

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**
Date: **4 October 2018**
Title: **Customer Satisfaction Survey**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**
Wards Affected: **All Wards**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

Urgent Decision: **N** Approval and clearance obtained: **N**

Date next steps can be taken:
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision) **Executive and Council**

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel RECOMMENDS to the Executive to note the results from the Council's recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and endorse the proposed actions as detailed in para 5 of this report.

1. Executive summary

- 1.1 This report is presented by the portfolio holder for Customer First and details the scores achieved by the Council as part of a recent Institute of Customer Service customer satisfaction benchmark survey.
- 1.2 The report also includes recommended next steps to improve the Council's customer satisfaction scores.

2. Background

- 2.1 Earlier this year the Council in partnership with West Devon Borough Council became a Member of the Institute of Customer Service. The Institute is an independent, not for profit membership body with over 480 organisational members. 80% of membership organisations are from private sector and 20% from the public sector. The Institute is renowned for providing customer survey, benchmarking and training services.

- 2.2 The purpose for joining the Institute of Customer Service was to obtain a true benchmark of our customers' experience against the best private and public organisations in the country; and more importantly use our membership to learn from the top performing companies as to how best we can improve our customer service offering.
- 2.3 It's important to note top scoring organisations include Amazon, First Direct, O2, Marks and Spencer, BMW and government agencies such as HMRC and DWP.

3 Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 On 16 June this year the Council contacted over 4,000 South Hams District Council customers. Contact was made by either email or text message. A copy of the survey questions can be found at Appendix A of this report. The text highlighted in yellow in the appendix shows how the survey was tailored to suit South Hams customers.
- 3.2 Customers were only contacted if they had had dealings with the Council within the last three months. Each email was personalised with the customer's name and their reason for contacting the Council. Customers were asked to provide honest and anonymous feedback on their recent customer experience. Customers did this by clicking on a link which took them to a survey hosted on the Institute of Customer Service survey portal.
- 3.3 Over 500 South Hams customers responded to the survey. The response rate exceeded the Institute of Customer Services minimum return rate of 100 responses as such the survey was deemed statistically sound.
- 3.4 The survey responses were used by the Institute of Customer Service to benchmark the Council against the UK Customer Satisfaction Index. The index is updated twice a year and canvasses the opinions of 10,000 UK customers.
- 3.5 Results from the benchmarking can be found at Appendix B. Key points to note from the results are as follows:
 - a. The survey shows combined and individual scores for South Hams and West Devon Borough Councils.
 - b. It takes organisations time to up their customer satisfaction scores, as shown on page 11 of Appendix B.
 - c. The Council scores higher than the average local Council for its Net Promoter Score and Customer Effort scores as shown on pages 14 and 26 of Appendix B.

- d. The Council needs to improve its performance on getting things right first time and keeping its customers informed as detailed on pages 16, 20 and 27 of Appendix B.
 - e. Words used to describe the Council are a mixture of both positive and negative as detailed on page 21 of Appendix B.
- 3.6 Customers have been contacted and thanked for participating in the survey and have been invited to join a Customer Focus Group should they wish to.
- 3.7 The survey results have been shared with staff at a series of Away Days which took place between 21 September and 1 October. The purpose of the Away Days was to analyse and reflect on the results with staff and to encourage staff to be active participants in formulating an action plan to improve customer satisfaction. In particular staff were asked to focus on solutions to improve:
- a. Getting services right first time
 - b. Keeping customers informed
 - c. Showing customers they care
 - d. Complaint handling
- 3.8 The ideas generated at the Staff Away Days will help inform a set of Council service standards.
- 3.9 Plans are also underway for the Council to participate in National Customer Service week taking place from 1-5 October 2018.

4 Options available and consideration of risk

- 4.1 The Council could have chosen not to benchmark its customer service delivery; but in doing so would fail to understand how its customer service ranked against other public and private sector service providers.
- 4.2 In order to gain a true understanding of customer satisfaction levels it was deemed appropriate to grasp the nettle and benchmark the Council against the best customer service providers.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Building on the work detailed in paragraph 3 above it is recommended that officers:
- a. Produce a comprehensive action plan and present this to Overview and Scrutiny Panel in November 2018.
 - b. Start an end to end process review of all customer transactions and involve customers signed up to the Customer Focus Group to do this. Thus ensuring any amended or new customer processes are sense checked and deemed customer friendly before going live.

- c. Repeat the Institute of Customer Service benchmarking in 12 months time to measure improvement and demonstrate the action plan has had a positive impact.
- d. Introduce short and simple transactional surveys in between now and next summer to regularly appraise customer satisfaction levels and hone service delivery where needed.
- e. Regularly report to Executive on the results of all transactional surveys.

6. Implications

| Implications | Relevant to proposals Y/N | Details and proposed measures to address |
|--|---------------------------|--|
| Legal/Governance | Y | Overview & Scrutiny Panel have a responsibility to assist the Council in identifying areas for improvement and to make any necessary recommendations to the Executive and Council. |
| Financial | Y | There are no financial implication as a result of this report that have not already been budgeted for. |
| Risk | Y | A failure to review and act upon customer satisfaction levels could lead to: Lack of coherent delivery Reputational harm Ineffective use of resources Poor quality service These risks are mitigated by: The recommendations outlined in this report |
| Comprehensive Impact Assessment Implications | | |
| Equality and Diversity | | None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report. |
| Safeguarding | | None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report. |
| Community Safety, Crime and Disorder | | None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report. |
| Health, Safety and Wellbeing | | None – no policy or service change is proposed in this report. |
| Other implications | | - |

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Customer Survey Questions

Appendix B – Customer Survey Results