



LONDON BOROUGH OF
RICHMOND UPON THAMES

Customer Services Service Plan 2007/08

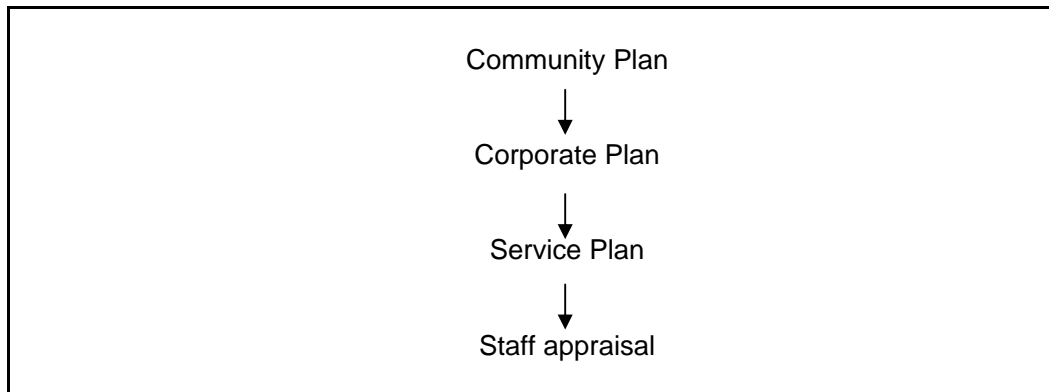
*“To provide the services that will make Richmond upon Thames
the greenest and best place in London to live work and visit”*

The Council's vision as set out in the Corporate Plan

1. Introduction

Service Plans provide an important link between the Council's overarching objectives and the work done by individual service sections and, through the link to the appraisal process, to the work done by teams and individuals.

Through the hierarchy of plans, it is possible to translate the Council's objectives into priorities, action plans and performance targets for every member of staff.



Performance is monitored continuously and reported to Members on a quarterly basis. Individual staff targets are monitored through regular one to one meetings and the formal cycle of the appraisal process.

The Council's Values

In providing the myriad of services to our customers, the Council expects staff to act in accordance with the 5 core values:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|---|
| Aspire | - we will deliver excellence, meeting the needs of our customers |
| Innovate | - we will find new and better ways of delivering good value services |
| Take responsibility | - we will make timely, sound decisions and take responsibility for them |
| Be clear, honest and open | - we will be straight talking and say what we mean without jargon |
| Be inclusive | - we will work effectively with stakeholders and partners, co-operating with and supporting others to achieve results |

The Council's Priorities

The Council has set the following 5 priorities for the coming year. These reflect the main areas where the Council wants to achieve the biggest impact but recognise that all services must be delivered efficiently and effectively.

- 1 - Environment and Sustainability
- 2 - Education and Children's Services
- 3 - Efficient Local Government
- 4 - A Safer Community
- 5 - Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents

How do we currently support these priorities?

It is sometimes difficult to see how an individual task might contribute to a high level Council priority. The table below sets out the key areas of work undertaken by the service and makes the link to the relevant priority.

Area of work	Impact on services
Acting as the public face of the Council	All Council services benefit from stakeholders having a positive impression of the Council
Assisting the public with information and service requests	Customer services have a key role to play for all services in ensuring that their customers can access services easily and efficiently
Acting as an exemplar within the Council for effective joined up service provision	Promotion of joined up services and a single point of contact reduces duplication and provides better customer services

2. Who we are and what we do

Customer Services provides a front line contact service for the Council via the telephone and face to face. As part of the ongoing corporate restructure the service is moving into Finance and Corporate Services with effect from April 2007. The service employs approximately 25 staff and is primarily responsible for:

- providing staff to three Council reception areas, currently employing 9 staff and seeing over 79,000 customers pa;
- providing the customer services centre, currently employing 15 staff and dealing with over 170,000 telephone and email enquiries pa for the Environment Directorate;
- providing the Council's switchboard, currently employing 6 staff and handling over 272,000 telephone enquiries pa.
- Increasingly our customers choose to interact with us via our website, and the service works very closely with the corporate Web Team and others to ensure that the same systems that support effective face to face and contact centre working are also available to customers and staff on the web.

3. Requirements Placed On Us

The Council has recently adopted a formal Customer Strategy. Building on the work of the Customer First programme of recent years this strategy encapsulates our vision for excellent customer services at the Council – we aim to provide the best possible services for our customers by putting the customer first.

The strategy sets out how the Council will respond to our customers' needs, how we will ensure that services are accessible, and how we will involve customers in planning and delivering our services. We know that we will not be able to meet the needs of all of our customers all of the time, but we aim to use our resources in the best way possible and to make open and transparent decisions.

We aim to provide information and services for customers based on the following principles:

- Our customers are customers of the Council not the service
- Our customers' needs come first
- Our customers are always in the right place.

The objectives of the Strategy are to ensure:

- Services are more accessible.
- Services are designed, reviewed and developed with customers.
- Services are inclusive and responsive to customers' choices and needs.
- Services work with partners to provide joined up delivery.
- Technologies adopted are efficient and effective.
- Staff are supported and empowered to deliver excellent customer service.

The Customer First programme has also led on the introduction of a number of Standards and Commitments, which Customer Services themselves are committed to delivering:

- Telephone calls will be answered within five rings.
- CSC 80% of calls answered within 20 seconds
- Letters will be responded to in seven working days, or if a full response cannot be sent in this time, an acknowledgement will be sent in two working days advising when a full response may be expected
- All external emails will be acknowledged within one working day of receipt, and a full response sent within the letter response standard
- Complaints will be responded to within 15 working days at stage 1 (by the manager of the service), 20 working days at stage 2 (by the head of service), and 25 working days at stage 3 (by the Chief Executive)
- Our reception areas will be clearly signposted
- We aim to assess customers' requirements within 5 minutes
- All our staff are easily identified by uniform and name badges
- If the query is confidential, a private area will be offered
- We will greet customers in a friendly and professional manner
- We will treat customers as individuals, and give a quality service to meet their needs
- We will answer queries immediately, or arrange when to call back
- If English is not a customer's first language, we will use an interpreter to help.

All of the actions in our Service Plan for 2007/08 are designed to help deliver these objectives and standards. As one of the largest public facing services, seen by many customers as the face and voice of the Council it is essential that we offer high quality and effective performance. Amongst the most significant issues for us:

- providing high quality services to visitors who come in to see us so that they have their issues effectively dealt with and come away with a positive impression of the Council. Empowering our front line staff and supporting them with the right information systems to be able to do this not only provide good customer service but is more efficient in that it means more enquiries are dealt completely there and then, leading to fewer follow up contacts.
- The same issues apply to the contact centre. Additionally here though, with the effective use of technology there is an increasing opportunity to standardise the experience for customers when they call the Council so that they receive a uniformly excellent experience. Key to this is the expansion of the centre across other areas of the Council.

4. How We Are Doing

Customer Services leads on a number of initiatives that provide feedback on both our own services and others across the Council. Principle amongst these is the ongoing mystery shopping programme. This has found that our services are improving, and that overall a consistently acceptable standard of service is being provided when customers contact Customer Services by phone, email, and face to face contact. There is still room for improvement and customer services are working hard to deliver the best possible customer experience.

5. Pressures for Change

Customer and other stakeholders expectations are rising all the time and Customer Services is at the forefront of the Council's drive to meet these expectations, by delivering excellent services themselves and by acting as an exemplar to others. Specifically we need to undertake the following:

- Embark upon a programme of expansion for the CSC;
- Continue with the roll out of the CRM system, ensuring full integration with the web site and for face to face services;
- Renew and promote the Customer First programme, ensuring it is focussed on the delivery of the objectives within the Customer Strategy;
- Pursue and promote opportunities for partnership working both within and outside the Council, thus ensuring delivery of efficiencies.

Overarching all of our actions and objectives is the need for us to commit to achieving a minimum 3% efficiency saving in 2007/08 across our total budget. This will be achieved through the implementation of all of the actions listed in the action plan below.

6. Rolling Action Plan

OBJECTIVES 2007/08

The service has the following overall objectives for 2007/08:

- To continue to develop our ICT to ensure that it is enabling us to provide excellent services;
- To improve levels of customer service within Customer Services and across the Council;
- To develop the capacity and performance of all staff;
- To improve the accessibility of our services for all;
- To achieve a minimum 3% overall efficiency saving as a result of the implementation of all of the listed actions.

Service Objective(s)	To continue to develop our ICT to ensure that it is enabling us to provide excellent services						
Actions	Council Priority	Targets	Measure	Resource Implications	Risk	Person responsible for achieving	Efficiency savings
Implement Mcfarlane telephony solution	Efficient Local Government	By end May 2007	System successfully operational delivering expected functionality	Within identified implementation budgets.	Technical and project management issues arise Solution does not provide expected benefits	DC	Will lead to reduced call times and therefore to improved efficiency within the CSC
Continue to develop the functionality of the CRM system	Efficient Local Government	Ongoing	Web integration achieved for key services	Within identified implementation budgets	Technical and project management issues arise	DC	Will lead to reduced call times and therefore to improved

			Further content created for services being moved into CSC		Solution does not provide expected benefits		efficiency within the CSC. Migration of customers to web services will further reduce CSC resources in time
Service Objective(s)	To improve levels of customer service within Customer Services and across the Council						
Actions	Council Priority	Targets	Measure	Resource Implications	Risk	Person responsible for achieving	Efficiency savings
Devise detailed delivery plan for Customer Strategy actions [see appendix one]	Efficient Local Government A Safer Community Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	Plan in place by end May 2007	Plan objectives are costed and deliverable within identified timescales	To be agreed	Scope and breadth of actions are impacted by capacity and resource issues	MG/DC	Various
Assess demand for extending opening hours of Customer Service Centre and then implement	Efficient Local Government Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	Following installation of Workforce Planning tool within 5 months	Implementation of extended hours of opening	Will need to be met from efficiency savings arising from new telephony	Demand is either not there or proves too significant to meet cost effectively	DC	None specific
Monitor performance and user satisfaction regularly and use feedback to improve	All	Ongoing	80% of calls answered within 20 seconds 90% of users	Within existing	Not all feedback can be acted upon – expectations	DC	None specific

			satisfied with service received		need to be managed		
One contact point for notification of births and deaths	Efficient Local Government Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	Explore if Contact Centre can assist with customer contacting Council only once	Complete analysis by end June 2007 and implement solution by end December 2007	Within existing	Change management issues impact	Win Whiting/DC	Will lead to a reduction of duplication of processing
Service Objective(s)	To develop the capacity and performance of all staff						
Actions	Council Priority	Targets	Measure	Resource Implications	Risk	Person responsible for achieving	Efficiency savings
Implement revised structure for service	Efficient Local Government	By end May 2007	New structure is fit for purpose and delivers expected benefits	Within existing	Staffing issues cause delays	DC	Revised structure including workforce planning capability will lead to efficiencies
Cross-train all Customer Services staff to ensure consistency of service	Efficient Local Government Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	Complete by October 2007 to allow for cross working F2F and CSC	Extent to which staff are able to work flexibly in both disciplines	Within existing	Staffing issues and capacity impact	DC	Greater staff flexibility will lead to efficiencies
Service Objective(s)	To improve the accessibility of our services for all						
Actions	Council Priority	Targets	Measure	Resource Implications	Risk	Person responsible for achieving	Efficiency savings
Undertake surveys of areas of deprivation	Efficient Local Government	Use assisted collection list to	Publish survey by	Within existing	Surveys reveal issues that	DC	None specific

to establish how they need/want service delivery improvement	A Safer Community Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	pilot by end May 2007	June 2007		require as yet unidentified funding		
Commit to EINA surveys and outcomes and develop service improvements as appropriate. Commit to actions identified within the E & CS Equalities and Diversity action plan	A Safer Community Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	Complete EINA by end 2007	Complete EINA by end 2007	Within existing	Any resulting initiatives will target services on hard to reach customers	Natasha Bradshaw/DC/Win Whiting	None specific
Set up liaison arrangements with agencies like Age Concern, CAB, DSS to promote joined up working	Efficient Local Government A Safer Community Promoting the Health, Housing and Well Being of All Residents	Quarterly meetings with agencies	Joined up working arrangements with external agencies	Within existing	Partner expectations of what is possible are too high	DC	None specific

Appendix One

Customer Strategy Actions

Objective	Action	By when
1. Services are more accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Expand services included in the Customer Service Centre (CSC) to become corporate resource. b. Assess the future role of Careline in relation to the CSC. c. Launch of one number for the CSC and marketing to customers. d. Market the most efficient ways for customers to access services. e. Develop transactional capacity of website including citizen's accounts. f. Review face to face contact including enhancement of facilities at the Civic Centre and future of Sheen Lane Centre. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 March 2007 Summer 2007 April 2007 March 2007 March 2007
2. Services are designed, reviewed and developed with customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. All external services to achieve Charter Mark b. The Customer/User Methodology which builds on Charter Mark to be rolled out to two more services following the pilot in Revenues and Benefits c. Use customer segmentation data to determine customers' preferences and needs for accessing services and ensuring the channels and services are available in the right place and time. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 2008 December 2007 April 2007

3. Services are inclusive and responsive to customers' choices and needs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Ensure that all customer facing services complete Equalities Needs Impact Assessments b. Develop service action plans to respond to the results of mystery shopping c. Ensure that the Customer Strategy action links to the evolving Community Engagement Strategy. 	<p>March 2008</p> <p>Quarterly</p> <p>TBA</p>
4. Services work with partners to provide joined up delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. The Local Strategic Partnership to be asked to consider how we may improve operational joint working to improve customer service. 	<p>April 2007</p>
5. Technologies adopted are efficient and effective	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Develop route maps for CRM, the website and back office systems which align essential technical changes with the redesign and delivery of improved services for customers 	<p>April 2007</p>
6. Staff are supported and empowered to deliver excellent customer service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review and evaluate the Customer First Training Strategy and current provision b. Ensure links between Customer First and Investors in People as the latter is subject to Internal Review Assessments c. Develop the Frontline Focus Group as a resource for feedback and improved ways of working 	<p>September 2007</p> <p>December 2008</p> <p>June 2007</p>