

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE**



Assessment Report
Customer Service Excellence

Highland Council

Highland Council Customer Services

Successful
1 July 2011

Assessment Summary

Overview

Overall Self-assessment	Satisfactory
Overall outcome	Successful

The Service Point Network operates across the whole of Highland Region in 35 locations. Each office acts as the first point of contact for customers wishing to access services from the council. The Call Centre is also part of the Network and provides valuable telephony access for the public. Managers and staff take immense pride in operating the service and despite considerable financial constraints have maintained a high level of customer service delivery. Considerable partnership working has been developed for the benefit of customers and arrangements are tailored to suit the needs of local communities and customer groups. The transition from Charter Mark to Customer Service Excellence has been a challenging journey, but all involved have demonstrated a huge commitment and they are to be congratulated on this achievement.

1: Customer Insight

Criterion 1 self-assessment	Strong
Criterion 1 outcome	Successful

Processes for gaining Customer Insight are systematic and applied consistently across all Service Points. Good characteristics are identified and data thoroughly segmented. The CRM system plays an important role in this aspect.

Customer consultation and engagement is thorough and reviewed effectively, with clear goals set and outcomes are beneficial to customers. Generally publication of outcomes is satisfactory, although not always visible at all service Points.

Evidence on customer satisfaction is fairly general, but feedback from staff, partners and customers met indicates a high level of satisfaction with positive changes being made by listening to customers. Although standards for customer service are set in a number of areas, analysis of trends was not evident. Likewise evidence on measuring certain aspects of customer service such as delivery and information was lacking.

2: The Culture of the Organisation

Criterion 2 self-assessment	Satisfactory
Criterion 2 outcome	Successful

There is strong leadership at all levels and this emanates from sound policies, but also active support of staff. Customer expectations are clearly outlined, communicated and delivered. There is a strong sense of customer focus and engagement. Consequently customer are well treated and they feel welcomed.

Communications are open although privacy in all aspects is good.

Staff are very polite and professional in service delivery, and are well trained and supported. Although the considerable effort of staff is appreciated by customers, managers could not fully demonstrate how they evaluated staff contributions and gave appropriate reward.

3: Information and Access

Criterion 3 self-assessment	Strong
Criterion 3 outcome	Successful

Full range of information is provided across several channels and customers are provided with clear instructions on contact methods and charges. Suitable arrangements are in place to ensure information is both received and understood and following appropriate consultation improvements have been made. Information provided is both accurate and complete.

Efforts are made to ensure services are accessible, despite the remoteness of some locations, and staff ensure that alternative arrangements are in place where necessary. Offices are well appointed and inviting to customers.

Partnership working is excellent and considerable effort is made to care for respective communities.

4: Delivery

Criterion 4 self-assessment	Satisfactory
Criterion 4 outcome	Successful

Good meaningful standards are in place, which are monitored effectively. However the level of involvement of customers and staff in setting and reviewing standards is not clear. Customer expectations are agreed at the outset of contact and promises are delivered. Benchmarking performance against other organisations is weak although learning from best practice is effectively implemented. There is clear commitment to identifying dips in performance.

Complaints handling is thorough and customers find it easy to make such approaches. However less input from customers was evidence regarding the review of the complaints system.

5: Timeliness and Quality of Service

Criterion 5 self-assessment Satisfactory

Criterion 5 outcome Successful

Standards for timeliness and quality are in place and customers are made fully aware on what to expect. Delivery of those standards is well managed and first point of contact arrangements are designed to benefit customers. Sharing of relevant information around the whole network and with partners is very effective. Response times are important to this organisation and performance is monitored effectively. Outcomes are positive, but effective comparison against others is not obvious.

1: Customer Insight

1.1: Customer Identification

1.1.1: We have an in-depth understanding of the characteristics of our current and potential customer groups based on recent and reliable information.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

105: Customer Assessment and Engagement

The vision for improving our services to customers. Simplified customer access to all Council services and an increased number of services delivered at the first point of contact. This will include simplified and standardised eligibility and assessment processes to accelerate decisions and service.

99: Special Diet Request

This is based on customer information and is a request to enable all children to participate in school meals. This a special menu request whcih is available and can be used to ensure children still receive a meal of their choice in school.

76: Snapshot of customers by Gender over 2 months

This is a snapshot of our customers by Gender over a two month period. This helps to determine the characteristics of our customer groups. It ensures that we know the make up of our main customer groups for the different services available.

16: Registration Survey

This is a survey of Registration Service Customers. They include all groups that will contact a registrar from registering a birth or death, arranging a marriage or Ancestor Research.

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Annual Performance Survey. This is sent by the Council to 2000 households in the Council area and the replies give information on the requirements of our customers. It also highlights any areas where our customers see the need for improvements. See pages 5-7

09: CRM Demonstration

This is the demonstration of our new Laggan CRM system. It records information on a customer each time they contact the Council. The information is updated for existing customer and a new record created for new customers. It identifies the different customer groups currently using our service

1.1.2: We have developed customer insight about our customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

106: Process Analysis methodology

Better Understanding: The Corporate Improvement Programme's CEA have developed a Take-On plan for customer-facing business process redesign. The volumes of customer transactions have informed this Plan. The first phase addresses 62 processes. This statement describes this process

99: Special Diet Request

How we use customer feedback to determine how we deliver our services for customer groups with a particular need and understand their requirements

60: Passport Service Customer Survey

This is the IPS survey of customers in the Highlands using the Remote Interview Service for Passport Applications. It is an independent assessment of the customer group and their views on using the remote interview service. See page 2 para 5

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Annual Performance Survey. This is sent by the Council to 2000 households in the Council area and the replies give information on the requirements of our customers. It also highlights any areas where our customers see the need for improvements. See pages 25 -27

16: Registration Survey

The results of our Registration Survey based on customers to our shared service Registration Offices and our stand alone Registration Offices

09: CRM Demonstration

This is the demonstration of our CRM system. It records information on a customer each time they contact the Council. The information is updated for existing customer and a new record created for new customers. This information identifies existing customer groups.

1.1.3: We make particular efforts to identify hard to reach and disadvantaged groups and individuals and have developed our services in response to their specific needs.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

99: Special Diet Request

An example of developing our service in relation to the special needs of customers

04: SLA Passport Service

This service has been developed with the Passport Service to provide a service locally for customers requiring a Passport. The Video Link enables the interview to be undertaken without the need for the customer to travel long distances to the nearest Passport office

56: Interpretation and Translation Service

This is the system we use when customers whose first language is not English are having difficulty making their views known to staff handling their enquiry. It gives access to an interpreter from the same language group as the customer

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

Evidence of email enquiries being received at our Service Centre. These are acted upon within one day of receiving them and either dealt with in house or passed to the relevant service

35: Council Tax - Large Print

Council Tax information in a large print format is available in all our service points and shared offices

39: Home Visit Advert

In rural areas we advertise our willingness to visit house bound customers. The same service is also available through consultation with our service partners.

1.2: Engagement and Consultation

1.2.1: We have a strategy for engaging and involving customers using a range of methods appropriate to the needs of identified customer groups.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

44: Budget Consultation

This a consultation exercise conducted by the Council asking the views of users ahead of the approaching budget briefings for members and services. The report covers the whole council and not just customer services

41: Highland Citizens Panel

This is a new initiative by the Council. The Citizens panel was introduced in 2010 has has over 2500 members. The Citizens' Panel is made up of a representative sample of residents who have agreed to participate in consultation activities such as the Annual Performance Survey

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Highland Council Annual Performance Survey sent to the Councils Citizen Panel for completion. Customer Services are represented by questions in the survey but it covers the whole Council

15: Customer Survey 2010

This is the most recent survey of our customer base. It includes users of Customer Services at all our Service Points. The survey now uses the Citizens Panel as its focus group which includes user of our services

16: Registration Survey

The results of our Registration Survey based on customers to our shared service Registration Offices and our stand alone Registration Offices. It is comprehensive and gives a complete picture of users of the service. Pages 8, 13, 14, 15 detail the customers responses

12: Customer Service Strategy

This is our Customer Service Strategy for the years 2009 -12. It details how we will engage with our customers and the methods we will use. Pages 5,12 ,13 ,14 and 15 explain how we will engage with our customers and the enablers we will use to do this

1.2.2: We have made the consultation of customers integral to continually improving our service and we advise customers of the results and action taken.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

98: FSM and CG in Polish and Gaelic

The Free School Meals and Clothing Grant forms are now available in Polish and Gaelic. This was as a result of customer consultation especially with the Polish community who found the forms printed in English confusing.

19: Mystery shopping Service Centre

Mystery shopping at our service centre in Alness. The results are compared with other councils and this is used for benchmarking service provision

64: Customer Complaint CD and Customer Suggestions

This is a customer complaint/suggestion recorded at the Service centre. As a result of the difficulty the customer experienced, the process was updated and the telephone number more prominently displayed.

44: Budget Consultation

As part of the Council Review of Expenditure, a budget Consultation process was established where customers could make their views known about the services they wished retained. Service Points scored highly with the public as a service to be retained. see page 12

16: Registration Survey

The results of our Registration Survey based on customers to our shared service Registration Offices and our stand alone Registration Offices. This is published on the web and in our registration offices

15: Customer Survey 2010

The results of our customer survey in 2010. The results are based on customer feedback and represent the views of customers

1.2.3: We regularly review our strategies and opportunities for consulting and engaging with customers to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

79: Review of Complaints Process

Review of Complaints Procedure: This report was presented to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The report reviewed the effectiveness of the Corporate Complaints procedure and commits the Council to carrying out future reviews.

44: Budget Consultation

A good opportunity for consulting with customers across the Highlands. This budget consultation was open to all residents of highland to submit thier views on council services and the changes that should be made. The method is effective and provided excellent results.

28: Payment Strategy Survey CRM

This is an engagement with customers on the introduced Payment strategy. The customers views are recorded, analysed and reported back to senior management. The customers views on this survey are wholly responsible for change in service. See evidence 62

42: Customer Service Review

This is the Customer Service Review and it will help develop our strategy for consulting and engaging with customers. See page 2 para 3

12: Customer Service Strategy

Our customer service strategy provides the methods of how we will consult with our customers using appropriate methods for our different customer groups

1.3: Customer Satisfaction

1.3.1: We use reliable and accurate methods to measure customer satisfaction on a regular basis.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

28: Payment Strategy Survey CRM

This proved to be a very accurate survey to such an extent that the results changed the policy of the council and led to a temporary suspension of the Payment Strategy implementation.

70: Audit Scotland Report

Audit Scotland Report on Highland Council. The report covers all the services of the Council and its performance. Pages 20,25 and 30 are highlighted as part of the measurement of Customer Satisfaction

60: Passport Service Customer Survey

This is a survey completed by Identity and Passport Service on Customers who have used Highland Council Service Points for their remote Passport interviews. The results are very encouraging and prove that the service provided on behalf of the IPS is meeting their standards. See pages 2-3

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Annual Performance Survey. This is sent by the Council to 2000 households in the Council area and the replies give information on the requirements of our customers. It also highlights any areas where our customers see the need for improvements. See pages 14-20

19: Mystery shopping Service Centre

The Service Centre Annual Mystery Shopping review. This is from 2008 as it is the last full Mystery Shopping completed for the Service centre. Another consultation is planned for 2011. (Cost and Budget pressures make this a necessity every four years rather than annual survey)

37: CRM Survey

These surveys are held at regular intervals through the CRM system for capturing customer views. They provide good information on our performance as viewed by customers to the service.

1.3.2: We analyse and publicise satisfaction levels for the full range of customers for all main areas of our service and we have improved services as a result.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

60: Passport Service Customer Survey

This survey has been conducted independently by one of our partners (IPS) on staff providing their service as part of our SLA with the IPS. The result highlighted the majority of customers are satisfied with the service, efforts are being made to address the concerns some customers raised.

64: Customer Complaint CD and Customer Suggestions

Service was improved as a result of this customer suggestion and this can be demonstrated on the web page. The customer had difficulty finding information relating to Bulky Uplifts and the Web Page was updated to highlight the telephone number more clearly.

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Annual Performance Survey. This is sent by the Council to 2000 households in the Council area and the replies give information on the requirements of our customers. It also highlights any areas where our customers see the need for improvements. See pages 53 and 79

19: Mystery shopping Service Centre

The results of the Mystery Shopping survey for the Service Centre. The results are highlighted for Highland Council in comparison against the other Councils taking part. Service has been updated as a result and the Service centre now opens on Saturday mornings

15: Customer Survey 2010

The results of our customer survey in 2010. The results are based on customer feedback and represent the views of customers to our Service Points

16: Registration Survey

The results of our Registration Survey based on customers to our shared service Registration Offices and our stand alone Registration Offices. Improvements have been made following the customer suggestion on page 11 and debit and credit cards are now accepted for payment

1.3.3: We include in our measurement of satisfaction specific questions relating to key areas including those on delivery, timeliness, information, access, and the quality of customer service, as well as specific questions which are informed by customer insight.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

28: Payment Strategy Survey CRM

This was a survey organised after customer had complained about the withdrawal of cash payments at Service Points. The questions were based on customer insight and the resulting answers led to a temporary change in the payment strategy

58: Call handling statistics

This is the analysis of our telephone calls received at our Service centre. It breaks down the number of calls answered within call service standards.

16: Registration Survey

The results of our Registration Survey based on customers to our shared service Registration Offices and our stand alone Registration Offices. This is published on the web and in our registration offices. See pages 8, 10, 11 and 13-16

44: Budget Consultation

A wide ranging Budget Consultation with the Residents of Highland Council area. The answers produced help shape the policy of the council. See Page 12 for Service Points

37: CRM Survey

These surveys are held at regular intervals through the CRM system for capturing customer views. They provide good information on our performance as viewed by customers to the service. This particular survey has captured the views of 408 customers

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Annual Performance Survey. This is sent by the Council to 2000 households in the Council area and the replies give information on the requirements of our customers. It also highlights any areas where our customers see the need for improvements. See pages 28-34

1.3.4: We set challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and our levels are improving.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

107: CEA Design Principles

Customer Engagement & Assessment Design Principles: These are the guiding principles which describe how will re-design and improve our customer-facing business processes.

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

Our Annual Performance Survey. This is sent to the 2000 member of the Citizens Panel and the replies indicate how the Council is performing. It also highlights the areas where customers see the need for improvements. See pages 54-55

57: Service Centre Call Handling Standards

These are recognised call handling standards for Call centres. Although the Service Centre is more than a call centre the same Standards apply for telephone calls. A number of different standards are in place to handle the different processes in the Service Centre

54: Error Rates Registration Service

These are the published Registration Error Rates for all councils in Scotland. The GRO is very strict on errors made as part of the registration process and Highland Registration Service performs very well in relation to other councils.

03: Registration Service Standards

These are the Registration Standards that must be met by all registrars - including Service Point staff. The standard for Registration in Highland is improving with more Registrars now sitting the Qualification Examination and with 16 confirmed passes this is more than any other Council in Scotland

02: Customer Service Standards

This is our Customer Service Standards. These standards have been in use in our Service points for a number of years although updated periodically. A further update is required as a result of the Customer Service Review

1.3.5: We have made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

108: Council Target Operating Model

The Council's Target Operating Model: Under the auspices of the Corporate Improvement Programme, we have committed to better manage our interactions with customers to improve the service that we offer.

64: Customer Complaint CD and Customer Suggestions

This is a CD recording of a customer complaint. The customer experienced difficulty in finding the information required to contact a service. The webpage was altered as a result and the telephone number prominently displayed

62: Temporary Amendment to Payments

This is the introduction of a Temporary Amendment to the Payment Strategy introduced on 01 April 2011. Customers complained about the lack of cash collection facilities and this was reintroduced in those offices where manual payments are made.

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

This is the Annual Performance Survey. This is sent by the Council to 2000 households in the Council area and the replies give information on the requirements of our customers. It also highlights any areas where our customers see the need for improvements.

45: Scanning of benefit forms

This is a new process to speed up the time taken in assessing benefits for customers. Instead of the forms being copied and each sheet being stamped and signed, the form is scanned and sent to a central server in Finance where it is accessed and actioned.

44: Budget Consultation

The Budget Consultation with the population of the highland asking for views on how the budget allocated to the council should be spent to benefit the population and the services that should be cut. The results demonstrate the improvements made to services

2: The Culture of the Organisation

2.1: Leadership, Policy and Culture

2.1.1: There is corporate commitment to putting the customer at the heart of service delivery and leaders in our organisation actively support this and advocate for customers.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

80: Weekly Business Meeting Report

Weekly Business Meeting Reporting :This report is presented to the Council's Chief Executive and Directors. It is produced from the CRM system and contains customer complaints and enquiries which have breached the Council's 10 working day response standard.

89: Customer First Strategy

A Council Strategy for Putting the Customer First. It is part of the Council's overall Customer Service Strategy and will be updated as necessary. See pages 1,2 and 3 of the report and page 9 of the strategy . This is supported by the council putting customers first

50: Highland Council Web Strategy

A new strategy for visitors to the the Highland Council web site to leave their views. This is supported by the Council and enables web based customers to leave their views. Page 7 refers

24: Corporate Plan

This the Highland Council Corporate Plan. It lays out how the Council will deliver its services and the committment to the Single Outcome Agreement. Pages 5,6,13,15,29 and 31 refer.

25: Chief Executive Service Plan

This is our Service Plan. It details how Customer Services will operate and its commitment to its customers. See pages 4,5,13,18 and 33 in particular

41: Highland Citizens Panel

This is the Highland Council Citizens Panel. The Council uses this as a focus group and consults with over 2000 members before introducing new policies and procedures. This has proved to very useful and an excellent tool for the Council

2.1.2: We use customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

49: Payment Strategy

This is the Payment Strategy introduced to the Council on 01 April 2011. It has a major impact on how customer pay bills and was a priority item for the council to improve service. See page 2. This is connected to evidence number 51 Ways to Pay where information was provided to customers

63: Budget Consultation - Customer Views SPs

This is the views of customers who took part in the Budget Consultation and their views on Service Points and the part they play in providing services to the Highland population. It has been taken from the full Budget Consultation Report see page 12

44: Budget Consultation

A wide ranging view of customer comments that assisted the Convener and Chief Executive on how to plan for the future using the views of the population. See pages 1 and 2 for the Public Consultation results and improvements

42: Customer Service Review

This the result of the Customer Service Review. It was formed as a result of the consultation with Customers as part of the Budget Consultation. The outcome of this helped to shape our strategy for our review of services. See pages pages 2&3 and Evidence 44 and 63

12: Customer Service Strategy

This is our Customer Service Strategy for the years 2009 -12. It details how we will engage with our customers and the methods we will use. See page 5,7,10

2.1.3: We have policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

11: SLA Northern Constabulary

Any service delivered to customers should be excellent and our SLA with Northern Constabulary is no exception. The number of police enquiries varies across offices and the total number of enquires handled to date are contained in evidence number 93. See page 4 of SLA for service outputs

60: Passport Service Customer Survey

The standards for providing a service to IPS customers are laid out in the SLA we have with the IPS. The response from customers to this survey indicate they "Receive an Excellent level of service" See page 2

57: Service Centre Call Handling Standards

The Service Centre operates to Call Handling Standard produced by the Council. There are no set British Standards covering all Call and Service centres and these standards are much more customer focused than standards produced in the private sector.

08: SLA VisitScotland

This is our SLA with VisitScotland. Although it is joint office providing service to two different client groups, the level of service provided to both groups of customers is the same - excellent!

03: Registration Service Standards

This is the Standard all customers requiring a registration service can expect. These are produced by the GRO Scotland and issued to all registrars.

02: Customer Service Standards

This is our Customer Standards for all customer to all our offices

2.1.4: We ensure that all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and this is confirmed by feedback and the measurement of customer experience.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

This is a selection of customer comments on the service received at the Service Centre. Customers were invited to record their comments on the Service received and the helpfulness of staff

37: CRM Survey

This is feedback from one of the CRM surveys conducted regularly through our offices and Service centres. It covered 408 customers and a selection of their comments are included. This is the way all surveys will be conducted in future through Customer Services

30: Customer Comment Card

A selection of comment cards and letters from customers charting their experience of our customer service.

16: Registration Survey

This is the latest Registration Survey. It includes a number of different customer groups for Registration i. e. registering a birth, a death, arranging a marriage, ancestry research, civil partnership etc. All different groups with a different expectation of the service

47: Equality Impact Assessment

This is a EIA undertaken by Finance and Customer Services to ensure the impact of the Payment strategy would not have an adverse effect on our customer groups. See appendix 1 of the EIA

2.1.5: We protect customers' privacy both in face-to-face discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

77: Data Protection CD Issued to all offices

This CD on Data Protection is issued by the Information Commissioners Office and is issued to all Service Points. All staff also know they can contact the Councils Data Protection Officer if required

09: CRM Demonstration

This part of the CRM demonstration will show how customer information is protected as part of the process

04: SLA Passport Service

The Remote Interview Facility we have with the IPS requires the privacy of customers and the secure transfer of data as part of the process for the interview. This is achieved by the SP staff encrypting the equipment before the interview begins.

45: Scanning of benefit forms

This was introduced to speed up the process of customer applications for Housing and Council Tax Benefit. It also protects customer data as the information is transmitted electronically. This will be a visual demonstration of the process.

23: Interview Room Poster

This is displayed in all our offices and informs our customers there is a private interview room available. There is quite a take up on the interview room for Finance, Housing and Money Advice Service as well as Registration and service Point use.

22: Privacy Glass - Inverness SP

This glass was installed at the service point to give customers privacy from the public on the walkway outside. It ensured they could sit in private before seeing the staff from a service (including Money Advice and Debt Counselling) without being recognised by the public. It is reassurance

2.1.6: We empower and encourage all employees to actively promote and participate in the customer focused culture of our organisation.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

109: Staff Secondments

Practitioners Seconded to CRM Configuration Team: To recognise the importance of a Customer Services practitioner view in the development and build of the new system, three staff were selected for secondment opportunities to join the CRM Configuration Team. This evidence reflects this secondment

30: Customer Comment Card

The customer comments on these cards demonstrate the how staff have promoted a positive view of the Council to customers and delivered a service that is customer focused

90: Blue Badge Staff Suggestion

This is a staff suggestion where the member of staff viewed a process for payments of Blue Badges as part of the Payment Strategy and found it to be unfair on a particular group of customers. The chain of events is recorded with the outcome at the end

31: Customer Service Qualification Certificate

This qualification is customer focused and all staff have to undertake this qualification. The qualification encourages staff to act on their own initiative, act proactively and promote good customer service. The provision of good customer service is shared by senior management in all services

52: Staff PDPs

As part of Staff Personal Development Plans staff are encouraged to take the lead in resolving customer problems and developing good customer relationships.

48: Staff suggestions to improve service

This is where staff contribute to suggestions to improve customer service. This is either through suggesting amendments to forms customers will use or to the process for a service. There are four examples in this evidence

2.2: Staff Professionalism and Attitude

2.2.1: We can demonstrate our commitment to developing and delivering customer focused services through our recruitment, training and development policies for staff.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

53: New Job Description for Team Leader

As part of our Review the Job Description have been updated and a greater emphasis is placed on the training of staff and responsibility for Personal Development Plans

59: Staff Training Database

This is a record of all the training staff undertake as part of their customer service training. It is kept up to date and records the different and customer focussed training each member of staff undertakes

52: Staff PDPs

All staff have a Personal Development Plan (PDP). These highlight the need for customer service training and each member of staff undertake a suite of training necessary for their role of providing customer service

31: Customer Service Qualification Certificate

This is the qualification that all staff undertake as part of their training. It is recognised by all Scottish Councils and has been implemented across Scotland to ensure all customers receive the same level of service - irrespective of which council area they live

2.2.2: Our staff are polite and friendly to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

A selection of written and recorded comments on the service received by customers.

19: Mystery shopping Service Centre

Telephone Response Report for Mystery Shoppers. See pages 21-22 for Highland Council response on Politeness and Helpfulness. There is also a comparison to other councils.

31: Customer Service Qualification Certificate

All staff undertake this qualification which focuses on providing a first class customer service to all customers. The qualification has a number of modules and this Module 1 deals with Customer Awareness and Understanding. See page 1 Module 1

09: CRM Demonstration

This is a demonstration of our new Laggan Customer Service Management (CRM) system. It records information on a customer each time they contact the council. The demonstration will show how staff answer the phone and assess the needs of the customer and demonstrate politeness and helpfulness

30: Customer Comment Card

A selection of comments made by customers to our Service Points and registration offices. These highlight the customer comments of the staff helpfulness and how they have assisted the customers

2.2.3: We prioritise customer focus at all levels of our organisation and evaluate individual and team commitment through the performance management system.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

80: Weekly Business Meeting Report

This report is presented to the Council's Chief Executive and Directors. It is produced from the CRM system and contains customer complaints and enquiries which have breached the Council's 10 working day response standard

14: Minutes of Team/Group Meeting

These are copies of Team Meetings held across the Customer Service Network. They include office meetings and Management Team Meetings and meetings with Police and VisitScotland as part of our customer focus at all levels

44: Budget Consultation

This is the budget consultation with customers being invited to submit their ideas and proposals to the Council ahead of the budget committee decisions. The proposal for this consultation came from Chief Executive and the Budget Leader in the Council

50: Highland Council Web Strategy

The Highland Council Web Strategy for canvassing customer views. This is a new strategy and is still in its infancy and to date the response has not been good - but once it is better advertised it should prove more popular

52: Staff PDPs

A copy of a PDP for staff from Customer Services highlighting the importance of customer service and focus to the member of staff and the high priority the Council puts on excellent customer service and customer satisfaction.

2.2.4: We can demonstrate how customer-facing staffs' insight and experience is incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

102: Staff Suggestion FSM/CG

This is a staff suggestion regarding the FSM/CG forms. The suggestion is to hold these on the staff communications portal rather than have them on the individual member of staff PC. This ensures they are always available. Simple but effective suggestion

90: Blue Badge Staff Suggestion

This is a suggestion from a member of staff regarding the payment strategy for Blue Badges. She realised it would impact on customers and highlighted the fact. Policy was changed to accommodate her suggestion.

14: Minutes of Team/Group Meeting

The minutes of team meetings where staff suggestions have been incorporated into internal processes

48: Staff suggestions to improve service

Staff are asked for their views on any new policies or procedures being introduced by service that will have an affect on how customer services are delivered. There are four examples of staff suggestions in this evidence

2.2.5: We value the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

80: Weekly Business Meeting Report

The Chief Executive holds a weekly business meeting and as part of this meeting he dicusses complaints and service performance. Each service is required to produce a report on their service performance regarding complaints

17: Committee Report Service Centre

This is a report to Committee demonstrating the Council willingness to fund additional opening hours for the Service centre. This improved customers ability to contact the Council outwith the normal opening hours

48: Staff suggestions to improve service

This is a selection of suggestions by staff to improve Customer Service. There are four examples in this evidence

59: Staff Training Database

This is our Staff Training Data Base. It records all the training staff undertake as part of their training in Customer Services and includes Equality, Race, Discrimination, Disability and Customer Services Training

31: Customer Service Qualification Certificate

This is our Customer Service Qualification which all staff undertake as part of their training. Highland Council staff came second and third among Scotlands Councils on the first group of candidates to sit the exam.

3: Information and Access

3.1: Range of Information

3.1.1: We make information about the full range of services we provide available to our customers and potential customers, including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is in charge.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

68: Highland Council Web Page

The Highland Council web page and the link to customers services. It explains clearly the service available at each individual office. <http://www.highland.gov.uk/livinghere/servicepointnetwork/>

58: Call handling statistics

This is a years call handling statistics at the Highland Council Service centre. It shows the number of calls received and how they were handled

66: Organisational Chart

This is our updated Organisation Chart as a result of our Customer Service Review. It explains who is in charge and the way the line management structure is organised. All staff are aware of the new structure

39: Home Visit Advert

This is one of the areas where a home visit is still provided. This applies mostly in rural areas but instances have occurred in more urban areas.

32: Plasma Screens in SP to display information

These Plasma Screen presentations are updated each month with current information. Other services also use the plasma screen to display information relevant to customers. Some of the other services use are incorporated into the evidence

51: SP Ways to Pay and Changes to Service

This is the advertising campaign as a result of the payment strategy. This provided information to customers where the nearest payment point is located if they preferred to pay their council bills by cash. There is also a CD with this evidence as part of the Radio Campaign.

3.1.2: Where there is a charge for services, we tell our customers how much they will have to pay.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

110: Council Charging Policy

The Council Charging Policy: This statement describes the Council's charging policy and introduces the Corporate Improvement Programme's Income Generation Project

68: Highland Council Web Page

The Highland Council Web page has all the information on the Council services. It also includes the information when a charge is payable for the Service

51: SP Ways to Pay and Changes to Service

This is the details of how and when customers can make payments as a result of the Payment strategy being introduced.

38: Additional examples of charges for services

This is some other examples of where the customer is told how much they will have to pay. As a service we do not charge customers for our own service but rather implement the charge arranged by other services. The charges are imposed across the full range of Council Services

29: Charges for Services

This is the Registration Service Charges for services and this is displayed in the Registration Offices. It informs customers of the charges they will have to pay for Services

3.2: Quality of Information

3.2.1: We provide our customers with the information they need in ways which meet their needs and preferences, using a variety of appropriate channels.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

35: Council Tax - Large Print

One of the methods used to provide information to our customers with a sight disability. The information is also available on Audio CD and a visual CD for customers with a hearing disability

10: Newspaper Evidence of new developments

Information displayed in newspapers alerting customers to new developments being brought in by the Council.

68: Highland Council Web Page

This is the Highland Council WEB Page. It displays all the Customer Service information for Service Points and the rest of the Council which is accessed through out Customer Service offices and Service Points

27: Winter Watch

An example of how the public is informed of services. This is the Winter watch programme that is ditributed each year for the Winter Season over the winter break. This also incorporates other council Information

32: Plasma Screens in SP to display information

The information on the Plasma screens changes to reflect the different information the council wishes displayed. It also includes information where consultations are taking place on specific and canvass the views of customers. See pages 33, 34

51: SP Ways to Pay and Changes to Service

This is a poster for each Service Point advising customers of "Ways to Pay" as a result of the introduction of the Payment strategy. This information is also available on a CD, Plasma screen presentation in Service Points and as a radio Broadcast

3.2.2: We take reasonable steps to make sure our customers have received and understood the information we provide.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

98: FSM and CG in Polish and Gaelic

These forms were produced in Polish to assist the large Polish community based in the Highlands. They have proved to be very popular and the community have commented on how helpful they are. It also helps those members of the population whose first language is not English

30: Customer Comment Card

A selection of customer views on the service provided through our Customer Service Offices. This demonstrates they have understood the service provided and their views on this service

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

This is a snapshot of customer comments on the service provided through the Service Centre. It confirms if the information provided met the customer's needs.

09: CRM Demonstration

This will demonstrate the voice contact with the customer. It will detail the customer enquiry, the solution and if the customer is satisfied with the information provided.

3.2.3: We have improved the range, content and quality of verbal, published and web based information we provide to ensure it is relevant and meets the needs of customers.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

83: Plain English Campaign

The information provided to Customers is written in a format they can understand. The Council is the Holder of a Plain English certificate to commend the service for writing plainly and correctly in a manner understood by customers

68: Highland Council Web Page

This is a demonstration of the new developments on the Highland Council Web page. This is updated regularly to display current and relevant information

34: Council Tax Cd and Visually Impaired List of Customers

Verbal information for customers on the latest council tax information.

13: CS Communication Examples

Examples of Communication to Customer Services staff. These are relevant to customer information and it informs the customer as well as the staff of alterations to service or any essential changes to be communicated quickly to customers.

56: Interpretation and Translation Service

This has been updated to include new information for customers and staff. The interpretation Service now also includes a map of each country to better help identify the country of the individual if they are unable to read.

10: Newspaper Evidence of new developments

This is part of the published requirement for this evidence.

3.2.4: We can demonstrate that information we provide to our customers is accurate and complete, and that when this is not the case we advise customers when they will receive the information they requested.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

This is evidence of emails received at the Service centre. Where the email cannot be answered by staff at the Service centre, the customer is informed and the enquiry passed to another service. Where possible the customer is informed of the time frame for an answer to their enquiry

69: Clothing Grant/Free School Meals Applications forms

When these forms are completed with the customer the information for the time frame and the process is explained to the customer. Sometimes the school is contacted immediately to ensure the free school meals section is actioned the following day or the first school day after the visit to the office

45: Scanning of benefit forms

When benefit forms are scanned and sent electronically to Finance, the customer is informed of the process and the likely time frame for the benefits forms to be actioned.

43: Complaint form and procedure

The Council Complaint form has a set timetable for responses depending on the type of complaint and the service concerned. Customers are always told the process of the complaint, where it will be sent and the time frame for a response

09: CRM Demonstration

This provides evidence of when a customer has not received all the information requested at the first visit, the steps taken to ensure that the customer will receive the information on a certain date or time

3.3: Access

3.3.1: We make our services easily accessible to all customers through provision of a range of alternative channels.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

81: Updated Customer Service Offices

Face to face channel through our Customer Service Offices. This map has been updated and with the combining of Registration offices and Service Points, customers will be able to access more services in the one location.

56: Interpretation and Translation Service

This has been updated and is widely use in the inverness and Fort William area Service Points where the train and bus routes come to the end of the journey. Inverness has quite mixed ethnic minority population base. (Fact: Over 28 different language teachers are required in Highland Council schools.

39: Home Visit Advert

We also undertake home visits to our customers who cannot manage to visit one of our offices. This is mostly achieved in rural areas.

35: Council Tax - Large Print

Our council tax large print booklet. This is produced in the required numbers each year and copies are held in all our Service Points

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

E Mail enquiries received at the Service centre and actioned by staff.

68: Highland Council Web Page

The Highland Council web page. It contains information available to all customers and also has different language sections to reflect the mix of ethnic minorities in the Highlands

3.3.2: We evaluate how customers interact with the organisation through access channels and we use this information to identify possible service improvements, and offer better choices

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

12: Customer Service Strategy

The information on how customers contact the council have been evaluated and improvement to service as a result of this are incorporated into the Customer Service Strategy. See pages 13,14 and 15.

51: SP Ways to Pay and Changes to Service

These changes were introduced as part of the Payment Strategy and customer insight. The number of venues customer could pay across the highlands was increased to 321 from the original 38 offices. This offered a better choice to customers

91: Number of visitors to web site

This is the total number of visitors to the Council web site over a period of 1 year. The web site is proving to be more popular as the public use this facility for accessing services and using the on line payment facility.

58: Call handling statistics

This information confirms the number of customers who use the Service centre as their method of contacting the Council. The numbers have increased year on year and the Service Centre now opens later on weekdays and on Saturday mornings as a result of customer feedback

64: Customer Complaint CD and Customer Suggestions

Customer complaint captured on CD. The complaint was analysed and improvements made to web page as a result.

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

Customer Comments on service at the Service centre. They were asked to leave their comments on the service received during their phone call.

3.3.3: We ensure that where customers can visit our premises in person facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

04: SLA Passport Service

As part of the SLA the room in which the interview is conducted must be clean and tidy. See page 19 Schedule 3 Room Specification.

92: Management visit to CS offices

This is a visual check as part of the Management checklist for visits to Customer Service Offices. All our offices are checked regularly to ensure they are as clean and comfortable as possible

60: Passport Service Customer Survey

The Passport Survey asked applicants in question 4 how they rated the standard of the premises in which the interview is conducted. 23 rated the premises as excellent and 8 as very good. See Q4 of the survey results.

88: DDA Accessibility Survey

All our offices are DDA compliant and customers can access all our offices. This is the state of our offices as part of the improvement undertaken to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 2002

74: Passport Service Office Report

This is a report on the Kingussie Service Point - one of our offices where Passport Applications are undertaken. The report highlights cleanliness of the office. See page 3 para 2.2 "Room and Equipment"

3.4: Co-operative working with other providers, partners and communities

3.4.1: We have made arrangements with other providers and partners to offer and supply co-ordinated services, and these arrangements have demonstrable benefits for our customers

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

13: CS Communication Examples

These alerts are sent to every Customer Service Office as soon as they are received. This enables the customers to keep up to date with the changes as they happen and to be informed of any alteration to any service.

20: SLA Hi Scot Credit Union

This is our latest partnership with HI-Scot Credit Union. Originally formed in the Western Isles it has developed into a credit union covering the Highlands and Islands. Their service is actively promoted and Customer Service staff complete application forms and provide information.

93: Northern Constabulary Fact Sheet

As part of our SLA with Northern Constabulary, Customer Service staff handle enquiries for the police and refer customer to the NC staff. This is a snapshot of some of the enquiries dealt with by our joint offices over the last quarter.

08: SLA VisitScotland

This partnership is still operating in two offices - and the Visit Scotland member of staff still conducts registration duties - the only such partnership in the UK.

06: SLA CityLink Buses

A very good partnership. This has now been extended to 5 Service Points (all in rural locations) and has proved a real benefit to the community

04: SLA Passport Service

This is a particular pleasing partnership and so successful has it been that the IPS wish to use our premises in Inverness to conduct face to face interviews for first time applicants. This should be coming on line in August this year

3.4.2: We have developed co-ordinated working arrangements with our partners that ensure customers have clear lines of accountability for quality of service.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

07: SLA Planning Service

This SLA details how far staff will proceed with the customer in relation to Planning matters. Page 4 Para 4 details the level of service staff will provide to customers

11: SLA Northern Constabulary

The working arrangements with Northern Constabulary are clearly defined and staff know exactly what service to provide on behalf of NC. See page 4 para 4. There is also a customer complaints section built into the agreement. See page 5 para 8

20: SLA Hi Scot Credit Union

This SLA has a flow chart which staff follow to provide the service to the customer. This is the service agreed with Hi Scot and further information is provided to the customer about the follow up for their application.

08: SLA VisitScotland

This is our longest standing agreement with one of our partners and it has been in place (with updates) since 1999. Page 4 para 4 details the working arrangements for both Visit Scotland and Highland Council staff as to the responsibilities for each customer group.

06: SLA CityLink Buses

This agreement is in 5 of our Service points. Para 3 details the responsibility of the staff in relation to the sale of tickets for Citylink.

04: SLA Passport Service

Clear lines of responsibility are outlined in this document for Customer Service staff to follow. As this involves a great deal of data protections and security of information this SLA is more detailed in this respect than any of the other agreements. See pages 6 para 4 and page 14 para 26

3.4.3: We interact within wider communities and we can demonstrate the ways in which we support those communities.

Applicant Self Assessment: Strong

New Evidence

93: Northern Constabulary Fact Sheet

We do have an SLA with Northern Constabulary and this helps the wider community. By entering into partnership with the Police, it ensured a police presence for the community otherwise the police station would have closed in each of the areas where the partnership is present

84: Missing persons poster

Customer Services has signed up to the Missing Person organisation and this is an example of a poster sent to all Customer Service offices as the person was expected to be in the Highlands. Any contact a missing person makes with our offices is recorded through the CRM system

05: SLA Albyn Housing

Albyn Housing provides Social Housing in the Highlands. As part of the SLA with Albyn, Customer Services in Aviemore provides a service for Albyn customers. If this was not provided, Albyn customers would need to travel to Inverness or Albyn would require to open a separate office in Aviemore

97: Business Support for Schools

As part of the service to the community, Customer Service provides job placements for the local schools. This is regular occurrence and provides job experience for the younger community.

98: FSM and CG in Polish and Gaelic

There is a large Polish community in the Highlands. Apart from FSM forms other information is provided in Polish to assist the community integrate into Highland Life. Polish literature is included in our selection of information in evidence 82

61: Assistance to Sutherland Partnership

Sutherland Partnership are based in Lairg Service Point which is closing and moving to the police station. Agreement has been reached that Sutherland Partnership will move to the police station and continue to operate from an office in the building at no additional cost.

4: Delivery

4.1: Delivery standards

4.1.1: We have challenging standards for our main services, which take account of our responsibility for delivering national and statutory standards and targets.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

04: SLA Passport Service

These National Standards are for conducting Passport Application Interviews by Video Link. Our offices are required to meet these. Failure to observe these standards could jepordise the interview both for the customer and the Passport Service. See also evidence 60

57: Service Centre Call Handling Standards

Call Handling standards are necessary for all telephone customers and these take account of privacy, documentation and security for customers calling the Service centre. Different Standards are in place for the different processes in use, but all have the same customer service focus

02: Customer Service Standards

Our Customer Service Standards. These tell the customer the levels of service they can expect when they contact the Council

03: Registration Service Standards

These Standards are set by the General Registrar for Scotland and apply to all registration events in all our offices. They are very strict standards as your are dealing with information recorded for posterity.

4.1.2: We monitor and meet our standards, key departmental and performance targets, and we tell our customers about our performance.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

36: Complaints Response Fact Sheet

This is a fact sheet with complaints against customer services where we have not met our customer standards. This details the complaint and the action taken to resolve the customer complaint

93: Northern Constabulary Fact Sheet

This is a fact sheet on how we are dealing with enquiries for Northern Constabulary. It is part of our SLA and the customer service provided for police enquiries is the same as for all other aspects of our service.

100: Meeting our Standards Fact Sheet

This is a fact sheet on how we are meeting our existing standards for face to face, telephone, email and written standards for service

40: Annual Performance Survey 2010

See pages 13 to 21 for results of the customer contact with the Council. The standards in the survey mirror our own for first point of contact waiting times for face to face, telephone, email and written requests. It also gives satisfaction with service information

16: Registration Survey

The Registration survey informs our customers how we have performed against these standards.

4.1.3: We consult and involve customers, citizens, partners and staff on the setting, reviewing and raising of our local standards.

Applicant Self Assessment: Insufficient

New Evidence

44: Budget Consultation

The wide ranging budget consultation determines the views of citizens and these views will help determine our new updated standards. The standards have to be updated to meet the results of the consultation and the review and customer, partners and staff views are included

42: Customer Service Review

A wide ranging review including consultation with our partners on the review of our existing operating process and procedures including setting new and improved standards for customer service and how it will be delivered.

14: Minutes of Team/Group Meeting

Our Team Meetings discuss a wide range of subjects with Senior Service Point Officers

4.2: Achieved Delivery and Outcomes

4.2.1: We agree with our customers at the outset what they can expect from the service we provide.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

87: Plus One Scheme

The Councils Plus One Scheme where Carers Go Free. Customer Services are instrumental in updating this process and entitlement and the Card issued through our offices. Customers who qualify for the card are informed of its use and restrictions.

69: Clothing Grant/Free School Meals Applications forms

The customer is told at the time of application whether they qualify for the grant. If they are successful it is explained to them what they can expect to receive and when. This is very important as the school year term time depends on when the award is made for the clothing grant

94: Parking permits

Always a hot bed of discussion as to exactly where the boundaries for the issue of a parking permit begin and end. Customers are informed if they qualify and how much the cost will be.

93: Northern Constabulary Fact Sheet

This is a good snap shot of some of the enquiries we have dealt with on behalf of Northern Constabulary. Our staff have to tell the customer what they are capable of doing before passing the enquiry to the police when they cannot provide an answer.

29: Charges for Services

This is some examples of the cost of the services. These charges are explained to customers from the outset to enable them to decide whether to accept the service.

46: Blue Badge Process

This is the Blue Badge process which determines eligibility of the award of a Blue Badge. A great deal of applicants apply for a badge but very few meet the criteria for the award

4.2.2: We can demonstrate that we deliver the service we promised to individual customers and that outcomes are positive for the majority of our customers.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

60: Passport Service Customer Survey

This is the first draft of the Passport Customer Survey on customers using our Service Point to facilitate the Remote Access Passport Application interview. The survey indicates that customers received the service promised and the majority were satisfied with the outcome.

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

A selection of customer comments both written and recorded on the level of service received and how satisfied customers are with the outcome.

30: Customer Comment Card

A selection of customer comments on the service they have received and how positive they felt about the outcome of the service they received.

16: Registration Survey

Specific questions were asked in the survey about the outcome of the service for customers. The results of this can be found on page 9, 10 and the Analysis of responses on page 13 to 16

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

When customers contact Customer Services by email the enquiry is either dealt with at the first point of contact or referred to another service. The customer is kept informed of where the enquiry is going and to which service.

15: Customer Survey 2010

Our 2010 customer survey based in our Service Points. It demonstrates that the the majority of customers are satisfied with the service they received

4.2.3: We can demonstrate that we benchmark our performance against that of similar or complementary organisations and have used that information to improve our service.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

103: SOCITM benchmarking

This is an extract from the SOCITM benchmarking exercise undertaken across all UK councils. It is website comparison of the council in relation to all other council websites. Highland Council rates are similar with the majority of sites : 1 Star rating the top being 4 Star

67: Single Outcome Agreement HC

Agreements under this for Customer Services are: Archive Centre National Outcome 13: Service Points/Service Centre Outcome 15.3 and Customer Services with Hi Scot Credit Union partnership Outcome 7A. These are all part of providing "People across the Highlands having access to the service they need"

19: Mystery shopping Service Centre

The latest Mystery Shopping from the Service Centre. This shows how the Service centre compares against other similar organisations. It is both online and telephone survey

73: Benchmarking Orkney Isles Council

This is an exercise undertaken with Orkney Isles Council. It compares where Highland compare favourably in areas of service. See pages 2-9 for specific functions relating to Customer Services for both councils

55: Benchmarking Scottish Government

We are very pleased that the Scottish Government used our partnership with the Passport Service as an example of good practice as part of the Single Outcome Agreement. See page 82

54: Error Rates Registration Service

The Registrar General publishes these error rates for all Councils in Scotland. Highland Council compares well with similar councils.

4.2.4: We have developed and learned from best practice identified within and outside our organisation, and we publish our examples externally where appropriate.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

86: Staff Incentive Scheme Suggestions

A Council wide scheme encouraging staff to provide suggestions to improve services in the council. A number of examples are included where the scheme has improved service and contributed to saving the council expenditure

111: Improvement Service Community

Scottish Government Improvement Service : Communities of Practice. Customer Service Management Team staff are members of various Communities, the purpose of which is to support local authorities to deliver better outcomes for communities by sharing best practice.

55: Benchmarking Scottish Government

The Scottish Government published this example from Highland Council in their report on Single Outcome Agreements (SOA). Customer Services are delighted that this example of cooperative working with partners was identified as one of the best examples in Scotland.

4.3: Deal effectively with problems

4.3.1: We identify any dips in performance against our standards and explain these to customers, together with action we are taking to put things right and prevent further recurrence.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

62: Temporary Amendment to Payments

This is an amendment based on customer experience where the Payment Strategy introduced by the Council impacted on some groups of customers. There was a fall in how we delivered the service, a change was made to the strategy, customers were informed and the issue is resolved

101: Waiting Times Service Points

This is a snapshot of waiting times in Inverness Service Point, our busiest office. The average waiting time is 11 minutes (our standard is 10 minutes) and steps were taken to bring this down to our standard by changing the staff rotas to bring staff in to work at the busiest times.

36: Complaints Response Fact Sheet

This where we failed to meet our standards and the results of the failure in service. The fact sheet also shows the response to the customer and the actions taken to prevent the same incident recurring again.

75: Complaints for year 10/11 and the details

A comprehensive study of all complaints received by service and ranking. It also demonstrates the type of complaint and how it was resolved.

4.3.2: We have an easy to use complaints procedure, which includes a commitment to deal with problems fully and solve them wherever possible within a reasonable time limit.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

80: Weekly Business Meeting Report

This is a copy of the weekly Business Meeting chaired by the Chief Executive. The CE takes a keen interest in complaints and asked for a weekly update on how many are still outstanding and not answered within the agreed time frame

75: Complaints for year 10/11 and the details

This details the number of complaints received in the council and the time frame in which they are answered.

43: Complaint form and procedure

The complaint form describes the time frame for answering complaints and also the different stages a complaint can take from first being received into the system. The aim is to answer all complaints in 10 working days

36: Complaints Response Fact Sheet

This is an analysis of complaints received against Customer Services. It gives a description of the complaint and how it was handled to ensure quick resolution of the situation

09: CRM Demonstration

This demonstrates the process for handling complaints received either by telephone, writing or by email. The complaint can be received from a number of different sources but the most important aspect is to log it and direct it to a member of staff for quick resolution where possible

4.3.3: We give staff training and guidance to handle complaints and to investigate them objectively, and we can demonstrate that we empower staff to put things right.

Applicant Self Assessment: Insufficient

New Evidence

09: CRM Demonstration

This will demonstrate that staff have training in dealing with complaints and putting things right for the customer. Our response rate for First Point of Contact resolution is 81%

59: Staff Training Database

This is the Customer Service Staff Training data base and details all the training staff undertake as part of their training. Customer Service training includes complaint training and this is highlighted.

31: Customer Service Qualification Certificate

This qualification has been adopted by all Councils in Scotland. It includes details on handling complaints as part of the customer training. See page 6.

4.3.4: We learn from any mistakes we make by identifying patterns in formal and informal complaints and comments from customers and use this information to improve services and publicise action taken.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

64: Customer Complaint CD and Customer Suggestions

This where the customer complained by telephone and the details are recorded. Improvements were made to the web site and published information as a result of the complaint. This was a formal complaint and several other customers had complained of the same difficulty in finding a number for service.

30: Customer Comment Card

Customer use the comment card to complain about services and some examples of this are included in the Customer Comments evidence. Where it is possible to improve service as a result of these comments and complaints this has been achieved.

79: Review of Complaints Process

The Complaints process was reviewed in 2009 and the improvements implemented in 2010. The main reason for the review was customer complaints that it was not a easy to understand process or procedure. This was simplified in the review and the new process introduced

62: Temporary Amendment to Payments

There was a repeated complaint from customers following the introduction of the payment strategy that the withdrawal of payment by cash at Service Points was unfair to some groups of customers. As a result the payment strategy was reversed in some offices and cash is now being taken again

4.3.5: We regularly review and improve our complaints procedure, taking account of the views of customers, complainants and staff.

Applicant Self Assessment: Insufficient

New Evidence

75: Complaints for year 10/11 and the details

This the number of complaints received during year 10/11. By analysing the details of the complaint and the time taken to resolution, the Complaints Review considered all details when reviewing the Complaints Process from start to finish and how it could be improved

79: Review of Complaints Process

Review of Complaints Procedure: This report was presented to the Council's Audit and Scrutiny Committee. The report reviewed the effectiveness of the Corporate Complaints procedure and commits the Council to carrying out future reviews.

4.3.6: We ensure that the outcome of the complaint process for customers (whose complaint is upheld) is satisfactory for them.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

This fact sheet contains a customer comment where a complaint was resolved by Customer Services staff to the satisfaction of the customer.

104: Customers Views on Complaint Process

This is a small survey of customers who had complained to the Council and received a reply in relation their complaint. This is a small survey undertaken over time of those customers whose complaint had been upheld

5: Timeliness and Quality of Service

5.1: Standards for Timeliness and Quality

5.1.1: We set appropriate and measurable standards for the timeliness of response for all forms of customer contact including phone calls, letters, e-communications and personal callers.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

101: Waiting Times Service Points

This is a selection of waiting times at Service Points. The main recording is at our busiest office in Inverness where waiting times are electronically recorded and monitored

43: Complaint form and procedure

The Complaint Form has the time frame for answering complaints and correspondence received. All correspondence - including emails - are responded to within three days and a full response provided in 10 days

58: Call handling statistics

This is evidence of how quickly the calls received at the Service Centre are answered. It also shows the abandonment rate of calls unanswered. This compares very well with private sector organisations.

02: Customer Service Standards

This tells the Customer the time frame they can expect their enquiry to be handled depending on how they have contacted the Council. It explains clearly the length of time they are expected to wait for their enquiry to be answered.

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

This is a sample of email enquiries received at the Service centre. It demonstrates how quickly the enquiry is handled and if necessary the service the enquiry has been referred. The Council uses the same response rate for emails as for written request: Acknowledge in 3 days and a response in 10

5.1.2: We set comprehensive standards for all aspects of the quality of customer service to be expected in all dealings with our organisation.

Applicant Self Assessment: Not Rated

New Evidence

95: Police vetting process

As part of our partnership with Northern Constabulary all staff working in the joint offices receive personal vetting. This ensures the quality of customer service received is the same to the customer if there enquiry was being handles at a police station

57: Service Centre Call Handling Standards

Standards for Call Handling at our Service centre. These are used by all staff handling telephone enquiries at the Service Centre. In addition where it is required a script will be issued to staff for a particular pupose whcih they are required to follow.

03: Registration Service Standards

These standards are set by the General Registrar for Scotland (GRO) and all staff handling customers requiring a registration event must meet these standards in all dealings with customers.

04: SLA Passport Service

Comprehensive standards set by the Identity and Passort Service whcih must be met before the Council is permitted to conduct Passport Application Inteviw facilities. They include quality of customer service. See page 6,8

02: Customer Service Standards

Our Customer Standards lay out the standards of customer care our customers can expect when they contact our offices

5.2: Timely Outcomes

5.2.1: We advise our customers and potential customers about our promises on timeliness and quality of customer service.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

43: Complaint form and procedure

The Complaint form and procedure informs customers of the time frame for an answer to their complaint. It details the process and the position in the service of the person supplying the answer.

58: Call handling statistics

The statistics on call handling enquiries at the Service Centre. This gives a very good breakdown on how quickly the call was handled and how quickly the customer received the information

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

A sample of email enquiries, the content of the enquiry and how the enquiry was handled.

02: Customer Service Standards

This tells the customer the time frame they can expect their enquiry to be handled depending on how they have contacted the Council. It explains clearly the length of time they are expected to wait for their enquiry to be answered. It also informs the customer the quality of service they can expect

5.2.2: We identify individual customer needs at the first point of contact with us and ensure that an appropriate person who can address the reason for contact deals with the customer.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

96: Corporate Analysis by Incident

This covers the period from 01 April 2010 to 31 March 2011. It details the number of enquiries and the total dealt with at First Point of Contact. 81% were handled at first point of contact and the remainder transferred to another service

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

A sample of email enquiries received at the Service Centre. It identifies the nature of the enquiry and the best person to deal with the enquiry

64: Customer Complaint CD and Customer Suggestions

This is an example of a customer telephone contact where the customer had a complaint about the information on the Council website. Her complaint received an immediate answer and the web page updated to reflect the nature of the complaint.

09: CRM Demonstration

The demonstration will detail how customer enquiries are received and if the enquiry cannot be handled at the first point of contact, the customer is informed where their enquiry is being directed and who the person is in the appropriate service.

5.2.3: We promptly share customer information with colleagues and partners within our organisation whenever appropriate and can demonstrate how this has reduced unnecessary contact for customers.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

93: Northern Constabulary Fact Sheet

A good example of sharing information with colleagues. Although Northern Constabulary are not part of the organisation they are in partnership and sharing of information is common between partners

96: Corporate Analysis by Incident

This is the information on enquiries received through the CRM system. It indicates to which service the enquiry has been passed if it cannot be dealt with at the first point of contact.

45: Scanning of benefit forms

This is our fastest way of sharing written information provided by the customer with Finance Service. Benefir forms are scanned into the system for instant access by Finance staff to deal with the enquiry.

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

A good selection of email enquiries where the information received by the service centre is passed to other services for action

13: CS Communication Examples

Services share their information with Customer Services for publication in our Service Points. The communications are just an example of the numerous alerts sent to all our offices for information for staff to apss on to customers.

09: CRM Demonstration

This will demonstrate the sharing of information when the enquiry is being referred to another service as the enquiry is only something that the service can handle. This can be housing repairs, street lights, fallen tres etc

5.2.4: Where service is not completed at the first point of contact we discuss with the customer the next steps and indicate the likely overall time to achieve outcomes.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

93: Northern Constabulary Fact Sheet

This describes some of the enquiries Customer Services have handled for Northern Constabulary at our joint offices. In each case the customer is informed of the outcome of their enquiry and where it is being directed.

02: Customer Service Standards

Our customer Service Standards tell the customer when he can expect to receive a reply to written correspondence. If this cannot be achieved with the time frame the customer will be informed and a new date set for resolution of the complaint

43: Complaint form and procedure

The Complaint forms lists the time frame for a reply to the complaint. This is an acknowledgement within three days and a full reply in ten days. If this cannot be achieved an explanation is sent to the customer with a revised date for completion.

96: Corporate Analysis by Incident

This is a breakdown of all the enquiries received in a year through the CRM system. It indicates the service the enquiry was passed to when it could not be answered first time. In discussion with the customer a time frame is given for the enquiry to be answered

09: CRM Demonstration

The demonstration will indicate to which service the enquiry is being passed. A time frame will be set for the enquiry to be resolved. Some enquiries such as Housing Repairs have set time frames approved by the service and these are given to the customer.

5.2.5: We respond to initial enquiries promptly, if there is a delay we advise the customer and take action to rectify the problem.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

72: Complaint from member W MacKay

This is a case where the initial request turned into a complaint. Customer services handled the call but the service failed to react and it was again Customer Services who provided the input to get the problem resolved.

43: Complaint form and procedure

The Councils Complaint Procedure with timescales for responding to customer complaints. If there is to be a delay in responding to the complaint, the customer is informed of the new date for reply See also evidence 75 for complaints response times.

09: CRM Demonstration

This is a history of when the customer contacted the council. All enquiries are logged and the action taken to deal with all enquiries promptly to the satisfaction of the customer.

21: Evidence of Email enquiries

When an email enquiry is received a quick response is notified to the customer. If this cannot be handled immediately the customer is informed of the action taken and when he can receive a response.

5.3: Achieved Timely Delivery

5.3.1: We monitor our performance against standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we take action if problems are identified.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

Customer Comments on the service they have received. These recording indicate that customers were satisfied with the time their enquiry was handled and the quality of service they received.

100: Meeting our Standards Fact Sheet

This is a fact sheet detailing how we have performed against our standards for all aspects of our service. They include our performance on timeliness and quality of customer service.

58: Call handling statistics

The Call Handling Statistics for the Service Centre. When a problem was identified where calls were going unanswered at certain times the resources were split to ensure a better service and eliminate the problem

54: Error Rates Registration Service

Registration is an important service provided by the Council. The main Error Rates identified were mis-spelling of medical terms on Death Certificates. As no spelling check is available on the Registration software, medical dictionaries were issued to registrars to improve quality of service

62: Temporary Amendment to Payments

This amendment was as a result of a drop in the quality of customer service. Customer pressure resulted in this temporary amendment to the payment strategy to the benefit of customers

5.3.2: We are meeting our current standards for timeliness and quality of customer service and we publicise our performance against these standards.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

58: Call handling statistics

The statistics on how our telephone calls at the Service centre are answered. It includes the details of the calls answered, how quickly and the number of abandoned calls

65: Customer Comments on service + (CD)

Customer comments on how we are meeting our standards for timeliness and quality of service

101: Waiting Times Service Points

This covers a period of time in the Inverness Service point for waiting times. There has been a great improvement in waiting times in Inverness due to additional staff providing service at the busiest times of the day.

100: Meeting our Standards Fact Sheet

This is a Fact Sheet on how we are performing against our Standards. This leaflet is published and available in all our Customer Service Offices to inform customers

5.3.3: Our performance in relation to timeliness and quality of service compares well with that of similar organisations.

Applicant Self Assessment: Satisfactory

New Evidence

73: Benchmarking Orkney Isles Council

This a benchmarking exercise undertaken with Orkney Isles Council. Our service compare very well with the Isles Council and the results can be found on pages 2-9.

19: Mystery shopping Service Centre

A comparison with other Councils in the UK for the Service centre based on the mystery shopping survey

58: Call handling statistics

The Call Handling Statistics compare very well with other Scottish councils and in particular the private sector.

54: Error Rates Registration Service

These Error Rates cover all councils in Scotland. Highland Council compares very well with the other Scottish Councils for Registration Error Rates in documentation.