, opening hours.
- In terms of publicising services corporately, this is done comprehensively through a range of channels and media (web, newspapers, View, Intranet, Core brief), though it has to be said that efforts are directed towards internal and external customers of the Council rather than customers of the Directorate.
- Legal service and Insurance are part of the WES package of services offered to schools and there is a very high level of take up - brochures are

sent out to schools explaining the services that are delivered and what they can expect.

It has also developed guides for clients to help them use the service effectively in certain areas of activity and they also run various training course on particular issues which helps publicise the service as well as imparting knowledge

Legal Services also publish a publication 'In the Know' for senior officers and members

- Internal audit as part of corporate governance initiatives - has a card put in people payslips to let them know what to do in event of suspected fraud - so again another way of publicising the service.
- Risk Management has been conducting briefing sessions for officers on the new approach to risk management.

### Summary of Recommendations made by Sheffield City Council

#### Responsibilities

- A Council Member, preferably of Cabinet rank, should be formally assigned the lead role for customer service to give political drive to the work.
- The Achieving Excellence Group, chaired by the Chief Executive, should exercise oversight of the customer service agenda, setting standards and expectations, establishing an action plan and overseeing the implementation of the review recommendations.
- The Customer Services Section should have an expanded role. Co-ordinating customer service work, monitoring standards and performance, supporting services, undertaking mystery shopping and challenging where necessary. Directorates and delivery partners will continue to be responsible for collating and reporting directorate performance.

#### Telephone Contact

Measures should be taken to strengthen the council's telephone service to customers. Priority actions should be

- Renumbering to produce a small number (ten max) of key contact numbers for the public
- The production of an intranet directory for staff and delivery partners
- The production, monitoring and reporting of performance data for publicised phone numbers.

**First Point** (These are one stop shops that had tended to provide a service biased to housing customers).

- The scope of First Point should be revisited to ensure that it is serving those services which can most benefit from it. Those services which operate separate city centre reception points should be assessed to determine whether they are suitable for inclusion.
- Service level agreements should be concluded for all services in First Point

#### Minimum Standards

Minimum standards of availability should apply to the council's public services, specifically,

- All services should be available to customers in person and by phone between 9am and 5pm (Mon-Fri). The possibility of extending telephone contact hours to 8.30-5.30 should be explored subject to testing customer demand, cost and flexibility.

- Customer calls on publicised phone lines should not be met by voicemail.
- Customers should encounter one telephone hand-off at most.

### **Performance Management**

Performance indicators for customer service should be developed, targets set and information recorded and reported systematically to DMTs, EMT (via the Achieving Excellence Group) and Members in an accessible for. The reports should also include the mystery shopping results.

### **Publicity**

- An A-Z of services should be produced every two years and provided to every household in the city. Discussions with partners should take place with a view to making this an A-Z of all public services in the city, with costs shared between them.
- Consideration should be given to producing a newsletter (again preferably with partners) which could provide residents with up to date information on access to services.

### **Language Provision**

The Council's current language provision should be subject to early review to ensure that the council has a language service which meets customers' needs effectively and flexibly.

### **Employee Support**

- All employees and managers should go through mandatory customer service and complaints training.
- Customer service should be incorporated in staff appraisals
- Customer service orientation should be built into the person specification for all staff and assessed as part of the recruitment process.

### **Complaints**

The strengthening of complaints handling should be implemented rigorously.

### **Charter Mark**

The council should seek charter mark status across the whole organisation (including as far as possible, delivery partners) by the end of 2007.

## Review of Customer Focus – Action Plan – January 2009

## APPENDIX 3 ITEM 5

	Deadline	Responsible Officer
<b>Recommendation 1</b>		
<p>By June 2009, the Chief Executive should introduce a policy that requires that in any twelve-month period the Chief Executive, Strategic Directors and Heads of Service will spend at least two full days working on the frontline of their service. As part of their performance monitoring process these managers will report back to their manager on their experience and any changes they have made as a result of their experience. Where appropriate, Heads of Service will introduce this requirement to other managers.</p>	June 2009	Chief Executive
<p>Once a year SDLT will consider a report produced by Strategic Directors outlining the key lessons learnt and actions taken. Responsibility for the production of this report will rest with the Strategic Director of Performance and Development. The first annual report will be considered by SDLT in June 2010.</p>	June 2010	Strategic Director, Performance and Development
<b>Recommendation 2</b>		
<p>That following the June 2009 election, Group Leaders ensure that all their Members undertake to spend the equivalent of at least one day a year helping in the direct provision of service.</p>	Post June 2009	Leaders of Political Parties
<p>At end of the municipal year in April 2010 a report will be presented to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee detailing the way in which Members have fulfilled this requirement and setting out the learning points from their experience.</p>	June 2010	Leaders of Political Parties (Assisted by Chair of Resources, Performance and Development OSC and Cabinet Manager)
<b>Recommendation 3</b>		
<p>That at the end of the municipal year, the Corporate Services Portfolio holder be required to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on their actions to improve customer service across the authority. As County Council elections are to be held in June 2009 the first report should be made in September 2009 and in the May of subsequent years.</p>	September 2009 and in May of subsequent years	Corporate Services Portfolio Holder assisted by Head of Customer Service and Access





	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 6</b></p> <p>A. That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be required to ensure that customers' accessing services via the Contact Centre continue to be greeted by a person and not a recorded message offering options.</p> <p>B. That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development and the Strategic Director of Resources give consideration to the introduction of clearly legible and visible name badges for staff.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>July 2009</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Performance and Development</p> <p>Strategic Director of Performance and Development</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 7</b></p> <p>That by March 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development has ensured that as many members of staff as possible have received via e-mail or Lotus Notes an electronic version of "Putting our Customers First". A statement explaining the importance of good customer care to staff should accompany the circulation of this document and reference to it should be included in the "core brief" given to all staff.</p>	<p>March 2009</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Performance and Development</p>

	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 8</b></p> <p>By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have modified the appraisal process to take account of the need to provide excellent customer service. All staff should be required to account for their role in providing excellent customer services whilst managers should assist staff in recognising training needs and ensuring that they are familiar with the customer service guide "Putting our Customers First".</p>	July 2009	Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 9</b></p> <p>That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that by September 2009 customer service orientation is included in the person specification for all staff and assessed as part of the recruitment process.</p>	September 2009	Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 10</b></p> <p>That by July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development to have developed a series of options for:</p> <p>a) enhancements to the new staff induction process to increase the emphasis on customer service and</p> <p>b) the introduction of biennial customer service training for all staff and Members.</p> <p>Options to be brought to Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration.</p>	July 2009	Strategic Director of Performance and Development

	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 11</b></p> <p>That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development explores opportunities for Members and officers to participate in the training offered by the Institute of Customer Service.</p>	December 2009	Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 12</b></p> <p>That by June 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development, working with equality and diversity officers, to have reviewed equality and diversity training for new elected Members ensuring that it is given a prominent position in the overall new Member induction and on-going training package.</p>	June 2009	Strategic Director of Performance and Development

	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 13</b></p> <p>A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development ensures that relevant staff have briefed all directorate management teams on the role and availability of the translation service.</p> <p>B) That a review be undertaken by September 2009 of the processes used to ensure that translation services (both written and verbal) are easily accessible to members of staff and customers. This review should include consideration of the best way of using the language skills of staff across the authority and wider public sector.</p>	<p>TBA</p> <p>September 2009</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Performance and Development</p> <p>Strategic Director of Performance and Development</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 14</b></p> <p>A) That the Strategic Director of Performance and Development be requested to report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the issues facing the Council and its partners resulting from equality and diversity- related issues.</p> <p>B) That the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee gives consideration to undertaking further work on equality and diversity issues.</p>	<p>Issue to be considered as part of work programming for R,P&amp;D OSC.</p>	<p>Strategic Director of Performance and Development</p>
<p><b>Recommendation 15</b></p> <p>All Strategic Directors to require that where possible their staff avoid passing customers from one place to another. During published business hours, customers ringing frontline service phone numbers should be given one hand-off at most. If the customer does not come through to the correct service area the second officer should give the customer the choice of taking full details or ensure a call back from the correct area.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>All Strategic Directors under direction of Chief Executive</p>

	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 16</b></p> <p>By July 2009 the Strategic Director of Performance and Development gives consideration to the production of a welcome pack to be distributed to estate agents and housing associations for the use of new or re-locating residents to Warwickshire. The outcome of discussions on this matter should be reported to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	July 2009	Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 17</b></p> <p>Consideration should be given to modifying the Council's website to facilitate feedback from customers. A specific and clearly identified area of the homepage should encourage customers to report good and less than satisfactory customer service. This facility should be repeated elsewhere in the website where specific services have been offered.</p>	TBA	Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 18</b></p> <p>That the Strategic Director of Resources report to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2009 on progress with new technology-based initiatives for the reporting of problems by customers, case-load tracking, feeding back progress and the completion of the customer service cycle.</p>	September 2009	Strategic Director of Resources
<p><b>Recommendation 19</b></p> <p>That by September 2009 SDLT has agreed standards for customer service follow-up with a view to annual reports being made to the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee.</p>	September 2009	All Strategic Directors under direction of Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 20</b></p> <p>That as part of his regular reporting on progress with the development of the customer service and access agenda the Strategic Director of Performance and Development updates the Resources, Performance and Development Overview and Scrutiny Committee on progress towards greater collaborative service delivery between agencies including the Police, Primary Care Trust district and borough councils and county council.</p>	Ongoing	Strategic Director of Performance and Development/Head of Customer Service and Access

	<b>Deadline</b>	<b>Responsible Officer</b>
<p><b>Recommendation 21</b></p> <p>That consideration be given by the Strategic Director of Performance and Development of ways in which customer service related training can be developed in conjunction with partner agencies.</p>	TBA	Strategic Director of Performance and Development
<p><b>Recommendation 22</b></p> <p>That Strategic Directors undertake to ensure that when the authority commissions services and lets new contracts there is a requirement within those contracts that people working under them abide by the County Council's customer service ethos.</p>	TBA	All Strategic Directors