

**CUSTOMER
SERVICE
EXCELLENCE**



Assessment Report
Customer Service Excellence

Birmingham City Council Environment and Culture Directorate

Successful
21 October 2012

Assessment Summary

Overview

Overall Self-assessment	Satisfactory
Overall outcome	Successful

Rolling Programme Two, 2012.

The E&C Directorate has maintained responsibility for all services listed at the full CSE and RP1 assessments during 2011. A corporate review has resulted in BMAG, Commissioning Culture and Corporate Communications moving away this year. Whilst the operational management of individual services continues to lie with the Districts, strategic responsibility, corporate direction and overall performance are maintained by the strategic centre. Internal customers are well supported by the performance and compliance, and other business support teams.

There were many outstanding features of the Rolling Programme Two assessment visit. The very strong and dedicated Leadership of the Directorate is ably supported by managers and staff in the individual services. A cohesive approach has been maintained throughout some testing times during the past year and the internal support teams have retained their commitment to assisting the Directorate to deliver excellent service. Individual services retained their autonomy by providing updated and comprehensive documentation that supported the Directorate application. Every service included in last year's assessment also prepared sufficient evidence to maintain separate accreditation, thereby ensuring the probity of the Directorate's application. Representatives presented their evidence during separate service area interviews, and were supported by members of the performance and compliance team, after which services were selected for site visits.

Clearly discernible progress has been made in line with the strategic direction, the requirements of the CSE Standard and statements made in the 2011 assessment report. The Directorate's Application was again presented well, with updated, refreshed and some new evidence, and any Elements that have been changed from the previous assessment are referred to below. The CSE Improvement Group, comprising managers and members from each service area has met monthly, and agenda items are built around the five drivers of customer satisfaction and demonstrate staff determination to provide the best service possible for all customers. This Directorate is a 'trail blazer' for the City in terms of its cohesive approach to planning, performance, customer service excellence and accountability and remains the only one in the City to hold the CSE Standard.

1: Customer Insight

Criterion 1 self-assessment	Strong
Criterion 1 outcome	Successful

Rolling Programme Two.

Individual services ratified and complemented the evidence from the Directorate to demonstrate increased understanding of customer group behaviours, including through information about the new corporate segmentation groups. Interesting developments include for gaining greater understanding of the needs of students and for the smooth running of the Olympics training camps. The corporate tracker has been supplemented by many local consultations to gain customer views about improvements, which inevitably have also included decisions about leaner service provision. Updated evidence of the linkage between consultation and service improvement has been used to raise Element 1.3.2 to full compliance. However, there is still insufficient standardisation to confirm that both themes in 1.3.3 have been met across all service areas. Excellent individual service evidence demonstrated positive changes as a result of analysing the customer journey, with an example of best practice being provided by Sport & Leisure. There is scope to consider opportunities for sharing mapping examples during CSE meetings.

2: The Culture of the Organisation

Criterion 2 self-assessment	Strong
Criterion 2 outcome	Successful

Rolling Programme Two.

Customer insight is used for improvement planning, including through corporate surveys about any service constraints and good evidence was provided by individual and strategic services for compliance at 2.1.2. Information sharing and confidentiality policies and procedures have been updated this year, with updated training being conducted for all staff. Element 2.1.6 continues to be an example of Compliance Plus, with staff providing many examples of how they promote and participate in the customer-focused culture of the Directorate. Staff performance development objectives have been completed for the year confirming they are encouraged to provide an excellent standard of customer service and to have a good understanding of the needs of both internal and external customers. Compliance Plus is maintained for 2.2.4, examples being updated by individual services. Updated evidence was also provided to confirm the role of managers and senior staff in valuing the contribution made by all staff to the continuing success of this Directorate. There is scope for you to consider whether there is a need for a Directorate-wide formal vision statement about your customer-focused culture.

3: Information and Access

Criterion 3 self-assessment	Strong
Criterion 3 outcome	Successful

Rolling Programme Two.

The Directorate-wide and individual service area plans publish any fees and charges with annual updates. Element 3.2.1 is considered worthy of retaining Compliance Plus for examples of how you strive to provide customers with information through a wide range of channels, including the increased use of many social media applications. Element 3.2.2 is raised to Compliance Plus for the excellent individual service area examples of how staff take care to make sure that information is not only received but also understood by customers. Element 3.3.2 is now fully compliant as individual services were able to provide evidence of how they have evaluated access channels, particularly for preferred methods of contact and for use of social media, with some improvements identified which may give greater choice for customers. There was good supporting evidence for 3.4.2, with many examples of accountability tracking taking place with key partners, who during this visit confirmed agreements working in practice. Element 3.4.3 remains an example of Compliance Plus, including this year for supporting Council statements to do with succeeding economically and making a contribution.

4: Delivery

Criterion 4 self-assessment	Strong
Criterion 4 outcome	Successful

Rolling Programme Two.

This year, there is conclusive evidence that Directorate measures and individual service targets have been in general met raising 4.1.2 to full compliance, although there is scope to publish performance out turns to the wider general public, whilst taking account of corporate constraints. You continue to provide a high quality service that is appreciated by individuals as well as the majority of customers. Element 4.2.4 is now considered an example of Compliance Plus, with individual service areas providing evidence to support that best practice is shared outside the organisation, some of which draws accolades nationally, including for active participation in sports and leisure, for re-cycling waste, for partnership working with Highways, for Parks gold medals, and for specific guidance for international events. You have updated training to handle complaints objectively and 4.3.3 is now fully compliant. The corporate complaints scheme has been reviewed in-house and you have systems to discern and publish complaints trends for individual services. There is scope to share any individual service complaints handling procedures good practice across the Directorate, including that from Bereavement Services.

5: Timeliness and Quality of Service

Criterion 5 self-assessment	Satisfactory
Criterion 5 outcome	Successful

Rolling Programme Two.

Standards for quality and timeliness are advertised to different audiences and although compliant, it would be useful to review and compare back office protocol, individual service area and single point of contact standards, with reference to a greater degree of Directorate cohesion. Performance data and surveys, together with observation by peer review groups confirm that individual services usually respond to initial enquiries promptly. Observation during the visit confirmed that in-house support, performance and compliance teams' responses are prompt and action is taken if any problems are identified. Service areas have their own policies and procedures for informing customers of any delays. Monitoring of main business is robust throughout the Directorate, but for full compliance at 5.3.1 and 5.3.2, there is a need to ensure this also happens for all stated standards to do with quality and timeliness across all service areas. There is still scope for individual services to review any 'charter' standards that are incomplete, variable in quality or 'aged'. Likewise, there is scope for the Directorate to consider further how it might more usefully compare this performance against other organisations.