

A FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPING A CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY FOR WYRE FOREST DISTRICT COUNCIL

Introduction

Wyre Forest District Council (WFDC) is committed to delivering building a better future for those who live and work here. The Council's Corporate Plan sets out a vision for delivering the best possible services and is linked closely with the Community Strategy for the Wyre Forest, the Best Value Performance Plan and internal Divisional Business Plans and the Council's budgeting process.

The Customer Service strategy will be designed to support the values, aims and objectives of the Corporate Plan with an emphasis on continuous consultation and evaluation.

Customer Service is intrinsically linked to trust and reputation, which has recently been highlighted by the Local Government Association in conjunction with MORI. Their findings suggested that if Councils focus on doing certain things well - for example, cleaning the streets and communicating with key audiences - it would improve overall public satisfaction and in turn impact on reputation.

This link provides a bridge from branding to customer service, and therefore WFDC is developing a Branding strategy alongside its Customer Service Strategy.

A DEFINITION OF CUSTOMER SERVICE:

"The thousand, concrete, minute actions performed by everyone in Wyre Forest District Council to keep the customer happy."

Institute of Customer Service

Background and Objectives – why is Wyre Forest District Council re-evaluating customer service?

There is a national drive to re-focus public services around the needs of citizens and other users. This covers social inclusion/equality of access with particular emphasis on the national strategy to deliver services electronically.

Customers expect more from service providers and the Council has an opportunity to exceed these expectations if a proactive approach is adopted.

The development of a Customer Service Strategy supports the drive to bring services closer to the customer and provides a framework with measurable and deliverable targets.

Future plans include a move to a single site, as well as the integration of the Worcestershire Hub, a countywide initiative aimed to bring Council services under one roof – a Council ‘supermarket’ for customers.

The time has come to develop a Customer Service Strategy so that the Council can establish clarity of how its services are to be delivered. To do this the Council needs to gain a clear understanding of present perceptions of service delivery so that it can assess what changes need to be made in order to meet these aspirations.

Where does Wyre Forest District Council want to be?

Wyre Forest District Council aims to develop and sustain the area as a place where people are supported and encouraged to reach their full potential, are proud to live and work, and businesses are attracted to invest.

Drivers for establishing a Customer Service Strategy

Internal	External	Government
Transposed sub-brand culture	Worcestershire Hub Branding	Pending Local Government Review on Councils
Developed into mini-brands	Partnership Working	‘the future is local’ a new vision for local Government – closer to people and places. LGA publication
Various hybrid brands	A multitude of ‘council’ sub brands	Reputation Campaign - LGA
Centralised Office Accommodation – need to establish clarity with ownership of services		

Baselines

The Customer Service and Branding Working Group was set up in 2005 for the purpose of formulating a Customer Service and Branding Strategy which would agree a corporate approach to customer service and branding across the authority.

The group looked at best practice across the country to inform their work and held an on-site day with Consultants SOLACE Group to evaluate current perceptions of customer service and branding.

Initially, the formulation of a combined customer service and branding strategy was anticipated, but after further research, it was felt by the Chief Executive, that two mutually exclusive strategies should be developed, demonstrating the wider realms of both branding and customer service.

Customer Service Values

- Improving the customer experience
- Exceeding customer expectations
- Improving access to information and services
- Developing partner relationships

What will this customer service experience involve?

- Continually reviewing and improving customer services – people feel consulted and that they live in a forward thinking and caring district
- People feel they get excellent value for money, and that they are valued customers
- Pro-active partnership working to promote the ethos of the Worcestershire Hub

The approach

The objectives are focused on people and how they 'experience' the Council:

People who live in Wyre Forest – Residents

People who run businesses in Wyre Forest – Business Owners

People who work in Wyre Forest - Workers

People who visit Wyre Forest - Visitors

People who have leadership roles in the community and in organisations – Partners

Cabinet 24/08/06

Realising the Customer Service Vision

Next steps:

1. Consultation and Audit

We will combine existing and new research with residents, workers and visitors. This will be achieved by a combination of quantitative and qualitative research across our audiences:

People who live in Wyre Forest – Residents	People who run businesses in Wyre Forest – Business Owners	People who work in Wyre Forest – Workers	People who visit Wyre Forest – Visitors	People who have leadership roles in the Community/organisations
<p>Newswyre Summer 2006</p> <p>Customer Satisfaction Surveys</p> <p>Citizen’s Panel/Community Choice questionnaire</p> <p>Members Bulletin and consultation</p>	<p>Newswyre Summer 2006</p> <p>Business focus group and questionnaire</p>	<p>Newswyre Summer 2006</p> <p>Partners Meetings and focus groups (ie PCT, Wyre Forest Matters, Worcestershire Partnership etc)</p> <p>WFDC Core Brief</p> <p>WFDC Intranet</p>	<p>Tourism/visit or research</p>	<p>Media audit</p> <p>Neighbouring Districts</p> <p>Ask Partners what they think of Wyre Forest, and if we can share their own reputation/perception surveys</p>

2. Analysis of Audit and Consultation

3. Create Customer Service Strategy to include:

Current Perceptions of WFDC

Where we want to be:

Defining Customer Service

Customer Service Charter

LGA Reputation Campaign

Satisfaction surveys

Key Performance Indicators

Compliments, Comments and Complaints Procedure

The way forward: how we deliver excellent customer service

Benefits of excellent customer service

Resource Implications

Risk Analysis

Measurement and Evaluation of delivering excellent customer service

Timescales

- Audit and Consultation July – September 2006
- Analysis October 2006
- Create Customer Service Strategy November 2006