

**Report to:** Overview and Scrutiny Committee  
Audit, Governance and Improvement

**Date:** 9th March 2009  
26th March 2009

**Subject:** Details of new Customer Access Strategy 2009-12, and revised Complaints Procedure.

**Report of:** Customer Access Strategy and Complaints Procedure

**Contact officer:** Sharon Weetman 01942 488312

---

**Purpose / summary:** To inform Members about the Customer Access Strategy and Complaints Procedure, and how these are planned to be implemented.

To gain support for the proposed reporting mechanism relating to these documents.

**Alternative options considered and reason for selecting the one recommended:** An alternative option would be to continue to operate the customer service and complaint handling functions in an uncoordinated fashion. This would not reflect the "One Council" approach and would reduce our ability to learn corporately from customer feedback being received and use this to develop customer centric services.

The recommended option will enable the Council to:

- Develop a good knowledge about customers and their needs and expectations;
- Learn from the feedback received and use this to improve service delivery;
- Share best practice;
- Improve the Council's reputation;
- Provide Members with regular information about our performance in relation to customer service.

**Recommendation / decision:** That the implementation of the Customer Access Strategy and Complaints Procedure is supported.

**Key Decision:** This report does not involve a key decision.

**Risks / Implications:**

Financial: The establishment of the local one stop shops will require funding – to be confirmed for each project.

Staffing: The establishment of one stop shops and the contact centre will require changes to some contracts.

Policy: The Customer Access Strategy is new; the Complaints Procedure has been revised.

Equal Opportunities - Has a Diversity Impact Assessment been conducted? Yes

Wards affected: All

**Property Implications – Does the proposal involve a reduction, addition or change to the Council’s asset base or its occupation?**

Yes – One Stop Shop projects

**If yes, have the property implications been agreed with the Corporate Property Officer?**

Yes

**Does this proposal have significant implications for the Council and the local population?**

A full diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

**Does this proposal involve a new policy or procedure or significant changes to an existing policy or procedure?**

A diversity impact assessment has been undertaken and is attached as an appendix to this report.

Has the Service Director - Borough Solicitor confirmed that the recommendations within this report are lawful and comply with the Council’s Constitution?

**Yes –**  
complaints  
procedure  
reviewed

Has the Service Director - Corporate Services confirmed that any expenditure referred to within this report is consistent with the Council’s budget?

**No**

Are any of the recommendations within this report contrary to the Policy Framework of the Council?

**No**

\* delete which applicable

**For Cabinet reports only :**

Categorisation of the report:	<b>X</b>
Discussion leading to a decision	

	<b>X</b>
Discussion	

Monitoring	
Sharing for corporate understanding	<b>X</b>

Decision	
Information	

---

**Tracking/Process:**

	Consultation	Ward Members	Partners
Panel	Overview & Scrutiny	Cabinet	Council

List of Background Papers in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972:

Title of document	Which meeting did it go to?	Date of meeting	Copy available from?
Customer Access Strategy Complaints Procedure	SMT	3rd February 2009	Sharon Weetman

Proper Officer \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **Background:**

The Council's Customer Care Charter was published in April 1998, outlining our approach to customer care and the standards we aim to achieve. The charter has not been reviewed since this date, and is now being implemented in different ways, and to different standards, across the Council. Over the last 10 years a number of changes have been made in the way customer services are approached, with a focus now very much made on putting customer views and needs at the core of service delivery. The Customer Access Strategy has been developed to provide a framework for the delivery of services that meet customer needs and expectations, that are based on firm evidence of need, that are efficient, and are delivered how and when people want them.

During 2008 a review was carried out of the Council's Complaints Procedure. The Council currently has one complaints procedure, but it is operated in a variety of ways within different services. It is not currently easy to assess the quality of response provided, or to ensure that appropriate action is taken to use complaints to deliver service improvements. The proposed new procedure will require all complaints to be logged through one database, which will be monitored centrally, so that the issues that cause customer satisfaction can be identified, and actions put in place to address. There will also be more focus on customer satisfaction with complaint handling to identify where improvements can be made.

## **Proposals:**

- The Customer Access Strategy is supported and relevant project plans developed to deliver the implementation plan.
- The Complaints Procedure is supported and the new approach is launched from April 2009.
- The Overview and Scrutiny Committee receive a regular report on the Council's performance in delivering the outcomes of these plans. This report will include:
  - General customer satisfaction data, and details of lessons learned and actions taken;
  - Numbers of complaints in total, by stage of complaint, and by category;
  - Performance in responding to target timescales for complaints;
  - Customer satisfaction with complaint handling, lessons learned and actions taken.

## **Alternative options considered and reason for the recommended option:**

An alternative option would be to continue to use an outdated and disjointed approach to managing our customer services function which does not reflect the "One Council" approach.

## **Conclusions:**

The Customer Access Strategy and Complaints Procedure reflect the Council's ongoing commitment to put customers at the heart of what we do.

Reporting on the achievement of the outcomes and performance aims within the documents will provide Members with an overview of progress being made in the delivery of improved customer services, and how customer feedback is being used more effectively.



# How to complain about a Council service

DRAFT

Responsible officer	Sharon Dickinson, Head of Customer Services
Publication date	June 2008
Review date	June 2011

## Introduction

Wigan Council aims to provide the best possible service to our customers, and to act on any feedback we receive.

We collect your feedback through our “Have your say” programme which is made up of:

- **Compliments** – when we’ve done something well;
- **Comments** – when you’ve got a suggestion or a thought about how we do things;
- **Complaints** – when you’re not happy with the service we’ve provided;
- **Customer Satisfaction Surveys** – when you’ve received a service from us and we ask you what you thought.

We hope that you will receive a high quality service whenever you contact us to make an enquiry, request a service, or to ask for advice and information; but if this is not the case we want you to let us know so that we can improve in future. This procedure outlines how the Council will respond to a complaint and what you can expect when making a complaint to us as part of the above.

## What is a complaint?

A complaint is:

***“When you tell us that a Council service you expected either wasn’t delivered at all, or wasn’t delivered to your satisfaction”.***

If you tell us about a fault that needs to be put right, for instance a street light that is out, this will initially be classed as a service request.

Some services have specific procedures governing complaints and appeals. Whilst not dealt with under our complaints procedure, they will follow the same principles of transparency and fairness.

If your complaint falls into one of these categories we will tell you, and let you know how it will be dealt with. The main complaint types that would be dealt with under other procedures are listed below:

- an appeal against refusal of planning permission;
- complaints that fall within other statutory complaint procedures (eg care services or child protection);
- a school admission or exclusion appeal;
- complaints about Councillors;
- a complaint from a member of Council Staff about a personnel matter.

If you make a complaint about another organisation that is providing a service on our behalf, or about a number of different services or providers, we will assign a main contact to make sure your complaint is dealt with, and give you their contact details. We will take responsibility for making sure that you receive a full response to your complaint.

## How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint to us in whichever way is easiest for you.

- Come in to any public Council office
- Phone our Contact Centre on 01942 xxxxxx.
- Use our minicom on 01942 xxxxxx
- Use our online form at [www.wigan.gov.uk/complain](http://www.wigan.gov.uk/complain).
- E-mail us on [complaints@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:complaints@wigan.gov.uk).
- Fill in our complaint form – available from any Council office or library
- Write to us at Wigan Council – Complaints, Town Hall, Library Street, Wigan, WN1 1YN
- Contact your local Councillor.

All complaints are dealt with in the strictest of confidence and any personal information is stored in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

## Our Promise

- Your complaint will be received positively, however you make it;
- We will carry out impartial and confidential investigations;
- We will make sure that our staff are trained to handle complaints effectively;
- When we have got it wrong, we will apologise and put things right where we can;
- We will respond to your complaint within the timescales outlined below;
- We will keep you updated on progress, and tell you what will happen next;
- We will tell you how we make our decisions;
- We will learn from what you tell us and use your feedback to improve our services;
- We will focus on getting the right outcome you, rather than on processes and procedures.

## The Complaints Process

We will always try to resolve complaints on the spot by talking through problems with you, without the need to go through our formal complaints procedure. This can save a great deal of time, distress and cost.

If we are unable to resolve the complaint to your satisfaction then we will tell you how to proceed within the formal procedures outlined below.

- Stage 1 – complaint investigated by Service Manager or appropriate Officer.
- Stage 2 – review by Service Head or Chief Officer.
- Stage 3 – final review by Chief Executive or Deputy.

A diagram showing the complaints process is attached to the end of this document.

## Complaint Process - Stage 1

A complaint will be progressed under stage one of our formal complaints procedure when:

- We can't resolve the problem informally;
- We receive your complaint in writing, by email, via our online form or the Council's comments, compliments and complaints form;
- You tell us that you want to make a formal complaint;
- We believe it is necessary to use the formal procedure to resolve or respond to the complaint.

Complaints at Stage 1 will be investigated by a Service Manager or appropriate officer from the service you have complained about, who was not directly involved in the reason for your complaint.

We will acknowledge your complaint on receipt, and confirm our understanding of the complaint. We will try to provide you with a full response within 10 working days of the receipt of your complaint. If this is not possible we will write to you to let you know why there is a delay, and the estimated time it will take to provide a full response. The full response will advise you how to progress to Stage 2 if you are still unhappy.

## Complaint Process - Stage 2

You can ask us to review your complaint at Stage 2 if:

- You are unhappy with **how** your complaint was handled at stage 1;
- You are unhappy with the response you have received.

We need to know which part of the complaint you feel wasn't handled well, and what action you would like to be taken.

Stage 2 complaints will be investigated by a Chief Officer or Head of Service who will review how your complaint was dealt with originally to decide if:

- The complaint was investigated thoroughly, objectively and honestly;
- The conclusions reached are based on evidence obtained; and
- The response was reasonable, appropriate and tried to achieve resolution.

The investigating officer may contact you during their review to confirm any details or to discuss your complaint further with you. At the end of the investigation, and within 15 working days of receipt of your request, they will write to you with the outcome of their investigation and any actions resulting from it. The response will advise you how to progress to stage 3 if you are still unhappy.

Where the complaint is upheld at stage 2 a review will be carried out of the original department's complaint handling procedures and actions put in place to promote better resolution at the first stage. We will tell you what actions have been taken.

## Complaint Process - Stage 3

You can ask the Chief Executive to review your complaint at Stage 3 if:

- You have not received a response to your complaint at Stage 2 within 15 working days, or a holding letter indicating when you will receive this;
- The response to your stage 2 complaint did not provide details of how the original complaint had been reviewed, and the findings from this;
- You are unhappy with the response you received at Stage 2.

Stage 3 complaints will be reviewed by the Chief Executive, or Deputy, who will review the original complaint, and the response provided at stage 2. The Chief Executive, or Deputy, may contact you during their review to confirm any details or discuss your complaint further with you. At the end of the investigation, and within 15 working days of receipt of your request, they will write to you with the outcome of their investigation and any actions resulting from it. The response will advise you how to contact the Local Government Ombudsman if you are still unhappy.

Where the complaint is upheld at stage 3 a review will be carried out of the original department's review procedures and actions put in place to promote better investigation of complaint handling at stage 2. We will tell you what actions have been taken.

### Local Government Ombudsman

If your complaint has progressed through the above stages and you are still not happy with our response you can ask the Local Government Ombudsman to review our investigation.

The Local Government Ombudsman is an independent body, whose purpose is to provide impartial and prompt investigation and resolution of complaints of injustice through maladministration by Local Authorities.

The Ombudsman can investigate complaints about how the council has done something, but they can't question what a council has done simply because someone does not agree with the Council's decision.

All complaints referred to the Council via the Local Government Ombudsman are reviewed by the Council's Legal Services Department.

**Note:** The Ombudsman is unlikely to investigate your complaint unless you have given us the opportunity to consider your complaint under our procedures.

Contact details for the Ombudsman are:

The Local Government Ombudsman  
PO Box 4771  
Coventry CV4 0EH

You can call the LGO Advice Team on 0845 6021983 for advice or to make a complaint by telephone.

You can also text 'call back' to 0762 4804323.

Deleted: 21

## Unreasonable Complaints

If we consider that a complaint is unreasonable it will be passed to the Head of Customer Services who will consider whether further investigation of the complaint will be carried out.

Unreasonable complaints would include, but are not limited to:

- Using a “scattergun” approach to send the same complaint to a number of points;
- Making excessive demands on staff time and resources whilst investigating your complaint;
- Refusal to accept a decision that has been made and upheld;
- Resubmitting a complaint that has already been dealt with in the last 6 months;
- Using abusive, threatening, or libellous language.

If your complaint is considered unreasonable you will be informed in writing and advised of any action to be taken or right of appeal.

## Recording and Monitoring Complaints

Customer Service Officers monitor all complaint records to ensure that appropriate investigations are completed and responses sent out, and that action is taken where necessary to learn from your feedback and improve our services.

Customer Service Officers will assign your complaint to a category, depending on what it is about. This helps us to clearly identify the things that customers want us to improve. The categories we use are:

- 1) Quality of service;
- 2) Staff behaviour;
- 3) Delay in service delivery;
- 4) Decision;
- 5) Equality and Diversity;
- 6) Other.

All complaints are logged into the Council’s customer relationship management (CRM) database and analysed by number, type, location, customer groups (age, gender etc.) and reported regularly to Audit Governance and Improvement Review Committee. We will look at how well we are performing against our targets and also at the level of satisfaction we are achieving. You can see details of our complaints performance on the Council’s website.

Where complaints have been upheld, an action log will be added to the CRM system so that we can make sure something is done to improve our services for the future.

The Council considers an annual report detailing Ombudsman complaints received, and any related recommendations.

## Customer Satisfaction

When you have received a response from us through our formal complaints procedure, we give you the chance to tell us how easy you found the complaint system to use, and how you felt about how your complaint was handled.

We will use this information to help us improve our complaint handling for the future and publish the feedback on our website.

## Fairness

We are committed to making it easy for anyone who is unhappy with a service or experience provided by the Council to tell us about it. An assessment has been carried out on this procedure and actions identified to make sure that all members of the community are considered.

DRAFT

## The Complaint Process

- You haven't received the expected service; or
- You have received the expected quality of service.

Let us know.....



### Informal

- If you speak to us about your complaint we will try to resolve it on the spot.
- We will confirm with you what the problem is and how you would like it to be resolved.
  - We will try to solve the problem.
  - We will check if you are happy with the resolution.

### Formal – Stage 1

- If your complaint needs more investigation, or we receive it in writing:
- A manager will look into your complaint and send you a response within 10 working days – or a holding letter telling you when to expect a response.

### Formal – Stage 2

- If you are unhappy with the response at Stage 1:
- A Chief Officer or Head of Service will review how your complaint was handled.
  - You will receive a response within 15 working days – or a holding letter telling you when to expect a response.

### Formal – Stage 3

- If you are unhappy with the response at Stage 2:
- The Chief Executive, or Deputy, will review how your complaint was handled at both stages.
  - You will receive a response with 15 working days – or a holding letter telling you when to expect a response.

### Ombudsman

If all the stages of our complaints process have been followed and you are still not happy with our response, you can ask the Local Government Ombudsman to carry out a review.

# Transforming our Customer Services

## Customer Access Strategy: 2009- 2012

### Introduction

Wigan Council is focused on delivering services to our customers, and understanding our customers' needs is changing the way we do our business with and on behalf of the citizens of the Borough:

- Understanding what our shared priorities are
- Understanding our customers' diverse needs
- Understanding what drives satisfaction; and
- Redesigning services around the customer

Our aspirations for the way we work together are summarised in our mission:

We work for the Wigan Community to enhance their lives  
We treat everyone fairly and with respect  
We work together to achieve results  
We deliver on our promises  
We challenge what and how we do things to improve  
We provide value for money by using our resources effectively

Wigan Council has been rated as a four star Authority by the Audit Commission, reflecting our ongoing commitment to delivering excellent public services to all residents and visitors to the Borough. However, if we are to maintain this status in the future we must ensure that our services are driven, and owned, by our customers – and not by our policies. We must operate as 'One Council in One Borough', and we must work with our partners to get the right service to the right person at the right time.

The catalyst for change in our approach and way of thinking is the development of the Wigan Life Centre campus which is due to open in 2011, and the Local 'Life Centres' which will provide local access to public services in our communities. These centres, along with our Public Service Contact Centre, will resolve a high level of customer enquiries at the first point of contact, and operate on the basis that achieving the right outcome for each customer is the focus of every interaction. Our vision for change is, however, wider than just buildings – it encompasses all Council staff, Elected Members and all Council service provision. We are committed to reviewing and improving all aspects of our customer interactions, processes, and culture to embed best practice across the whole organisation.

This document sets out our vision for the future of customer service delivery, and our plans for achieving it. The strategy has been developed with regard to national best practice developed by the Cabinet Office and the Customer Excellence Standard.

Sharon Weetman  
Head of Customer Services

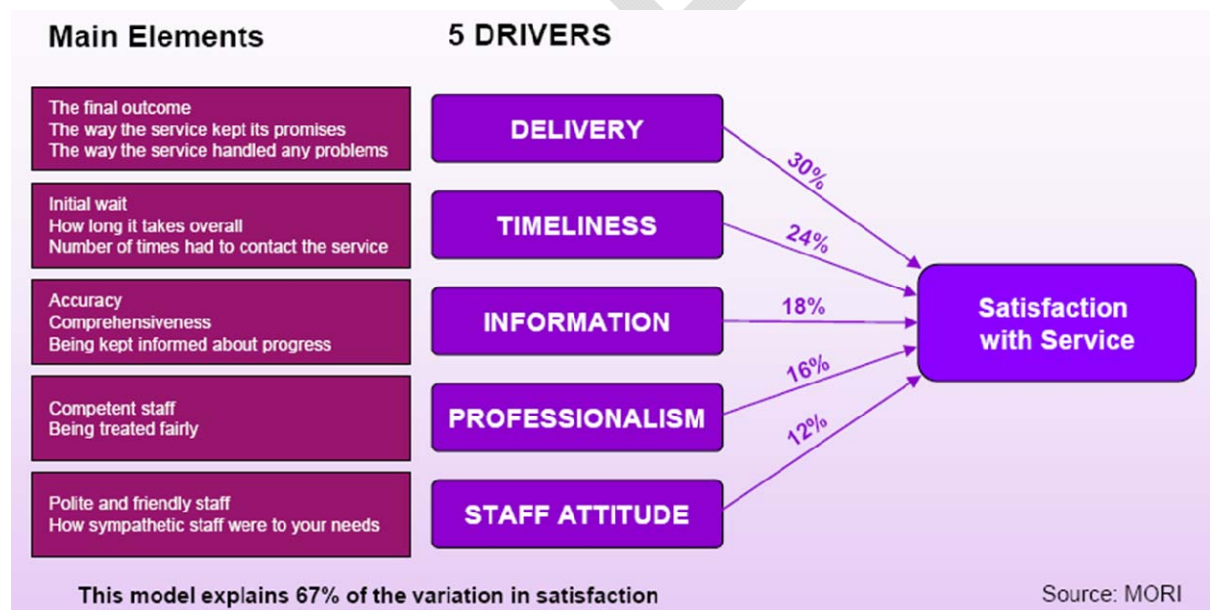
## Our Vision

***We want Wigan to be the best at delivering innovative customer services that are:***

- ***owned by our customers;***
- ***easy to access;***
- ***available when you need them, via a method that suits you;***
- ***and delivered to a standard that exceeds expectations.***

## Customer Expectations

A 2004 survey of public service providers found a pattern of common drivers of customer satisfaction in the UK. This is summarised below:



Our plan to improve our customer services considers each of these drivers and outlines:

- Our current position;
- Future actions;
- Desired outcomes.

## Delivery

### Current Position

- Corporate standards were set in 1998, but are no longer widely publicised and our performance against them is not published. Many services have their own standards.
- Front facing customer service is provided by individual services and there is no clear picture of the cost of delivery through the different channels.
- A corporate complaints procedure is in place, but is managed and monitored differently by services. We are unable to assess our overall performance, or to identify trends over time.
- Customer satisfaction is assessed by individual services, but we have no overall approach for the Council as a whole, or to consistently learning from the feedback received in a timely way.
- “What’s your issue?” system has been implemented as part of the Children & Young People’s Strategy.
- In 2008 the Citizens Panel were asked about the Council’s approach to complaints. Only 7% of respondents felt that we positively encourage complaints and use them to improve for the future. However, 63% felt that we deal with complaints satisfactorily when they arise.

### **Actions**

- Carry out an audit of the different customer service programmes and standards that are in place currently across the Council.
- Identify the cost of each customer contact type and transfer to cheaper/more effective methods where appropriate.
- Consult with customers on what is important to them in service delivery and launch new corporate charter that matches local expectations.
- Ensure that any service related customer promises complement the corporate standards, and are monitored and reported in the same way.
- Establish regular monitoring of performance against these standards, and agree process for addressing areas for improvement. Publish the results, and resulting action plans.
- Launch a suite of products to enable customers to easily make comments, suggestions and/or complaints. Establish one system for logging, monitoring, and acting upon all customer feedback and quality assure this.
- Regularly publish information about our performance in handling complaints, and improvements that have been made as a result.
- Carry out an audit of the range of satisfaction measurement tools currently in use, and their effectiveness.
- Establish a corporate approach to the collection, monitoring, and use of customer satisfaction data. Publish how we are doing, actions we are taking, and improvements made as a result.
- Establish a ‘customer journey mapping’ programme to identify the customer experience of our service delivery for different kinds of customers (e.g. age ranges). Identify points of duplication, anxiety, and/or delay, and eradicate.
- Establish benchmarking process with other public service providers to identify best practice and options for improvement.
- Investigate the establishment of a “young people’s citizen’s panel” using methods and channels that are more appealing to this age group.

<b>Outcomes:</b>
------------------

- We make it clear to customers what we will deliver, and when.
- We keep to this promise, and report on our performance.
- It is easy for customers to tell us how we are doing – and they tell us.
- We handle problems positively, and encourage customers to complain when we don't meet their expectations.
- We use satisfaction data to drive improvements, but also to recognise good practice.
- We are learning.

## **Timeliness**

### **Current Position**

- We have corporate standards for responses to letters, phone calls, and e-mails but no consistent method for monitoring adherence to them.
- The Contact Centre teams are now using technology to identify wait times, abandoned call rates, and average length of calls in order to identify peaks of customer demand and respond to it.
- The Contact Centre teams are now operating extended hours of provision to increase customer access.
- Outside the Contact Centre teams we don't have an accurate picture of the customer experience when they telephone the Council. A monthly survey is carried out via the switchboard, but this not representative of the whole organisation and does not result in clear improvement plans.
- From October 2008 we are monitoring the levels of customer contact that could be avoided if we improved our processes or made information clearer.
- The number of visitors to our reception points, and the reason for their visit, is not currently logged. We are unable to accurately identify when our busy times are, frequent request types, or how we can improve the level of face to face service we provide.
- 63% of respondents to the Citizens Panel in 2008 felt that it is important to have a one stop shop type facility in their local community.

### **Actions**

- Establish corporate measurement of all customer contacts to develop a One Council view of demand and performance.
- Develop and implement a channel management strategy for the Council.
- Make it easy for customers to get in touch with us by phone, face to face or electronically, and provide fast and effective resolution from any channel.
- Establish Public Services Contact Centre and programme to transfer all basic first point phone enquiries through it by 2011.
- Develop a joined up approach to public service delivery through the Life Centres and Children's Centres through collaborative working with local partners.
- Establish a network of "problem noticers" in local communities, and provide them with tools to effectively identify where customers may be eligible for support, and signpost to services.

- Work with young people to develop the “problem noticer” role and look into accredited training to support this.
- Use business process review (BPR) processes to identify where efficiencies can be made to improve the speed with which we resolve enquiries.
- Review mail services and implement tools to monitor quality and timeliness of responses to written correspondence.
- Set clear expectations of when customers can expect service requests to be met, and report back on performance.
- Use avoidable contact data to reduce the number of repeat and progress chasing calls.

**Outcomes:**

- We know who our customers are, how they get in touch, and what their needs are.
- We develop our services around what customers want.
- Customers can get through to us quickly and get their enquiry resolved at the first point of contact.

## **Information**

### **Current Position**

- Over 100 phone numbers are currently advertised to contact the Council. This can result in confusion for the customer as to who to get in touch with.
- Many personal e-mails are published to the public. Responses to these mailboxes are not monitored, and can result in delays in action.
- The website holds a comprehensive amount of service related information, but it can be difficult to find and is not always written in the language that our customers use.
- Some, but not all, services publish information about their performance against standards.
- Customer feedback suggests that we do not consistently provide updates on how enquiries and requests are being resolved, and this information is not always available to front line staff.
- We don't hold organisation-wide information about who our customers are, the services they access, and the other services they may be eligible for.
- A Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system is in place and is being developed.
- An online Members' Enquiry System is in place for Councillors to log requests and monitor progress. Feedback says that this system often causes delays in getting a resolution and that feedback is not provided.
- Front line staff have access to interpretation and translation services if required.
- Borough Life is circulated on cd and is available on podcast to customers with visual impairments.
- The Youth Information Team produces information for 13-19 year olds in a variety of ways.

## **Actions**

- Carry out an audit of the customer access channels currently advertised for the Council, and the level of demand for each.
- Reduce the number of phone numbers that are advertised to the public through transfer of front line services to the Contact Centre.
- Establish generic mailboxes for public use, and protocols for monitoring and response.
- Regularly publish performance for customers about our overall performance.
- Implement website improvement plan, and establish customer panel to provide feedback on clarity and ease of use.
- Establish online mechanism to enable customers to rate the content of the website, and make suggestions for improvements.
- Establish the use of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system to develop customer history of enquiries that front line staff can use to provide a comprehensive response, and also to signpost to other services.
- Review the Members' Enquiry System and link to other information systems to ensure progress is monitored and actions progressed.
- Review current methods for providing information to young people, with a focus on use of technology and accessibility for all.

## **Outcomes**

- Resources are transferred to the front line so that contact points are reduced and wide range of issues can be resolved from one place.
- Information about how to get in touch is easy to find and clearly displayed.
- Where customers want to self serve online, they can.
- All front line staff have access to the information they need to respond effectively to customers and know how to use it.

## **Professionalism**

### **Current Position**

- Citizens Panel feedback in 2008 shows that staff knowledge is the most important thing to customers when they contact the Council. Getting the outcome you want is second most important, and the first person you speak to being able to deal with your enquiry is third.
- Four Council services have achieved Chartermark accreditation, and one has achieved the new Customer Excellence Standard.
- NVQ programmes are in place across a number of front line services.
- There is a corporate customer service awareness training course available.
- There is no corporate training programme available on dealing with complaints positively.
- CYPs have established a pledge that supports departmental commitment to customer care.

- Young people are trained and encouraged to participate in the recruitment process within the Council.

### **Actions**

- Identify where enquiries can be resolved at the first point of contact and provide front line staff with the tools to achieve this.
- Achieve corporate accreditation to the Customer Excellence Standard.
- Establish a professional customer service culture within the Council that attracts high calibre candidates.
- Establish a competency based approach to delivering customer service training that is externally accredited.
- Establish testing of customer service performance as part of recruitment process for all posts, and review as part of EDR.
- Include customer service competencies in all job descriptions.
- Ensure that all staff have the right tools available to deliver effective services.
- Look into training and supporting local residents to be involved in customer service recruitment.
- Work with the youth service on developing front line skills for all staff is responding positively to enquiries from young people.

### **Outcomes:**

- Corporate Customer Service Excellence Accreditation achieved.
- Staff feel proud to work in customer service roles.
- Training is consistent across the Council and is externally accredited and recognised.

## **Staff Attitude**

### **Current Position**

- We have a corporate commitment to putting customers first.
- Customer feedback for our front line services shows high levels of satisfaction with the way staff handle enquiries.
- The 2008 employee survey showed a downturn in the number of staff describing themselves as either fairly or very satisfied with their job.
- The 2008 employee survey showed a downturn in the number of staff describing themselves as fairly or very motivated in their current job.

### **Actions**

- Develop “One Customer” awareness raising campaign to establish the Wigan culture – what we expect from all staff.
- Implement a regular mystery shopping programme to see what the customer experience is really like.
- Establish a staff suggestion scheme that makes it easy for anyone to propose improvements to the way we deliver services from their experience of working with customers.
- Establish a recognition programme for excellence in customer services.

- Achieve “Louder than Words” accreditation from Royal National Institute for the Deaf (RNID) to show our commitment to treating everyone fairly, and to establish a culture of all staff and customers with respect and dignity.
- Adhere to the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) “See it Right” charter.

**Outcomes:**

- Staff feel valued and this is reflected in how they treat customers.
- We know, from customer feedback and mystery shopping, that the customer experience is tailored to the individual.
- Our working culture is one where poor treatment of customers is not tolerated at any level.

DRAFT

## Implementation Plan

**2009-10**

### Stage One

Audit of all our current approach to customer services:

- Customer service programmes and standards across the Council;
- Range, cost and usage of access channels;
- Range of satisfaction surveys & how they are driving improvement;
- Customer data held – what and where.

Development of our approach to customer insight – implementation of tools to deliver this.

Position statement of our current position re Customer Access and services complete.

Establish customer transformation governance structure.

Consult on, agree, and implement common performance standards.

**2010-11**

### Stage Two

Gap analysis completed for Customer Access and Services within the Council – customer demand and feedback is the basis of this.

Project plan in place to deliver improvements for the Council and achieve Customer Service Excellence Accreditation.

BPR programme developed for customer services in the Council.

Competency framework in place and driving customer service improvements in the Council.

Audit of customer service programmes and standards for partners complete.

Potential for collaborative projects identified.

Customer service outcomes embedded into service planning cycle.

**2011-12**

### Stage Three

Culture of customer focus is embedded across the Authority, and evidence shows that staff feel part of the improvements being made.

Customer and community satisfaction is high, both with standards of service and levels of involvement.

Customer Excellence Accreditation achieved.

Clear points of contact for public services established and publicised.

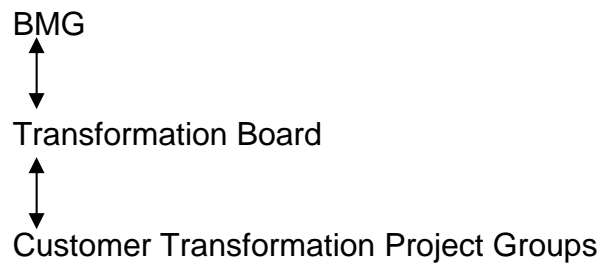
Services clearly developed around customer need.

Clear evidence that customer need is driving service delivery.

Collaborative working in place with partners to deliver customer service improvements.

## Governance Arrangements

The delivery of this programme will be steered through the following structure:



DRAFT