



“OUR COMMITMENT TO YOU”

**STRATEGY FOR DELIVERING A GREAT
CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

Business document

Devon County Council's
Customer Access Strategy
2006

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Foreword

To maintain our position as a high performing authority we need to put the people who matter most at the heart of everything we do – our customers. We want our customers to know they come first, that we are approachable irrespective of the way in which they contact us; that we make our services as customer friendly as possible and that we work with our partners to improve access to services and information across the public sector in Devon.

Through our Strategic Plan we have committed ourselves to providing excellent customer service to everyone who contacts us. The **Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience** sets out how we intend to achieve this aim.

Putting ourselves in the shoes of the member of the public and treating them as we would wish to be treated is a key part of this strategy. However, along with this right we recognise the responsibility of the public to treat our staff with respect. This strategy sets out our commitments to our customers and provides the tools to help staff deliver on those commitments.

As Executive Support Member for Customer Service and Performance Management I am committed to working with you to deliver this strategy which will help to transform this authority into the customer focused organisation which the people of Devon deserve.

Councillor Des Hannon
Executive Support Member for Customer Service and Performance
Management

1.0 Introduction

The **Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience** contains our aspirations for delivering excellence in customer service. This document is for internal purposes and is being developed in conjunction with 'Our Commitment to You', an external document which will promote concisely our aspirations and plans to our customers.

This business document will guide and inform all activities relating to improving the customer experience across the organisation. It addresses customer focus, access, quality, equality and efficiency. It has been developed from work carried out by the Corporate Management Board during late 2004 and early 2005 and has two underlying principles:-

- Improve the quality of the customer experience
- Deliver efficiency

The strategy has also been developed with regard to from national best practice such as the work conducted by the Customer Focus Network. The model for becoming a customer focused organisation is set out in appendix 2.

We have started work on shifting the organisation to a more customer-focused approach. The Access Strategy (2003) established the need for a Customer Service Centre which would radically alter the way in which the customer would experience service when contacting us by telephone.

The Customer Services Centre (CSC) will open in June 2006 and will resolve the majority of customer queries at the first point of contact and deliver a high quality and efficient experience for customers. This is the most important outcome. This has involved a fundamental review of procedures, process and systems. Information and decision-making has been moved to the front line. This **Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience** sets out our plan for improving the whole customer experience irrespective of the methods they chose to contact us by.

Delivering improvements to customer experience and public access are relative, not absolute. Defining both the range and baseline of the current position and the characteristics of a great customer experience is the first step. As with any improvement agenda we recognise that once a baseline has been established and progress made then targets can be stretched and higher standards set. Therefore, in the spirit of continuous improvement this strategy will be reviewed on an annual basis and an adjustments document will be published.

This draft has been developed by a team representing all parts of the Devon County Council; its membership is set out in appendix 3. The priorities, outcomes, activities and measures set out in this document will be tested through a detailed consultation process involving customers, Members and staff.

This document:-

- Establishes the links with the Strategic Plan
- Sets out our vision
- Sets out the specific activities behind the priorities
- Details how performance will be managed

2.0 Link to the Strategic Plan

The Council's Strategic Plan sets out:-

The County Council's role is to improve quality of life, invest in the future, and manage change for the benefit of Devon's people. We believe the people of Devon deserve high quality public services."

The Council's priorities for the next 5 years are:-

- Giving Devon's children and young people the best possible start in life
- Strengthening Devon's economy
- Celebrating Devon's culture
- Improving Devon's environment
- Promoting independence and choice for Devon's adults

The Council's values underpin everything we do:-

- Putting the people of Devon first
- Valuing everyone
- Improving and innovating
- Working together

The Strategic Plan sets out the support strategies which will help us deliver all of our priorities and make Devon an even better place to live. One of the key support strategies is 'Providing Excellent Customer Service'. The **Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience** sets out how we plan to support the Strategic Plan.

Providing Excellent Customer Service is also closely linked with another supporting strategy - **Connecting with Devon's communities**:

The administrative county of Devon is made up of hundreds of diverse and scattered communities built around 29 market and coastal towns and the city of Exeter. We aim to:

- gain a fuller understanding of the diverse range of needs of Devon's communities;
- take the different needs of our communities into account in all our plans to ensure that everyone can share in Devon's economic prosperity and enjoy a good quality of life.

The plans to deliver these two themes will be co-ordinated and aligned

3.0 Vision

The Council has defined a customer as follows:-

"Devon County Council is wholeheartedly committed to placing customers at the heart of its service planning and delivery. If you contact us or are affected by anything we do, you are one of our customers. Customers are not an interruption to our work; they are the purpose of it.

Devon County Council's customers, like our staff, are not cold statistics. We are all human and deserve to be treated with dignity and respect. In all our dealings with the public, we must put ourselves in the customer's place and think how we would wish to be treated.

We will keep our promises to you. For example, if we've agreed to contact you on a particular day we will do that. If this turns out to be impossible because circumstances have changed, we will contact you beforehand and agree a new date with you.

Like all other local authorities, we have to operate within legislative, policy and financial constraints. This means that we may not always be able to deliver exactly what you want. We do, however, promise to be fair, honest and open. We will always explain the reasons behind our decision."

The County Council wants everyone who contacts us to receive excellent customer service. It sets out the following vision for Customer Services:-

- Create an organisational culture that always puts the customer first
- Provide easy access to all our services and other public services
- Resolve enquiries right the first time
- Provide high-quality cost-effective services

The **Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience** details how we plan to deliver this vision.

4.0 Summary of priorities

Following consultation with customers, elected Members, staff and partners we have identified four priorities:-

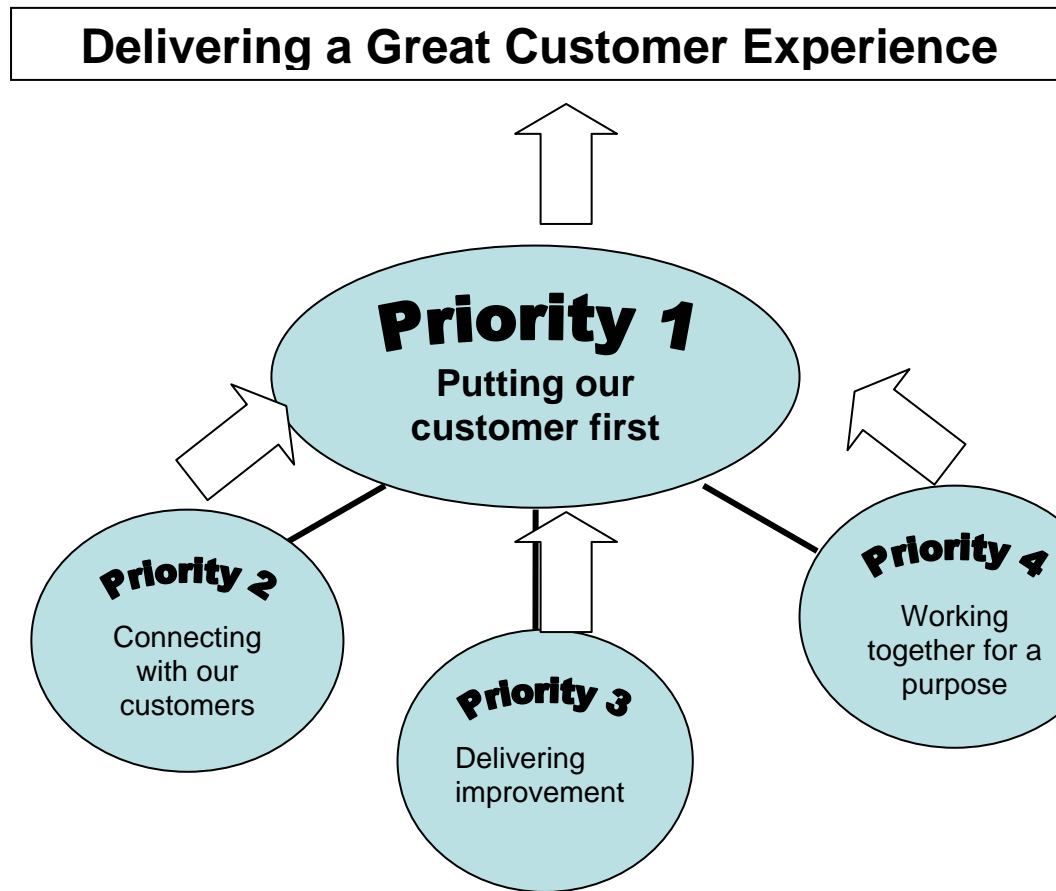
- Priority 1 – Putting our customers first**
- Priority 2 – Connecting with our customers**
- Priority 3 – Delivering improvement**
- Priority 4 – Working together for a purpose**

We have identified the '7 c's' as key factors for becoming a customer focused organisation:-

- *Commitment* – setting out our commitment to putting our customers first
- *Customer understanding* – listening to how customers and understanding the complexities of their communities and their individual needs and reacting to those needs
- *Clarity* – simple, straightforward information and effective two way communication
- *Communication* – effective consultation using a combination of approaches
- *Change* – making positive changes from what we have learnt
- *Co-ordination* – ensuring everything the organisation does considers the key outcome of the quality of the customer experience
- *'Can do'* – adopting a "can do" approach to clearing any barriers that arise

This diagram sets out how our priorities fit together. The main priority is 'Putting our Customers First'. The other priorities support this priority and are the mechanisms for Delivering a Great Customer Experience.

How the priorities fit together



For each priority we have identified :-

- *Outcomes*
- *Actions*
- *Success measures*

We have set out detailed actions plans within appendix 1. The action plans will set out how we intend to achieve our outcomes. For each outcome they will detail:-

- *Actions*
- *Timescale*
- *Responsibility*
- *Success criteria*
- *Monitoring and evaluation*
- *Link to other plans*

5.0 Audit

To inform the development of this strategy we carried out an audit. The purpose of the audit was to gain an understanding of influences, facts, trends and views of customers on accessing Council services. The audit revealed:-

Strategic Perspectives

- Significant work has already undertaken to move the customer service agenda forward. This includes the definition of a customer, vision for customer services, Customer Feedback Policy, Customer Service Standards, benefits realisation and a corporate agreement on the principles governing re-engineering processes to make them more customer focused and efficient
- Providing excellent customer service is about improving quality and efficiency
- Our Customer Service Standards are compatible with developing national standards
- Effective and efficient customer service is a key support strategy in delivering the priorities within the Strategic Plan
- New CPA methodology has a greater emphasis on demonstrating improved outcomes for local people and value for money
- Need to make clear links between Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience and the rest of corporate strategic planning framework such as the Local Area Agreement and Fair for All programme

Demographics

- Rurality, diversity, transport, equality and demographic changes major factors influencing service provision
- The Council receives a ratio of 2.06 calls per head of the population compared to 1.54 average for similar County Councils. This appears to be associated with the rurality of the county and the high proportion of older people in Devon
- Sparsity is a particular issue for developing face to face services

Consultation and Engagement

- Limitations have been identified in the way in which the authority consults with its customers and with the citizens of Devon
- Devon County Council signed up to the 'Charter for British Sign Language'
- Technological solutions being explored to set up three way communications using Language Line service
- Use of community-based interpreters is currently being explored together with partners and other agencies

Partnership and Working with Other Agencies

- Development of holistic approaches to improving services to customers are well established in Devon County Council e.g. Care Direct, and Children's Trust projects. DCC is also one of the pilot sites for the Link Age Plus pilot
- There are clear opportunities to work in partnership with partners to develop 'shared services'

Accreditation of Processes and Skills

- Charter Mark is the Government's national standard for excellence in customer services. A number of Devon County Council services have obtained or are working towards accreditation
- Institute of Customer Service is an independent organisation which promotes customer service performance and professionalism. The Customer Service Centre will seek membership
- Personal development of staff involved in dealing with the public helps the Council show that they value staff. It is also a means to deliver improved service. NVQ in Customer Services and Advice and Guidance will be encouraged

Links with Property Management Strategy

- It is critically important to include considerations of customer service to any Corporate Property Strategy or Property Review. Equally, it is important to consider the case for co-locating services. Many offices that are currently open to the public are single service.
- There is a need to co-ordinate development projects to question the use of new buildings
- Audit Commission report highlights that Councils do not necessarily need to own buildings to provide services

Access

Telephone

- Telephone is the preferred channel of contact by majority of our customers
- Telephone calls for all services will be migrated, on a phased basis, over to the new Customer Service Centre. The phasing will be complete by March 2007
- National studies found that with a well regarded telephone service few customers felt it was necessary to visit a Council office.
- There are opportunities for leveraging the CSC to enable achievement of further improvements and efficiencies. For example, the CSC is a vital component for self directed care, and services can be "switched on" at the first point of contact.

Written Correspondence

- Poor written communication is a major cause of complaints - no response (or inadequate response) to letters, tone, or use of jargon
- A small percentage of customer contact takes place by letter. Few residents will consider writing a letter as their first means of contact unless their preferred method fails
- A review of the process by which mail is delivered to Officers' desk has highlighted a number of opportunities for simplifying the process which will enable correspondence to reach the intended recipient at the earliest possible opportunity. Scope for automation in the medium term is being identified
- Approximately 65,000 cheques are sent in by post per annum
- Fax is not a main channel of communication. However, still a favoured manner for certain groups such as older deaf people.
- Facilities to translate written documents to BSL (and vice versa) are now easily available

Face-to-Face

- Resolution at first point of contact principles must be extended to face-to-face offices and outreach e.g. DORIS in order to secure additional improvements and efficiencies. Without this, there is a danger of adding an “extra tier”
- Mobile and Outreach important methods of delivering face to face service
- Assisted Customer Access Points important in promoting trust in new technologies and improving customer access
- Face to face still an important method of customer contact and is particularly preferred by older residents and people from BME communities. One of the reasons given is making it easier to be understood.

Web, Email and SMS

- There are opportunities to promote and grow self service methods of customer contact
- Video conferencing or web cam communication may be an answer to the communication needs of a small but significant group of customers such as the profoundly deaf or those whose first or only language is British Sign Language
- ‘Textbox’ will be used by CSC to improve communication with hearing impaired
- There is an Increase in use of email to contact. However, email is still viewed by customers as less immediate than picking up the telephone
- There is an expectation by the public that emails will receive a speedy response
- Increasing ownership and access to internet assisted by growth of Broadband
- SMS texting is increasingly being used for improving two way communication with customers

Other channels

- There are opportunities to develop new technological approaches such as Digital television
- Technological solutions being explored to set up three way communications using Language Line service
- Use of community-based interpreters is currently being explored together with partners and other agencies
- Although the situation is improving, it remains difficult to arrange for a BSL interpreter at short notice
- We work with a range of partners in the third sector who provide valuable advocacy services for many of our customers

Customer Data Management

A review was conducted in late 2005. It revealed:-

- Shared information and knowledge across the organisation about customers is necessary in order to deliver excellent customer services
- Customer data is managed on a directorate rather than corporate basis
- Data sharing across directorates is limited, ad-hoc and service driven
- Extent of external data sharing varies across the Council but is extensive and increasing

- Data stored on a major database in each directorate
- There is no clear idea of which data is held
- There are clear opportunities for efficiency savings, improving service effectiveness and ensuring compliance

6.0 Performance management

Feedback from the public about the Council's performance will be a key indicator in determining how we are progressing towards delivering a great customer experience. We have developed a customer feedback policy, which sets out how we value feedback about our services and recognise the right of our customers to make a complaint, compliment or suggestion about our services. This policy sets out our commitment to using customer feedback to improve our services

We have also developed corporate customer service standards which give a written definition of the standards the County Council aims to offer customers, however they choose to contact us and whatever the nature of their request. In the short term these standards define:-

- Consistency of service for all customers
- Fair and equal access to services for all customers
- Service that is focused on what is important to customers
- Clarity about what is expected from our staff
- A measurable service

Service Managers are responsible for ensuring that the standards are met in their areas of responsibility. Each service manager receives monthly call reports that set out how their areas have performed in terms of call handling. The performance of email correspondence with the public can be measured and managed through service-based mailboxes. Service Managers must also track and manage written correspondence.

The ***Strategy for Delivering a Great Customer Experience*** will be used to publicly launch these new standards.

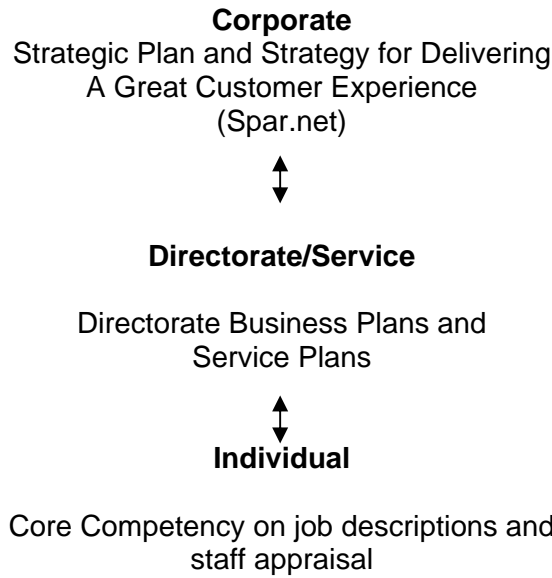
Together with the additional performance indicators set out in this strategy these policies will play a key role in changing working practices and placing the customer at the heart of what we do. We plan to use a variety of methods/tools to assess our performance such as:-

- Mystery shopper
- Feedback from Members on issues relating to customer service arising from their case work
- Customer surveys
- Customer focus groups

We will be using our performance management system, Spar.net, to monitor the progress of key indicators, projects and activities within this plan.

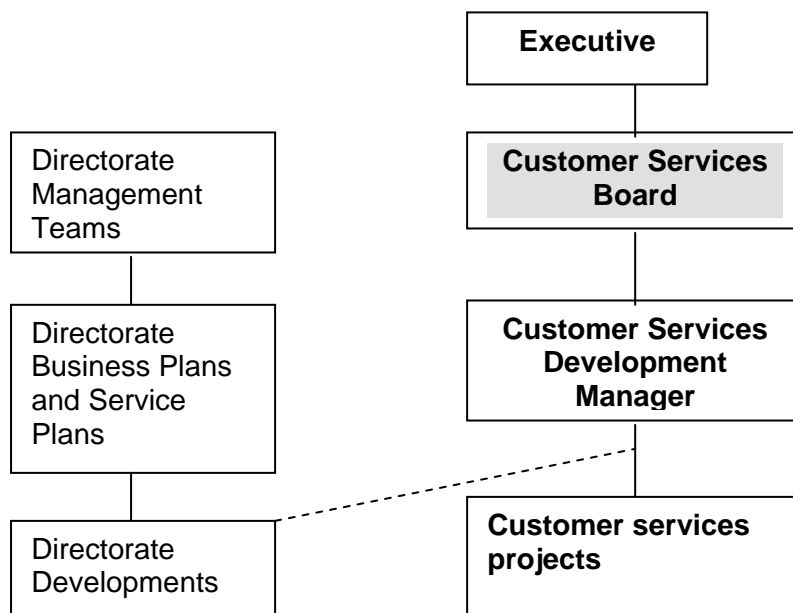
All projects arising from the Strategy will follow the corporate guidelines set out in 'Managing Projects – The Devon Way'.

Internally, we aim to manage the delivery of this strategy through the following mechanisms:-



Governance arrangements

The governance arrangements for managing the implementation of this strategy are as follows:-



Section 7.0

Priority 1 – Putting our customers first

OUTCOMES

Our customers know we:-

- 1.1 Put them first;
- 1.2 Listen to them and help them meet their needs;
- 1.3 Provide quality services that are effective, efficient and approachable

Why is it a priority?

“Customers are not an interruption to our work; they are the purpose of it.”
(DCC: 2005 – Definition of a customer)

Our definition of customers clearly puts them at the heart of everything we do. We have made an express commitment in our Strategic Plan to create an organisational culture that always puts the customer first. This priority is therefore fundamental to achieving our aspirations.

Our work on developing the customer experience recognises that there are both internal and external customers. There is an internal ‘supply chain’ in that we either work directly with the customer or support someone who works for the customer. We therefore understand that we have to balance our priorities to be sensitive to the needs of both.

The County Council has differing relationship with the citizens of Devon, depending on the type of interaction. There is a traditional customer/supplier relationship in situations where the Authority provides services and benefits to citizens. Citizens or “service users” can be regarded as clients that the organisation encounters through individual contacts and transactions. However, there is a significantly different relationship when the Authority has to enforce something because of its statutory duties. Even an enforcement service can respond to needs and preferences of service users within certain constraints. When establishing customer satisfaction with “enforcement transactions”, it is necessary to distinguish between satisfaction with the process and satisfaction with the outcome.

Like all other local authorities, we have to operate within legislative, policy and financial constraints. This means that we may not always be able to deliver exactly what the customer wants. We do, however, promise to be fair, honest and open. We will always explain the reasons behind our decision.

Actions

To achieve Outcomes 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 we propose the following actions:-

- Improving customer experience a key consideration in any business change process
- Implement consistent customer service standards and train our staff in their use with commitment from the top of the organisation

- Establish monitoring process for key customer services eg; telephone logging and responses to written correspondence
- Implement customer feedback policy and train our staff
- Develop and implement a variety of methods for obtaining customer feedback particularly from hard to reach groups
- Establish monitoring systems for capturing customer feedback
- Use feedback from customers to improve service delivery
- Develop and implement a policy and guidance on dealing with unacceptable behaviour from customers

Performance measures

Further work is to be undertaken to develop performance indicators for this strategy which will be monitored through our performance management system 'spar.net'

- Achievement of Customer Service Standard targets
- Overall customer satisfaction
- Outcome of perception/customer quality survey of every (x No) customer
- Results from customer feedback monitoring
- Reduction in complaints being escalated

Section 7.0

Priority 2 – Connecting with our customers

OUTCOMES

Our customers know we:-

- 2.1 Provide easy access to our services in ways that they find convenient;
- 2.2 Give the same standard of service irrespective of the method they use to contact us;
- 2.3 Maintain and improve the traditional methods of contact
- 2.4 Promote the use of self service to enhance choice and improve efficiency
- 2.5 Explore opportunities to use new and innovative technologies to assist customers to access our services

Why is it a priority?

'The Council's role is to improve quality of life'

(DCC: 2005 – Strategic Plan)

There is a direct correlation between quality of life and having access to key services. We know that rurality is a big issue for Devon as is demographics. These factors in combination may create additional barriers such as those experienced by older people living in rural areas. We also know that in Devon many of our customers experience exclusion as a result of complex factors including; living in a deprived area; being on a low income; suffering racial or religious discrimination; barriers that exclude people with disabilities or; due to their sexual orientation; due to their gender; or as a result of not having English as a first language. In addition to these barriers exclusion may arise for reasons as simple as customers feeling confused about where to go for assistance and may end up giving up out of frustration. We need to appreciate this level of 'latent demand'. Through this strategy we consider how to overcome these barriers. This work is directly linked to Devon Strategic Partnership's work on Social Inclusion.

The Council, in consultation with the people of Devon have identified priorities which will be subject to particular focus over the next 5 years. However, the key to improving outcomes in these priorities is ensuring that people can effectively access those services.

We recognise that customers will increasingly wish to use a variety of methods to access services at a time which suits them. We will therefore need to offer a variety of options, available 7 days a week, 24 hours a day which meet the needs of people who wish to 'channel hop'. In order to meet this need we have to promote and encourage take up of self-service channels. However, we are committed to maintaining traditional channels for example, retaining the fax facility as this is a preferred method for certain hard to reach groups.

Actions

To achieve Outcomes 2.1, 2.2, 2.3, 2.4 and 2.5 we propose the following actions:-

Overall

- Promote and migrate services to online facilities and to the Customer Service Centre to improve quality of customer experience and produce efficiency savings
- Produce Web Site Marketing Strategy aimed at increasing the take up of on line services
- Promote Customer Service Centre to customers and staff
- Provide access to translators and interpreters for those customers who experience language barriers

Telephone

- Implement a phased migration of telephone calls to Customer Service Centre using agreed re-engineering and benefits realisation principles
- Implement customer service standards for telephone calls
- Roll out of call logging reports and action taken to address performance issues
- Introduce short term improvements to current processes and working practices
- Introduce use of Language Line at the Customer Service Centre to assist customers with language difficulties

Face to face

- Implement customer service standards for face to face contact
- Develop prioritisation process for capital funding to consider alternative, cost effective customer provision where capital expenditure on a new building proposed such as Outreach or Community Access Points
- Link with the Corporate Property Strategy and Property Area Reviews to consider viability of building to achieve resolution at first point of contact and adherence to relevant legislation such as Disability Discrimination Act compliance
- Consider alternative methods to provide face to face services such as outreach or on line services in line with benefits realisation principles
- Ensure face to face provision, from buildings with resolution provided at first point of contact

Written correspondence, email and fax

- Implement customer service standards for letters, email and fax
- Implement monitoring systems for mail, email and fax responses
- Review mail distribution arrangements and implement recommendations
- Promote use of service and group emails through email policy, letter templates and other correspondence with customers

Web

- Produce Website Marketing Strategy to include long term arrangements for Community Access Points
- Introduce Annual Customer Verification of web site

New and innovative approaches

- Implement new technologies which will assist people with disabilities to access our services such as Text Box at the CSC
- Ensure Corporate use of text to aid two way communication with customers
- Undertake cost benefits analysis of implementing new methods of communication such as Digital Channels.

Performance measures

Further work is to be undertaken to develop performance indicators for this strategy which will be monitored through our performance management system 'spar.net'

- % of resolution at first point of contact
- Increase contact by BME communities and other hard to reach groups eg; Deaf community
- BVPI – Accessible buildings
- Numbers of unique users visiting website
- Number of e-enabled payment transactions accepted via web site
- Number of change of address notifications accepted via web site
- Number of e-enabled payment transactions accepted by telephone
- Number of change of address notifications accepted by telephone
- Number of e-enabled payment transactions accepted via face to face contact (either at reception or community access points)
- Number of change of address notifications accepted via face to face contact (either at reception or community access points)
- Number of visits to receptions
- Number of payments accepted by cheque or other non-electronic form
- Number of change of address notifications accepted by non-electronic form
- Outcome of customer service standard monitoring
- Improvement in call logging figures for abandoned and transfer rates

Section 7.0

Priority 3 – Delivering improvement

OUTCOMES

Our customers know we:-

- 3.1 put their interests at the heart of any business change
- 3.2 understand what we do well and improve what we don't do so well
- 3.3 are working to develop a standard quality of service across the organisation
- 3.4 are working to simplify our processes and remove duplication

Why is it a priority?

"Wherever possible and affordable we will improve the quality and effectiveness of the services we provide and commission"

(DCC: 2005 – Strategic Plan)

Achieving improvement is a dynamic process, which sometimes involves changing the way we do things. However, to demonstrate that we are a customer focused organisation we must put the interests of our customers at the heart of any change.

To ensure that we deliver a great customer experience we have already started to consider our internal arrangements such as:-

Physical/structural change – we are making changes to our organisational structures to ensure greater user focus

Process – we have agreed our key principles for re-engineering our processes to ensure they are customer focused and efficient. These principles are detailed below and are being implemented on a phased, service by service basis:-

- Enable 80% of customer queries to be resolved at first point of contact
- Reduce paperwork for customer and County Council to speed up time of resolution
- Remove steps in the process wherever practical
- Empower customer service staff to help the customer
- Encourage cost-efficient media and methods eg email in favour of post, electronic payments in favour of cash and cheques
- Capture information from people's heads and redesign processes so that they are simple and rules based
- Hand over as much of the simple and rules based work as possible to the Customer Service Centre. This will allow professionals and technical specialists to concentrate their attention in more complex areas.

We have also introduced a Benefits Realisation process to manage the migration of activities to our new Customer Service Centre which have already realised an encouraging level of cashable and non-cashable savings. This involves:-

- The Business Case identifies opportunities for efficiency such that the ongoing operational costs will be less than half the operating costs before the introduction of the Centre. This could generate savings of up to £2m annually
- Benefits arising from the introduction of the Customer Service Centre is managed by a Member/Officer Customer Services Board and monitored by a Member/Officer Improvement and Efficiency Board

Behaviour/culture – we recognise that key to successful improvement is that we involve and take staff along with the process. We have started to roll out a comprehensive package of training in customer services, equality and complaints handling. We are also raising awareness, through staff road shows, of our new policies such as the Customer Feedback Strategy and Customer Service Standards.

Actions

To achieve Outcomes 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4 we propose the following actions:-

- Ongoing review of business processes using agreed re-engineering and benefits realisation principles
- Develop and implement an internal communications plan to include feedback process on staff issues, comments or suggestions
- Include Customer Service Competencies in new job descriptions and introduce to existing job descriptions through job evaluation process
- Ensure training to staff for conducting staff appraisals will include discussion about Customer Service Competencies and Customer Service Standards
- Develop ongoing Customer Service Training programme with regular reviews of effectiveness
- Introduce customer service award schemes and regular staff recognition
- Produce and agree programme for achieving Charter Mark for front line services as a driver for positive change
- Deliver call logging reports to Service Managers and implement consolidated customer database (LAGAN) for logging customer feedback.
- Promote NVQ in Customer Services and professional membership of Institute of Customer Services for staff training packages
- Develop and implement training packages for contract and project management to enable successful management of commissioned services
- Seek membership to Institute of Customer Services for Customer Services Centre
- Review opportunities to expand membership of ICS to other front line services

Performance measures

Further work is to be undertaken to develop performance indicators for this strategy which will be monitored through our performance management system 'spar.net'

- Staff satisfaction survey
- % of staff who have received Customer Service Training
- Participation in Customer Service Awards
- Improvements in call logging figures for abandoned and transferred calls
- Decrease in % of complaints which are escalated
- % of front line services with Charter Mark
- % of staff trained in project and contract management

- % of staff with customer service qualifications
- % of staff with professional recognition in customer services

7.0

Priority 4 – Working together for a purpose

OUTCOMES

Our customers know we:-

- 4.1 work with our partners to deliver shared services where this will bring the most benefit
- 4.2 take responsibility to direct customers to the right place if we cannot help
- 4.3 have clear arrangements with partners about how we want to work together to deliver the best service
- 4.4 are working to develop the same standards

Why is it a priority?

“We need to work in close partnership with local communities and organisations to achieve our vision for Devon. Effective partnership means building trust, developing a common understanding of the needs of our communities, agreeing joint priorities, taking collective action and pooling resources where this will improve services.”

(DCC 2005 – Strategic Plan)

In the context of delivering a great customer experience, working together refers to moving beyond the “That’s not us” culture. Our customers do not care about our structures they care about getting service. Therefore this priority focuses on how we can work with our partners.

We also recognise that we work with a range of organisations in the Third Sector such as Age Concern, Citizens Advice who provide valuable advocacy services for our customers

The Devon Chief Executives Group has established a subgroup to look at the potential for shared services. An approach is being made to the Regional Centre for Excellence to secure funding for a pilot project

Actions

To achieve Outcomes 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4 we propose the following actions:-

- Review our ‘core’ business and agree the services we can share
- Collaborate with partners to provide ‘shared services’ where this is appropriate
- Share clear and simple information with partners to enable effective signposting of customers
- Achieve clarity about what we and our partners want out of shared working
- Develop projects around service needs of customers not individual organisations
- Develop a partnership protocol to guide our ‘working together’
- Promote benefits of membership of Institute of Customer Services with other Devon authorities

Performance measures

Further work is to be undertaken to develop performance indicators for this strategy which will be monitored through our performance management system 'spar.net'

- Mystery shopping between organisations
- Customer feedback
- Elected members going back to case work customers to test service given by Council and feedback
- Cost of failure demand
- Staff satisfaction of 'front line' staff across the organisations
- Protocol developed and agreed with partners for 'working together'

ACTION PLANS

Priority 1 – Putting our customers first

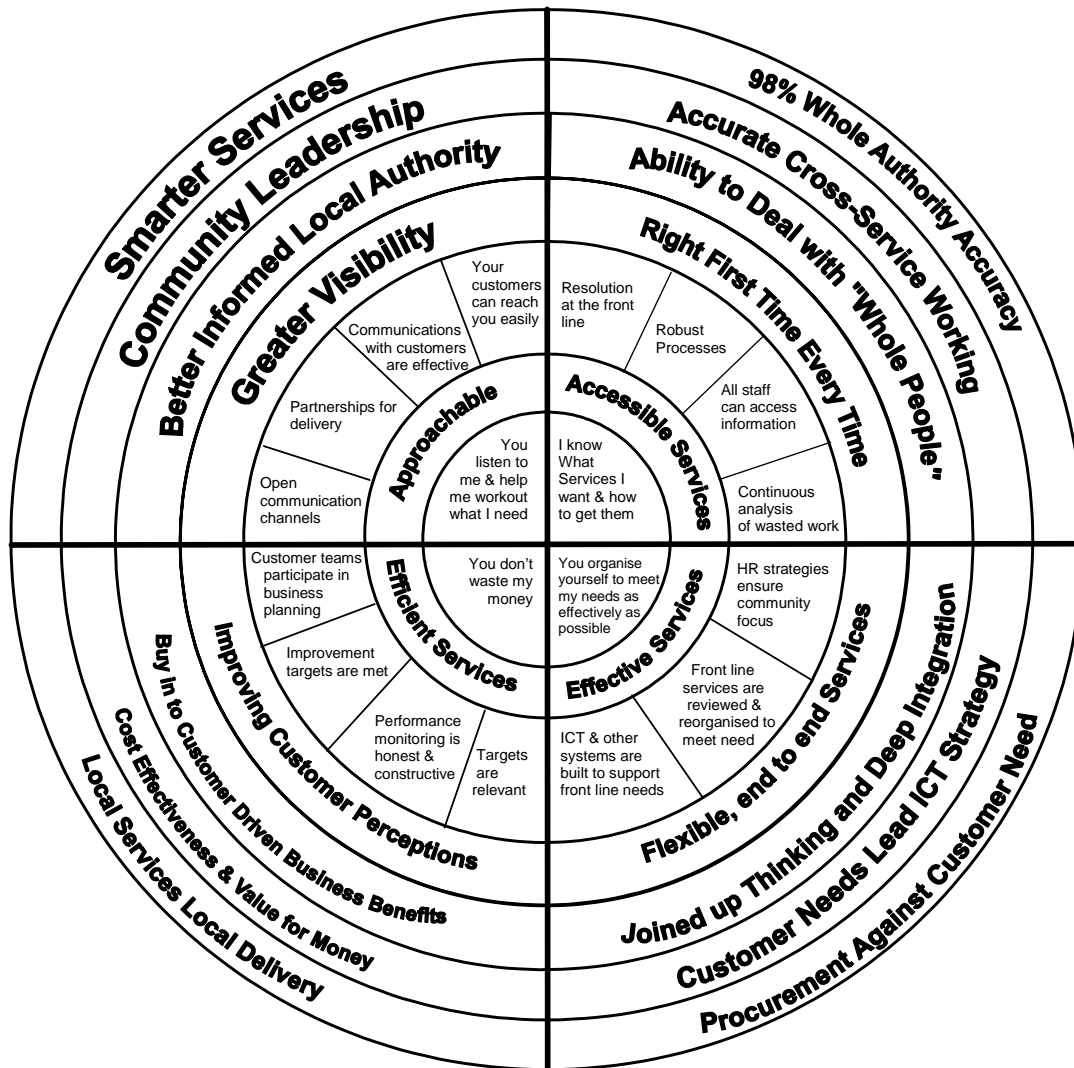
(To be completed once priorities, outcomes and actions agreed)

Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Success criteria	Monitoring and evaluation	Link to other plans

Appendix Two

Customer Focus Model (Customer Focus Network)

The following model illustrates the proposed model for a customer focused organisation developed by the Chief Executive's Customer Focus Network



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Appendix Three

Strategy Development Team

The officers detailed below have been involved in developing this strategy:-

Name	Directorate/Service area
Judith Davey	Customer Services Development Manager
Paul Giblin	Social Services
Carole Searle	Registrars Service
Nathan Cudmore	Economy and Regeneration Service
Richard Horne	Emergency Planning Team
Amanda Brent	Devon Property
Debbie Fox	Environment Directorate
Claire Bird	Customer Services Development Team
Becky Filby	e-Government Team
Sarah Skinner	Devon Direct Services
Sue Pargeter	Library Services
Simon Kitchen	Customer Service Centre Manager
Tony Parker	Corporate Communications
Roger Grainger	County Community Strategy Officer
Jo Hooper	Corporate Equality Officer
Richard Carter	ICT Services
Julie Beardall	Performance and Reward Team
Julie Mitchell	Education, Arts and Libraries Directorate
Sue Rook	Customer Services Development Team
Peter Greene	Trading Standards