

Report to: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**
Date: **6 November 2018**
Title: **Customer Satisfaction Survey**
Portfolio Area: **Customer First**
Wards Affected: **All Wards**
Relevant Scrutiny Committee: **Overview and Scrutiny Committee**

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

Date next steps can be taken:
(e.g. referral on of recommendation or implementation of substantive decision) **Hub Committee meeting on 20 November 2018**

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RECOMMENDATION

That the Panel RECOMMENDS to the Hub Committee to:

- 1. note the results from the Council's recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and endorse the proposed actions as detailed in section 5 of this report.**
- 2. support the proposed Customer Service Standards as detailed in Appendix B 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 South Hams District 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 members are from the 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.
- 2.4 On 19 June this year the Council launched its first Institute of Customer Service Survey by contacting over 3,600 West Devon Borough 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 West Devon customers.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 396 West Devon 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.
- 2.7 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.
- 2.8 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 23 of Appendix B.

- d. The Council performs poorly on getting things right first time and keeping its customers informed as detailed on page 16 of Appendix B.
 - e. Words used to describe the Council are a mixture of both positive and negative as detailed on page 21 and 25 of Appendix B.
- 2.9 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.
- 2.10 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
- 2.11 The ideas generated at the Staff Away Days have helped inform a set of draft Council Customer Service standards.
- 2.12 To raise awareness of the importance of Customer Service the Council recently participated in National Customer Service week which ran from 1-5 October 2018.

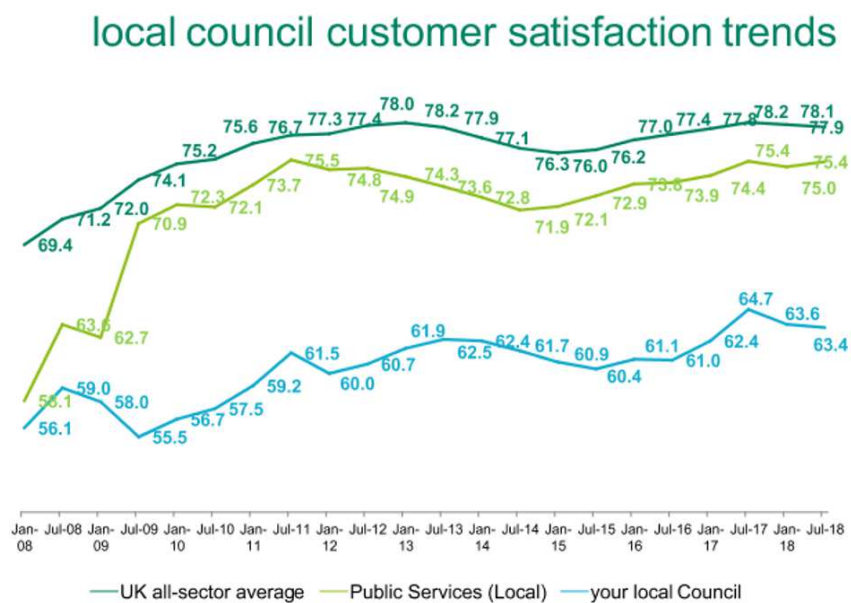
3 Outcomes/outputs

- 3.1 The Council is due to undertake a further Institute of Customer Service Customer Satisfaction Survey in October 2019. This section of the report details a set of suggested 2019 survey outcomes. The outcome scores have been devised by consulting with the Institute of Customer Service and by closely benchmarking the Council's existing results against the average local council scores.
- 3.2 Whilst the Council will look to improve all measures and scores ahead of a follow-up survey in October 2019. There are 3 main measurable outcomes that the council will look to improve over the next 12 months. These are;
- *Improvement in the overall benchmarking score*
 - *Improvement in the 'right first time' score*
 - *Improvement in the 'keeping customers informed' score*

3.3 Outcome 1

A minimum 5.1 point improvement in the Council's overall benchmarking score in 12 months' time when the Council conducts its next Customer Satisfaction Survey. Thereby bringing the Council's score in line with the average national UKCSI (UK Customer Service Index) for local councils of 63.4

3.4 A stretch target of a 7.5 improvement, being mindful however that Institute of Customer Service figures show that local council scores have improved on average by only 1 point per year over the last 10 years to reach the current figure of 63.4 out of 100 points. See graph below.



3.5 Outcome 2

A minimum 15% uplift to the Council's 'right first time' score in next year's Customer Satisfaction Survey. Thereby bringing the Council's score to 56.3% and slightly surpassing the average national UKCSI (UK Customer Service Index) for local councils of 56.2%

3.6 Clearly we should strive to get all services delivered 'right first time' every time and will make every effort to exceed this 56.3% target.

3.7 Outcome 3

A minimum 1.2 point uplift to the Council's 'keeping customers informed' score in next year's Customer Satisfaction Survey. Thereby bringing the Council's score to 6.2 and in line with the average national UKCSI (UK Customer Service Index) for local councils of 6.2 out of 10 points.

- 3.8 A stretch target of a 2.7 point uplift bringing the Council in line with the UKCSI average for all service sectors.

4 Options available and consideration of risk

4.1 Do nothing option

The Council could chose to disregard the results of the Council's recent Customer Satisfaction Survey and take no further action. However, in doing so the Council would be failing to act upon valuable customer feedback and would be at risk of reputational harm.

4.2 Take action option

By setting targets as detailed in section 3 above and devising an action plan as outlined in section 5 below the Council is proactively responding to the Customer Survey results. It is therefore deemed appropriate to pursue this option.

- 4.3 It is important to note that the targets detailed in section 3 will be delivered without any additional resources. Any changes in external factors such as additional budget pressures or changes in central government priorities could impact on our ability to deliver the action plan detailed in section 5.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 In order to meet the outcomes outlined in section 3 above it is recommended that officers pursue the actions illustrated in the timeline shown in Appendix C attached. A detailed description of each action is given in paragraphs 5.2 to 5.14 below.

5.2 Customer Service Standards

Based on feedback from Members and comments provided by staff at the recent customer satisfaction staff away days it is apparent that there is a need for the Council to adopt a set of clear Customer Service Standards. Preliminary research has been undertaken to look at service standards operated by other local councils. Attached is a set of draft standards that officers would welcome Members views on in order that a set of service standards can be adopted by the end of November this year. Please see Appendix D.

5.3 Customer communication review

Launch and promote a set of Customer Service Standards and systematically review communication to customers to ensure standards are met.

5.4 Standardised team meetings

Ensure all team meetings feature customer satisfaction and routinely ask did we get it 'right first time' this week? Resulting in teams taking ownership of service failures and regularly reviewing complaints and compliments to hone their service offering.

- 5.5 Recording mechanism to review and act upon service failure
Devise a standardised form and process to be used by teams and Members when they identify specific service failures and ideas for service improvements.
- 5.6 Focused snagging team
Through the Council's Programme Board establish a group of officers to act as a snagging team to review and coordinate suggested service improvements. Thereby ensuring improvements complement one another and do not cause undue service failure elsewhere in the organisation.
- 5.7 End to end review of high volume services
Assign resource to both Waste and Development Management services to conduct systematic end to end service reviews. It is envisaged these reviews will highlight ways in which processes might be simplified and improved. Thereby making the customer's experience when engaging with these services much more satisfying and less open to complaint.
- 5.8 Customer focus groups
Establish customer focus groups to test high impact processes prior to going live and rolling out to the rest of the public.
- 5.9 Regular 'how was it for you' surveys
Introduce weekly surveys for completed processes where customers are contacted via their preferred method of contact and simply asked 'how was it for you' and 'what could we do to improve'. The rationale for introducing these quick weekly surveys is to gauge a gradual understanding of whether service is improving as opposed to waiting 12 months for the main Customer Satisfaction Survey to be conducted.
- 5.10 Ongoing staff training
It is anticipated that the regular 'how was it for you' surveys and service reviews will highlight the need for staff training in areas such as inbox management, use of plain English, managing expectations, etc. Staff resource from the Council's HR and Communication Teams has been factored in to aid the delivery of necessary training.
- 5.11 Monitor staff performance
Ensure all staff are performance managed against each of the Council's service standards through regular one to one meetings with their manager and identify any areas for celebration or improvement.
- 5.12 Prominent progress reporting
In order that all Members can chart the progress made in improving customer satisfaction it is proposed regular progress reports are provided in the weekly Members' Bulletin and at monthly Hub

meetings. To motivate staff it is proposed progress is reported in the weekly staff newsletter the Friday Flash and that the general public are kept informed of the Council's progress via the Annual Report published in May and via minutes of Executive meeting on Modern Gov the portal containing all Council minutes.

5.13 National Customer Service Week 2019 and survey launch
Participate in National Customer Service week commencing on 7 October 2019 and use it as a launch for the Council's second Institute of Customer Service Customer Satisfaction Survey.

5.14 Review 2019 Customer Satisfaction Results
In January 2020 present the findings of the second Institute of Customer Service Customer Satisfaction Survey results to the Council's Overview and Scrutiny Panel.

6. Implications

Implications	Relevant to proposals Y/N	Details and proposed measures to address
Legal/Governance	Y	Overview & Scrutiny Committee has a responsibility to assist the Council in identifying areas for improvement and to make any necessary recommendations to the Hub 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		None

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Customer Survey Questions

Appendix B – Customer Survey Results

Appendix C – Customer Satisfaction Action Plan Timeline

Appendix D – Draft Customer Service Standards