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REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	24 <sup>th</sup> NOVEMBER 2005	CATEGORY: DELEGATED/ RECOMMENDED OPEN
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES	
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	PAM CARROLL (5784)	DOC: s:\cent_serv\committee reports\finance and management\24 nov 05\customer service strategy committee report.doc
SUBJECT:	CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY UPDATE	REF: PLC
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: FM11

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### 1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 That this committee notes the content of this report and progress to date on the Customer Service Strategy. (*This document can be found on the Council's Intranet site: Corporate Services/IT&Customer Services/Customer Services/Customer Service Strategy.*)
- 1.2 The committee approves the recommendation to adopt the South Derbyshire District Council Crest as the main logo for our corporate image. (see Appendix B)

### 2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To report on the progress to date on the Customer Service Strategy.
- 2.2 To ask members to consider proposals to update the Council's Corporate Image.

### 3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 A Customer Service Strategy was adopted in December 2003 clearly linked to the Council's vision for the future: -  
  
'To promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the community through the provision of cost effective, customer focused services'.
- 3.2 One of the Council's key aims is to 'Continually improve the quality and efficiency of our services'.
- 3.3 To achieve this aim we will ensure that the services which we provide to local people, voluntary and community groups, businesses, potential investors and residents as well as visitors are readily available, accessible to all and of the highest standard.

- 3.4 The Council's current Corporate Plan indicates that opportunities exist to improve our customer service standards. We aim to make services 'customer centred' – adapting service delivery to meet the needs and wishes of the local community and radically improving customer experience.
- 3.5 The Customer Service Strategy identified that successful implementation of the Strategy requires a sustained corporate commitment from the Council, its staff and its members. To support first class service delivery, the infrastructure of the telephone and information technology and the development of computer systems must be of the highest standards. It involves a radical re-organisation in the way the Council delivers its services.
- 3.6 We are:
- Putting our Customer First
  - Involving our Customers
  - Providing Clear Service Standards
  - Improving access to our services
  - Ensuring a pleasant customer experience
  - Improving our Corporate image
- 3.7 The proposals in this report aim to finalise the proposals to build a stronger corporate image and at the same time create a more cohesive image of the Council.
- 3.8 The guidelines will raise awareness amongst officers of the in-house graphic design capabilities reducing the need to outsource projects. Our internal print room will also have a clearer design brief. This will have a positive cost implication.

#### **4.0 Detail**

##### **Background**

- 4.1 The Customer Service strategy focuses on:

- ♦ The Council's vision for the future:-

To promote and enhance the social, economic and environmental wellbeing of the community through the provision of cost effective, customer focused services'.

- 4.2 One of the Council's key aims is:

- ♦ 'To continually improve the quality and efficiency of our services'.

To achieve this aim we will ensure that the services which we provide to local people, voluntary and community groups, businesses, potential investors and residents as well as visitors are readily available, accessible to all and of the highest standard.

- 4.3 The Council's Corporate Plan indicates that opportunities exist to improve our customer service standards. We aim to make services 'customer centred' – adapting service delivery to meet the needs and wishes of the local community and radically improving customer experience.

#### 4.4 The key principles underlying this Customer Services Strategy are:

- ♦ to place customers at the forefront of all our services;
- ♦ to respond to priorities identified by the community – building service delivery around customer choice wherever possible;
- ♦ to provide customers with clear information about the range of services available, and the standards of service which they can expect;
- ♦ to give customers the opportunity to influence the range and standards of services offered by;
  - carrying out regular customer surveys
  - inviting customers to comment, compliment, or complain about the services which they receive
- ♦ to provide equality of service provision by ensuring that customers' needs are met irrespective of age, gender, physical or financial ability, ethnic origin, religion or geographical location;
- ♦ to maximise customers' choice by accessing services electronically;
- ♦ to ensure that a minimum of 80% of all enquiries to the Council will be dealt with at the first point of contact;
- ♦ to provide a consistently high quality response to customer enquiries whether customers access services through our reception, the web site and our telephone system;
- ♦ to offer a home visit to customers experiencing difficulties accessing our services, e.g. disabled persons;
- ♦ to provide a high quality of experience for our customers through attractive and wheelchair accessible reception facilities;
- ♦ provide clear and easily understandable information, prominently displayed and accessible;
- ♦ provide easy to use information technology systems;
- ♦ promote a culture of service excellence through all the Council staff;
- ♦ provide Council staff with the training and equipment needed to meet the high quality expectations of our customers;
- ♦ demonstrate continuous improvement.

## 4.5 Delivering the Customer Service Strategy

4.5.1 The Customer Service Strategy identified that successful implementation of the Strategy requires a sustained corporate commitment from the Council, its staff and its members. To support first class service delivery, the infrastructure of the telephone and information technology and the development of computer systems must be of the highest standards. It involves a radical re-organisation in the way the Council delivers its services. The steps which we have taken so far are outlined below.

4.5.2 **Putting the Customer First.** We have carried out a systematic review of transactions in all service areas to identify the services more responsive to customer needs and, at the same time, streamlining service delivery. We are using a technique known as Business Process Re-engineering (BPR) and working with members of the Derbyshire Partnership to develop this technique.

- ♦ This may include the need to restructure front line customer services and all back office functions to ensure sustained efficiency savings.
- ♦ Our aim is to provide an information system which enables 80% of callers to have their query, or request for service, dealt with by specially trained customer service advisers, without the need to pass the callers on to other staff.

4.5.3 **Involving our Customers.** Effective, regular consultation and greater engagement with the community will ensure service improvements are driven by customer need and choice. Consultation mechanisms to include:

- ♦ In February 2006 a customer services questionnaire will be sent to the South Derbyshire Citizens Panel;
- ♦ We have reviewed our current complaints procedure and re-developed it to a Compliments, Comments and Complaints procedure – to encourage users to give their opinions on our policies and practices at any time;
- ♦ Regular customer satisfaction/feedback surveys will be carried out utilising the telephone contact centre;

4.5.4 **Clear Service Standards.** Central Government is preparing guidelines for a set of national customer service standards. As part of the Derbyshire Partnership we are currently developing a set of generic customer service standards which will be written in line with these guidelines. We will publish a Service Charter giving details of the services provided, how to access the service and what customers can expect. The Charters will be written in plain English.

- ♦ We will also publish a comprehensive Customer Care Policy outlining standards and targets to be applied on all occasions when our customers contact us, wherever and by whatever means our customers contact the Council.

**4.5.5 Improved Access to Services for Customers.** We have installed a new telephone system, customer relationship management software package, A-Z of services and completely re-designed our website to enable us to provide customers with additional choices of accessing Council services including;

- ♦ Access to all services from our internet site; with the ability to deliver 100% of transactions electronically;
- ♦ Exploring the possibility of providing an out of hours telephone service by utilising the offices used by Careline at Granville Court. This will give telephone access to our service from 8.00am to 8.00pm and Saturday mornings 9.00am– 1.00pm.

**4.5.6 A Pleasant Customer Experience.** We want the act of contacting the Council to be an easy and pleasant experience for our customers:-

- ♦ We offer service information available in a range of formats, including Braille, audio-tape, large print and languages other than English;
- ♦ We ensure that information is provided about all of the Council's services and is presented in a Plain English style;
- ♦ The reception refurbishment is currently well underway and we are on schedule to open the new facilities in January 2006. This will:
  - Ensure that all customer reception points offer unrestricted access for people with disabilities;
  - Provide loop systems to aid people with hearing impairments;
  - Provide reception areas which are welcoming, well decorated and well lit;
  - Extend the opening hours for making payments;
  - Offer the facilities for enquiries and conversations to be held in confidence.

**4.5.7 An Improving Council: Branding Council Services.** We want our customers to know when they are using a service provided by South Derbyshire District Council. Our aim is that they identify these services with consistent high quality standards. To assist this Customer Service Strategy we will 'brand' all of our services, our information leaflets, internet sites, letterheads, vehicles and reception areas.

- ♦ Our aim is that customers will share our pride in the quality of services which we offer and will consider us to be a high performing Council. As with any business it is important that local people are able to identify easily with the Council that serves them.

**4.5.8 In essence this involves having:-**

- ♦ A recognisable logo that is displayed prominently on printed material, signage, letters etc.
- ♦ Colours that are associated with the organisation.
- ♦ Standard typefaces that give a consistent approach to printed material and are easy to read for people with a visual impairment.

- ♦ A house style for publications to ensure that customers can relate to them as coming from the same organisation.
- ♦ At this committees meeting on 2<sup>nd</sup> September 2004, proposals on the Council's corporate image were agreed as follows:
  - A consistent range of colours for all Council publications;
  - Stationery to portray a consistent image on compliment slips, correspondence etc;
  - Leaflets to be more consistent in design;
  - Display advertisements to be in a corporate style;
  - Powerpoint presentations to be on a standard template for council presentations;
  - Exhibition material to have a consistent image;

4.5.9 Following the above meeting and after further consultation with members and officers, it would appear that there is a preference to retain the crest as the preferred logo. It is a further recommendation that we should retain the oak leaf logo for services connected to the National Forest – such as Rosliston Forestry Centre.

4.5.10 Following approval, we will issues guidelines internally that will raise awareness amongst officers of the in-house graphic design capabilities reducing the need to outsource projects. Our internal print room will also have a clearer design brief. This will have a positive cost implication.

4.5.11 **Timescale for Implementation.** Delivery of this Customer Service Strategy involves a major review of all of the Council's services. Within 12 months our customers will benefit from an improved quality and wider choice of services. The detailed process of implementing and achieving this Customer Service Strategy across the whole Council, which involves the supporting infrastructure (IT & workforce planning) should be achieved by 2007 (as per action plan attached – appendix A).

## **5.0 Financial Implications**

5.1 None.

5.2 All work to date has been undertaken within budget.

## **6.0 Corporate Implications**

6.1 It is important for an organisation to have a strong corporate identify. This report identifies how we can develop a stronger and more streamlined identity for South Derbyshire District Council.

## **7.0 Community Implications**

7.1 The proposals will make it easier for our customers to relate to the work of the council and help to sign post better the services that we provide.

- 7.2 The implementation of the Customer Services Strategy will help to provide better service to members of our community.

**8.0 Summary and Conclusion**

- 8.1 The proposals within this report are aimed at delivering a stronger corporate image for South Derbyshire and the Customer Service Strategy will continually improve the quality and efficiency of our services.

