
REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	12 OCTOBER 2006	CATEGORY: DELEGATED/ RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES	OPEN/EXEMPT PARAGRAPH NO:
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	Peter McEvoy (595830)	DOC:
SUBJECT:	Environmental Services Guide and Standards	REF:
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Members are requested to consider the proposed Service Guide and Standards and, subject to any comments, approve the document for publication

2.0 Purpose of Report

- 2.1 To allow members to consider the draft Service Standard and offer any comments as to it's contents prior to publication.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 As part of the Higher Quality Services Theme of the Council's new Corporate Plan there is an action for 2006/7 to 'plan and establish Service Standards, in consultation with service users across all service areas'. Further, '**More efficient customer focussed services**' is one of the three main areas that the Council wishes to concentrate on first.
- 3.2 In addition, Environmental Services have been preparing an application for recognition that their Services meet the Standard for Public Service Excellence, Charter Mark. The draft Service Plan, also before this Committee, contains the target to achieve accreditation in 2006/7. Having a set of published service standards is key to satisfying the Charter Mark Standard.
- 3.3 The overall aim of these initiatives is to improve access to information and Council Services for local people by being:

- accountable and open
- to learn from feedback
- assist in the culture of continuous improvement

and, through this process to improve efficiency and ultimately, customer satisfaction. This is a key element of any future CPA assessment.

4.0 Detail

4.1 A corporate 'Customer Service Code Of Practice and Standards' was approved by Finance and Management Committee on 22nd June 2006. The document sets standards for:

- Telephone use
- Written communication
- Face to Face
- Customer Feedback

4.2 For consistency, a similar style of booklet is to be used for all services to create a range of 5 booklets covering the following key services:

- Environmental
- Benefits and Taxes
- Housing
- Planning and Building Control
- Leisure and Community

4.3 In accordance with best practice, the booklets are recommended to be similar in design, within corporate colours, including logo, name of service, web site, relevant photos, other languages etc. Inside the booklet, the Council's vision will be reproduced together with details of our compliments/comments/complaints procedure. A colour version of the document cover will be distributed at the meeting.

4.4 The standards will be a mix of national standards such as BVPI'S and local standards that, wherever possible, are subject to benchmarking with other organisations to ensure they are realistic and challenging. All of them will be monitored on a quarterly basis and reported to the various Policy Committees as part of the usual Performance Management Reports.

4.5 The standard contents of the booklets will provide the following information:

- A copy of the generic customer service standards
- A contents page
- Introduction (Key facts; What can these services do for you?)
- Web site address including performance updates
- A brief description of the service, with relevant telephone no's etc
- Standards of Service clearly identified.

The Environmental Services Service Guide is the first Service specific example to be produced. Furthermore because of the number of services included in Environmental Services it is likely to be the most extensive by a considerable margin. The text of the guide is attached as Appendix 1 for consideration and a colour, formatted version will be available at the committee to allow consideration of the presentation.

4.6 The booklets will be available in reception, libraries, our web site and to any person or organisation that requests a copy.

5. Consultation

5.1 Consultation on the framework to date has included the following:

- Relevant staff
- Charter Mark advisor
- Word Centre (to ensure plain English)
- Corporate Scrutiny Committee

In addition, once launched, consultation will be ongoing by inviting feedback from users of the service and readers of the booklet.

5.2 Meetings have taken place with the Charter Mark lead assessor who has considered the general format and details of the Environmental Services brochure and who has been complimentary about the process and content. All suggestions received so far including from Corporate Scrutiny Committee have been incorporated into the current draft.

5.3 A significant amount of consultation has been undertaken with all stakeholders in bringing together the new corporate plan. Certainly local people, service users, partners, voluntary organisations and parishes have been included in the future design and delivery of Council Services, in particular those areas that are considered to be a priority for the Council to deliver. The standards have been completed with these in mind and within current resources. At this stage it is therefore not recommended that we consult externally and formally on every standard within every service, but that the future consultation of these standards becomes an integral part of the Councils consultation strategy.

6.0 Financial Implications

6.1 None.

7.0 Corporate Implications

7.1 The standards outlined provide consistency of service delivery in key areas and will improve performance, accountability and openness. This will have a positive effect on any Value For Money or other CPA assessment.

8.0 Community Implications

8.1 The community will benefit from clear descriptions of services and related standards and will know what to expect and comment upon.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 The Service Guide offers a clear description of the Services offered and defines the standards that can be expected by the public. Publishing the document is key to developing the Service further as a truly customer orientated public service, in keeping with the Council's vision and priorities.

10.0 Background Papers

10.1 Customer Service Code of Practice

10.2 Consultation Strategy.

