

the *MORAY* council

Customer Focus

Strategy



the *MORAY* council

Introduction

This is Moray Council's Customer Focus Strategy. It brings together recent improvements in this area together with further activity planned to improve customer focus and satisfaction, aligning this with the Council's Performance Management and Service Planning processes to ensure that this aspect of the cycle of informed continuous improvement is supported and promoted.

Over recent years the Council has increasingly sought customer feedback on our services, listening to what our customers have told us and making improvements where necessary. Some recent examples include Dial M for Moray, the Council's dial-a-bus service and the Library Service:

- Passenger surveys indicated that dial-a-bus service could be improved by extending booking times and that a small extension to the areas covered would make a big difference to many customers. These changes were investigated in late 2014 and implemented in April 2015 when a trial service was introduced between Grantown on Spey and Tomintoul .
- The Library Service seeks customer feedback in a number of ways, collating this and providing quarterly summaries of comments received and what the Service did in response

This strategy aims to distill existing good practice, identify areas for further improvement and to provide a set of actions which will raise standards of customer satisfaction across all council services.



The Council Vision

“ Moray is a diverse area of natural beauty where people choose to live, learn, work and enjoy ”

The Council has also adopted six core values:

- Ambition
- Listening
- Respect
- Fairness
- Sustainability
- Accountability

Part of which entails learning from our failures and changing accordingly.

The Strategy Mission

The ideal we are pursuing in implementing this strategy - our mission - reflects the importance of high quality and responsive public services to achieving the corporate vision and can be stated simply:

Moray Council Cares

This strategy puts in place measures that will ensure our staff demonstrate their commitment to this ideal in every aspect of our interaction with customers. In doing so, the Customer Focus Strategy aims to improve the customer experience for people living in Moray who access our services, putting their needs at the heart of service delivery.

Objectives

To achieve our mission, we need to focus on areas which are fundamental to good customer service – our objectives.

To give our customers:

- Options in how they access our services, whether this is by telephone, online, in writing or face to face
- Services that are designed around their needs, taking their views into account
- A responsive service, where issues are resolved at the first point of contact whenever possible
- A consistent customer experience in line with corporate customer care standards

The way in which we will deal with our customers is set out in the new Moray Council Customer Charter, developed as part of this strategy.

The pledge we make to our customers in that Charter is as follows:

We will:

- provide high quality customer service however you wish to contact us
- offer you choices in how you contact us to get information, request services or to tell us what you think
- provide a responsive service where issues are resolved at the first point of contact wherever possible
- be polite, helpful, sensitive and discreet in all our dealings with you
- treat you fairly and equally, communicating in plain language
- keep your information safe
- respond to routine enquiries promptly or tell you why it will take longer. Urgent enquiries will be responded to as a priority, and we will keep you informed of progress
- use customer views including complaints to help improve and shape future service delivery
- check regularly that the terms of our Charter are being delivered to you. Where we have fallen short, we will address this



The ultimate goal of the work set out in this strategy is to achieve a high level of customer satisfaction, using customer views to help improve and shape future service delivery.

Actions

To meet our objectives and achieve our goal, we have identified a number of actions set out in the Appendix to this Strategy. Some of the actions were recognised as early wins and have been implemented quickly, while others are longer term. Each action is designed to address a specific area identified for improvement.

Monitoring

Progress in terms of this strategy will be monitored in the first instance through the Customer Focus Group established to develop and share good practice in this area. The actions set out in the Appendix will ensure that customer satisfaction is made visible for members, and that performance in this area is monitored through the Council's committee process. The Group will also review this Strategy and the Charter no less than every two years. In addition, any significant deficiencies in this area, whether at service level or corporately, will be monitored through the Council's Corporate Management Team (and where appropriate, by further consideration at Committee) through the exception reporting mechanism provided for in the Performance Management Framework.

Appendix

1. Produce a new Customer Charter to replace the previous Customer Care Policy, reflecting the Corporate Mission and Customer Care Pledge, updated customer contact channels and sustainable working practices – the previous Customer Care Policy has been overtaken by changes in technology and modern working practices. A new approach is needed which reflects the Council's current mission and objectives. To this end, a Customer Focus Charter will be framed which not only reflects the shift in the methods used by our customers to make contact with the Council but also the part which our customers must play in helping us to deliver high quality services. The Charter will be reviewed following customer consultation.

2. Developing customer service skills in our staff – Whilst all staff working in Customer Services receive training according to their specific work area, the approach to this issue differs from service to service despite the fact that many officers outwith Customer Services deal directly with the public. At present, there is no recognised corporate approach to best practice in our dealings with customers. As a result, a further action is that employees will be trained to deliver services in line with the Customer Focus Charter. Customer Services E learning is being prepared for staff and classroom courses are regularly reviewed to ensure that the content meets the expectations of our customers. Feedback is also collected from employees via the Public Sector Improvement Framework (PSIF) to reflect changing attitudes and behaviours in order to adapt service delivery. In addition, we aim to improve consistency by using a model such as The Customer Service Excellence standard to ensure that we listen, measure, respond and develop our practices in light of changing demands. Consideration is currently being given to the standard which the Council wishes to adopt.

Excellence in Customer Service will also continue to be an active consideration in the Council's STAR (Staff Thanks and Recognition) Awards which recognise exceptional conduct or performance by Council employees.

3. Improve Accessibility of Customer Care Information – Customer Care information is held in a number of locations and web pages across the Council and so is often hard to access for customers. Equally, service information held online can be readily and cost effectively updated but is not subject to any corporate review period. A key action is therefore to review all Customer Care Information no less than 6 monthly, holding this in a variety of formats in clearly identified locations. For paper information this will continue to be held at Access Points, local libraries and other service delivery points such as schools. For online information, this will include creation of a dedicated Customer Service page on the Council website on which the Customer Focus Strategy, Customer Focus Charter and service specific Charters such as the Housing Charter will be held together. This page will also contain links to information on complaints and service performance.

4. Achieving a consistent approach to customer engagement, the use and reporting of customer feedback and consequential improvement activity – using customer feedback to improve services is a key objective of this strategy. In order to achieve this, action is needed on a number of fronts:

- Service Planning Guidance will be reviewed to make specific reference to both customer results and a review of previous improvement activity as part of service planning.
- The Performance Management Framework will be reviewed to align with revised Customer Satisfaction arrangements and to recognise the continuous improvement cycle – this will include introduction of the Continuous Improvement Assessment Tool, a tool designed to draw improvement issues together and to help prioritise resulting improvement activity.
- Ensure all services are progressing with development of customer satisfaction performance indicators for reporting no less than every 3 years.
- The six monthly Performance Management Reports will be reviewed to make reference to both complaints and customer satisfaction results gathered in the reporting period to enable councillors to prioritise service based improvement activity
- Customer satisfaction results will be added to the annual corporate Complaints Report to provide members with a comprehensive overview of customer feedback and to help them prioritise corporate improvement.
- A publicity campaign for the new Customer Focus Charter and Strategy both internally and externally will be launched following approval.

5. Implement new Ways of Working to recognise Developments in Technology – The Council is currently nearing completion of a modernisation programme known as “Designing Better Services.” Certain aspects of that programme are relevant to customer care, including:

- Reducing the wide range of telephone numbers for accessing Council services, channelling calls through the Council’s Customer Contact Centre wherever appropriate.
- Moving to a paper lite environment, channelling paper mail through the central mail room for conversion to electronic format.
- Wherever possible using technology to capture data.
- Encouraging customers to use contact methods which allow them to access the information or service they require directly – commonly known as “self-service.” This particular area for improvement is being further developed through the Digital Services Programme in terms of which customers will be able to access more information and services online.

The target for this work will align with DBS Project targets, with development under the Digital Services programme progressing separately.

6. Promoting Community Involvement in Service Improvements – The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, due for enactment in the summer of 2015, will formalise the right of the community to participate in the delivery of service outcomes. As part of the procedures which the Council will develop to meet its obligations under this legislation, the annual report summarising themes and actions arising from corporate complaints and customer feedback gathered across the Council will also be provided to the Community Engagement Group for consideration as to whether any participation requests or action may usefully be considered based on this analysis.

7. Creating and Maintaining a Customer Focus Group comprising officers from all services

– This group was formed to develop this strategy and the Charter and will continue to meet to help to coordinate customer service improvements across the Council, to ensure that outstanding actions from the Strategy are implemented, that the Strategy and Charter are kept under review and to enable officers to share good practice with one another.

Put customers at the centre of our activities – need to look at how we engage with customers	
Action 1	Draft Charter framed, circulated for consultation internally, through Community Engagement Group and through public consultation including questionnaires at Access Points and via the Council's website. Draft now submitted for approval. An Easy Read Version will also be prepared.
Action 2	E-learning modules are under development, to be rolled out initially to Customer Services staff and then in stages across all customer facing staff, and the appropriate service standard is under consideration.
Action 3	Following committee approval the webpage will be configured and launched within 7 days.
Action 5	The DBS programme is to be completed in December 2015. A report of the Digital Services Programme was considered at the Policy and Resources Committee on 14.4.15
Provide a framework to ensure that customer feedback (including complaints) is contributing to demonstrable service improvement	
Action 4	Service Planning Guidance has been revised The Continuous Improvement Assessment Tool is being disseminated through management teams for active application by the summer of 2015 All services are making good progress in developing customer satisfaction PIs Six monthly performance reports now contain customer satisfaction information gathered in the period as well as complaints to enable assessment at service level Customer Satisfaction Information will be added to the next Annual Report on Complaints and Feedback to enable assessment at corporate level.
Action 6	To facilitate continuing community involvement in service improvements, the Community Engagement Group will be provided with the Council's Annual Complaints and Feedback summary and analysis. This report is due to be considered by the Council in September 2015.
Provide Members with a comprehensive overview of customer feedback to help them prioritise improvement activity.	
Action 4	As above
Coordinate customer service improvements across the council, sharing good practice	
Action 7	The Group has been meeting for 18 months. Following launch of the strategy and charter the membership will be reviewed and the group will continue to meet six monthly.

For further information, please visit the **Moray Council Customer Services** page on the Council's website <http://www.moray.gov.uk/customerservices> or call **01343 543451**

Notes



D-00878