



Assessment Report

CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE





1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Following the assessment, Birmingham City Council Economy Directorate were found to have a deep understanding of, and commitment to, Customer Service Excellence. The commitment was displayed from Senior Management levels through to operations and front-line staff.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank those people involved in the overall assessment process. It has been a pleasure meeting with your team and having the opportunity to observe your service in action.

The outcome of the assessment was -

“Continued award of the Customer Service Excellence Standard has been recommended”

Address:	1 Lancaster Circus, Queensway, Birmingham B4 7DJ		
Standard(s):	Customer Service Excellence	Accreditation Body(s)	UKAS
Representative:	Joanne Podmore		
Site(s) assessed:	Single site	Date(s) of audit(s):	24 – 27.07.18
Lead Assessor:	Bob Mandy	Additional team member(s):	N/A
Type of Assessment:	Annual Review		
Review of Certification Claims	Claims are accurate and in accordance with SGS guidance		



2. CONTEXT

The Economy Directorate is currently made up of five council departments, The Business and Customer Support team has been centralised and are not included within the figures the 41 staff continue to provide support to the Economy Directorate

The departments are as follows:

- Planning and Regeneration approximately 241 staff.
- Highways and Infrastructure approximately 72 staff
- Transportation and Connectivity approximately 103 staff
- Employment and Skills approximately 36 staff.
- Birmingham Property Services approximately 94 staff

From these five departments, the Economy Directorate is made up of seven functions. These are Employment, Highways and Infrastructure, Transport and Connectivity, Planning and Development, Housing Development, Birmingham Property Services and European & International Affairs. Whilst these appear as individual services on an organisation chart they are in fact closely interlinked and interdependent. The work of the Economy Directorate involves strategic leadership through the development of policy leading to the direct delivery of projects and services as well as partnership working to bring about implementation.

The activities are all focused on driving forward the economic growth of Birmingham leading to the delivery of housing and jobs, environmental enhancements, sustainable transport and improved connectivity, supporting local people into employment, improving skills and business development. These activities as seen or discussed during this assessment range from a resident applying for and having a roadside curb dropped to the strategic planning and development of the infrastructure required for staging the 2022 Commonwealth Games.

The work of the Directorate is set in the context of the social, economic and environmental challenges faced by the city of Birmingham. These challenges include:

- By 2031 Birmingham's population is set to grow by 150,000 people with a demand for more than 89,000 new dwellings.
- The growth in the city's population will result in 700,000 additional daily trips across the network by 2031.

- The increase in population will require the creation of over 100,000 jobs.
- Meeting the target of 60% reduction in levels of CO2 by 2027.
- Major improvements to the air quality within the city reducing emissions and other pollutants that directly affect the health and wellbeing of the population.
- Ensuring safeguarding and the protection of children is embedded within all work programmes to demonstrate shared ownership of the Council's statutory duties and primary priority.
- Improving road safety and reducing the number of people killed and seriously injured on our road network.
- Ensuring resilience in the transport network during an intensive infrastructure improvement programme on road and rail.
- The maintenance and management of the city's highway infrastructure, street lights, traffic signals and associated structures.
- Tackling local unemployment and improving the number of local people qualified to NVQ level 3.

To address these challenges during the coming years a number of major projects and programmes will be prioritised to deliver the greatest economic benefits to the city.

Curzon - delivering local infrastructure and development enabling activity to maximise the economic benefits of HS2 and facilitating the new city centre terminus station.

Birmingham Smithfield - delivery of a major Council led city centre redevelopment delivering over 300,000 sqm of commercial space, 2,000 homes, create 3,000 jobs and deliver improved public transport and public realm spaces.

City Centre Enterprise Zone - continued implementation of the £1b investment plan delivering support for site enabling, gap funding, public transport infrastructure and public realm improvements. The EZ will support accelerated delivery of development facilitating 40,000 jobs, one million sqm of commercial floor space and 4,000 new homes across the city centre by 2038.

Birmingham Connected - implementation of priority projects as part of the Birmingham Connected programme, facilitate and support the delivery of a range of projects to create a sustainable transport system.

Peddimore - delivery of City Council led development to create opportunities for new employment generating activity to deliver 251,000 sqm of commercial space, 10,000 jobs and support key growth sectors including advanced manufacturing.



Business Enterprise and Innovation Programmes - delivery of £33m investment programmes focused on growth and development of businesses.

Youth Promise Plus - significant coach mentoring project supporting up to 16,610 NEET young people towards training, education or employment.

Employability and Skills for Inclusive Growth - delivery of £21m investment in SME workforce development, and employability pathways for adults and young people.

Langley Sustainable Urban Extension – 6,000 new homes to be built delivering new communities and associated infrastructure.

Housing programme including InReach and BMHT continues to deliver homes across the city.

East Birmingham – delivering local infrastructure and development activity to maximise the economic benefits of HS2 and improve the local environment, connectivity, inclusivity and access to jobs.

Economic Zones – delivering local infrastructure and development enabling activity to maximise the economic benefits focused on key sites and infrastructure across the city.

Energy Company – Creation of an energy company focusing on developing better outcomes for those on pre-payment meters.

Air Quality Action Plan – Measures to address the exceedance of air quality indicators and improve the quality of the environment across the city by addressing the sources of pollution.

By listing these projects and programmes it is possible to gain an understanding of the far-reaching strategy that the Economy Directorate is leading. In addition to the programmes and projects listed above the Economy Directorate will be at the centre for developing the sites and infrastructure for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Whilst it is a positive move for Birmingham to host the games the legacy will be 1,000 homes left from the athlete's village, the stadium and infrastructure across the city.

Birmingham Property Services has been fully integrated onto the Economy Directorate and the scope of the registration has been extended to cover this service.



3. METHOD OF ASSESSMENT

The assessment was undertaken in two stages; the first was a review of your self-assessment submission. This review enabled the assessor to gain an understanding of how the organisation has met the requirements of the Customer Service Excellence standard.

The next stage was to review the actual service delivered on-site. This was conducted through reviewing practice as well as speaking to staff, partners and customers. This included following customer journeys through your processes and how these aligned with customer insight.

During the assessment process, the criteria are scored on a four-band scale:

COMPLIANCE PLUS - Behaviours or practices which exceed the requirements of the standard and are viewed as exceptional or as exemplar to others, either within the applicant's organisation or the wider customer service arena.

COMPLIANT - Your organisation has a variety of good quality evidence which demonstrates that you comply fully with this element. The evidence which reflects compliance is consistent throughout and is embedded in the culture of the organisation.

PARTIAL COMPLIANCE - Your organisation has some evidence but there are significant gaps. The gaps could include:

- Parts of the applicant's organisation which are currently not compliant and/or
- Areas where the quality of the evidence is poor or incomplete and/or
- Areas which have begun to be addressed and are subject to significant further development and/or
- Areas where compliance has only been evident for a very short period of time

NON-COMPLIANT - Your organisation has little or no evidence of compliance or what evidence you do have refers solely to a small (minor) part of your organisation.

The current scheme allows applicants a maximum number of partial compliances, equating to a pass mark of 80% for all criteria.



4. OPENING MEETING

The on-site assessment commenced with an opening meeting.

The assessment activity and the partial compliances were discussed. The itinerary had been agreed with Birmingham City Council - Economy Directorate in advance. The organisation was informed that all information obtained during the assessment would be treated as strictly confidential.

The scope of Assessment was confirmed as: Birmingham City Council - Economy Directorate

5. ON-SITE ASSESSMENT

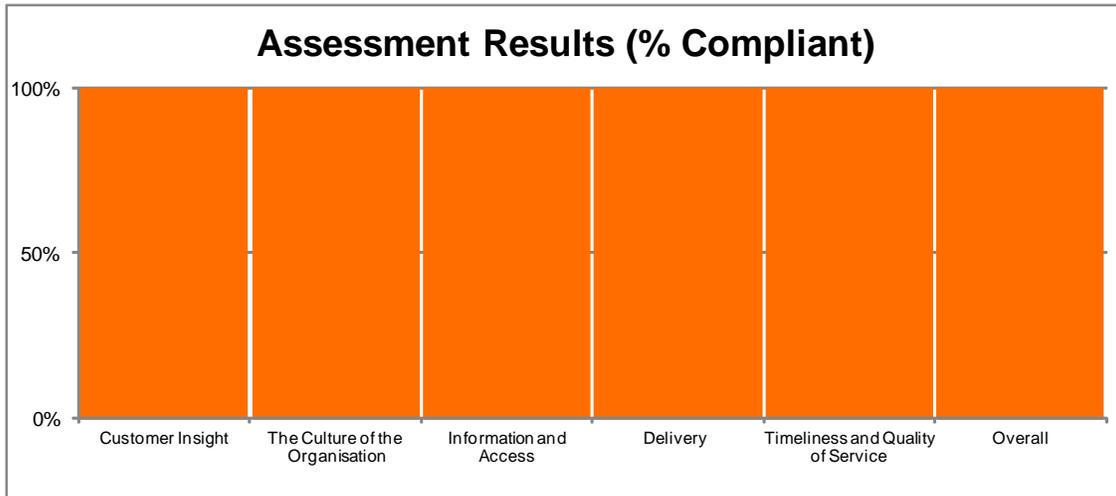
The Assessor was accompanied throughout the assessment by Joanne Podmore and other personnel within the organisation were involved when assessing activities within their responsibility.

The assessment resulted in the raising of no partial compliances. A number of observations are listed in Section 7 of this report.



Criterion		Maximum number of partial compliances	Number of non-compliances	Number of partial compliances	Number of Full compliances
1	Customer Insight	2	0	0	11
2	The Culture of the Organisation	2	0	0	11
3	Information and Access	2	0	0	12
4	Delivery	3	0	0	13
5	Timeliness and Quality of Service	2	0	0	10

Good practices awarded during the assessment	9
Compliance Plus awarded during the assessment	3



Have the partial compliance(s) raised at the last assessment been closed?	Yes
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Partial compliances from previous visit closed out.

CRITERION 1

1.3.2 There is evidence from across the Directorate that there are good processes in place for gathering customer satisfaction feedback and analysing results. However, no satisfaction work is currently carried out for Parking Enforcement.

This has been introduced recently with results currently being analysed.

CRITERION 4

4.2.3 Whilst some parts of the Directorate do actively benchmark with comparator organisations this could be more widespread.



Benchmarking is now more widespread. This has been a natural development within the Directorate. The Directorate had only just been established at the time of the last assessment.

4.2.4 Learning from best practice and publishing results is done in some parts of the organisation but could be more widespread.

The seven functions work much closer together and share best practice across the Directorate.

6. AREAS OF PARTIAL COMPLIANCE

CRITERION 1

None raised

CRITERION 2

None raised

CRITERION 3

None raised

CRITERION 4

None raised

CRITERION 5

None raised



7. OBSERVATIONS

During the site assessment, the following general observations were made. These include: positive areas scored as Compliance Plus; areas of good practice; areas for improvement identified throughout the entire assessment process, as listed below.

Areas for Improvement

- 4.2.3 Benchmarking has been introduced across the Directorate but there is room to increase activity. In BPS for example.
- 3.1.2 As part of the assessment a visit was made to a curb dropping contract for a private householder. The cost of this day's work is a minimum of £1,300. As a non-technical observer, this seems a lot of money. However, when the process is explained in detail the customer gets value for money. Whilst the planning application process is easy to follow on the council website consider adding an explanation of exactly what you get for your money during curb dropping work. It would also be useful to list the time scale for this work.
- 4.2.1 When a tenant loses their home due to being part of a clearance scheme they receive a payment to help with relocation costs. The payment is made by cheque rather than bank transfer due to the current IT system being insecure. A new secure system was dismissed as too expensive. However, whilst this may be true in the short term the savings made using BACs payments over the coming years would far outstrip the short term savings. This is also more customer friendly as the tenants would not have to wait for their cheques to be cleared.
- 4.1.3 The Birmingham and Solihull Youth Promise Plus project is aimed at giving personalised employment and skills support for 15 – 29-year-old residents who are not in work or education (NEET). The teams have engaged with more than 16,600 young people to date with many positive outcomes. This is out of a total of more than 37,000 NEET people in Birmingham which is the highest total across UK local authorities. However, central funding for the project has come to an end and the teams are being disbanded. The Directorate cannot directly influence central funding but this is a project that is having a positive impact across the city and it is a shame to lose it both from a human and financial point of view.



- 4.1.2 The Norfolk Tower clearance scheme is a good example of improving the living environment for the people of Birmingham. However, the scheme has demolished a tower block with 107 flats and replaced them with 28 houses. The Directorate's business plan states that "by 2031 Birmingham's population is set to grow by 150,000 people with a demand for more than 89,000 new dwellings." It will be interesting to see how the demand can be met whilst decreasing the housing stock with schemes similar to Norfolk Tower.
- 5.2.2 BPS is doing an excellent job in relocating people across the corporate buildings. Their workload will increase with the many projects being planned across the city but with a decreasing number of staff.

Areas of Good Practice

- The Directorate continues to enhance their processes for gaining customer feedback. The processes cover all aspects of the many services provided and feedback is gathered using BeHeard a new system that replaces Survey Monkey. The new system is more secure and has much better functionality for reporting on complaints and looking for trends.
- The assessment included site visits to a number of different services including curb dropping, planning, Youth Promise Plus and BPS. All staff and contractors interviewed were polite and friendly with customers and feedback from these customers was very positive.
- The strategy for demolishing aged tower blocks and replacing them with estates was demonstrated by a visit to what was once Norfolk Tower. The replacement houses and surrounding green areas has turned a socially unacceptable living area into a pleasant estate.
- Modeshift STARS is the national schools awards scheme that has been established to recognise schools that have demonstrated excellence in supporting cycling, walking and other forms of sustainable travel. The scheme encourages schools across the country to join in a major effort to increase levels of sustainable and active travel in order to improve the health and well-being of children and young people. In Birmingham, the small Transportation Team have signed up 190 schools out of the 507 across the city. To date seventeen have achieved the bronze award, three silver awards and one gold award. This is an excellent part of the city transportation policy of getting people out of cars and cutting down levels of emissions. It is also encouraging that the Bikeability Scheme for

schools is running alongside Modeshift STARS as at the time of the last CSE visit funding was ceasing along with the scheme.

- The Birmingham CC website has been greatly enhanced since the last visit and is more user friendly and interactive. Many services can be booked on line such as planning applications. In addition, the council has also analysed the requirements of GDPR and ensured that the website and the rest of the services fully comply.
- The planning committee process has been made more customer friendly with a less intimidating setting for the meetings. They are also introducing 3D planning presentations that will be screened for members and customers. Contentious points can be much more easily illustrated using this format.
- The BPS process for relocating people around the corporate estate has been refined to ensure the minimum disruption to services. This process is supported by a Statement of Needs (SON) form that is completed by a manager for all staff being relocated. The SON makes the relocating service analyse its requirements. This includes the number of work stations required including hot desks, specialised equipment such as chairs and IT and telephony requirements. They also have excellent feedback processes to continually improve the service.
- The Directorate has a robust appraisal process that includes measures on customer care and focus for all managers and staff.
- The Directorate has continued to improve the channels of communication for all customers for all services since the last visit. Whilst customers are encouraged to use online channels the Directorate recognises that this may not always suit everyone.

Areas of Compliance Plus

- 4.3.5 The Planning and Regeneration complaints process has been adopted by the rest of the Directorate and is a model of best practice. The process is gradually being adopted across Birmingham City Council. The complaints process continues to be enhanced, with a new complaints system being introduced as of 1st June 2018. This is called Icasework and is a more user-friendly system with better reporting functions. It allows customers to make complaints, compliments and comments for service improvement online.

- 3.4.3 The Directorate is a facilitator for the city's Big City Plan to regenerate the city by 2031. This is focused on the whole community and the list of projects and programmes is in the context section of this report. It shows the breadth of the developments planned across the city. From this it is possible to gain an understanding of the far-reaching strategy that the Economy Directorate is leading. In addition to the programmes and projects listed above the Economy Directorate will be at the centre for developing the sites and infrastructure for the 2022 Commonwealth Games. Whilst it is a positive move for Birmingham to host the games the legacy will be 1,000 homes left from the athlete's village, the stadium and infrastructure across the city.
- 4.1.3 As mentioned above The Birmingham and Solihull Youth Promise Plus project is aimed at giving personalised employment and skills support for 15 – 29-year-old residents who are not in work or education (NEET). The teams have engaged with more than 16,600 young people to date with many positive outcomes. This is out of a total of more than 37,000 NEET people in Birmingham which is the highest total across UK local authorities. This has already been listed as an opportunity for improvement but as a service to the young people of Birmingham is also listed as a service of compliance plus value. The assessment included site visits to meet two young people who have been given training opportunities in a Marks and Spencer store via the Prince's Trust and two more that had been supported by Trident Reach. The first two young people were gaining their first work experience in the store. Trident Reach is a specialist provider for young people who are homeless or at risk of being homeless. The two working in the store felt that the opportunity would enhance their job prospects. The two interviewed at Trident had literally had their lives turned around by the involvement of their Intervention Workers.



8. ACTION PLANNING & NEXT STEPS

The achievement of Customer Service Excellence is an ongoing activity and it is important that Birmingham City Council - Economy Directorate continues to meet the elements of the criteria throughout the three years the hallmark is awarded for. Efforts must be made by Customer Service Excellence holders to continually improve their service.

We recommend that you develop an action plan based on the findings of this report. The action plan does not need to be a separate document and is likely to be more effective if the actions are embedded in your normal improvement and service developments plans.

We will undertake an annual review that will look at your continued compliance with the Customer Service Excellence. As part of the review we will also look at progress on any findings of the previous assessments.

In addition to reviewing progress outlined above, we will also review the services delivery, done so by following customer journeys.

For more information on the annual review please refer to our document "Building on your Customer Service Excellence success – Preparing for the annual review".

Holders must inform SGS of any major changes in the service provision covered by the scope of the certificate. This includes reorganisation or mergers.

In addition, SGS must be informed should the certified service experience a significant increase in customer complaints or critical press coverage.

If you are in doubt at any stage, we strongly recommend contacting the Customer Service Team for advice on the significance of any service or organisational change, or issues surrounding customer complaints.

SGS will visit within the next 12 months for the annual review.

SGS recommends that Birmingham City Council - Economy Directorate retains a copy of this report to aid continuous improvement, and as a reference document for future assessment reviews.