



BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

MEETING OF THE PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD

MONDAY 18TH MAY 2009, AT 6.00 P.M.

THE COUNCIL HOUSE, BURCOT LANE, BROMSGROVE

SUPPLEMENTARY DOCUMENTATION

The attached papers were specified as "to follow" on the Agenda previously distributed relating to the above mentioned meeting.

6. Customer First Strategy Review (to follow) (Pages 1 - 86)

K. DICKS
Chief Executive

The Council House
Burcot Lane
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14th May 2009

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Agenda Item 6

BROMSGROVE DISTRICT COUNCIL

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT BOARD

18 MAY 2009

CUSTOMER FIRST STRATEGY REVIEW

Responsible Portfolio Holder	Mike Webb, Portfolio for Community and Customer Engagement and Community Safety
Responsible Head of Service	Hugh Bennett, Assistant Chief Executive and Deb Poole, Head of E-Government and Customer Services

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The report recommends the adoption of a new Customer Access Strategy to replace the existing Customer First Strategy.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that Performance Management Board:-
1. Notes the significant improvement to the Council's customer performance over the last three years, in particular, the Customer Service Centre (5.41 Appendix 1).
 2. Notes that while our process times are generally much improved, customer satisfaction (5.3 Table 2 Appendix 1) and staff satisfaction remain too low.
 3. Recommends the Cabinet to agree the proposed updated corporate customer standards (5.22 Appendix 1), which will be published later in the year to customers and inserted into each service business plan;
 4. Notes the March 2009 CPA report recommendation, that a "culture of customer focus should be fully established at all levels within the Council" (6.4 Appendix 1);
 5. Recommends the Cabinet to agree the Strategy's priorities for the year ahead (9.1) and approve the detailed action plan to support the delivery of these priorities (11. Appendix 1); and
 6. Recommends the Cabinet to agree the Strategy scorecard 2009/2010 (10. Appendix 1), in particular, the customer measures and recognises the distance we still need to travel in order to become an excellent Council.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In March 2006 the Cabinet approved a Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council. At the time the primary focus of the Council had been to improve its basic performance, in particular, its Best Value performance indicators, which were critical to achieving a rating of "Fair" from the Audit Commission, when the Council is re-inspected in the Autumn of 2008; nevertheless, the Strategy recognised that the long term ambition of the Council is to deliver both excellent performance, but also an excellent customer experience, comparable to the best in the private sector.
- 3.2 The Strategy took a holistic approach, based on international private sector best practice, and looked to ensure there were actions designed to improve the customer service and culture of the Council across 12 themes (now 13, as we have added customer access on the advice of the Audit Commission).
- 3.4 The Council has made considerable progress since March 2006 including:-
- Customer First being one of the Council's four values and also one of the Council's five priorities;
 - Improved performance at the Customer Service Centre, including a call resolution at the first point of contact now above 90% (November 2007).
 - 73% of CSC customer would recommend the CSC to a friend (Customer Panel July 2007);
 - CSC answer times being consistently below 20 seconds;
 - a re-launched Council website;
 - Customer First training for all staff (with a third wave taking place in February and March 2008);
 - the roll out of complaints software across the Council;
 - the introduction of a Customer Manual for all staff;
 - the launch of the Council's All Inclusive Equalities Scheme, Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled User Group;
 - staff recognition for customer service and improvement;
 - senior management attendance at PACT meetings and the piloting of two area committees;

- a budget aligned to feedback received from residents;
 - performance for our Best Value performance indicators now being around the average for an English district council; and
 - a CPA rating of Fair.
- 3.5 Despite these improvements, we started from a low base and overall satisfaction with the Council remains low (as does staff satisfaction).
- 3.6 Customer access focus groups undertaken in the Summer of 2008 indicated that our customers are happy with the existing access channels, but are not happy with basics like letter writing (for example, receiving multiple responses to their letters), answering voicemails, the style of letters, general responsiveness etc. We need to become more responsive, empathic, focused on outcomes and communicate better (including feedback). These are largely behavioural issues. The aim of the new Customer Access Strategy is to increase our focus on these areas over the next three years.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Some of the proposed actions will require business cases and budget bids for the 2010/2011 budget cycle. These include making the Improvement Manager a permanent appointment and additional funding for marketing activity e.g. a magazine aimed specifically at children and young people.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 A new “duty to involve” has applied from 01 April 2009.

6. COUNCIL OBJECTIVES

- 6.1 Council Objective – Improvement and Council Value – Customer Service.

7. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 7.1 The main risks associated with the details included in this report are:
- Delivery of benefits and savings from Spatial Project.
 - Successful roll out of complaints software.
 - Responding to requirements of new regulatory framework for local government and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007.
- 7.2 These risks are being managed as follows:

- Delivery of benefits and savings from Spatial Project.

Risk Register: E-Government and Customer Services

Key Objective Ref No: 1
Key Objective: Spatial Project

- Successful roll out of complaints software.

Risk Register: Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance

Key Objective Ref No: 2

Key Objective: Effective Customer First Strategy

- Responding to requirements of new regulatory framework for local government and Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007:

Risk Register: Corporate

Key Objective Ref No:17

Key Objective: Ensure the Council achieves at least a CPA fair rating and is prepared for CAA.

7.3 The third risk is not currently included in the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance risk register and needs to be added and cross checked to the corporate risk register.

8 CUSTOMER IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Strategy is designed to improve customer service and care to our customers.

9. EQUALITIES AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

9.1 Equalities and Diversity are an integral part of the Council's approach to customer service and the Strategy includes a number of actions to improve our customer service in this respect.

10. VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The Strategy is consistent with the Council's VFM Strategy, in particular:-

- The Customer Panel will offer services increasing amounts of data on customer satisfaction which needs to be taken into account in any assessment of value for money; and
- Business cases will be required for a number of proposals in the Strategy e.g. community transport links, expansion of area committees.

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

Procurement Issues: Yes, community transport and future Customer Panel contract.
Personnel Issues: Yes, making the recruitment process more orientated to recruiting employees with a customer service aptitude.
Governance/Performance Management: Yes, more customer service measures in the corporate performance indicator set.
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act 1988: Yes, continued support for PACT and potential expansion of area committees.
Policy: None.
Environmental: Community transport is more environmentally friendly than individual taxis.

12. OTHERS CONSULTED ON THE REPORT

Portfolio Holder	Yes.
Chief Executive	At CMT.
Executive Director (Partnerships & Projects)	At CMT.
Executive Director (Services)	Yes.
Assistant Chief Executive	Author
Head of Financial Services	At CMT.
Head of Legal, Equalities & Democratic Services	At CMT.
Head of Organisational Development & HR	At CMT.
Corporate Procurement Team	No.

13. WARDS AFFECTED

'All Wards'.

14. APPENDICES

Appendix 1 Customer Access Strategy for Bromsgrove District , June 2009

15. BACKGROUND PAPERS

See bibliography in Strategy (14.)

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Customer Access Strategy

Customer Access Strategy Review

June 2009



Bromsgrove
District Council
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1. Foreword by Councillor Mike Webb, Portfolio for Community and Customer Engagement and Community Safety

Excellent customer service is one of the Council's four values.

Since the original Customer First Strategy was agreed in March 2006, the Council has come a long way on its journey to deliver this priority. The Council's is now rated "Fair" as a result of its second Comprehensive Performance Assessment. I am particularly pleased that the average speed of answering at our customer service centre is now consistently below 20 seconds and that over 95% of calls are resolved at the first point of contact (this is a very high level of customer service and one that is clearly valued by our customers). This is down to the hard work of the managers and staff at the Council. I am also really pleased to see senior officer commitment to the PACT process, to Local Neighbourhood Partnerships, "back to the floor" and "walking the wards". It is really important that both Members and officers really understand the District and residents we serve and provide leadership to the rest of the organisation.

2008 was a critical year in the Council's journey towards excellent customer service. In January, we launched our customer feedback system, customer manual for staff and customer standards. We put all staff through a second wave of customer first training and in October we completed the implementation of the spatial project which has seen the introduction of eleven new integrated IT systems. These systems will deliver financial savings, put us at the forefront of the Government's drive for electronic government, but most importantly deliver improved services to our customers. We also saw the Council starting to deliver equalities outcomes, like the agreed funding for the community transport scheme and funding for the refurbishment of the town centre toilets.

With so much going on, I was disappointed by the feedback in the Housing Inspection regarding the need for a customer access strategy, but have addressed this through an expanded customer access section in this Strategy, with a focus on, equalities monitoring and customer insight software, which are two key areas of development for the Audit Commission. I still contend that the focus should be on improving the customers' experience. This is what our own research points to and differs from the Audit Commission's focus on access.

This review and updated strategic action plan sets out in detail the actions we intend to take across 13 themes. As the 13 themes suggest, there is no single solution to achieving excellent customer service. We need to be ambitious, but also understand that this is about forming new and positive habits, about changing the psychology of the Council, something we cannot achieve overnight.

I look forward to reporting further progress to you in a year's time.

Councillor Mike Webb
Portfolio for Community and Customer Engagement and Community Safety

2. Introduction

- 2.1 In March 2006 the Cabinet approved a Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council. At the time the primary focus of the Council was to improve our basic performance, in particular, our Best Value performance indicators, which were critical to achieving a rating of “Fair” from the Audit Commission. Despite this focus on CPA, the Strategy has always recognised that the long term ambition of the Council is to deliver excellent performance and an excellent customer experience, comparable to the best in the private sector. The scale of this task should not be underestimated, given an often hostile media.
- 2.2 The Strategy took a holistic approach, based on international private sector best practice, and looked to ensure there were actions designed to improve the customer service and culture of the Council across 12 themes. On the advice of the I&DeA Peer Review and the 2008 Housing Inspection we have added a thirteenth theme, customer access:-
- ✚ organisational strategy and a compelling vision;
 - ✚ customer need research (listen to our customers);
 - ✚ organisation structure;
 - ✚ service delivery process;
 - ✚ management practices;
 - ✚ measurements;
 - ✚ training and management development;
 - ✚ internal team building;
 - ✚ customer education;
 - ✚ customer environment;
 - ✚ communications (internal and external) and community engagement;
 - ✚ managing the change; and
 - ✚ customer access.
- 2.3 A Specific, Measurable, Agreed, Realistic and Timebound (SMART) strategic action plan was agreed by Cabinet for these 13 themes. Progress against the action plan is reviewed in section 8. Besides progress against the action plan there have been a number of national developments since the Strategy was introduced, significantly, from April 2009, the Council will be subject to a new inspection framework – Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The impact of CAA is covered in more detail in section 4 below.

Fig 1 – Customer First Programme (13 Themes)

See separate attachment.

3. Customer Vision

- 3.1 The 2008 Housing Inspection identified the need for a clear customer vision. To be meaningful, we felt the Council needed more than a couple of lines and more of a picture of what customer service will look like in the future at the Council. The following vision was approved by 02 July 2008 Council.

Purpose

- 3.2 The Customer First Strategy sets out a detailed action plan for improving the customer service given by the Council. The purpose of this section is to articulate what all these actions will deliver, in effect, what the vision for customer service at the Council is.

A Compelling Vision

- 3.3 The Vision for the Council is:-

" Working together to build a District where people are proud to live and work, through community leadership and excellent services".

- 3.4 Our vision for customer first is to be a world class deliverer of customer service. This is not dependent on size, in fact, our relatively small size should make achieving this easier than a big less responsive organisation. To deliver it, we need to ensure that customer first flows through everything that we do, that the moment a member of staff starts for the Council, they are aware the customer is at the heart of what we do. It should be the first consideration in all that we do, above value for money, above performance and above technology. The first question should always be: what is right for the customer? As a result of the need to rebuild its management processes the Council still has quite an internal dynamic, but this is changing, as we come out of voluntary engagement, achieved a "Fair" CPA rating and started to deliver our Vision.
- 3.5 Achieving a customer first culture in any organisation is difficult, but for a local authority where there is no profit incentive to do so and a national focus on achieving quality of life outcome targets, this is doubly so; and yet, our customers expect an excellent customer experience. Our customers are comparing us with world class private sector providers in customer service, whose service is quick and easy and fits around people's increasingly fast lives.

- 3.6 We have defined customer first as follows:-

Who are our customers?

Everyone we come into contact with.

What is our vision for customer service?

To exceed expectations and delight our customers.

We will do this by:-

- Treating customers as individuals.
- Listening carefully to our customers.
- Taking ownership of problems.
- Doing the little things, because they matter!

- 3.7 We could spend a lot of time trying to define exactly who our customers are, for example, is someone captured offending on CCTV a customer? However, we have simply defined our customers as everyone we come into contact with, because everyone we come into contact with experiences the Council and will take away a view of the Council, based on that experience; so, whether we are dealing with a resident, someone who works in the District, an Audit Commission inspector, a councillor, a fellow member of staff, we should treat them as customers and ensure their experience of dealing with the Council is a good one; in fact, because many people have a negative perception of councils, we need to work even harder than some organisations and exceed our customer expectations and delight them! Is it possible to do this when we are giving bad news to a resident, for example, that they have lost their hedge dispute with their neighbour, or been unsuccessful in their planning application? We believe so. Even when we have to do difficult parts of our customer service, we should surprise our customers with the level of care and attention, consideration and empathy for them, so that they are surprised and delighted.
- 3.8 Our customer first poster sets out four behaviours which will help us delight our customers. 1) Treating them as individuals. By this we mean being attuned and empathic to their particular needs. It means taking the time to understand our customers, whether this is through undertaking large scale research to understand our customer base or something more immediate like ensuring we meet someone's dietary requirements at a lunch. 2) Linked to the first behaviour is our second one of listening. Tesco's believe their success is based on really listening and understanding their customers. We need to develop this. Too often, decisions in local government are still taken by a small group of people, without sufficient research into what the customer really wants. Whether as Members or officers, we assume we know and have not truly listened. Listening is hard, as it takes time and can be painful, as it requires change as a result. If you are not changing your service and not finding this difficult, you are probably not listening. 3) Taking ownership of problems is about leadership. We want everyone in the Council to act as the customer's advocate. This means chasing things up for them, owning the phone call, sticking with the complaint until it is resolved. 4) When we describe really good customer service we receive in our private lives, it is often the small things, the attention to detail, going the extra mile that we remember and marks out an average customer experience from a really great one. We want to do the same. It demonstrates we really care about our customer and makes them feel valued.

Leadership and Organisational Strategy

- 3.9 Achieving this vision of exceeding our customer's expectations and delighting them is going to be difficult and will not be achieved overnight, it may take 5 to 10 years of constantly going after customer first to really turn the Council into a truly world class organisation. Delivering this then is going to require strong and consistent leadership, starting at the top of the Council. The Customer First Board is chaired by the Executive Director Services, which indicates the importance placed on customer first. The Chief Executive undertakes a programme of ward visits with councillors and a "Chat with the Chief" programme of speaking to any group within the District that wishes to invite him, for example: Rotary, residents groups, charities etc. This approach is supported by Corporate Management Team who undertake "back to the floor" days and attend Partners and Communities Together (PACT) meetings and Local Neighbourhood Partnerships (LNPs). Our vision for customer first sees the expansion of LNPs to all parts of the District. They will provide a forum for elected members from each of the three tiers of local government, along with interested local residents and our partners to work together to solve the particular issues in their area. Ideally, we would like these LNPs centred on each community, but we are unlikely to have the capacity to support this, so will work along the lines of the parish boundaries. The Council is also investing in its neighbourhood warden scheme, so that residents can see a human face representing the Council in their patch.
- 3.10 The Council is already unusual in the level of senior officer commitment it gives to these meetings. They help provide a focus on what are resident's immediate concerns and prevents a "head office" culture developing. As the new Chief Executive of Sainsbury's pointed out, head office was not the business centre, each store is, and similarly, our business centres are the wards and communities within which we deliver services.
- 3.11 Finally, we have a comprehensive customer first strategy, but we will keep reviewing progress formally at Cabinet each year and update the Strategy as we progress towards our vision.

Customer Needs Research (listening to our customers)

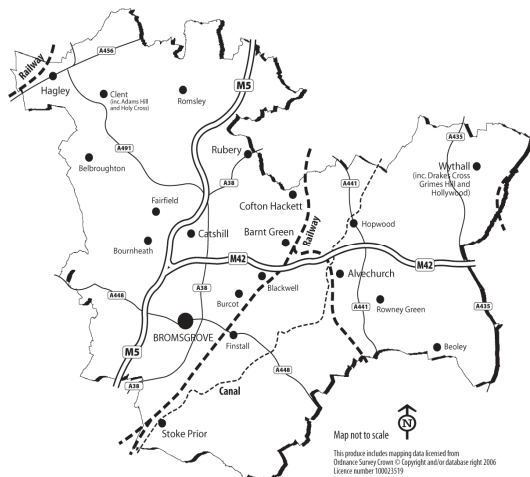
- 3.12 PACTs, LNPs, walking the wards and neighbourhood wardens will provide us with regular local feedback on resident's issues, but we need to support this with more formal research, what the private sector would call market research. We will develop a strong annual business cycle that our customers become familiar with, so they know how to engage with the Council. We will run a customer satisfaction survey every year, checking we have the right priorities and tracking our customer's satisfaction. We will mirror this, with surveys of our internal customers, Members and stakeholders, so that we are getting regular, statistically sound information from our customers. Every year we will engage residents in our budget setting process through: a budget jury, bids from the Equalities and Diversity Forum, bids from the LNPs, an annual children and young people's conference, a "town hall" meeting and the older person's forum. We will also undertake a regular "quality of life" survey to find out about our customer's lifestyles and build this information into our thinking about customer service.
- 3.13 These will be our regular ways of listening, but we will also undertake specific consultations through a corporate consultation programme. We will consult both users and non-users on issues of customer access, customer standards and

issues affecting the future of the District like the town centre, the train station, future housing provision etc.

- 3.14 We will ensure the parish councils have a formal opportunity to present their plans to the Local Strategic Partnership Board and ensure we respond to their issues.
- 3.15 Gradually, we will move the Council away from consultations towards involvement and dialogue, so that over time our residents become confident that can access the Council and make their views known before decisions are taken. We will be close to our customers and known in their communities.

Customer Access

- 3.16 We want all of our customers to be able to access the Council's services and for this access to be quick and easy (intuitive), so we will need to develop and deliver a customer access action plan. Customer access is not made easy in our District, as a result of us not being a tight urban conurbation. We are spread out, with many communities not seeing Bromsgrove town, as their natural hub, instead looking to Solihull, Redditch and Stourbridge.



- 3.17 Data suggests that 16,643 people travel into the District for work, with 26,112 (29%) of the population travelling out, a net commute out of 9,469. For our residents who travel out of the District every day, we need to ensure they can access our services through the use of ICT, in particular, the Customer Service Centre (CSC) and the Council's Internet. The level of service at the CSC is already very good in many respects: customers get straight through to a customer service operative, but we currently lose too many calls, so part of improving access will be to reduce demand, ensuring we exceed the industry standard for calls answered and waiting times. We have a particular problem when calls are passed through to the "back office". Our existing technology does not allow us to track what has happened to these calls. We will need to develop manual systems and in the longer term ICT solutions that allow to track these calls and make sure the "back office" delivers the standard of service provided by the CSC. Similarly, we have improved our Internet through using the County

Council's platform, but the diversity of what we deliver makes it more difficult to use than a site like First Direct's or Easy Jets. We will need to work with our customers to understand how they think when using our Internet site, so that it works around them. We will also move to more self serve, particularly payments and the tracking of planning applications, to enable residents who wish to access our services in this way to do so. We will need to understand that while these efficient methods may work for some of our customers, other groups, particularly, our ageing population, increasing migrant workers and people with disabilities may not wish to access our services in this way, preferring face to face contact.

- 3.18 We already have a walk in CSC, shopmobility, DDA compliant buildings, an interpreter service and hard of hearing links, but we will need to do more to ensure we deliver the level of customer access our customers expect. Our vision includes a community transport service, improved public transport across the District, including a new bus interchange at both the town centre and train station and a new train station. We will need to research the need for longer opening hours and rural hubs (Shropshire use video links). In the longer term we will re-connect the Council House and CSC in a new civic quarter. The Council House will also provide offices for our main partners, particularly the voluntary sector, so our Council House becomes a community hub in the heart of our new town centre.
- 3.19 We have introduced customer standards, which we will review each year, in consultation with our customers, and update. By publishing these we will also let our customers know the level of service they can expect when accessing our services.

Service Delivery Processes

- 3.20 Underpinning our customer access strategy will be world class service delivery processes that ensure services are delivered in the most effective way and are right first time. Much of this improvement will centre on the better use of ICT, but should not be driven by ICT, but by customer need identifying an ICT solution as the right approach. The Council has caught up on years of under investment in ICT and delivered the spatial project, which has seen the introduction of 11 software solutions, primarily in the Planning and Environment Department. Many of these are web enabled, allowing the customer to self serve and track their issue on our website. The Council has also recently introduced an electronic customer feedback system. This will play an important role in providing us with proper statistical data on where we get most complaints and about what.
- 3.21 Once we have delivered the Spatial Project, the Council will move onto to look at issues like the use of new hand held technology to ensure we can work off site, in customer's homes (benefits) or out on the highways (chipped bins linked into driver's cabs and back to the Depot).
- 3.22 All of this work will involve re-engineering existing customer processes and solid programme and project management. The Council will support this through the Improvement Manager's post.

Customer Environment

- 3.24 Currently our customer environment is not at the level required. Like the best in the private sector, we want modern premises which work for our customers. The Spadesbourne Suite and Council Chamber are just two examples of rooms that do not send out an image of a modern council or ones that are conducive to our customers wanting to spend time in these buildings. A new Council House, in the town centre connected to the CSC should resolve the majority of these issues. This will be addressed as part of the town centre regeneration masterplanning.

Communications

- 3.25 Our external communications will be consistent in style, through the roll out of our style guide (brand) and the Council will develop a consistent, empathic, plain English tone to its communications. The Council will communicate in a planned manner; ensuring customers can easily access our communications and get the information they need when they need it.
- 3.26 We will keep staff fully informed about customer performance and about new issues, recognising they are the Council's ambassadors, making them proud to work for the Council
- 3.27 We will also use communications to educate our customers, so that they consume with a social responsibility that helps the Council achieve its outcomes, for example, recycling, improved diet, exercise etc. We will run campaigns that support the delivery of these outcomes.

Organisation Structure

- 3.28 Our structures will be kept under review and driven by what is right for the customer – effective, rather than just efficient. We will explore opportunities for joint working, particularly with Redditch BC, market testing and other forms of delivery, so long as they enhance the service to our customer and deliver VFM. The Redditch CSC is an area on which we will focus, given the proximity of some of our residents to Redditch and their likely preference to visit this CSC rather than the one in Bromsgrove.

Management

- 3.29 Lastly, we will underpin all our customer delivery with management processes that support customer first. We will provide annual training for all our staff on customer first; ensure our performance management system is suitably populated with customer metrics, particularly around customer satisfaction for each service, tracked annually through the customer panel. We will encourage strong teams through team building, ensure change is properly managed through a corporate programme management approach and consider how we further incentivise staff to deliver customer first and improved performance.

4. National Developments

- 4.1 Since the last update in February 2008, there have been a range of developments, building on some of the areas that were emerging last year. The changes since last year are set out in paragraphs 4.3, 4.9, 4.14, 4.15, 4.17 and 4.21.

Comprehensive Area Assessment

- 4.2 The key national development is the planned replacement of Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), with Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA). The new approach to regulating the work of local authorities started on 01 April 2009. The Council will in future receive an annual organisational assessment, made up of the annual Use of Resources assessment and a Managing Performance Assessment. The whole area i.e. Worcestershire will receive an area assessment. CAA will have a significant impact on the Customer First Strategy, as it represents a major shift in government thinking, away from the measurement of processes and outputs towards a more customer centric view of service delivery, which is to be welcomed. The key changes in thinking (which in many ways is much more important than the regulatory process) are set out below:-

- ✚ There is going to be a much stronger emphasis on *customer access*. This is going to require improved monitoring systems, so that we know who is and who is not accessing services and when a customer group is identified as not accessing a service, that we improve our marketing to that group. Equalities monitoring is going to be key to this area.
- ✚ Linked to the above point, the Government are stressing the importance of *customer insight* software like Mosaic and Acorn. These software packages segments customers into groups e.g. Group A “empty nester”. They are common in the private sector and enable companies to market specific products to particular households with lifestyles that suggest they will buy the product. The Government wants us to use this type of software to market to non-users, for example, marketing affordable warmth grants to households that might be eligible.
- ✚ A much stronger emphasis on delivering *outcomes*, rather than outputs and processes, so for example, nationally crime levels (output) might be falling, but the fear of crime is increasing (outcome). Excellent communications are key to this and if the Council is going to be able to respond this agenda, it needs to consider an increased capacity
- ✚ Linked to the above point, this move towards outcomes has been supported by a new *National Indicators set*, which replaces the existing Best Value performance indicators. This set includes a lot more measures of satisfaction and perception through surveys like the Place Survey, business survey and third sector survey.
- ✚ An increased emphasis on *community engagement* particularly with the more vulnerable in our communities. Community engagement is

envisaged as a stage on from consultation, involving customers in the decision making process. Good community engagement should ensure we prioritise our communities' aspirations which should increase satisfaction levels. Evidence also suggests that the very process of engagement increases satisfaction, as customers' increase their understanding of what things cost and what the Council has the capacity to deliver.

- ✚ There will be more room for councils to use local performance measures, but the Audit Commission will expect an increased emphasis on *data quality* (the Council is improving in this area and has recently moved its score from 1 out of 4 to 2 out of 4).

- 4.3 A key development since last year is the launch of a new set of National Indicators. As predicted, these are much more about perceptions and outcomes. What we did not see coming was National Indicator 14 – reducing avoidable contact: minimising the proportion of customer contact that is of low or no value to the customer. The intention of this indicator, as the name suggests, is to capture all customer contacts to the Council and determine whether they were necessary, so for example, someone phoning up about a missed bin, or a letter they have not understood, would be considered an avoidable contact, which is waste. By identifying these types of contacts, it is hoped that councils can re-engineer their customer interactions and service delivery to improve services and reduce waste and save money at the same time. Service teams will need help with this work. Good change management envisages a three pronged approach, linking corporate strategy, with programme management and operations. A key role is a business change manager who makes a link between the business and the required change, effectively supporting the business through periods of change. This is the role envisaged by the Improvement Manager post, which has been extended by 6 months, but in the view of this Strategy needs to become a permanent fixture for the business, to facilitate change within the Council. The re-engineering of processes, based on NI14, would typically be done through techniques like business process re-engineering and lean systems, which the current manager is trained in. The Council is currently undertaking a significant amount of change, particularly with the Joint CEO project, so for 2009/2010, the Strategy has identified three pilots for lean systems, with support from RIEP. We can learn from these and take this thinking forward into the Joint CEO project during 2010/2011.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

- 4.4 In terms of this Act's impact on the Council's approach to Customer First, the clue is very much in the title. The word "involvement" is a step change from the previous focus in the Local Government Act 1999, which used the term "consultation". Under the Act, the Council will have a specific "duty to involve". The Government is concerned that the current levels of consultation and civic participation are not bringing about a sufficient understanding of the difficulties politicians face in balancing the competing needs of communities and this is driving an increasing dissatisfaction with public services at a time when they are actually improving.

- ✚ There will be a “duty to cooperate” placed on all key public bodies in an area, so this will add some much needed statutory teeth to the Local Strategic Partnership

4.5 The new duty came into force on 01 April 2009. The duty is likely to impact on the Customer First Strategy as follows:-

- ✚ Consultation will need to provide “genuine opportunities” for people to be involved, so councils will want to draw on widespread evidence of what constitutes good practice in consultation. The Council undertook a number of benchmarking visits on performance management during 2007, which have benefited the Council. In 2008 we will need to undertake similar visits on “involvement” in order to sharpen up our practice.
- ✚ An expectation that we undertake “participatory budgeting” and “citizen juries”. The Assistant Chief Executive attended a course on these earlier in the year, which has given the Council a number of best practice examples. Such approaches are designed to increase dialogue and understanding on the issues the Council faces. They are resource intensive.
- ✚ The co-design of services i.e. where local people play an active role in the commissioning of services. The town centre redevelopment offers such an opportunity, while the work on transport e.g. community transport and railway station also offer possibilities.
- ✚ Co-produce or carry out some aspects of customer delivery for themselves. The Act particularly focuses on the transfer of assets and community centres. The Artrix is such an example. This part of the Act is unlikely to have much impact on the Council due to the low level of buildings we own.
- ✚ Residents work with Council on assessing services e.g. citizens acting as mystery shoppers. A local RSL recently won the public sector award for customer service with The Times newspaper. The RSL used this approach. It has been something the Council has discussed before. Such an approach does involve resource and at this stage, we are still rectifying basic performance and customer service issues; however, we should look to adopt such an approach in the medium term, perhaps in 2009.

4.6 The Council’s support for PACT, two LNPs, “Chats with the Chief”, investment in the Customer Panel and establishment of the Equalities and Diversity Forum means the Council is comparatively well placed to respond to this agenda.

4.7 The Statutory Guidance on the “duty to involve” clearly states (2.22, page 25) that:-

“authorities should consider the predicted benefits of informing, consulting and/or involving against the costs of that involvement”.

- 4.8 So, the Council should look to build the “duty to involve” into the Customer First Strategy, but consider carefully the resource implications. The strategic action plan for the Strategy has been updated accordingly.
- 4.9 Since the last Strategy, the Council has launched a Community Engagement Strategy to respond to the Strong and Prosperous Communities agenda and has undertaken a range of new initiatives like the Budget Jury, U Decide event, expansion of the Local Neighbourhood Partnerships agenda and involving residents in the community transport and train station projects. This involvement needs to be taken through the organisation to ensure the increasing use of more innovative engagement techniques. The Senior Policy and Performance Officer (Community Engagement) remains a priority post, in order to respond to this expanding agenda.

Varney Report

- 4.10 Plans to transform services are supported by the December 2006 Service Transformation Report (Sir David Varney) – the key themes of which have been incorporated into this our approach to telephony, face to face and e-government access channel design. The Spatial Project is critical to delivering this vision for local government.

Local Area Agreement

- 4.11 A new Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire was agreed in June 2008. Most of the targets focus around service outcomes e.g. reduced crime, reduced CO2 emissions, but one target does relate to this Strategy:-
- Empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery.
- 4.12 The key to delivering this target will be the County wide Community Engagement Strategy, supported by our Community Engagement Strategy and the various engagement tools we use: PACT, LNPs and the proposed review of the need for community transport, working alongside the Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Group.
- 4.13 Since the last Strategy update, the Council has updated its own Community Strategy to align it to the new LAA. With regard to the above target, the key action for the Council is to align its own Community Engagement Strategy with Worcestershire County Council’s. This should not pose any problem and the two councils have recently undertaken some excellent partnership working around the U Decide event.

Communities in Control White Paper

- 4.14 A major change since the last Strategy update is the publication of the “Communities in Control” White Paper. This paper is aimed at improving local democracy and increasing participation in civic life, so it is not strictly about customer service and customer access; however, as per the diagram in Fig. 1, it underpins decisions about service delivery, customer service and can have a dramatic impact on customer satisfaction levels. A very good example of this is

the feedback we received from the Customer Panel (Customer Satisfaction Survey) last summer. The results from the Equalities and Diversity Forum and DUG were significantly higher than the rest of the population and while the Budget Jury were not surveyed in this way, anecdotal feedback strongly suggests the same was true for this group, in other words, increasing participation significantly increases customer satisfaction, not because we have necessarily delivered more, but because there is an increased understanding from the public about what we can and cannot do. This is a very important point; whilst we do need to deliver better services and improved outcomes, their impact on improving customer satisfaction will be reduced if we do not engage properly in dialogue throughout the process of service design.

- 4.15 The Community Engagement Strategy sets out how we will respond to this new White Paper, we do not need to go into the details here, with the exception of Chapter 3 Access to Information. This chapter makes a link between low levels of customer satisfaction and the quality of information provided by local authorities. For example, in 2006/2007, barely half of local authority residents felt their council kept them very or fairly well informed about services and benefits provided. The White Paper sets out a number of points for improving information. These include: the use of plain English campaigns, the use of customised websites that are built around a web users usage pattern (what is referred to as Web 2.0 services), extensive use of on-line consultations, for example Redbridge LBC had 2,500 responses to its e-consultation on the Council's priorities and budget (we had 19 for the 2009/10 budget round), a liberal policy on the re-use of council materials, so they can be used by social networks like MySociety. The White Paper acknowledges that e-information is not everyone's favoured access channels and gives examples of other innovations like key fact cards and fridge magnets. The Paper also points to information becoming "truly local" and being at a neighbourhood level, supporting existing neighbourhood projects like PACT and LNPs. Charters, like the new Policing Pledge and Charters for Independent Living are also seen as positive steps
- 4.16 Before we embark on delivering all of these innovations, we need to consider our capacity to do so; cross reference to the feedback we are receiving at a local level and prioritise what will have the biggest impact.

Audit Commission Discussion Paper "In the Know"

- 4.17 This Audit Commission paper was published in February 2008. It provides a useful overview for Members and managers. Table 1, page 14 of the White Paper provides a particularly useful summary of the types of information required by the strategic, scrutiny, management and engagement with users, parts of the organisations. It stresses the importance of good data quality for informed decision making. The Council has a Data Quality Strategy, but still needs to improve in this area, particularly, middle management understanding of outcomes and outputs. The Paper provides some excellent examples of companies of the use of information by private sector companies, particularly, around analysing customer behaviour, through club cards and spending patterns. The Audit Commission envisage this as a key development for CAA and customer access. The generally held view is that councils will not be able to deliver the CAA customer access agenda, without using some form of customer insight tool like Mosaic.

- 4.18 Mosaic involves developing a deep understanding of a council's customers. Mosaic apportions every single household into 11 groups and 61 types. Customers are segmented, information about their satisfaction, service consumption and channel preference developed for each preference, so that customer access and service delivery to each segment can be more focused and improved.
- 4.19 There is no doubt that companies like Tesco have benefited from such software; however, there is a concern about applicability to a District of 87,000, compared to national companies like Tesco. Wychavon DC have decided to pilot the use of Mosaic and have agreed to share their learning, so that we can make a decision during the 2010/2011 budget round on whether to purchase this software. As a pre-cursor to this development, the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team is being restructured (within its existing budget), so create a Graduate Marketing Officer post, to improve the Council's marketing of services and access channels.

Customer Service Excellence

- 4.20 During 2008 the Government introduced a new Government standard "Customer Service Excellence". This does appear to be a useful standard, covering five criteria:-
- Customer insight.
 - The Culture of the organisation.
 - Information and Access.
 - Delivery.
 - Timeliness and Quality of Service.
- 4.21 The Standard clearly overlaps with much of the thinking behind CAA. The Standard includes a web based self assessment tool. It would be a useful first step to complete this assessment during 2009/2010, with a possible external accreditation in 2010/11, subject to the resource required for the Joint Chief Executive project.

5. Customer Feedback and Performance Indicators

- 5.1 Customer feedback and performance indicators are a key aspect of any improvement agenda. The Council now has in place a proper corporate performance management framework, including customer panel surveys, which was supplemented this year by the new Place Survey. The Council has also introduced a complaints software package across the Council, which has provided further analysis on the nature of our complaints and is reported to Members quarterly. The Council has also been producing good quality performance data for the Customer Service Centre since its inception.

Best Value Satisfaction Survey (to be replaced with Place Survey data when available – available, but no comparable data yet).

- 5.2 A detailed report on the Survey's results was taken to the Performance Management Board in September 2007 and the information was also used in the Council Plan 2008/2011 Part 1, which provided the strategic backdrop to the medium term financial plan. The overall results, compared to the last survey/quartile and then with the other Worcestershire Districts are set out in the two tables below.

Table 1 - Overall satisfaction survey results

Ref	Description	2003/04 Result	2006/07 Result	Quartile
Corporate Health				
BV3	Overall Satisfaction with the way the authority runs things	48%	51%	3
BV4	Satisfaction with complaint handling.	25%	31%	4
Environment				
BV89	Satisfaction with street cleanliness	61%	62%	4
BV90a	Satisfaction with waste collection.	83%	76%	3
BV90b	Satisfaction with waste recycling (local facilities)	71%	76%	1
Culture				
BV119a	Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities	45%	53%	4
BV119b	Satisfaction with libraries	n/a	72%	3
BV119c	Satisfaction with museums / galleries	25%	27%	3
BV119d	Satisfaction with theatres / concert halls	n/a	33%	3
BV119e	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	71%	76%	2
Planning Satisfaction survey				
BV111	Satisfaction with planning service by those making a planning application	69%	56%	n/a
Benefits Satisfaction Survey				

Ref	Description	2003/04 Result	2006/07 Result	Quartile
BV80a	Satisfaction with contact with the office	78%	79%	n/a
BV80b	Satisfaction with service in the office	78%	83%	n/a
BV80c	Satisfaction with the telephone service	73%	72%	n/a
BV80d	Satisfaction with staff in the office	83%	84%	n/a
BV80e	Satisfaction with forms	62%	61%	n/a
BV80f	Satisfaction with speed of the service	78%	74%	n/a
BV80g	Overall Satisfaction with the service	82%	82%	n/a

- 5.3 Through the medium term financial plan, the Council can point to investment in most of the underperforming issues identified above e.g. customer complaints system, street cleanliness, street theatre, leisure facilities and disinvestment where a decision has been made not to make an area a local priority e.g. the museum. It is interesting to note that the satisfaction with waste recycling is top quartile. This service, along with waste collection and the Customer Service Centre is probably the most visible of the Council's activities. It has received investment and the high level of service being offered clearly has been recognised by the public. The investment in the CSC also appears to have been recognised by the public (see Customer Panel section). The waste collection service is an area that despite operational improvements this year is likely to need a more fundamental investment in both vehicles and ICT to deliver a very high quality service level, which we should aim for on our most visible services.

Table 2 - Comparison of satisfaction survey results with other authorities in the county

BVPI No.	1.1 Description	Bromsgrove	Malvern Hills	Wychavon	Worcester City	Redditch	Wyre Forest
CORPORATE HEALTH							
3	Overall Satisfaction with the way the authority runs things	51%	57%	65%	61%	54%	50%
4	Satisfaction with complaint handling	31%	36%	45%	42%	35%	37%
ENVIRONMENT							
89	Satisfaction with street cleanliness	62%	74%	77%	69%	72%	62%
90a	Satisfaction with waste collection	76%	87%	84%	79%	87%	67%
90b	Satisfaction with waste recycling (local facilities)	76%	86%	80%	72%	79%	73%
1.2 CULTURE							
119a	Satisfaction with sports and leisure facilities	53%	61%	66%	66%	56%	65%
119b	Satisfaction with libraries	72%	-	80%	75%	-	82%
119c	Satisfaction with museums / galleries	27%	49%	37%	60%	33%	42%
119d	Satisfaction with theatres / concert halls	33%	79%	38%	57%	53%	32%
119e	Satisfaction with parks and open spaces	76%	85%	81%	74%	78%	76%

- 5.4 For most of the satisfaction indicators the trend for Bromsgrove has been favourable, overall satisfaction increased, compared to an average decrease nationally. Where the national trend increased Bromsgrove results, in most cases, increased by a bigger margin. Likewise, where the national trend was a decrease then Bromsgrove results usually decreased by a lesser amount. The only two indicators where Bromsgrove trend was worse than the national trend was BV 89 – street cleanliness and BV90a – waste collection; however, celebrations about Bromsgrove results bettering the national trend need to be tempered by the fact that for most of the satisfaction indicators Bromsgrove was starting from a very low base, two exceptions being BV90b – recycling (top quartile) and BV119e – parks and open spaces (2nd quartile).

Customer Panel Survey

Quality of Life

- 5.5 The quality of life survey identified that 74% of residents have not used the Artrix which is a clear customer access issue. Similarly, 76% of those surveyed rarely or never use public transport and 11% rated public transport as Excellent or Good. The Council clearly needs to work in partnership with the County Council, who are the transport authority, on the Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy and improve public transport in the District, as clearly this is a critical enabler for improving customer access. It is interesting to note that 73% of those surveyed support the introduction of a community transport scheme. The planned new Bromsgrove Railway Station will also be a key development.
- 5.6 For Health, cheaper entry fees and increased promotion were cited as the top 2 reasons likely to increase usage, 61% of those surveying stating that they did not have enough information to make choices about leisure activities in the District.
- 5.7 For older people, being able to live in their homes longer (61%) and community transport (35%) were the key issues. The former has been picked up as a key issue in the new Housing Strategy and the latter has just received funding through the 2009/2010 budget round.
- 5.8 The main issue affecting young people is the lack of things to do (57%). Youth clubs, sports coaching and events were the top priorities for rectifying this. We also need to consider how we improve children and young peoples' awareness of the extensive range of activities that our Sports Development Team and Neighbourhood Wardens already deliver.

Customer Satisfaction

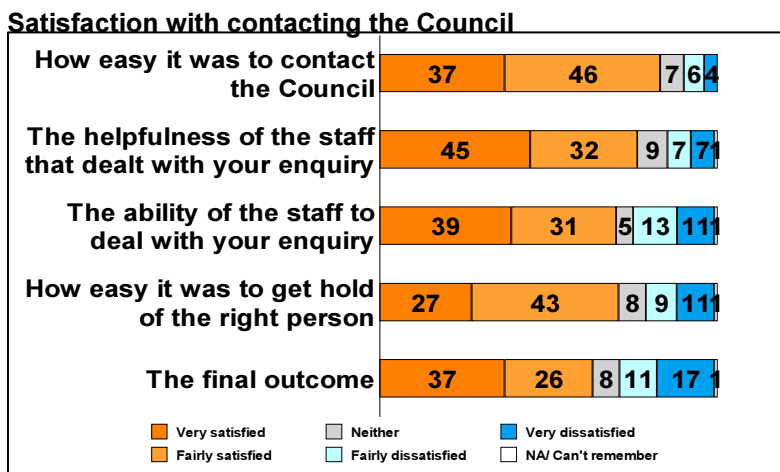
- 5.9 Customer feedback and performance indicators are a key aspect of any improvement agenda. The Council has in place a corporate performance management framework, including two customer surveys per annum, which was supplemented this year by the new Place Survey (the Council also surveys its own staff every year). The Council has also introduced a complaints software package across the Council, which provides further analysis on the nature of our complaints. The Council has also been producing good quality performance data for the Customer Service Centre since its inception.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

5.10 Bromsgrove District Council commissioned Snap SurveyShop to assist with our Customer Satisfaction Survey 2008. Unlike the Place Survey, the Customer Satisfaction Survey allows us to ask specific questions about our services. The Council has also recently undertaken several Focus Groups on Customer Access which also provided a great deal of feedback to the Council on its customers' experiences. Overall, the feedback about customer service from the Customer Satisfaction Survey and the Focus Groups is increasingly positive; however, there is still considerable room for improvement. The following are key extracts from the Customer Satisfaction Survey:-

Ease of accessing the Council

5.11 63% of all respondents had contacted the Council in the last year of these, 57% last made contact over the phone and 35% visited the Customer Service Centre. The majority who made contact in the last 12 months (61%) said they would prefer to contact the Council over the phone. 23% preferred to visit in person and 10% to make contact via email. The main reasons for contact were to request information (27%), to register a complaint (24%) or to make an application (16%).



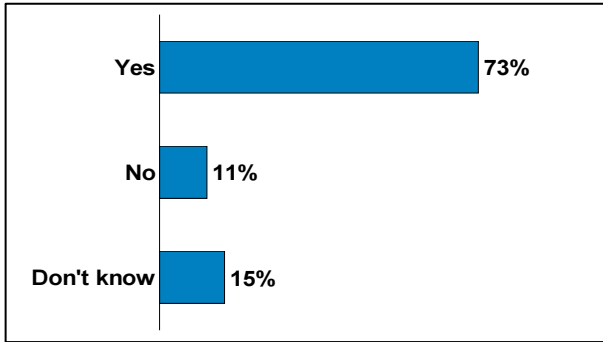
Base: All respondents who have contacted the Council in the last 12 months (342~360)

5.12 Those who had contacted the Council were asked how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with different aspects of their contact. 83% of respondents found accessing the Council easy (this rose to 98% in the over 75s). 70% were satisfied with how easy it was to get hold of the right person, 77% with the helpfulness of staff, 71% with the ability of staff to deal with their enquiry, and 63% with the final outcome of their enquiry. These are excellent figures particularly the 83%. The focus groups held on customer access allowed us to research why the other 17% found contacting the Council difficult.

Recommending the Customer Service Centre

5.13 Three quarters (73%) would recommend the use of the Centre to a friend, this figure was relatively constant across different groups: from 72% in males to 73% in females, and from 73% in 35-54 year olds to 86% in under 35s.

Would you recommend the Customer Service Centre to a friend?



Base: All respondents who have visited the CSC (202)

- 5.14 Respondents who had visited the Customer Service Centre were asked to rate different elements of their experience. The most positively rated elements were; the ease of getting through the door (60%), the availability of parking places (53%), the lighting (52%), the height of counters (49%), and the signs and display materials (49%).

Length of time waiting when calling the Council

- 5.15 Respondents were asked what they felt was an acceptable length of time to wait before having their call answered when calling the Council. The majority (84%) said it should be answered within 6 rings or less (35 seconds). Females (63%) were more likely than males (49%) to have phoned, while males (42%) were more likely than females (29%) to have visited the Customer Service Centre. Older respondents were also more likely to have visited the CSC in person than younger respondents, while younger respondents were more likely to have phoned.

Frequency of Internet use

- 5.16 Nearly 7 in 10 respondents (69%) had internet access at home or at work. 34% had access at home and at work, 32% access at home only and 3% had access at work only. Older respondents were significantly less likely to have Internet access; however, 84% of residents claimed to have used the Council's Internet site less than once a year.

Customer Focus Groups

- 5.17 As part of the research for this updated Customer First Strategy, a number of customer focus groups were conducted.

Customer Standards

- 5.18 There were many positives from the focus group on our customer standards. These included the response of e-mails, which invariably is much faster than our current standard. Similarly, the experience of the CSC was very positive, with customers commenting favourably on the speed of response and the fact that they get through to a human being. Similarly visiting the CSC was generally viewed as a positive experience. The key area for improvement, identified by residents included:-

- Changing the Council's telephone on hold music.
- Back office use of voicemail and being passed around.
- An automatic response to e-mails (as used by many companies) that acknowledges the e-mail and sets out our standard response time.
- A response to all letters, even if they just require an acknowledgement.
- Improved information about councillors – only 20% knew who their councillor was.
- Improved marketing of the Website, other access channels, complaints procedure and customer standards.
- Improved marketing of PACT meetings.
- Return phone calls to customers from senior management to find out about their experience.
- A unique reference number for a customer contact, so it can be traced and returned to.
- The simplification of forms.
- More information at the CSC on other public providers.
- The introduction of a free telephone number to assist those on low incomes.
- Greater efforts to assist those who have difficulty filling in forms through outreach work.
- A list of named officers and their departments and phone numbers.

5.19 All of these ideas have been built in to the updated action plan, with the following exceptions: the list of named officers (this would bypass the CSC which is the main access channel for the Council). A free telephone number would be too expensive for the Council and the current number is a local rate and therefore comparatively very cheap; the use of voicemail (the Council would have to employ more staff in the back office to cover a low number of calls). Voicemail can work, if residents are rung back promptly i.e. within 24 hours, but we need to adhere to this standard and publish it.

5.20 Our existing corporate customer standards are:-

1. Respond to customer letters within 10 working days or letting the customer know if it is going to take longer. This may be by e-mail, letter or telephone.
2. Acknowledging customer feedback within 3 working days. This may be by e-mail, letter or telephone.

3. Providing a full response to customer complaints within 10 working days or letting the customer know if it is going to take longer.
4. Answering the telephone within 6 rings.
5. Responding to voicemail messages within 2 working days.
6. Being polite at all times and aiming to listen and understand our customers needs.
7. Ensuring that our services, offices and information are accessible as possible to all our customers.
8. Ensuring that a senior officer from the Council will attend at least 85% of PACT meetings.

5.21 The focus group amended these to:-

1. Acknowledging all customer contacts within 3 days and stating in the acknowledgement that we will provide a full response within 10 working days (if not possible within the 3 days).
2. Responding fully to customer contact within 10 working days and letting the customer know within this timescale if it is going to take longer.
3. Providing a full response to a customer complaint within 5 working days and letting the customer know within the timescale if it is going to take longer.
4. Answering the telephone within 6 rings.
5. Responding to voicemail messages within 2 working days.
6. Ensuring that our services, offices and information are as accessible as possible to all our customers.
7. Ensuring that a senior officer from the Council will attend at least 85% of PACT meetings.

5.22 A new set, based on this feedback and other considerations is set out below:-

1. Providing an automatic response to e-mails and responding fully within 3 days or letting the customer know if it is going to take longer and why.
2. Responding fully to letters within 10 days or letting the customer know if it is going to take longer and why.
3. Responding fully to customer contact within 10 working days and letting the customer know within this timescale if it is going to take longer.

4. Providing a full response to customer complaint within 5 working days or letting the customer know within this timescale if it is going to take longer and why.
 5. Answering the telephone within 6 rings.
 6. Responding to voicemail messages within 1 working day.
 7. Ensuring that our services, offices and information are as accessible as possible to all our customers.
 8. Ensuring that a senior officer from the Council will attend at least 85% of PACT meetings.
 9. Being polite at all times and aiming to listen and understand our customers needs.
- 5.23 The “being polite at all times” has been re-inserted as, while customers view this as a given, it is important that we communicate to our staff about our expectations as well as our customers. The voicemail has been reduced to one day. The two days was to cover weekends, but it confuses customers. The focus group accepted it, because it was explained to them. The 3 days for e-mails was suggested by the Equalities and Diversity Forum, who felt that the general speed of electronic communication meant a tougher standard, should be set. “Customer contact” has been split between e-mail, letter and telephone to provide clarity.

Customer Access

- 5.24 This feedback from the focus group makes depressing reading. There were clear examples of avoidable contact, due to service failure (and people tend to remember bad experiences). Clearly, a key problem is customers being passed around, not getting a response, a lack of information and lack of ownership. Two service areas seemed to be causing customers a particular concern; Highways (a County Council function) and Planning (a District Council function). We need to consider how we can fast track improving these areas and would suggest Planning, given it is our function. Options may include working with the planning team to identify what excellence looks like and what it is going to take to get there or some form of external peer review, for example, by the I&DeA. Comments from the focus groups included:-

“for these types of enquiry, residents find it easy to contact the council and the council appears to deal with the issues very quickly and effectively”. Complicated requests cause problems”.

“Overall, respondents are aware of how to contact the Council and don’t appear to have a problem doing so; it is more dissatisfaction and frustration with how the enquiry is dealt with (if at all) once it reaches the Council e.g. calls/voicemails not being returned, letters not being actioned”.

“I just want one letter from the right persons, not several letters from different people passing it over”.

“Already have a surgery in the area”

- 5.25 Lack of ownership, empathy on issues and being passed around were constantly cited as issues. We need to measure the extent to which this is happening, but also work with staff on resolving these issues, on the assumption that the average member of staff wants to give good customer service, but something is preventing them from doing so. A 24 hour voicemail for CSC was suggested while not many knew who their councillor was, but those who had used them found them useful for complicated issues:-

“it seems that proactive councillors are a good resource and could be used more at a local level”

- 5.26 Transport access to the CSC was not seen as a major issue, due to the ease of contacting the CSC by telephone. The main concern was around more complicated issues and complaints. Outreach and satellite CSCs were not seen as key improvements by residents (the focus groups were held in Wythall, Rubery and Hagley).
- 5.27 Remote video links were discussed, but not received favourably. There was a view that we “rely too much on technology”, that it would “scare people” and “I wouldn’t want to go to my corner shop and speak to my Council!”
- 5.28 Opening times not identified as issue, but regular feedback on complaints and information requests were.

Older People Focus Groups

- 5.29 A number of focus groups were also held with Older People. The following paragraphs consider the range of issues they came up with.
- 5.30 Fixed incomes and Council Tax and taxation in general came up as issues. Related to this was the need for clearer signposting to available benefits.
- 5.31 The social isolation caused by caring for partners, transport (being able to get on buses and better information) were identified as issues, as was the fear of using the shopmobility scooters and the need for training on them.
- 5.32 Older residents spoke well of health care, but getting to services an issue. They do not want outreach services, but better transport links, including Saturday mornings.
- 5.33 Like all residents a better retail offer in Bromsgrove was a concern. More specific to this age group was a desire to have a regular programme of social activities for older people in the District. A walkthrough linking town centre and Sanders Park was also suggested.
- 5.34 Access to good quality sheltered accommodation and nursing homes was a major concern for all attendees, something that is being addressed through the updating of the Housing Strategy.

5.35 Roads and pavements consistently came up as a problem as did car parking and green waste. The focus group facilitator's comments on these issues were:

"These responses may demonstrate that respondents were generally so comfortable in their lives, and so in control of them that there was little else to worry them".

Younger People

5.36 Younger people were not directly consulted as part of the research for this Strategy, however, the Council has now held two Children and Young People's Conferences and looked at practice at other councils, in particular, Westminster LBC. A number of potential developments have emerged:-

- The need for a place to hang out in the town centre, since the McDonalds closed.
- A website aimed at young people.
- Transport for young people.
- A magazine aimed specifically at young people.

Equalities and Diversity and Disabled User Group

5.37 The Council has taken significant steps over recent years to engage with minority groups in our community. Key improvements currently being worked on include:-

- Town centre toilets.
- A community transport scheme.
- BLAGG.
- A translation service.
- Employment for people with disabilities.
- Town centre layout, in particular, drop kerbs.
- A DDA compliant Bromsgrove railway station.
- In person.
- Quicker response times for customer standards.

5.38 Feedback from the Equalities and Diversity Forum and DUG was generally positive about the Council. Members of these groups tended to prefer contact in person and wanted quicker response times than the set standards, particularly for e-mails.

- 5.39 A key point to emerge from the work with these two groups is the difference between their satisfaction levels and those of the general public. Despite the fact that we are still to deliver most the key points they have raised, the process of dialogue appears to have had a considerable impact on their satisfaction. For example, looking at the town centre, their satisfaction levels are invariably twice or three times those of the general public.

Performance Indicators

- 5.41 The Council was the 6th fastest improving Council in England for 2007/2008. Local indicators have also seen a significant improvement; in particular, the CSC (see overleaf) is now achieving its targets for average speed of answer and calls answered whilst continuing to achieve a 90% plus resolution at the first point of contact.

Ref	Description	Freq	C or S		Apr.	May.	Jun.	Jul.	Aug.	Sep.	Oct.	Nov.
CSC	Monthly Call Volumes Customer Contact Centre	M	S	Target								
				Actual	9,85	7,576	6,341	7,215	6,275	7,497	6,931	6,563
CSC	Monthly Call Volume Council Switchboard	M	S	Target								
				Actual	6,243	5,629	5,412	5,657	4,842	5,389	5,081	4,361
CSC	Resolution at First Point of Contact all services (percentage)	M	S	Target	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00
				Actual	98.00	98.60	98.90	99.00	98.70	98.40	99.00	99.00
CSC	Average Speed of Answer (seconds)	M	S	Target	30	30	30	30	30	30	30	30
				Actual	34	36	26	28	22	24	18	17
CSC	% of Calls Answered	M	S	Target	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00	85.00
				Actual	78.00	77.00	87.00	83.00	94.90	88.70	91.00	91.00

6. Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Peer Review

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

- 6.1 Placing the customer at the heart of Council activity was the first key recommendation from the Council's first Comprehensive Performance Assessment. In order to do this, the Audit Commission recommended that:-
- ✚ The Council base service planning and delivery on the outcomes of both evidence based needs assessment and inclusive consultation; and
 - ✚ Make customer satisfaction a key deliverable for all managers and staff and take robust and timely action to address dissatisfaction.
- 6.2 A key point to emerge from the CPA was the Audit Commission's view that while senior management and front line staff at the CSC were committed to Customer First, there is "still too much complacency from the rest of the organisation to the changes that need to be implemented".
- 6.4 The March 2009 CPA moved the Council's overall rating up to "Fair" and commented favourably on the CSC, the transactional website, customer first training and customer standards being in place; conversely, the report identified further outreach work, better communication of available services and access to them, the use of customer complaints data to improve services and greater consistency of customer care, as areas for improvement. The overall recommendation relating to customer service was:-
- A culture of customer focus should be fully established at all levels within the Council.
- 6.5 Other recommendations included the need to feedback to customers, a focus on customer outcomes, the routine evaluation of projects (so that we assess whether they deliver benefits to the customer) and workforce planning.

I&Dea Peer Review

- 6.5 The Council underwent and I&DeA Peer Review in May 2007. The peer review team made 12 recommendations. The Council's Corporate Management Team accepted most of these recommendations; however, all the recommendations focused on process and there were not specific recommendations (based on good practice from other authorities) on how to improve customer service. This was disappointing. These and the Council's response to them are set out on the following page:-

Ref.	Recommendation	Response
4.4.1	<p>Prioritise initiatives in the Council. There was evidence that a great deal had been achieved, but the pace of change is fast and it is unlikely that it can be continued at the same pace without impacting on key people in the Council.</p>	<p>The Council will have an opportunity to update its Improvement Plan again for July 2008 Cabinet. The Council should achieve a rating of Fair during 2008. The Council has also recently recruited an Executive Director Services. The target of achieving 5 CharterMarks by March 2010 has also been dropped. All four of these actions, should enable some reduction in the pace to a more acceptable level.</p> <p>09/10 Update - Council scored a 3 on prioritisation in CPA.</p>
4.4.2	<p>Clarify the roles of all Members in implementing the Customer First Strategy</p>	<p>The peer review team suggested that the Customer First Board include Members. The Portfolio Holder for Customer Services was invited to attend the Board; however, this would have meant another evening meeting. The Portfolio Holder already meets with Assistant Chief Executive and Head of E-Government and Customer Service each month and received a copy of the minutes from the Board. In addition, the Council has a Cabinet, PMB, Scrutiny model which is functioning better and better; focus should be maintained on improving the effectiveness of these formal committees. This recommendation was rejected; however, Members of PMB will be going “back to the floor” to listen to calls at the CSC in January. If this pilot proves successful “back to the floor” could be rolled out to all Members. We also need to increase all Member involvement in the next budget round (from the beginning of the process).</p> <p>09/10 Update – Portfolio Holder linked to Customer First Board.</p>

4.4.3	Define a Customer Access Strategy for Bromsgrove which meets the needs and aspirations of the Members and the community; this should consider the use of all channels and be used to inform discussions in the Worcestershire Hub partnership.	<p>Satellite CSCs around the District is an expensive approach and the need is not proven and needs a business case with clear evidence of a market or need before investment is made. Section 3.7 identified that the under 35s had an issue with accessing the CSC. They are a more mobile age group, which suggests the access issue is less about location. We will need to undertake some survey and focus group work in 2008 to determine the access issues we face.</p> <p>09/10 Update – Update Strategy includes section on Customer Access.</p>
4.4.4	Produce a Consultation Strategy which includes a feedback process.	<p>Updated Strategy agreed at November 2007 Cabinet. Each consultation is different, so there cannot be a standard way of feeding back; however, we should look to feedback to the public on every consultation exercise undertaken.</p> <p>09/10 Update – Community Engagement Strategy in place, but need to improve feedback from consultations.</p>
4.4.5	Implement a corporate complaints process and purchase a system.	<p>Purchased and due to be implemented on 31 January 2008.</p> <p>09/10 Update – System in place and quarterly reports being produced.</p>
4.4.6	Establish a programme and project management framework for the Improvement Plan which is consistently applied across the Council and can be utilised to direct the	<p>Bid made to Capacity Building Fund for Change Manager in Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team. This bid, if successful, should provide sufficient resource to</p>

	Customer First programme.	complete this work. 09/10 Update – Improvement Manager appointed. Programme Board in place.
4.4.7	Review the Spatial project to ensure that it is still fit for purpose, that the Council will achieve the benefits set out in the business case and identify any areas of the project which will provide early returns. The review team believe it might be advisable to split it more clearly into discrete work elements with very overt milestones so that it might be more easily managed and monitored.	Project has been reviewed and new supplier procured. 09/10 Update – Spatial Project delivered to time and budget.
4.4.8	Improve front office/back office working to ensure that the customer receives best possible service. This requires open, two way communications, will include work to improve system interfaces and recognise the need to be explicit about ownership of requests and enquiries.	The Customer First Board are now undertaking a range of customer clinics to provide senior management focus on some of the organisational sticking points that are causing problems. Also, the Change Manager post (above) should be able to undertake some business process re-engineering work on these issues. Asking the CSC to maintain a log of some of the calls put through to the “back office” and then spot checking what happened to these requests may also increase the organisational discipline required to deliver better customer service. 09/10 Update – Increased work between CSC and “back office”. Further migration planned, in particular, planning. Service has improved.
4.4.9	Develop a Bromsgrove position on shared services and communicate this to key stakeholders to ensure that Bromsgrove is in control of its own destiny.	The Council is increasingly working with Redditch. This work needs to progress further, so that it can be evaluated, before the Council can determine whether this is the right approach or whether the Council needs to consider that shared services model being considered by the three

		<p>southern districts. The Council's basic position is clear. If the business case makes sense, the Council will sign up. The recent "business case" for a shared service model of "the Hub" was only an outline proposal and needed further work.</p> <p>09/10 Update – Position is that Joint CEO is our favoured business model.</p>
4.4.10	Introduce a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the Customer First training that had been and will be delivered.	<p>The Customer First Board has agreed that members of the Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team will do spot checks on compliance with the Customer Manual.</p> <p>09/10 Update – Some spot checking introduced, but too limited to have any real impact. Mystery shopping to form part of front end of Customer First Part 3 training.</p>
4.4.11	Ensure that internal communications are relevant in terms of content and language and continue to drive both internal and external communications.	<p>The Council's communications is much improved; however, too much language is still in a professional versus customer style. Every manager to go through Plain English training and introduce Plain English clinics.</p> <p>09/10 Update – Positive feedback from Employee Survey, but press coverage blighted by relationship with Advertiser/Messenger and difficult decisions we have had to take.</p>
4.4.12	Enhance the performance management framework to include customer service metrics, satisfaction levels and complaints. Ensure that the improvements that are delivered can be clearly demonstrated.	<p>More customer service performance indicators are being introduced through the 2008/2011 Council Plan. Further changes will be made each year as the Customer Panel survey is refined.</p>

		09/10 Update – Corporate KPIs updated with new perception measures and satisfaction measures.
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Housing Service Inspection

- 6.6 Since the Strategy review, the Council's Housing Service has been inspected and achieved a one star, with promising prospects. The inspection was particularly critical of the need to produce a customer access strategy and the need to benchmark the Council's practice and engage further with residents about access channels and customer standards. This work has now been undertaken.
- 6.7 The Council visited both Shropshire County Council (now a unitary) and Wychavon DC. We have also considered a two star inspection report for Suffolk Coastal District and its Customer Access Strategy.

Shropshire County Council

- 6.8 Four key points emerged from the visit to Shropshire:-
- Their equivalent of the customer service centre was answering calls in consistently under five seconds (they are an excellent rated Council). We asked residents about call waiting times. They were happy with the existing speed of answering.
 - Their use of VDU technology, to enable residents to dial up from pubs and shops with this technology and undertake transactions face to face; whilst impressive, the call centre did not receive one call through access channel, in the time we were at the call centre. We asked our residents about this technology as part of our customer research (see section 5.27).
 - The provision of PCs in pubs, post offices, community halls etc. to enable improved customer access. We also consulted residents on this. This does not seem to be a key issue for residents; however, we should remain alert to such opportunities if demand does arise e.g. MARC etc.
 - The relative size of Shropshire County compared to a District like Bromsgrove. The provision of two CSCs (Bromsgrove and Redditch) means the District is already comparatively well served; however, public transport from some areas may be an issue. Rather than look to create more hubs, which are expensive in absolute terms and expensive in terms of their relative usage, we should look to work with the County Council to improve our understanding of transport accessibility, through the Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy and our own community transport scheme.

Wychavon District Council

- 6.12 Two key points emerged from the Wychavon visit. The decision to pilot Mosaic and an abandoned trial at remote working (as now currently being trailed with benefits in Rubery). Residents simply did not take up this type of service in Wychavon and the service was abandoned. Again, this points to focusing on our main access channels (see Fig. 1), marketing them better, improving them and linking to transport strategy.

Suffolk Coastal District Council (SCDC)

- 6.13 SCDC received its “Access to Services” inspection in January 2009 and received two stars with promising prospects for improvement. The Audit Commission define access through four broad themes: ease of access to services, using e-government to support access to services, reaching all parts of the community and partnership working.
- 6.14 A useful way to judge Bromsgrove’s position is to look at our position relative to the strengths and weaknesses identified in the report:-

Strengths	Bromsgrove DC Response
High levels of satisfaction.	Improving, but from low base. Engagement and communication critical along with improved services and visible outcomes e.g. town centre.
Services generally very responsive.	Much improved through CSC, PACT and service standards. Need to use mystery shopping to really determine whether we are responsive, but complaints of this nature low with the exception of complex contacts that require multiple responses.
Wide range of information sources used to inform and tailor service delivery.	Need to investigate this further at a team level through Customer First Part 3.
All e-Government targets met.	Spatial delivered on time and to budget.
High quality information available for service users.	Probably mixed. Appointment of Graduate Marketing Officer and review through Customer First Part 3.
Access and engagement activities use a variety of techniques.	Not convinced about access through depot etc. CPA positive feedback on engagement. Look at access channels through Customer First Part 3.
Council uses impact assessments to ensure specific needs addressed.	Doing this, but more difficult to point to changes as a result of. Equalities Monitoring will be key.
Effective use of procurement to support customer service and access.	Red action on the 2008/2009 plan, so need to action next year.
Working towards Level 3 of Local Government Equalities Standard.	Similar position.
Strong operational working relationships with partners.	Partnership working much improved. Need to consider looking at developing Theme Group action plans that cover customer access.
Positive service outcomes arising from improved access to services.	No evidence available corporately, but may be available within teams. Area to check during Customer First Part 3.
Corporate standards informed by customer research.	BDC's updated in this Strategy as a result of customer feedback.

Areas for Improvement	Bromsgrove DC Response
Needs to do more on gender and sexual orientation.	Similar position.
Not all service standards have been informed by user engagement.	Similar position. Will be able to offer support through Customer First Part 3.
Council office opening times not informed by user engagement.	Council House needs to open earlier and close later, but did not come back through customer focus groups.
Council's mystery shopping produced mixed results.	Need to mystery shop as part of pre-Customer First Part 3 work.
Need for improved promotion of services.	Employment of graduate marketing officer should help this, but this is being funded by a restructure, so no additional capacity is actually being created.
Make full use of buildings that could be access points.	Disagree with this approach. Our strategy is to focus residents into the CSC.
Promising Prospects Because	
Leadership from Councillors and senior officers.	Portfolio Holder and Customer First Board.
Track record of identifying local need and responding.	Increasingly we can evidence this.
Good progress on implementing customer service team.	CSC established and migration advanced.
Information technology being used to support access.	Where appropriate, probably through outreach and visiting, rather than Shropshire approach.
Clear plans to improve access through transport options.	Community Transport Scheme and development of Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy
Barriers to Improvement	
Collation of intelligence from customer contacts and learning from complaints.	Systems in place, just need to embed them.
Process to capture and share learning from specific access improvements across service areas should be enhanced.	Use of lessons learnt reports. Need to find approach for publishing these to managers.
Partners' website and Intranet not as good as Council website.	Need to concentrate on further improvements to our site, before going on to look at others.

6.15 Other areas of note in the inspection report included:-

- Engagement work with the small business community to learn more about how they want information provided. This led to a business bulletin, designed by the business community.
- The Council operates a business forum.
- The Council undertook a comprehensive baseline review of access across all services and service providers on behalf of the Council. Obtain copy.

- Limited use of GIS.
- The use of post offices for council tax and benefits services.
- The SCDC website has “transactional status” and is used for a range of booking functions.
- Council used grants to enable broadband computer access in settlements which were too small to qualify when BT introduced it.
- Use of special website for youth groups and individuals to connect. The site is well publicised and used by people across the District.
- The website uses the GovMetric system for customer feedback.
- Participation is monitored as part of monthly scorecards (this must be similar to equalities monitoring).
- Additional outlets like TICs and the depot used for some services like parking permits and additional waste bags (disagree with this).
- SCDC has “exemplar” website design.
- Complaints data is reported to Cabinet quarterly.
- Good understanding of needs of older population, in particular, visiting officer services.
- Closure of cash office.
- A specific working group of the LSP co-ordinates customer access activity across partners.

7. Spatial Project

Background Information

- 7.1 In 2005 a wide ranging investigation was carried out in conjunction with various organisations into the efficiency and effectiveness of the Council's service delivery and business processes. The findings of this investigation are detailed separately in the Spatial Business Case. The business case was approved by Council in August 2006. The project started at the beginning of October 2006 and was completed in October 2008.
- 7.2 The Spatial Project was a transforming and modernising programme aimed at providing staff with the systems, processes and tools to change and improve the way services are delivered to BDC customers. The project has delivered the following:
- Corporate Gazetteer
 - Gazetteer Management system aka LLPG – Local Land and Property Gazetteer.
The LLPG will be used to provide data updates to the NLPG – National Land and Property Gazetteer
 - Environmental Health system
 - Estate/Asset Management module
 - Building Control module
 - Development Control module
 - Electoral Management system
 - Housing module
 - Licensing module
 - Land Charges module
 - Document Management system
 - Business Process Mapping
 - Mobile technologies
 - Web based access to mapping data
 - Integration to existing core applications e.g.: Agresso, CRM etc

Benefits and Improvements Delivered by the Project

- 7.3 Corporate Gazetteer and Gazetteer Management
- An accurate, recognised national property reference number (UPRN) for every property that links to systems such as Council Tax and Business Rates.
 - Links to the Revenues and Benefits system to standardise address information and reduce incidences of wrongly addressed information being sent to customers.
 - One central council address database instead of numerous ones
 - Electoral roll data accuracy
- 7.4 Environmental Health
- Sharing of information across all departments for items such as records of

- properties where hazardous waste is generated.
- Link to Customer Relationship Management System to reduce the amount of re-keying when customers make enquiries or order services.
- Online applications to reduce the amount of data re-keying and speed up turn around times for customers.
- Public registers available online to increase public access to statutory information.
- Mobile working enabling officers to deliver environmental services at the required point of delivery without having to come back to the office.

7.5 Estate/Asset Management

- Core information for all asset control and property management that is up to date and available
- Linking to the LLPG will correctly reference addresses and will improve information flow.

7.6 Planning

- Customers will have access to on-line planning applications and automated land searches.
- GIS will improve accuracy of planning applications and turn around times.
- Automated searches will speed up search times for customers.
- Mobile working will increase staff efficiency and potentially speed up processing.
- Workflow will improve efficiency of the current process, reduce the amount of paper-based memos leading to better customer service.
- Accurate on-line licensing applications and control to automatically update systems and records

7.7 Electoral Management

- Accurate electoral data with integration to the LLPG for addressing data.
- Electronic signature recognition
- Improved quality of output both hardcopy and electronic

8. Review of Strategic Action Plan

Customer First Board Action Plan Feb 08 – Jan 11

Key	On target/completed	Less than 1 month behind target	Over 1 month behind target	Original date of planned action	Reprogrammed date
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Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
Customer Needs Research									
1.	Annual review of outsourced customer panel.	Panel established and providing feedback.	01.09.08	31.10.08	£20,000	HB	M		Review in 2009 to look at 6 district panels, being currently looked at by County's research Unit.
2.	Survey customers twice a year to find out what they think of our services (one "place" type survey/one customer standards survey).	Surveys completed and reported to CMT and Performance Management Board.	01.02.08	31.01.09	As above	HB	M		The second customer panel survey has been received, completed and reported to Cabinet.
3.	Hold a series of focus groups to determine customer access needs and how customers measure satisfaction.	Information used to inform Customer Access Strategy.	01.04.08	31.07.08	Improvement Fund	HB	H		Focus groups held, results received, will be incorporated into updated Customer First Strategy.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
4.	CEO to continue with the "walk the wards" programme.	Short list of actions arising delivered.	On-going	On-going	CEO	KD	M		Walking the wards ongoing. Variety of issues raised ranged from missing street name plates to lack of Police Community Support Officers. Other issues identified include – fly tipping and speeding.
5.	CMT to undertake "back to the floor" days.	Issues identified and resolved staff updated on Intranet.	On-going	On-going	CMT	SS	M		New programme for 2009 and intranet page created for reports on visits
6.	Members to go "back to the floor".	Short list of agreed actions, which are delivered.	01.07.08	31.01.09	Customer First Officer	SS	M		Suspended.
7.	Staff "job swap"	Positive feedback in employee survey.	01.10.08	On-going	Customer First Officer	SS	M		Build into PDR's for 2009/2010.
8.	Expand participatory budget pilots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equalities and Diversity Forum to submit bids. Children and Young People Forum to submit bids against agreed budget. Citizen's Jury to follow budget process 	Budget Cycle Timeline	Budget Cycle Timeline	2009/2010 Approved Budget	JM	H		Successful budget jury. Successful U Decide event. Successful community bids.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
9.	Annual Review of consultation strategy	Strategy approved by Cabinet.	01.09.08	01.11.08	CCPP Team	JM	M		New Community Engagement Strategy in place.
10.	Co-ordinate community engagement and consultation across the council	Co-ordinated programme of work agreed and delivered.	01.04.08	31.03.09	CCPP Team	JM	M		New Community Engagement Strategy in place.
11.	Establish an annual internal customer survey – before March 2008	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.09	31.03.09	CCPP Team	JM	M		Medium priority. Had to focus on new community engagement strategy etc. in advance of CPA which made doing this survey impossible.
12.	Establish an annual member survey – to be reviewed next year.	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.09	31.03.09	CCPP Team	JM	M		As above. Also post now vacant, so no resource until new appointment.
13.	Ensure the customer service improvements identified through scrutiny (and approved by Cabinet) are actioned.	Recommendations tracker reported to Scrutiny Steering Board.	On-going	On-going	Legal and Democratic Team	CF	M		Tracker report produced in accordance with timescales. Scrutiny recommendations fed into aligned processes via Heads of Service Identified training needs fed into Modern Member Steering Group

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
14.	Introduce a scheme for "adopting" parish plans and continue to develop e-link for parish councils.	Approach agreed by all stakeholders and up and running.	01.02.08	30.06.08	CCPP Team and Legal and Democratic	HB CF	M		Approach drafted, but on hold pending appointments to the CCPP team.
Organisational Structure									
15.	Ensure the impact on the customer is a key criteria in any decisions about future structures of the Council.	Clear evidence of benefit to customer from decisions.	On-going	On-going	CEO	KD	H		Impact on customer incorporated into report templates as specific issue to be addressed.
Service Delivery Process 16 - 24									
16.	Key ICT systems introduced as part of Spatial Project and processes re-engineered to ensure customer benefit.	Services mapped and re-engineered.	01.09.07	31.10.08	£6.7m	DP	H		Delivered on time to budget.
17.	Develop customer benefits statements for each part of the Spatial Project.	See above.	01.04.08	31.05.08	Improvement Manager	HB	H		Initial report produced by Head of Service for December 2008. Further report in 12 months time.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
18.	Ensure formal Resource Level Agreements between the Customer Service Centre and each service area are in place (and migration plans).	Agree schedule to complete them. Completed RLAs	01.02.08	29.02.09	CSC Manager	RH	H		Service migration has been ongoing over the last 3 years. EH RLA is currently being negotiated Licensing has been in migrated (Oct 2008) and has an RLA Planning is the next service under consideration (covering service areas of, Building Control, Development Control, Local Plans) This is part of the ongoing work of the Spatial project FM2
19	Ensure all contracts include a section on the customer and how it will be addressed through the particular service purchased.	Procurement guidance and advice reflects this action. Possible coverage as part of Internal Audit work.	01.04.06	30.06.09	Procure Team	JP	M		No further action at this stage – review in 2009
20	Undertake Customer Clinics	Identified improvements delivered.	01.12.07	On-going	Customer First Board	KD	H		Number of clinics held including Planning and Environment, Street Scene and Waste Management, Revenues and Highways Top five irritants identified each CFWG (based on service failure and repeat calls) – clinics held to address issues.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
21.	Additional BPR work with Change Manager post, on interface issues between CSC and "back office.	Identified improvements delivered.	01.05.08	30.09.09	Capacity Building Fund	HB	H		Manager appointed and 3 pilots being considered with further work to follow through next years customer clinics.
22.	Review equipment and ICT requirements for SSWM Department, in particular, waste collection.	Service requirements and costs identified for 2009/2012 MTFS	01.12.07	31.07.08?	SSWM/E-Gov&Cust	MB/D P	H		The project remains on target and in accordance with the project plan. Cases for any additional SSWM requirements will be in line with the business planning/budget. This is correct and on schedule.
23.	CSC to identify a list of customer issues for the Board to look at.	Issues referred to customer clinics and improvements made.	01.08.07	Review in 12 months	CSC Customer First Board	KD/R H	H		Regular item on CFB agenda – where necessary these lead to customer clinics
24.	Focus group on Internet to understand customer issues.	Improvements identified. Positive feedback from customer survey.	01.07.08	30.09.08	E-Gov & Customer Serv / CCP	DP	M		Will be picked up as part of focus group work on users and non-users. May require a separate focus group.
Management Practices 25 – 29									
25.	All DMT meetings to have a standard item on customer issues/feedback once a month.	Minutes of feedback and delivered actions of improvement.	01.02.08	31.01.09	CMT	HB			CMT template reporting being developed. This will provide guidance for DMTs as well. First report due early April. Guidance issued to HOS for monthly report. Needs to be monitored corporately to ensure this happens.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
26.	PDR format to include sections on customer service and behaviours for all staff.	Agreed approach built into 2009/10 PDR approach.	01.09.08	31.12.08	HR&OD	JP	H		Deferred until HR&OD have capacity to complete post Single Status and work force planning.
27.	All new job descriptions to have a standard agreed opening duty on customer service.	Standard duty in place (this is subject to discussion with new Head of HR).	01.02.08	31.05.08	HR&OD	JP	M		Given Single Status, timing not right.
28.	Continue with "Bright Ideas" staff suggestion scheme	Quarterly reporting of what CMT has done with suggestions.	15.04.08	On-going	CCPP	SS	M		Needs re-invigorating as a result of Employee Survey feedback.
29.	Undertake benchmarking visits to at least 2 councils recognised for best practice on customer service.	Ideas brought back and implemented.	01.02.08	31.01.09	Customer First Board	KD	M		Completed.
Measurements 30 - 40									
30.	Undertake the DCLG Place Survey.	Survey completed to required DCLG standard, results sent to DCLG and used in future decision-making of the Council.	01.09.08	31.03.09	Will require budget bid.	HB	H (statutory)		Completed.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
31.	Measure customer standards and charter through customer panel survey.	Improved performance compared to 2007 survey.	01.04.08	31.07.08	£20,000	HB	M		Completed.
32.	Introduce resident mystery shopper surveys.	Undertake surveys, received feedback and take corrective actions.	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP/CSC	SS	M		To be used as an evaluation technique for Customer First Part 3.
33.	Undertake annual review of complaints system as part of review of Customer First Strategy. Review complaints and compliments data at monthly performance CMT.	Approved by Cabinet.	01.12.08	06.02.09	Customer First Board	HB/S S	M		Will need to start this work in January 09.
34.	Customer Manual spot checks	Customer Manual being complied with.	01.06.08	Quarterly	Customer First Board	SS/H B/AM	M		Some mystery shopping undertaken by Board but too limited to provide sufficient evidence. HB and DP agreed to fund some external mystery shopping as a pre cursor to Customer Clinic work.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
36.	Update corporate performance indicator set each annum with customer measures.	Agreed by Cabinet as part of Council Plan.	01.12.08	20.02.09	CCPP	JO	M		Updated set in Council Plan 2008/2011. Currently being produced by John Outhwaite for March publication of Council Plan.
37.	Customer Service Excellence Standard for the CCPP Team.	Excellence standard obtained.	01.04.08	31.03.09	Existing budget.	SS	M		Replace with organisational self assessment.
38.	Customer Service Excellence Standard for the Elections Team.	Excellence standard obtained.	2009/2010	2009/2010	2009/2010 budget bid	SS	M		As above.
39.	Review the Customer Service Excellence process and decide on whether to apply the whole Council	Excellence standard obtained.	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP	SS	M		2009/10

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	
40.	Ensure residents obtain feedback from PACT meetings, pilot Area Committees. Invite PACT chairs to budget focus group obtain customer service ideas.	Feedback provided in suitable media e.g. next PACT meeting for residents, Together Bromsgrove.	On-going Sept Each Year	On-going Sept Each Year	Community Safety Team CCPP	GR JM	M M		Replaced by Budget Jury and "U Decide".
Training and Development 41 - 46									
41	Ensure the "Top Team" programme includes a focus on the customer.	Agreed training content includes customer service.	On-going	On-going	Improvement Fund	KD	H		Top Team now finished.
42.	All staff to go through annual Customer First Training each year.	95% of staff attended training.	Jan-Mar each year	Jan-Mar each year	Corporate Training Budget	HB/J P	H		Training going well, given difficult circumstances at the moment. Some senior managers have not yet attended inc HB Round up of staff not attending completed. New courses required to meet staff numbers.
43	Identify coaching for middle managers including a focus on customer service and interpersonal skills	All middle managers to have attended "handling difficult customer situations" and "interpersonal communication skills".	01.01.08	31.03.08	Corporate Training Budget	JP	H		No action at this stage.
44.	Continue to subscribe to a professional customer organisation	New ideas fed into the Strategy. Attendance at professional events.	On-going	On-going	CCPP Budget	HB	M		Subscription recently renewed.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	
45.	Review customer manual	Quarterly spot checks by CCPP team. Annual review of Manual	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP	SS	M		2009/10 action plan
46.	Develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the customer first training	Successful evaluation. Agree approach as part of training.	Jan-Mar each year	Jan-Mar each year	CCPP & HR&OD	HB&JP	M		Results show that the Council is getting better at the basics i.e. responding but style is not sufficiently customer orientated
Internal Team Building 47 – 52									
47.	Service business planning to be cascaded to a team level.	Staff involvement, measured through annual staff survey.	31 May Each Year	31 May Each Year	CCPP	HB	M		DMTs held business planning away days in September 2007. Meetings between team managers and Executive Director set for May and have now been completed
48.	PDR process to follow business planning.	100% of PDRs completed. Positive feedback on process through annual staff survey.	31 May Each Year	31 May Each Year	HR&OD	JP	H		Process complete but one or two employees did not receive written up PDRs
49.	Job rotation and procedure manuals in place for key customer processes.	Internal audit check arrangements in place (subject to agreement with IA Manager for 2008/09 audit plan). Determine SMART measure part of audit plan.	01.04.08	31.03.09	IA	JP	L		Feed into 2009/2010 Internal Audit Plan.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
50.	CEO DMT member to regularly attend team meeting.	Each manager to attend one meeting per quarter.	01.04.06	31.03.07	CEO DMT	CEO	M		PA to CEO/Leader arranging for CEO DMT to attend meetings
51.	Hold BBQ at Council House and Depot. Hold Xmas meal for all staff (after work)	Improved morale measured through annual staff survey.	01.07.08	01.12.08	£2,000	HB	M		BBQ held 10 July Xmas party 19 Dec 09
52.	Establish a project managers group.	Group established and making better connections between projects.	01.02.08	30.06.08	Within Budget	TB/H B	M		Not established but Programme Board created and training for managers being developed.
Customer Environment 53 - 56									
53.	Review customer friendly layout in Council House reception and CSC prior to CPA inspection.	Positive feedback in Customer Panel survey and CPA site visit.	01.04.08	31.07.08	CSC	HB SS	M		Tour undertaken.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
54.	Review all customer areas for their physical suitability for our customers.	DDA Compliance target.	01.07.08	31.03.09	DDA budget	CF	H		Scope access audits completed in accordance with timescales. All polling stations assessed for accessibility in accordance with timescales Capital budgets identified and built into medium term financial plan All works monitored in accordance with the timescales identified within the Assets Management Plan and Assets Management Group
55.	Obtain customer feedback from the public through the customer panel on the suitability of our premises.	Positive feedback from survey.	01.05.08	31.07.08	£20,000	HB	M		Feedback received through Customer Panel.
56	Introduce modern customer friendly name badges for every member of staff.	Badges for all staff.	01.04.10	31.03.11	CEO	HB	M		AMD/SS have produced option paper. HR do not have the capacity to address this with Single Status and budget restructures on the go. Defer to post Single Status.
Communications – Internal and External 57 - 65									
57	Continue to undertake visible leadership events.	Six monthly staff forums.	01.12.08	On-going	CEO	KD	H		Staff Forums and middle managers sessions and back to the floor sessions. Poor feedback from staff survey which needs to be

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
									considered.
58.	Continue to ensure the editorial policies for Connect and Together Bromsgrove include a strong customer focus.	Positive feedback from Members and Customer Panel.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M		May need to re focus on this.
59.	Continue to ensure a strong focus on the customer through internal communications.	Regular articles on the customer in the various communications.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M		May need to up this and switch away from performance.
60.	Continue team and individual customer service awards.	Monthly and annual award. Posters for each award.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M		Very poor feedback from staff survey, abandon scheme and see what reaction this produces before coming up with alternatives.
61.	Retain copies of positive letters and display at reception points.	Copies in all reception points.	Start in May 2008	On-going	CCPP	SS	M		To be ready for July 2008 along with compliments on website. Sufficient letters available to do this now but have put press releases in reception instead.
Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
62.	Increase awareness and use of Council's text messaging service.	Customer Panel indicator.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	HB	M		Advertised in Together Bromsgrove and Press Releases
63.	Improve customer communication by ensuring all written correspondence is	Plain English or similar training for all middle managers.	2008/2009	2008/2009	Awaiting report on approach and costs	AMD	M		Suspended

	customer focused, clear and easy to understand								
64.	Continue to publish our press releases via e-mail and on staff intranet	Check the intranet	01.04.08	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M		Doing this but website content is not up to date.
65.	Completed review of external communications to check compliance with style guide.	Document work programme for Corporate Communications Working Group on target.	01.02.08	31.01.11	CCPP and graphics contract	AMD	M		Graphics contract recently let.
Managing the Change 66 - 69									
66.	Customer First Board to meet regularly.	Every month. Progress against Customer First Strategy Action Plan reviewed at each meeting.	On-going	On-going	CEO, CCPP, SSWM, E-Gov./Cust	KD	H		Meetings take place monthly
67.	Undertake annual review of Customer First Strategy.	Review completed and reported to Cabinet and PMB.	Feb. Cabinet each year	Feb. Cabinet each year	As above.	HB	M		Going to Cabinet June. Original date was Feb.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
68.	Introduce a programme management structure to support the Improvement Plan and project management methodology at BDC	Documentation has clear process for considering the customer in any decisions/actions.	01.04.08	30.06.08	Change Manager	HB	H		Improvement Manager in post. Presentation to CMT.
69.	Recruit Improvement Manager to CCP Team (18 month fixed contract).	Post filled by 01.04.08 and delivering actions set out in strategy.	01.02.08	30.09.09	Capacity Building Bid	HB	H		See above
Customer Access 70 - 78									
70.	Review the need for community transport and extending shop mobility hours.	Service up and running and shop mobility hours extended if need identified.	01.02.08	01.04.09	2009/2010 Budget Bids	HB MB	H		Shopmobility open longer hours. Approval received subject to full council final approval.
71.	Respond to the County consultation on transport and ensure future transport developments e.g. railway station, interchange in town centre, improve customer access to council facilities.	Satisfaction measure in Customer Panel.	01.02.08	30.09.09	Network Rail and County Council Funding	HB MB	H		Detailed responses provided.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
72.	Continue to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and develop the role of the Welfare Officer in Revenues and Benefits.	Increase in take up of benefits claimants. Improved debt advice for residents.	On-going	On-going	Within Approved Budget	JP	M		On-going. Economic Summit to consider further.
73.	Carry out a review of resident's access requirements and determine whether there is a need to develop area offices for the CSC and/or extend the officer opening hours of the CSC.	Business case as part of 2009/2010 budget and start of any agreed changes in 2009/2010.	01.02.08	01.04.09	2009/2010 Budget Bids	HB DP	H		Key message from Housing Inspection. Series of work agreed with sub group of CFB Series of actions now agreed for research Focus groups did not point to the need for area officers so strategic model is existing model with better transport links.
74.	Undertake a benchmarking visit to a high performing Council to look at their approach	New ideas built into future Strategy update.	01.04.08	30.09.08	Officer Time	HB DP	M		Visit to Shropshire undertaken and fed back into customer access strategy work.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
75.	Continue to work towards Level 3 of the equalities standard for local government, in particular, start to deliver service outcomes.	Equality outcomes built into 2008/2009 improvement plan and separate corporate equalities action plan on target.	01.02.08	31.07.08	Equalities Officer	FS	H		Work continues in accordance with the requirements in the action plan and in accordance with timescales. FS currently writing self assessment for level 3. Equalities monitoring an issue.
76	Continue to work on the Council's communications, to ensure residents are aware of the services we provide and how to contact us; and continue to ensure a consistent brand for the Council and improve the Council's website.	Customer Panel measures on awareness of services and ease of access the Council.	01.02.08	31.07.08	Communications and Customer First Manager	AMD	H		CCPP currently being restructured.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority	Colour	Corrective Action
77.	Work towards ensuring full DDA compliance for our buildings	% of Authority buildings' public areas that are suitable and accessible to the disabled (BV156)	On-going	On-going	Approved Budget	CF	H		<p>All works categorized in accordance with requirements identified within the context of the Partnership Project and the redevelopment of the town centre</p> <p>Capital budgets allocated in accordance with Medium Term Financial Plan</p> <p>Works monitored by Corporate Property Officer and Assets management Group.</p>
78.	Continue to work with the Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Group.	Identification of service gaps. Annual review/survey on Forum and Group's satisfaction.	On-going	On-going	Equalities Officer	FS	H		Meeting in accordance with timescales

9. Priorities for the Year Ahead 2009/10

- 9.1 The same 12 themes are still valid; however, we have added a 13th theme, access, on the advice of the I&DeA. There are six priorities within these themes, set out below. A revised action plan is included overleaf.

Customer Needs Research

- Evaluate customer insight software (Mosaic).
- Implement process for corporate equalities monitoring.
- Ensure regular feedback and communication on community engagement exercises.

Service Delivery Process

- Realise service quality benefits of spatial project.
- Ensure regular customer complaints reporting to Members and improved services resulting from customer feedback.
- Ensure Internet content up to date and develop proposals for improved design of site, including GovMetric.
- Complete Planning Service migration to CSC.
- Complete Lean Systems pilots.

Organisational Structure

- Ensure Joint CEO shared services business cases include how customer service is going to be improved.

Measurements

- Communicate updated customer standards.
- Review customer metrics of Council, including outcome measures and Place Survey data.
- Undertake internal customer survey.

Training and Management Development

- Complete Customer First Training Part 3 training, which will be tailored specially to the needs of each team.

- Undertake customer service excellence self assessment.
- Complete phase one of project management training for managers.

Communications – Internal and External

- Increase awareness of text messaging service.
- Research older persons' directory and website.
- Research children and young peoples' magazine and website.

Customer Access

- Implement community transport scheme.
- Develop LSP Theme Group customer access plans.
- Work with the County Council to deliver the Integrated Public Transport Strategy, in particular, two “Gold Standard” modal interchanges, a new town centre hopper service, the publication of improved route information and new train station.
- Publicise the Council's access channels (along with customer standards – see above).
- Achieve Level 3 of the equalities standard for local government,

Section 8 provides a scorecard of measures for this Strategy, drawn from the service business plans. The specific dates for delivering these are set out in Section 9, which is the updated action plan for this Strategy.

10. Strategy Scorecard 2009/2010

Customer Measures	2009/2010	20010/2011	2011/2012	Process Measures	2009/2010	20010/2011	2011/2012
Improved overall satisfaction with the Council (%)	55	57	60	Maintain average answer times at the CSC below 20 seconds (seconds).	20	20	20
Improved satisfaction with refuse collection (%).	77	79	80	Maintain call resolution at first point of contact at CSC above 95% (%)	95	95	95
Improved % of residents recommending CSC to a friend (%).	75	77	80	Undertake Customer Excellence self assessment (date)	SA Sept 09		March 2012
Improved satisfaction with Council website (%).	65	70	75	Achieve Level 3 of the LG equalities standard (Level).	3	3	3
% of complaints resolved within 10 working days (%).	72	74	75	Complete and evaluate lean systems pilots (date)	Dec 09		
How easy it was to get hold of the right person (%)	75	80	85				
% of customers getting response to voicemail (%)	100	100	100				
Staff Measures	2009/2010	20010/2011	2011/2012	Finance Measures	2009/2010	20010/2011	2011/2012
All required staff to complete Customer First (Pt 3) training.	Sep 09			Deliver £300,000 annual saving from Spatial Project (£).	300,000	300,000	300,000
Reduce sickness absence to local authority average (days per FTE).	8.75	8.50	8.25	Undertake 12 month benefits evaluation of Spatial Project.	Dec 09		

Improve employee satisfaction (%). Complete project management training for all identified managers.	30 Apr 09	35	40	Develop Grants Policy to support community bids process. Successfully bid for customer insight software (subject to Wychavon evaluation).	Sep 09 Jan 10		
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11. Customer First Board Action Plan May 2009 – Apr 2012

Ref	Action	Measures of Success	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
Customer Needs Research							
1.	Review Customer Panel contract with a view to transferring to County Council.	Panel established and providing feedback.	01.04.09	31.03.10	£15,000	HB	M
2	Survey customers once a year to find out what they think of our services (one "place" type survey/one customer standards survey).	Surveys completed and reported to CMT and Performance Management Board.	01.07.09	28.02.10	As above	HB	M
3	Hold focus groups as and when to determine customer access needs and how customers measure satisfaction.	Information used to inform Customer Access Strategy.	01.04.09	31.03.10	CCPP Budget	HB	H
4.	CMT to continue with the "walk the wards" programme.	Short list of actions arising delivered.	On-going	On-going	CMT	CMT	M
5.	Re-launch "back to the floor" days.	Issues identified and resolved staff updated on Intranet.	01.05.09	31.05.09	CMT	SS	M
6.	Undertake the DCLG Place Survey.	Survey completed to required DCLG standard, results sent to DCLG and used in future decision-making of the Council.	01.09.10	31.03.11	Will require budget bid.	HB	H (statutory)
7.	Build "over the fence" into future PDR rounds.	Positive feedback in employee survey.	01.04.09	31.0.12	Customer First Officer	SS	M
8.	Continue to work with the Equalities and Diversity Forum and	Identification of service gaps. Annual review/survey on Forum and Group's satisfaction.	On-going	On-going	Equalities Officer	FS	H

	Disabled Users Group.							
9.	Further participatory pilots develop budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Equalities and Diversity Forum to submit bids. Children and Young People Forum to submit bids against agreed budget. Budget Jury to follow budget process. Local Neighbourhood Partnerships. 	As per Budget Cycle Timeline	As per Budget Cycle Timeline	2009/2010 Approved Budget	Vacant Post	H	
10.	Annual Review of Community Engagement Strategy	Strategy approved by Cabinet.	01.09.09	01.12.09	CCPP Team	Vacant Post	M	
11.	Co-ordinate community engagement and consultation across the council	Co-ordinated programme of work agreed and delivered.	01.04.09	31.03.10	CCPP Team	JM	M	
12.	Establish an annual internal customer survey.	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.04.09	31.03.10	CCPP Team	JM	M	
13.	Establish an annual Member survey – to be reviewed next year.	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.09	31.03.09	CCPP Team	JM	M	
14.	Ensure the customer service improvements identified through scrutiny (and approved by Cabinet) are actioned.	Recommendations tracker reported to Scrutiny Steering Board.	On-going	On-going	Legal and Democratic Team	CF	M	
15.	Introduce a scheme for “adopting” parish plans and continue to develop e-link for parish councils.	Approach agreed by all stakeholders and up and running.	01.03.09	31.07.10	CCPP Team and Legal and Democratic	HB CF	M	

Organisational Structure

16.	Joint CEO Shared Services	Clear evidence of benefits to customer from business case.	On-going	31.07.09	CEO	KD	H
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Service Delivery Processes

17.	Mobile working.	Complete the mobile working project to provide remote access to Council systems using CITRIX	Nov 08	June 09	ICT Manager	DW	M
18.	Smartpoint	Deliver the Smartpoint project to provide a single view of customer's details to CSA's.	Jan 09	Sept 09	Head of E-Government & Customer Services	DP	H
19.	Spatial Project Benefits Realisation	All departments involved in the Spatial Project will need to provide evidence of benefits realisation within their own service areas.	Sept 09	Nov 09	Head of E-Government & Customer Services plus other H of S for involved departments.	DP	H
20.	Annual review of CSC resource level agreements.	Revised Resource Level Agreement, to include Equality Data, agreed at CMT in March 2009. Before rolled out during 2009/10 seeking approval by Customer First Board in April 2009	April 2009	March 2010	Customer Services Manager	RH	M
21.	Planning Service migrated to CSC.	Planning migration(Development Control and Land Charging services) to be migrated to CSC from main reception	December 2008	July 2009	Customer Services Manager	RH	H

Management Practices

22.	Ensure all contracts include a section on the customer and how it will be addressed through the particular service purchased.	Procurement guidance and advice reflects this action. Possible coverage as part of Internal Audit work.	Dependent on date of contract procedure review	Dependent on date of contract procedure review	Procurement Team	JP	M
23.	Undertake Customer Clinics	Identified improvements delivered.	As And When	As And When	Customer First Board	KD	H

24.	Focus group on Internet to understand customer issues.	Improvements identified. Positive feedback from customer survey.	Completed	Completed	E-Gov & Customer Serv / CCPP	DP	M
25.	Introduce standard team agenda linked to CMT meeting.	Minutes of feedback and delivered actions of improvement.	01.04.09	31.10.09	CMT	HB	M
26.	PDR format to include sections on customer service i.e. customer standards.	Agreed approach built into 2009/10 PDR approach.	Completed	Completed	HR&OD	JP	H
27.	All new job descriptions to have a standard agreed opening duty on customer service.	Standard duty in place (this is subject to discussion with new Head of HR).	Will depend on Single Status	Will depend on Single Status	HR&OD	JP	M
28.	Continue with "Bright Ideas" staff suggestion scheme	Quarterly reporting of what CMT has done with suggestions.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	SS	M

Measurements

30.	Measure customer standards and charter through customer panel survey.	Improved performance compared to 2008 survey.	01.05.09	31.12.09	£7,500	HB	M
31.	Mystery Shopping	Undertake evaluation of customer first part 3 training to test improved access and experience.	01.04.10	30.09.10	£7,500	HB DP	M
32.	Undertake annual review of complaints system as part of	Approved by Cabinet. Quarterly Reporting	01.04.09	31.03.12	Customer First Board	HB/SS	M

	review of Customer First Strategy. Review complaints and compliments data at monthly performance CMT.						
33.	Update corporate performance indicator set each annum with customer measures.	Agreed by Cabinet as part of Council Plan.	01.12.09	20.02.10	CCPP	JO	M
34.	Customer Service Excellence Standard corporate self assessment.	Excellence standard self assessment completed and action plan developed.	01.04.09	30.09.09	Existing budget.	RH	M
35.	Customer Service Excellence Standard accreditation.	Excellence standard obtained.	2011/12	2011/2012	2010/2011 budget bid	RH	M

Training and Development

36.	All teams to go through annual Customer First Part 3 training.	95% of staff attended training. Development of customer excellence statements and customer excellence plans.	01.03.09	30.09.09	Corporate Training Budget	HB/JP/DP	H
37.	Project management training.	Complete phase 1 training and evaluate (in house methodology). Complete phase 2 training and evaluate (programme management and PRINCE2).	01.04.09 01.04.10	31.07.09 31.07.10	Corporate Training Budget	HB/JP/DP	H

38.	Continue to subscribe to a professional customer organisation	New ideas fed into the Strategy. Attendance at professional events.	On-going	On-going	CCPP Budget	HB	M
39.	Review customer manual.	Annual review of Manual	01.04.09	31.03.10	CCPP	SS	M
40.	Develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the customer first training	Successful evaluation. Agree approach as part of training.	See 31.	See 31.	See 31.	See 31.	See 31.

Internal Team Building

41.	Service business planning to be cascaded to a team level.	Staff involvement, measured through annual staff survey.	31 May Each Year	31 May Each Year	CCPP	HB	M
42.	PDR process to follow business planning.	100% of PDRs completed. Positive feedback on process through annual staff survey.	31 May Each Year	31 May Each Year	HR&OD	JP	H
43.	Job rotation and procedure manuals in place for key customer processes.	Internal audit check arrangements in place (subject to agreement with IA Manager for 2008/09 audit plan). Determine SMART measure part of audit plan.	01.04.09	31.03.10	IA	JP	L
54.	Hold BBQ at Council House and Depot. Hold Xmas meal for all staff (after work)	Improved morale measured through annual staff survey.	01.07.09	01.12.09	£2,000	HB	M

Customer Environment

55.	Introduce modern customer friendly name badges for every member of staff.	Badges for all staff.	2010/2011	2010/2011	?	DP/JP	M
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Communications – Internal and External

56	Continue to undertake visible leadership events.	Six monthly staff forums.	01.12.09	On-going	CEO	KD	H
57.	Continue to ensure the editorial policies for Connect and Together Bromsgrove include a strong customer focus.	Positive feedback from Members and Customer Panel.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
58.	Continue to ensure a strong focus on the customer through internal communications.	Regular articles on the customer in the various communications.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
59.	Re-launch team and individual customer service awards.	Monthly and annual award. Posters for each award.	01.04.09	31.05.09	CCPP	AMD	M
60.	Retain copies of positive letters and display at reception points.	Copies in all reception points.	Start in May 2009	On-going	CCPP	SS	M
61.	Increase awareness and use of Council's text messaging service.	Customer Panel indicator.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	HB	M
62.	Improve customer communication by ensuring all written correspondence is customer focused, clear and easy to understand	Plain English or similar training for all middle managers.	2011/2012	2011/2012	Awaiting report on approach and costs	AMD	M

63.	Continue to publish our press releases via e-mail and on staff intranet	Check the intranet	01.04.08	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
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Managing the Change

64.	Re-boot Customer First Board.	Every month. Progress against Customer First Strategy Action Plan reviewed at each meeting.	May 2009	May 2009	CEO, CCPP, SSWM, E-Gov./Cust	KD	H
65.	Undertake annual review of Customer First Strategy.	Review completed and reported to Cabinet and PMB.	May Cabinet each year	May Cabinet each year	As above.	HB	M
66.	Maintain a programme management structure to support the Improvement Plan and project management methodology at BDC	Documentation has clear process for considering the customer in any decisions/actions.	On-going	On-going	Improvement Manager	HB	H
67.	Permanently recruit Improvement Manager to CCPP Team (18 month fixed contract).	Post filled by 01.04.08 and delivering actions set out in strategy.	01.09.09	31.01.10	2010/2011 Budget Bids	HB	H
68.	Continue to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and develop the role of the Welfare Officer in Revenues and Benefits.	Increase in take up of benefits claimants. Improved debt advice for residents.	On-going	On-going	Within Approved Budget	JP	M
69.	Work towards ensuring full DDA compliance for our buildings	% of Authority buildings' public areas that are suitable and accessible to the disabled (BV156)	On-going	On-going	Approved Budget	CF	H

Customer Access

70.	Deliver a community transport scheme for the District.	Service and usage levels as per SLA.	04.09.09	-	2009/2010 Budget Bids	HB	H
71.	Integrated Passenger Transport Strategy - Town centre interchange. - Bromsgrove Train Station. - Train station interchange. - Review of District public transport.	New interchange in place. New train station open. New interchange in place. Review complete. Increased % of residents who use public transport. Increased % of residents who think public transport in District is Good.	2009/2010 2009/2010 2009/201 Completed	2013/2014 31.03.11 31.03.11 Completed	Network Rail and County Council Funding	HB PS	H
72.	Benefits pilot evaluation in Rubery.	Usage numbers.	Completed	Completed	Existing Budget	TB JP	M
73.	Continue to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and develop the role of the Welfare Officer in Revenues and Benefits.	Increase in take up of benefits claimants. Improved debt advice for residents.	On-going	On-going	Within Approved Budget	JP	M

74.	Lean Systems Pilot	Undertake two pilots in 2009/2010. Evaluate success and develop in-house methodology.	01.04.08	30.09.08	RIEP Funding and 2009/2010 budget bid.	HB DP	M
75.	Improve Website	Ensure website up to date. Improve platform and use of systems like GovMetric Improve transactional capability.	01.04.09	31.09.09	E-Gov/CS Dept County Council	DP	H
76.	Mystery Shopping	Undertake evaluation of customer first part 3 training to test improved access and experience.	01.04.10	30.09.10	£7,500	HB DP	M
77.	Revise Customer Standards	Link between revise standards and focus group feedback. Positive feedback from public, who remember them, by survey.	01.05.09	31.10.09	CCPP Budget.	AM	H
78.	Publish Customer Access Points, Standards and Feedback Mechanisms	Positive feedback from customer surveys that public aware of access channels and standards (fridge magnet?)	01.05.09	31.10.09	CCPP Budget.	AM	H
79.	Customer Insight Evaluation	Evaluate options in 2009/2010 and consider budget bid for 2010/11	01.04.09	30.09.09	2010/2011 Budget Bid	HB	M
80.	Appoint to Graduate Marketing Post	Marketing/Brand Strategy for Council	01.04.09	30.09.09	2009/2010 Budget Bid	AM	M

81.	Older People's Directory, linked to website.	Research best practice and develop joint budget bid for 2010/2011 if there is an identified need.	01.04.09	30.09.09	2010/2011 Budget Bid	AS	M
82.	NI14 – Avoidable Contact	Evaluate results and develop action plans to resolve areas of high repeat contact.	01.02.08	31.07.08	CCPP and E-Government and Customer Service Department	HB DP	H
83.	Local Neighbourhood Partnerships scheme.	Roll out 2 per year. Complete lessons learnt and evaluation.	On-going	On-going	£5,000 per Member/MTFS	HB	H
84.	Work towards ensuring full DDA compliance for our buildings	% of Authority buildings' public areas that are suitable and accessible to the disabled (BV156)	On-going	On-going	Approved Budget	CF	H
85.	Continue to work with the Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Group.	Identification of service gaps. Annual review/survey on Forum and Group's satisfaction.	On-going	On-going	Equalities Officer	FS	H
85.	Equalities Monitoring	Implement corporate system. Link to future impact assessments.	01.02.09	31.03.09	CCPP	Vacant Post	H

86.	Close Cash Office	Develop corporate cash less strategy for the Council linking in cheque reduction, cash reduction themes and the promotion of alternative cost effective payment channels e.g. Direct Debit, On line and Automated telephone payments. Long term objective to close cash office in CSC increasing capacity and space to offer other services. Could include payment machines which could be a Joint project with Redditch	April 2009	March 2012	Possible budget bid 2010/2011	JP/DP	M
87.	Develop LSP Customer Access Plan	Develop customer hearbeats. Develop action plans for improved service.	01.09.09	31.03.10	CCPP	Vacant Posts	M
88.	Develop Children and Young Persons Directory, linked to website.	Research best practice and develop joint budget bid for 2010/2011 if there is an identified need.	01.04.09	30.09.09	2010/2011 Budget Bid	PS AM	M
89.	Customer Service Audit.	Develop methodology for undertaken customer access/experience audits. Roll out programme of audits.	01.09.09 2010/11	31.03.10 2010/11	CCPP	AM	H
90.	Review of Planning Service.	Action Plan for delivering 3 star service in place and on target.	01.04.08	31.08.09	?	PS DH HB	H

12. Conclusions

- 12.1 The Council is now improving at a rapid speed and has achieved a CPA rating of Fair. The Council has robust processes in place which should enable it to achieve an excellent rating in the new CAA framework; however, the Council aspires to achieve excellence in customer service and this still does not feel central to either CPA or CAA whose lexicon is one of “citizens”, “users” “access” and “non-users” rather than “customer experience”. In addition, the imposed nature of much of the transformational change, means that it is difficult for the Council to steer its own focused path towards customer service excellence in a language that staff and residents understand.
- 12.2 Rather than look to the Government’s regulatory framework for local government for motivation (as there is very little carrot and a lot of stick), the Council needs to find its own approach. There does not seem to be an obvious and simple solution to achieving excellence in customer service; however, the original approach adopted in the Customer First Strategy of looking to ensure Customer First feeds through every aspect of the Council (in the now 13 themes identified), underpinned by investment in ICT and a long term commitment to customer service from Members and senior management appears a the right way forward. It is important that we make achieving customer service excellence the central theme of our journey from Fair to Excellence.

13. Contacts

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