

Governance, Audit and Scrutiny Committee
5 March 2018

**Report by the Corporate Planning
and Performance Manager**

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE AWARD 2018

REPORT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Members will be aware that the Customer Service Excellence Award (CSE), originally achieved in 2009, is re-certified on an annual basis subject to passing a compliance audit. The award covers a three year period, 2018 being a Year 1 renewal of the award. As in previous years renewal focussed on five criteria:

- (a) Customer Insight;
- (b) The Culture of the Organisation;
- (c) Information and Access;
- (d) Delivery and Timeliness;
- (e) Quality of Service.

The assessor spoke to the Deputy Chief Fire Officer, managers, operational and support staff, as well as a range of partners and customers of the Service. He also reviewed documentary evidence in print, on the website and on social media and followed a number of customer journeys to ensure processes aligned with customer insight.

The renewal audit for 2018 took place over 24 to 25 January; it is pleasing to report that the award has been successfully retained for a further three years, with no partial or Non-Compliance issues identified, four areas of notable Good Practice and, for the first time, one area of Compliance Plus assessed as exceptional/exemplar good practice.

In summary the assessor found:

- (a) The assessor was impressed with the visible customer focus applied across all areas of service delivery, including work to improve already well developed customer journeys within the Public Safety Centre and Control Room.
- (b) The strength, breadth and value of our Partnership work was recognised, the assessor met a number of partners as part of the audit; including the Stroke Association, Children's University and Howdens Joinery.
- (c) The assessor was pleased to observe greater interactivity for customers through social media, improvements to the website and use of targeted messaging.
- (d) The assessor commented on his positive interaction with well-motivated employees and noted our leading role within the sector nationally on gender equality.

The full report is included at Appendix 1.

RECOMMENDATION

1. Members acknowledge the retention of the Award and take assurance from our ongoing commitment to Customer Service Excellence.

BACKGROUND

2. The Customer Service Excellence Award tests in great depth those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with particular focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also an emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.
3. During the audit all criteria were reviewed, the Assessors itinerary allowed him to meet with several customers and partners as well as key members of staff.
4. The following summarised extracts have been taken from the formal report:

(a) Areas of Good Practice

- Customer journeys are well thought out. Our insight into the needs and characteristics of customers allows us to design bespoke approaches.
- Impressive data gathering, through working with other agencies, allows us to target services effectively and support other agencies to achieve their priorities for the wider benefit of our customers.
- We use the knowledge, skills and enthusiasm of staff to inform service planning, development and ethos.
- We have made excellent progress in making our range of services accessible to a wider customer base through the increased use of social media.

(b) Area of Compliance Plus

Compliance Plus describes behaviours or practices that exceed the requirements of the standard and are an exemplar to others.

- We have developed excellent partnership arrangements with robust mechanisms to ensure compliance with our policies and strategies. Of numerous examples, our arrangement with Howdens Joinery was specifically noted as 'taking partnership to a new level for fire and rescue services'.

(c) Areas for Improvement

Areas for Improvement are suggested actions that do not form part of the formal assessment criteria.

- Whilst rapport between leaders, managers and employees was evident throughout the visits we could consider refreshing the Staff Appraisal process to ensure employees benefit from regular and consistent dialogue with line managers.

Management Response

The formal appraisal scheme is currently being refreshed and will be re-launched in conjunction with training and development for line managers, to improve consistency of approach and application.

- We could further improve our public profile by providing customers and potential customers with information about our many services through the use of actual (anonymised) case studies, in addition to current messaging.

Management Response

Where appropriate, the use of case studies will be considered as a method of providing actual customer experiences.

- We could consider re-drafting and simplifying our draft customer promise.

Management Response

The Customer Promise under development is a draft leaflet style document intended to provide a short summary of the services and performance standards provided to customers. Further consideration is being given to the value of the document in light of developments with the website.

STRATEGIC PLAN COMPATIBILITY

5. The Customer Service Excellence Award contributes to our self awareness and continuous improvement.

FINANCIAL/RESOURCES/VALUE FOR MONEY IMPLICATIONS

6. None arising directly.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

7. None arising directly.

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT/HR IMPLICATIONS

8. None arising directly.

CORPORATE RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

9. None arising directly.

HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10. None arising directly.

COMMUNICATION ACTIONS ARISING

11. The Customer Service Excellence Report will be published on the HFRS Website.

DETAILS OF CONSULTATION AND/OR COLLABORATION

12. None arising directly.

BACKGROUND PAPERS AVAILABLE FOR ACCESS

13. None.

RECOMMENDATION RESTATED

14. Members acknowledge the retention of the Award and take assurance from our ongoing commitment to Customer Service Excellence.

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