

Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District

Customer First Strategy Review

January 2008



Bromsgrove
District Council
www.bromsgrove.gov.uk



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1. Forward by Councillor Mike Webb, Portfolio for Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation

Excellent customer service is a priority for the Council.

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 performance is now consistent with a "Fair" rated authority and we expect this to be confirmed when we undergo our second Comprehensive Performance Assessment, by the Audit Commission in late 2008. I am particularly pleased that the average speed of answering at our customer service centre is now improving and that over 90% of calls are resolved at the first point of contact. 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 area committees, "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 will be 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 will also be putting all staff through a second wave of customer first training. Later in the year, we should see the completion of the delivery of the spatial project, which will see 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 will also see the Council start working towards level 3 of the local government equalities standard and start delivering equalities outcomes.

This review and updated strategic action plan sets out in detail these key actions, but also a whole host of smaller actions across 12 themes. The idea is that customer first, runs through all that we do, so that staff, from the moment they join the organisation and through all they deliver, understand the importance of customer service. As the 12 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 Customer Care and Customer Service, and Revenue Generation

2. Introduction

- 2.1 In March 2006 the Cabinet approved a Customer First Strategy for Bromsgrove District Council. At the time (and still) the primary focus of the Council has been to improve its basic performance, in particular, its Best Value performance indicators, which are 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.
- 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 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;
 - + 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 12 themes. Progress against the action plan is reviewed in section 6. 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. The Council has also undergone a first Comprehensive Performance Assessment, a peer review from the I&DeA and has started to produce a range of customer satisfaction survey

data, to compliment the already extensive customer data from the Customer Service Centre. Finally, Cabinet has taken the decision (with cross party support) to make a £6.7m investment in ICT to bring the Council's ICT up to the requirements of the Government's e-Government standard. All of this information is reviewed in the following sections, before being brought together in an updated Customer First Strategic Action Plan.

3. National Developments

Comprehensive Area Assessment

3.1 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 is still being consulted on and will start in April 2009; however, a number of important changes can be identified at this stage:-

- + There is going to be a much stronger emphasis on the “experience of citizens, people who use services and local taxpayers.
- + A reduced focus on looking into councils’ processes and a much stronger emphasis on looking at why councils have taken particular decisions (the customer evidence for these decisions) and the outcomes achieved.
- + Continued emphasis on understanding the diverse needs of our communities, in particular, listening and responding to the needs of the more vulnerable in our communities.
- + A new national indicator set, which will replace the existing Best Value performance indicators. These have now been published and will be used to update the Council Plan. There are more perception indicators than previously seen under the Best Value regime and these will be measured by a new “Place Survey”, which will replace the Best Value satisfaction survey.
- + 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
- + 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).

3.2 These changes are being much heralded by Government, but the overall approach seems complex and the terms “customer” and “customer experience” are absent from the language of CAA; however, the shift towards measuring perception and greater freedom to use local measures is welcomed.

Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Act 2007

3.3 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.

3.4 The new duty will come 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.

3.5 All of the above come with resource implications. The Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team has less resource than either Wychavon or Redditch district councils, but a larger improvement agenda, given our current CPA rating; conversely, the Council’s support for PACT, two area committees, “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.

3.6 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”.

- 3.7 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.

Varney Report

- 3.8 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

- 3.9 The County Local Strategic Partnership is currently working on a new Local Area Agreement for Worcestershire. This agreement will go live in April 2009. Most of the draft targets focus around service outcomes e.g. reduced crime, reduced CO2 emissions, but one target does relate to this Strategy:-
- 3.10 Empower local people to have a greater choice and influence over local decision making and a greater role in public service delivery.
- 3.11 It is unclear how this target will be delivered in Worcestershire at this stage; however, the Council’s support for PACT, two pilot area committees and the proposed review of the need for community transport, working alongside the Equalities and Diversity Forum and Disabled Users Group.

4. Customer Feedback and Performance Indicators

4.1 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 two customer panel surveys per annum, which was supplemented this year by the Best Value satisfaction survey (the Council also surveys its own staff every year). The Council is also about to introduce a complaints software package across the Council, which will provide 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.

Best Value Satisfaction Survey

4.2 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

3.3 Through the 2008/2011 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%

- 4.4 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).

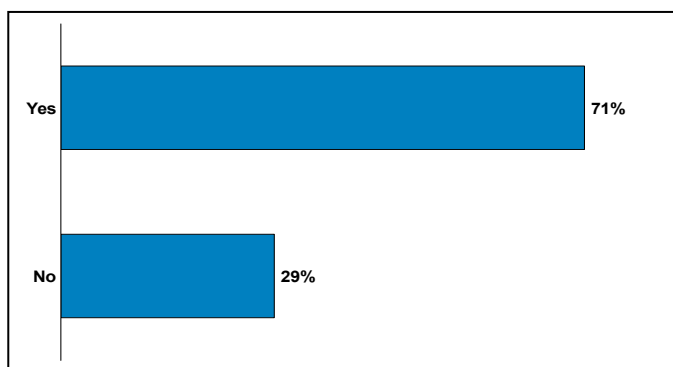
Customer Panel

- 4.5 Bromsgrove District Council commissioned Snap SurveyShop to assist with our Customer Panel Survey 2007. Unlike the Best Value satisfaction survey, the Customer Panel allows us to ask specific questions about our services i.e. it can be more specific. The Council has also recently undertaken two focus groups on the 2008/09 budget round which also provided some feedback to the Council on its customer's experience. Overall, the feedback from the Customer Panel and the budget focus groups with regard to customer service is increasingly positive; however, there is still considerable room for improvement. The following are key extracts from the Customer Panel survey:-

Ease of accessing the Customer Service Centre

- 4.6 71% found accessing the Customer Service Centre easy. Less than half (47%) of under 35s found access easy, compared to three quarters (76%) of those in the 55 or older age group. Ease of access varied by working status too, 61% of workers finding access to be easy compared to 79% of non workers.

Do you find the Customer Service Centre easy to access?



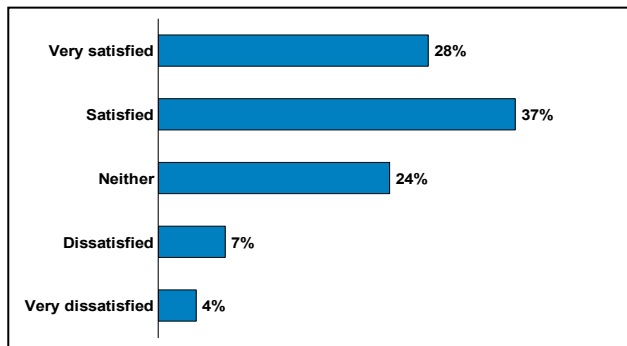
- 4.7 What is surprising about this result is that older residents seem to find the CSC easier to use than under 35s which is perhaps unusual as call centres are a relatively new way of doing business and something that under 35s are more familiar with. A focus group made up of under 35s may be required to find out what exactly is the issue here. Another issue that could not be identified from the analysis is whether there is any difference in satisfaction with access to the CSC by geographic area. Given that private sector companies operate national call centres, this should not be the case; however, a number of focus groups for residents in locations like Hagley, Alvechurch and Wythall, could prove useful in

identifying whether there is a need to offer a different form of customer service to these areas e.g. additional CSC offices, a CSC bus etc.

Satisfaction with service received

4.8 Two thirds (65%) were satisfied with the service they received. Satisfaction varied from 58% in males to 73% in females, 49% in 35 to 54s to 71% in 55 or older and 53% in workers to 73% in non workers.

Satisfaction with service received

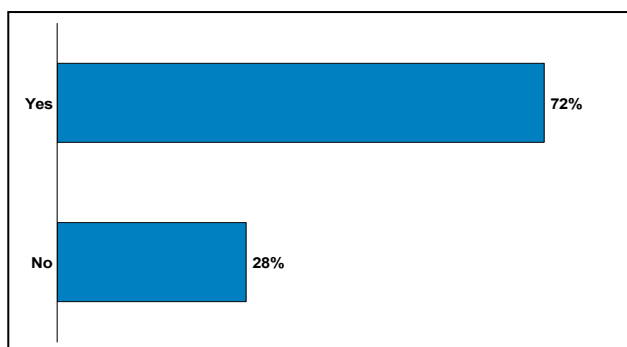


4.9 Again, it is surprising that the under 35s seem to be the least satisfied. As per the previous graph, a focus group may be required to find out the exact nature of the problem. It may be a perception issue. Given that not everyone will, by the nature of what the Council does, get the answer they want from the CSC, a figure of only 11% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied is very low. Senior managers have gone “back to the floor” and listened in to calls at the CSC and the level of service given by the operatives is excellent. We have started to do this with Members now and again, are getting very positive results.

Recommending the use of the Centre

4.10 Three quarters (72%) would recommend the use of the Centre to a friend, ranging from 68% in males to 78% in females, and 65% in 35 to 54 to 91% in under 35s.

Would you recommend the use of the Customer Service Centre to a friend?



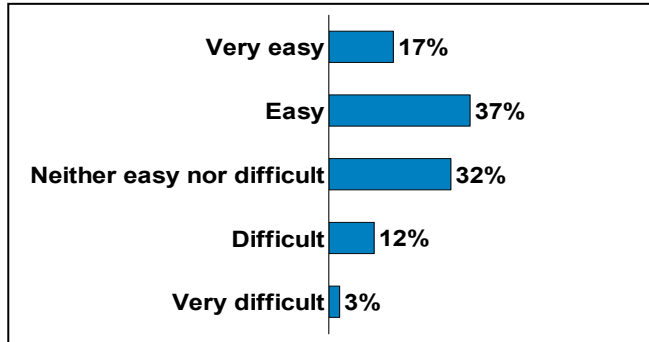
4.11 This survey measure has been recommended for the corporate performance indicator set, as this is perhaps the ultimate test of the effectiveness of the Council’s customer experience. It is also interesting to note that in the case of

the under 35s, 91% would recommend the CSC, despite their dissatisfaction with accessing it which suggests an issue with the figures.

Ease of contacting the Council

4.12 Over half (54%) found it easy to contact the Council. Ease dropped to 47% in males and under 35s, rising to 58% in the 55 or older age group and 59% in females.

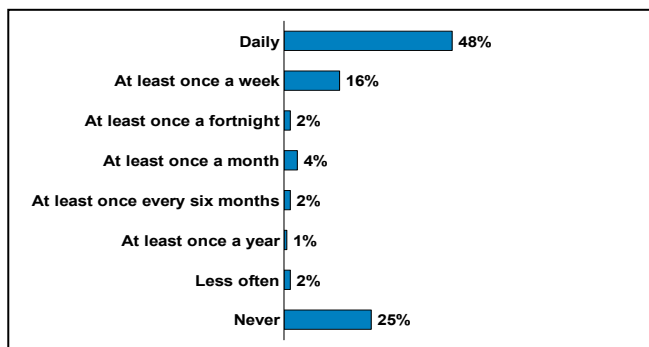
Ease of contacting the Council



Frequency of Internet use

4.13 About half (48%) used the internet on a daily basis and a further 16% at least once a week. One quarter (25%) never used the internet, varying from 6% amongst those working and 3% in under 35s, to 39% in the 55 or older age group and 45% in those not working.

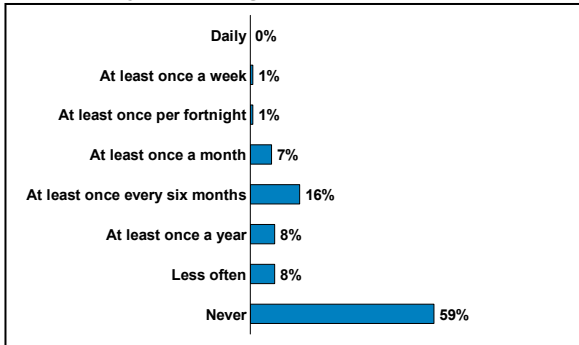
Frequency of internet use



Frequency of visiting Council's website

4.14 2 out of 5 residents (41%) had visited BDC's website. Two thirds (66%) of those in the 35 to 54 age group had visited the website, but only 29% in the 55 or overs and 26% amongst those not working.

Frequency of visiting BDC's website



4.15 59% may not be a problem, if they have not needed to look, but we did not ask how easy those who accessed the site, found it, something we need to ask in the 2008 Customer Panel survey.

Awareness of text messaging and email alert system

4.16 Only 7% were aware of the text messaging and email alert system.

Are you aware of the service?



Budget Focus Groups

4.17 Feedback from residents on the CSC as part of the budget consultation (residents were asked about their attitude to investing in more CSC advisers), few claimed to have had any problems actually getting in contact with the council:-

“Pleased with call centre service. Do not see a need.” – Female 35-44

“Not had any problems” Female 65+

“Service delivery and customer service has been good” – Male 35-44

4.18 Most who had contacted the council claimed that the problem was not accessing a council employee it was getting that employee to take ownership of the issue and/or call them back:-

“Try and improve internal efficiencies”

4.19 A few said it was easier to contact the council than their bank. One respondent also mentioned that they expect a wait when they contact the Council; however, it

was noted that customer service is important and that it was good that the council recognised this:

“Look after your customers! Should look to identify peak times that staff will be needed” – Male 35-44

- 4.20 The key issue here is the interface between the CSC and “back office”. This needs further management attention in 2008. The proposed appointment of a Change Manager with business process re-engineering skills will be an important resource to help facilitate this change.

Performance Indicators

- 4.21 Overall, the Council’s performance is improving at a rapid rate. In 2005/06 only 21% of the Council’s indicators were better than the national average. The conservative estimate for 2007/08 is that this figure will have increased to 60% (using 2006/07 quartile information). This is a significant improvement and should be recognised as such; however, this level of performance only gets the Council to approximately the average for a district council, when we aspire to excellence, so we will need to maintain our focus for at least the next three years in order to achieve the equivalent of an excellent rating in the new CAA framework. The Council has improved its performance largely through a focus on performance, that was previously absent; however, this approach has its limitations, with further change needed a combination of investment and more radical changes to the way things are done e.g. business process re-engineering linked to ICT. Three things are now critical to the continued improvement:-

- ✚ Continuing to ensure there is a very strong alignment between the budget and the Council’s priorities (which in turned are underpinned by performance and customer information);
- ✚ Completion of the Spatial Business Project; and
- ✚ Undertaking business process re-engineering work through the appointment of a Change Manager (externally funded).

- 4.22 Local indicators have also seen a gradual 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. The targets for the average speed of answer and calls answered were reduced in July to 35 seconds and 75%, from 20 seconds and 85% respectively. This was on the advice of the then Improvement Director and for a six month period. Current performance is achieving the revised targets and the original targets.

Customer First Strategy

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	8,410	6,399	7,628	7,819	8,855	7,483	7,676	7,089
CSC	Monthly Call Volume Council Switchboard	M	S	Target								
				Actual	7,718	7,310	7,060	7,270	6,995	5,888	5,946	5,573
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	90.77	90.00	92.00	95.00	90.20	95.00	86.40	95.00
CSC	Average Speed of Answer (seconds)	M	S	Target	20.00	20.00	20.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00	35.00
				Actual	67.00	47.00	53.00	48.00	55.00	53.00	31.00	31.00
CSC	% of Calls Answered	M	S	Target	85.00	85.00	85.00	75.00	75.00	75.00	80.00	80.00
				Actual	60.00	81.00	79.00	80.00	77.00	79.00	86.00	86.00

5. Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Peer Review

Comprehensive Performance Assessment

- 5.1 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.
- 5.2 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".
- 5.3 The uplift in the Council's performance does suggest that complacency can quickly be removed by the old adage, "what gets measured, gets done"; however, a key problem for the Council is how to measure customer satisfaction for some services (not all are suitable for measuring through the Customer Panel) and how to track the 10% of CSC calls that are put through to the "back office". There is no simple solution to these problems; however, concentrated senior management focus (and the CSC manager) on operational issues is probably the only solution. The review of the team action plans should enable the Assistant Chief Executive to check how each team is measuring customer satisfaction, while customer clinics for issues identified by the CSC and analysis of the information from the complaints software are also important. We also need to maintain a focus on a small set of customer indicators, as there is a tendency to set too many in surveys, which leads to a loss of focus.

I&DeA Peer Review

- 5.4 The Council underwent an 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	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.	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.
4.4.2	Clarify the roles of all Members in implementing the Customer First Strategy	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).
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	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

	be used to inform discussions in the Worcestershire Hub partnership.	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.
4.4.4	Produce a Consultation Strategy which includes a feedback process.	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.
4.4.5	Implement a corporate complaints process and purchase a system.	Purchased and due to be implemented on 31 January 2008.
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 Customer First programme.	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 complete this work.
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.
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	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

	explicit about ownership of requests and enquiries.	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.
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 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.
4.4.10	Introduce a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the Customer First training that had been and will be delivered.	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.
4.4.11	Ensure that internal communications are relevant in terms of content and language and continue to drive both internal and external communications.	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.
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.	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.

6. Spatial Project

Background Information

- 6.1 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 is scheduled to close in October 2008.
- 6.2 The Spatial Project is 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 will deliver 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 eg: Agresso, CRM etc
- 6.3 The key stages of the project are outlined below. These stages are not sequential and share dependencies. As such, many of the stages will run in parallel or at the very least will temporarily overlap.
- Data cleansing – Gazetteer, other departmental data sets
 - Back office systems and software installations inc IDOX and Anite applications and Business Process Mapping.
 - Support contract with MDA initiated for systems in 'live'
 - Corporate document management rollout
 - Integration with core back office applications

Planned Benefits and Improvements

6.4 Corporate Gazetteer and Gazetteer Management

- An accurate, recognised national property reference number (UPRN) for every property that can link into all Council systems such as Council Tax and Business Rates.
- Linking to the Revenues and Benefits system will 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

6.5 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 will reduce the amount of re-keying when customers make enquiries or order services.
- Online applications will reduce the amount of data re-keying and speed up turn around times for customers.
- Making the public registers available online will 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.

6.6 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.

6.7 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

6.8 Electoral Management

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

Business Transformation – a definition

6.9 Transformation alters the culture of an institution by changing select underlying assumptions and institutional behaviours, processes, and products: is deep and pervasive, affecting the whole organisation: is intentional and occurs over time

(American Council on Education (ACoE))

The transformation element of the spatial project will involve radical change to the following areas of the Council:

Areas of Transformation	Bromsgrove Spatial Project
<p>Our culture and behaviour:- how we treat service users, how we work with each other and with suppliers and partners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing access to accurate data • Sharing data across directorates to better serve the customer • Linking to the CRM will reduce re-keying of customer data, reduce errors and speed up transactions.
<p>The services themselves:- what it is that we deliver to the service user, how we make it available</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of public access to corporate data eg: planning applications available and searchable on the Council's website. • Ability to submit Planning Applications online and pay for them at the same time. • Mobile workforce delivering services direct to the customer. • Online licensing applications.
<p>Our processes and systems:- manual procedures, IT systems, work flow</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster processing of Land Charges requests. • Integrated systems with data flowing between them. • Document management across the organisation.
<p>Our organisational structures:- restructuring, joint delivery with public sector partners, joint delivery with private sector partners, outsourcing</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of Planning Services at the Customer Service Centre (CSC). • Easier access to data at the CSC • More services available at the CSC • Development of shared services with partners.

7. Review of Strategic Action Plan

Note: the references relate to the paragraph of the original Customer First Strategy.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Comments
Organisational Strategy and Vision					
6.4	Agree customer vision and Customer Charter at Cabinet.	Vision agreed and communicated to staff.	15.03.06	30.04.06	Agreed.
6.6	Develop the Vision further as part of the fundamental review of the corporate plan.	Vision further expanded upon by measures and actions through use of balanced scorecard.	15.03.06	30.09.06	Council Plan 2007/2010 and draft 2008/2011.
Customer Need Research					
7.5	Establish and outsourced customer panel.	Panel established and providing feedback.	15.03.06	30.09.06	Outsourced to SNAP Surveys.
7.6	Survey customers twice a year to find out what they think of our services (only one survey in 2006/07 due to set up time).	Surveys completed and reported to CMT and Performance Management Board.	01.10.06	31.03.07	Survey one completed and second survey in draft.
7.7	Hold focus groups, one for each service area to identify what drives customer satisfaction in each area.	Short list of drivers of customer satisfaction identified for each area.	01.09.06	30.09.06	Focus groups were undertaken on customer service, but more specific ones required on aspects of our service delivery during 2008.
7.8	CMT members to "walk the wards" once a year with Members.	Short list of actions arising delivered.	01.08.06	31.12.06	These are now taking place.
7.9	CMT (and Members) to undertake "back to the floor" days.	Press coverage and internal coverage.	01.04.06	31.07.06	CMT members have completed these. Very positive feedback during CPA.

Customer First Strategy

7.10	CMT meeting on "back to the floor" to agree actions.	Short list of agreed actions, which are delivered.	01.07.06	31.07.06	Information was brought back to CMT, but agreed that this approach did not work. Completion of days is monitored and issues picked up are dealt with by managers outside of CMT.
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Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
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7.11	Attend a regular industry association meeting to find out what other councils are doing.	New ideas obtained and built in to Strategy.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Council has joined a professional body, but has not attended a regular meeting.
7.12 11.22	Review the PACT and Spotlight meeting minutes once per annum for trends.	Trends reported to PMB. PMB to make recommendations to Cabinet.	01.01.07	31.12.07	PACT meetings do not produce minutes, only three priorities. These have not been reported to PMB/Cabinet, but everyone is aware of issues e.g. speeding, ASB, youth.
7.12 11.25	Review corporate complaints and compliments once per annum to review trends.	Trends reported to PMB. PMB to make recommendations to Cabinet.	01.01.07	31.12.07	Not completed as system not yet introduced. Will go live in January.

Organisational Structure

8.2	Ensure the impact on the customer is a key criteria in any decisions about future structures.	Clear evidence of benefit to customer from decisions.	On-going	On-going	2008/09 budget aligned to priorities which include customer service.
8.3	Cabinet report template to include a standard heading on "customer impact".	Template updated and being used.	01.04.06	31.05.06	Completed.
8.4	Council's project management methodology includes a strong focus on the customer.	Documentation has clear process for considering the customer in any decisions/actions.	15.03.06	30.04.06	Completed.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
Service Delivery Process					
9.4	All documentation reviewed to ensure customer friendly (after all services have migrated to Customer Service Centre).	All documents mapped. Consistent house style. Plain English.	Year 2	Year 2	Some documentation has been reviewed and customer clinics have also recently looked at this issue; however, signage and documentation still comparatively poor.
9.5	Key service delivery processes identified and re-engineered to ensure customer benefit.	Services mapped and re-engineered.	01.04.06	31.10.07	Completed as part of Spatial Project.
9.6, 9.7 & 9.8	Develop customer benefits statements for each service delivery area.	See above.	01.04.06	31.10.07	Benefits statements for the spatial project are an area we would like to complete, but capacity is not available until the Change Manager starts in CCPP Team.
9.9 & 9.10	Establish formal service level agreements between the Customer Service Centre and each service area.	Agreements in place, adhered too and actively supported by SMT member attendance.	Already in place.	Already in place.	A performance clinic held by the Improvement Director found that only one Resource Level Agreement is actually signed off. This is an area of focus for 2008/09.
9.11	Ensure all contracts include a section on the customer and how it is addressed through the particular service purchased.	Procurement guidance and advice reflects this action. Possible coverage as part of Internal Audit work.	01.04.06	30.06.06	This has not been actioned.

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
9.12	Internet/Intranet upgrade to focus on improvements for customer.	Content updated and migrated to new County platform.	01.03.06	31.05.06	The Council has moved to the County Council platform and while content needs to be kept up to date, the website is much improved.
		Positive feedback from public through survey.	01.01.07	31.03.07	

Management Practices

10.2	All team meetings to have a standard item on customer issues/feedback once a month.	Minutes of feedback and delivered actions of improvement.	01.05.06	On-going	Just introduced as part of monthly DMT performance pro-forma.
10.3	PDR format to include sections on customer service and behaviours.	Agreed approach built into 2007/08 PDR approach (this is subject to discussion with new Head of HR).	01.04.06	30.09.06	Not introduced due to scale of change going on with PDRs. Currently being reviewed.
10.4	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).	01.04.06	31.08.06	As above. Currently being reviewed.
10.5	Introduce a range of activities that communicate the importance of the customer.	See 7.7 to 7.9.	See 7.7 to 7.9.	See 7.7 to 7.9.	Clear leadership from both Members and CEO about importance of customer.
10.6	Customer Board to include two representatives from front line staff.	Realistic actions that reflect what is happening in the Council.	01.04.06	30.06.06	CSC and complaints manager represented.
10.7	Staff suggestion scheme on customer improvement.	Scheme operational and audit trail of improvements actioned.	01.04.06	30.06.06	Introduced with good suggestions.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
Measurements					
11.13	Undertake the ODPM Satisfaction Survey.	Survey completed to required ODPM standard and results sent to ODPM.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Completed and reported to PMB.
11.14, 11.15, 11.16	Finalise and roll out the customer charter.	Charter developed by staff. Charter published. Press coverage.	01.04.06	31.07.06	Agreed and will be re-launched with Customer Manual in January 2008.
11.17, 11.18, 11.19	Organise focus groups with the public.	See 7.7.	See 7.7.	See 7.7.	Completed, but more required to understand some of the issues customers have.
11.19	Measure customer standards and charter through customer panel survey.	See 7.6.	See 7.6.	See 7.6.	Useful survey completed and reported in July 2007.
11.20	Undertake mystery shopper surveys.	Undertake surveys, received feedback and take corrective actions.	01.09.06	30.06.07	Unsuccessful budget bid, so not progressed.
11.21	Review the need for separate Spotlight and PACT meetings.	Agreed approach with partners.	13.03.06	31.05.06	Spotlight meetings stopped.
11.23 11.24	Develop customer feedback policy and system (ICT)	New policy and process in place.	01.04.06	31.10.06	Policy agreed and system will go live in January 2008.

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
11.26	CharterMark one area of the Council outside of the recovery plan.	Charter Mark obtained.	Year 2	Year 2	Unsuccessful budget bid, so not clear that there will be any further action in 2008; however, this route will drive a much stronger customer focus, so the long term ambition should be to CharterMark every team.
11.27	Review the Charter Mark process and decide on whether to Charter Mark the whole Council.	Charter Mark obtained	Year 3	Year 3	See above.
11.28	Ensure residents obtain feedback from Spotlight/PACT meetings.	Feedback provided in suitable media e.g. Parish Magazines, next PACT meeting for residents.	On-going	On-going	PACT process ensures regular feedback to public.

Training and Development

12.2	Ensure the "Top Team" programme includes a focus on the customer.	Training contains customer focus.	13.03.06	31.10.06	Top Team produced corporate priorities which included customer service.
12.3	All staff to go through customer training which will focus on interpersonal skills.	95% of staff attended training.	01.04.06	31.07.06	Customer First Part 1 completed with Part 2 due to be completed by 31 March 2008.
12.4	Middle Managers course to include stronger focus on customer service.	All middle managers to have attended "handling difficult customer situations" and "interpersonal communication skills".	TBD	TBD	Being actioned through Customer First Part 2 training and all managers going on handling difficult customers in June.

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
12.5	Subscribe to a professional organisation that deals with customer service.	New ideas fed into the Strategy.	01.04.06	30.06.06	CCPP has joined an organisation.
12.6	Develop a customer satisfaction manual	Clear procedures for staff on best practice for customer care.	Year 2	Year 2	Manual will be launched in January 2008.

Internal Team Building

13.3	Service business planning to be cascaded to a team level.	Staff involvement, measured through annual staff survey.	01.09.06	31.03.07	Cascaded with Assistant Chief Executive due to review all team plans by 31 May 2008.
13.4	PDR process to follow business planning with staff putting forward their actions to improve customer service.	100% of PDRs completed. Positive feedback on process through annual staff survey.	01.09.06	31.03.07	Successfully introduced with 99% of staff receiving PDR.
13.5	Job rotation and procedure manuals in place for key customer processes.	Internal audit check that suitable arrangements in place (subject to agreement with IA Manager for 2007/08 audit plan).	Year 2	Year 2	No further action planned at this stage.
13.6	SMT member to attend one team meeting per year.	Standard met.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Achieved.
13.7	Staff social events (other than Christmas).	Improved morale measured through annual staff survey.	On-going	On-going	Xmas Party and BBQ a success. Need to consider holding these outside 9 to 5 to encourage customer culture and attendance from all staff.

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
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Customer Environment

14.3	Customer friendly layout in Council House reception and Member's area.	New reception open.	On-going	31.05.06	Council House reception much improved.
14.4	Review all customer areas for their physical suitability for our customers.	See 14.5	Year 2	Year 2	Council undertaking DDA compliance work.
14.5	Obtain customer feedback from the public through the customer panel on the suitability of our premises.	Positive feedback from survey.	Year 2	Year 2	Will need to survey in next round of Customer Panel.

Communications – Internal and External

15.4	Undertake visible leadership events.	Minimum two events per year.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Staff Forums every quarter.
15.5	Ensure the editorial policies for Grapevine and Council Chat include a strong customer focus.	Updated policies in place.	01.04.06	31.08.06	Both "Connect" and "Together Bromsgrove" has a customer/performance focus.
15.6	Ensure a strong focus on the customer through internal communications.	Regular articles on the customer in the various communications.	On-going	On-going	Council has won an award for its internal communications.
15.7	Remind senior managers to thank staff personally.	Positive feedback through staff survey.	On-going	On-going	There is a good culture of recognising staff and rewarding them through Team of the Month etc.
15.8	Introduce team and individual customer service awards.	Quarterly awards. Reported in Grapevine.	01.04.06	31.03.07	Successfully introduced (at least that is how the winners view it).
15.9	Retain copies of positive letters and display at reception points.	Copies in all reception points.	01.05.06	30.06.06	We did attempt this, but finding a positive letter was not easy 18 months ago. We should now re-launch this idea.

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
15.10	Continue to publish our press releases via e-mail, on staff notice boards and at the customer service centre.	Displayed.	On-going	On-going	On-going.
15.11	Develop a customer service poster.	Poster displayed around Council buildings.	01.05.06	31.08.06	Poster for Customer First value agreed and launched.
15.12	Review the corporate image of the Council, in particular, reprographics and our corporate rules for colours, lettering etc.	Standards agreed and operational.	01.07.06	31.12.06	New Corporate Style Guide due to be launched in January 2008.
Managing the Change					
16.4, 16.5	Establish a Customer Service Project Board.	Board established. Detailed project plan, similar to the Recovery Plan in place to support delivery of Strategy.	01.05.06	31.05.06	Established during 2007 with CEO as Chair.

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	
Other Actions In Support of Strategy					
All	Recruit to vacant Customer First Post (one year fixed contract).	Post filled	15.03.06	31.07.06	Now a permanent appointment.
4.6	Complete equalities impact assessment of Strategy.	Assessment completed and action plan in place.	01.05.06	31.07.06	Completed.
7.7	Train members of Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team in focus group facilitation skills.	Training undertaken and used to facilitate focus groups, particularly, for support services to help identify customer measures.	01.04.06	31.07.06	Training completed.

8. Priorities for the Year Ahead

8.1 The same 13 themes are still valid; however, there are six priorities within these themes, set out below. A revised action plan is included overleaf.

Service Delivery Process

8.2 Information Communication Technology

- Implement spatial project.
- Complete roll out of customer complaints system.
- Undertake review of waste collection vehicles and ICT requirements.

8.3 Improve links between CSC and “back office”

- Appoint Change Manager to Corporate Communications, Policy and Performance Team (funded from central government Capacity Building Fund).
- Complete Resource Level Agreements between each department and CSC.
- Undertake business process re-engineering work on interfaces between CSC and “back office”.
- Continue with “customer clinics”.
- Align all staff holidays to CSC opening hours through Single Status.

Training and Management Development

8.4. Customer First Training Parts 2 and 3 (and evaluation)

- Complete Customer First Training Part 2.
- Continue with annual training on customer service e.g. Customer First Part 3 etc.
- Introduce intensive customer care coaching for specifically identified managers and staff.
- Plain English training for all managers.

Measurements

8.5. Customer Performance Measures

- Review customer standards.
- Review customer metrics in each team action plan.
- Undertake and refine second annual Customer Panel survey with focus on customer standards and satisfaction.
- Increase customer measures in corporate performance indicator set.
- Undertake internal customer survey.
- Charter Mark CCPP team.

Communications – Internal and External

8.6. “One Council” Communications, Corporate Message and Style.

- Increase awareness of text messaging service.
- Continue to improve the Council’s website.
- Maintain the corporate communications planner.
- Identify communication projects in departments and ensure compliance with style guide.

Customer Needs Research

8.7. Community Involvement.

- Continued attendance of senior managers at PACT meetings, but widen this to Corporate Management Team.
- Complete external review of Area Committees and agree way forward, including review of need for area offices.
- Introduce a participatory budget approach for children and young people and build on approach piloted this year with Equalities and Diversity Forum.
- Undertake a series of focus groups on service design, with a particular focus on non-users and user groups that are dissatisfied.

- Develop a Customer Access Strategy.

Customer Access

8.8 Customer Access

- Review the need for community transport and extending shopmobility hours.
- Continue to work with the Citizen's Advice Bureau and develop the role of the Welfare Officer in Revenues and Benefits.
- 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.
- Undertake a benchmarking visit to a high performing Council to look at their approach to access.
- Continue to work towards Level 3 of the equalities standard for local government, in particular, start to deliver service outcomes.
- 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.
- Work towards ensuring full DDA compliance for all our buildings.

8.9 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.

8. Strategy Scorecard

<p>Customer Measures</p> <p>Improve overall satisfaction with the Council.</p> <p>Improve satisfaction with refuse collection.</p> <p>Improve % of residents recommending CSC to a friend.</p> <p>Improve satisfaction with Council website.</p> <p>Number of complaints resolved at stage 1</p>	<p>Process Measures</p> <p>Improve average answer times at the CSC.</p> <p>Improve call resolution at first point of contact at CSC</p> <p>Charter Mark the CCPP team in 2008/2009.</p> <p>Achieve Level 3 of the LG equalities standard.</p> <p>Reduce the number of missed bins.</p>
<p>Staff Measures</p> <p>% of staff completing the Customer First (Pt 2) training.</p> <p>Reduce sickness absence.</p> <p>Improved Employee Survey measures.</p> <p>Compliance with corporate customer standards.</p> <p>Plain English (or similar) training for staff.</p>	<p>Finance Measures</p> <p>£300,000 annual saving from Spatial project.</p> <p>Delivery of departmental VFM action plans.</p> <p>Successful bid to Capacity Building Fund for change manager.</p> <p>Equalities and Diversity forum budget bids for 2009/2010.</p> <p>Successful bids for other customer service improvements (based on identified need).</p>

9. Feb 08 – Jan 11 Action Plan

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
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Organisational Strategy and Vision

No further actions on this theme.

Customer Need Research

3.5	Annual review of outsourced customer panel.	Panel established and providing feedback.	01.09.08	31.10.08	£20,000	HB	M
3.5	Survey customers twice a year to find out what they think of our services (one “place” type survey and one customer standards survey).	Surveys completed and reported to CMT and Performance Management Board.	01.02.08	31.01.09	As above	HB	M
3.7	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
6 (7.8)	CEO to continue with the “walk the wards” programme.	Short list of actions arising delivered.	On-going	On-going	CEO	KD	M
6 (7.9)	CMT to undertake “back to the floor” days.	Issues identified and resolved and staff updated on Intranet.	On-going	On-going	CMT	SS	M
4.4.2	Members to go “back to the floor”.	Short list of agreed actions, which are delivered.	01.07.08	31.01.09	Customer First Office	SS	M
	Staff “job swap”	Positive feedback in employee survey.	01.10.08	On-going	Customer First Office	SS	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
2.4	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
-	Annual Review of consultation strategy	Strategy approved by Cabinet.	01.09.08	01.11.08	CCPP Team	JM	M
-	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
3.3	Establish an annual internal customer survey – before March 2008	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.08	31.03.08	CCPP Team	JM	M
3.4	Establish an annual member survey – to be reviewed next year.	Survey conducted and results used in service business plans.	01.02.08	31.03.08	CCPP Team	JM	M
	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
	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

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
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Organisational Structure

6 (8.2)	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
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Service Delivery Process

3.21 5.	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
6 (9.6)	Develop customer benefits statements for each part of the Spatial Project.	See above.	01.04.08	31.05.08	Change Manager	HB	H
6 (9.9)	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	29.02.08	CSC Manager	RH	H
6 (9.11)	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	30.06.06	Procure Team	JP	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
4.3	Undertake Customer Clinics	Identified improvements delivered.	01.12.07	On-going	Customer First Board	KD	H
3.20	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
3.3	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/DP	H
11.1	CSC to identify a list of customer issues each month 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/RH	H
3.14	Focus group on Internet to understand customer issues.	Improvements identified. Positive feedback from public through customer survey.	01.07.08	30.09.08	E-Gov & Customer Serv / CCPP	DP	M

Management Practices

4.3	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	M
6 (10.3)	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

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (10.4)	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
6 (10.7)	Continue with "Bright Ideas" staff suggestion scheme on customer improvement.	Quarterly reporting of what CMT has done with suggestions.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	SS	M
2.4	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

Measurements

2.1	Undertake the DCLG Place Survey.	Survey completed to required DCLG standard, results sent to DCLG and results used in future decision-making of the Council.	?	?	Will require budget bid.	HB	H (statutory)
6 (11.19)	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
6 (11.20) & 2.4	Introduce resident mystery shopper surveys.	Undertake surveys, received feedback and take corrective actions.	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP/CSC	SS	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
4.4.5	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	M
4.4.10	Customer Manual spot checks	Customer Manual being complied with.	Quarterly	Quarterly	Customer First Board	SS/HB/AM	M
4.4.8	Spot check service requests put through to the "back office".	Identify service failures to Customer First Board and rectify.	01.05.08	On-going	Change Manager	HB	H
4.4.12	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

Measurements (continued)

6 (11.26)	CharterMark the CCPP Team.	Charter Mark obtained.	01.04.08	31.03.09	Existing budget.	SS	M
6 (11.26)	CharterMark the Elections Team.	Charter Mark obtained.	2009/2010	2009/2010	2009/2010 budget bid	SS	M
6 (11.27)	Review the Charter Mark process and decide on whether to Charter Mark the whole Council.	Charter Mark obtained	01.04.10	30.09.11	CCPP	SS	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (11.28)	Ensure residents obtain feedback from PACT meetings and pilot Area Committees.	Feedback provided in suitable media e.g. next PACT meeting for residents, Together Bromsgrove.	On-going	On-going	Community Safety Team	GR	M
	Invite PACT chairs to budget focus group to obtain customer service ideas.		Sept Each Year	Sept Each Year	CCPP	JM	M

Training and Development

6 (12.2)	Ensure the "Top Team" programme includes a focus on the customer.	Agreed training content includes customer service.	?	?	Improvement Fund	KD	H
6 (12.3)	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/JP	H
6 (12.4)	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	31.03.8	Corporate Training Budget	JP	H
6 (12.5)	Continue to subscribe to a professional organisation that deals with customer service.	New ideas fed into the Strategy. Attendance at professional events.	On-going	On-going	CCPP Budget	HB	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (12.6)	Review customer manual	Quarterly spot checks by CCPP team. Annual review of Manual	2009/2010	2009/2010	CCPP	SS	M
9.2	Develop a process to evaluate the effectiveness of the customer first training	Successful evaluation. Agree approach as part of each round of training.	Jan-Mar each year	Jan-Mar each year	CCPP & HR&OD	HB&JP	M

Internal Team Building

6 (13.3)	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
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Internal Team Building

6 (13.4)	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
6 (13.5)	Job rotation and procedure manuals in place for key customer processes.	Internal audit check that suitable arrangements in place (subject to agreement with IA Manager for 2008/09 audit plan). Determine SMART measure as part of audit plan.	01.04.08	31.03.09	IA	JP	L

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
6 (13.6)	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
6 (13.7)	Hold BBQ at Council House and Depot. Hold Xmas meal for all staff (after office hours).	Improved morale measured through annual staff survey.	01.07.08	01.12.08	£2,000	HB	M
	Establish a project managers group.	Group established and making better connections between projects.	01.02.08	30.06.08	Within Budget	TB/HB	M

Customer Environment

6 (14.3)	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	RH	M
6 (14.4)	Review all customer areas for their physical suitability for our customers.	DDA Compliance target.	01.07.08?	31.03.09	DDA budget	CF	H
6 (14.5)	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

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
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Customer Environment (continued)

Staff Suggestion	Introduce modern customer friendly name badges for every member of staff.	Badges for all staff.	01.04.08	30.06.08	CEO	HB	m
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Communications – Internal and External

6 (15.4)	Continue to undertake visible leadership events.	Six monthly staff forums.	01.12.08	On-going	CEO	KD	H
6 (15.5)	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
6 (15.6)	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
6 (15.8)	Continue team and individual customer service awards.	Monthly award. Posters for each award. Xmas awards.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
6 (15.9)	Retain copies of positive letters and display at reception points.	Copies in all reception points.	Start in May 2008	On-going	CCPP	SS	M
3.16	Increase awareness and use of Council's text messaging service.	Customer Panel indicator.	On-going	On-going	CCPP	HB	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
9.1	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.	2008/2009	2008/2009	Awaiting report on approach and costs	AMD	M

Communications – Internal and External (continued)

6 (15.10)	Continue to publish our press releases via e-mail, on staff notice boards and at the customer service centre.	Visual check round the building that they are displayed.	01.04.08	On-going	CCPP	AMD	M
6 (15.12)	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

Managing the Change

16.4, 16.5	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
-	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

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
4.4.6	Introduce a programme management structure to support the Improvement Plan and project management methodology of the Council.	Documentation has clear process for considering the customer in any decisions/actions.	01.04.08	30.06.08	Change Manager	HB	H
All	Recruit Change Manager to CCPP 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

Customer Access

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
	Review the need for community transport and extending shopmobility hours.	Service up and running and shopmobility hours extended if need identified.	01.02.08	01.04.09	2009/2010 Budget Bids	HB MB	H
	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
	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
	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
	Undertake a benchmarking visit to a high performing Council to look at their approach to access	New ideas built into future Strategy update.	01.04.08	30.09.08	Officer Time	HB DP	M

Customer First Strategy

Ref	Action	Measures of Success (SMART)	Start Date	Finish Date	Resource	Lead	Priority
	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
	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	Equalities Officer	FS	H
	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
	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

10. Conclusions

- 9.1 The Council is now improving at a rapid speed and expects to achieve a CPA rating of fair in the Autumn 2008. 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” and “non-users” rather than “customer”. In addition, the focus on process and measurement means that the often intangible parts of an organisation i.e. the mindset of the Council, is absent from the Government’s thinking, which is still too producer focused.
- 9.2 Rather than look to the Government’s regulatory framework for local government for incentivisation, 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 12 themes identified), underpinned by investment in ICT and a long term commitment to customer service from Members and senior management appears a reasonable way forward.
- 9.3 Finally, by the end of 2008/2009, the Council should have in place all the major processes required to deliver excellent customer service. The step change from average to excellence is likely to be less dramatic than the previous few years, requiring us to maintain a strategic focus, but also ensure we make lots of small changes that improve customer service, along with embedding and refining our customer processes.

11. Contacts

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12. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Bromsgrove District Council, Customer Services Peer Review, I&DeA, (May 2007) (Available on request).