



Oadby & Wigston
BOROUGH COUNCIL

ORGANISATION/SERVICE ASSESSED

OADBY AND WIGSTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

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1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Oadby & Wigston Borough Council (the Council) is one of the seven district councils that make up the two-tier system of local government in Leicestershire together with Leicestershire County Council. The Council delivers the full range of services that all district councils provide. These are delivered through a combination of arrangements that are direct, contracted, shared or delegated. The four main services are Built Environment, Law & Democracy, Customer Service & Transformation and Finance services. These sub-divide into more finite services. The Council employ 184 staff. The Council also owns and manages its own housing stock of 1,200 homes. The Borough of Oadby and Wigston is a compact Borough which has a total population of 55,800 in an area of which approximately two thirds is urban in nature.

In July 2023, the Council moved to new premises at Brocks Hill, with the premises refurbished and modernised to provide a very attractive environment. In addition, the organisational values have been refreshed with a high degree of staff involvement. The outcome was that 'Putting the Customer First' has become the number one value - 'These are the staff's values'. This three-year review provided the opportunity to witness the Council's refreshed approach to delivering excellent services.

2. METHODOLOGY

The Council submitted evidence via Assessment Services Online Self-Assessment tool prior to this three-year review. A desktop review was undertaken on the 6th December 2022, with the review taking place onsite on the 12th and 13th December 2023.

Day one commenced with a tour of the new premises at Brock Hill. This was followed by a meeting with the CEO (Chief Executive Officer) to look at how the Council had maintained and improved on the commitment to putting customers at the heart of service delivery. A meeting with the Head of Customer Service and Transformation, the Customer Service Improvement Manager and the Customer Service Improvement Officer then took place. The meeting addressed the questions arising from the desktop review. The Leader of the Council was then interviewed.

Four meetings with representatives from various Teams followed. The first was with four representatives from the Customer Service and Transformation Team, followed by two members from the Community and Wellbeing Team, five members from the Finance Team and four members of the Law and Democracy Team. A presentation was given by two members of the Customer Service Improvement Team.

Day two commenced with a meeting with representatives from the Built Environment Team. After this, four customers were contacted by telephone to discuss their satisfaction with services they had received from the Council. A presentation was then given on the Customer Experience Strategy. Two partners were then interviewed via Microsoft Teams. These were a Health and Arts Team Leader and the University of Leicester. A further presentation was then given by the Communications and Marketing Manager.

Day two concluded with feedback to the Head of Customer Service and Transformation, the Customer Service Improvement Manager and the Customer Service Improvement Officer. Feedback included strengths, areas for improvement and the overall position against the CSE (Customer Service Excellence) Standard.

3. SUMMARY OF STRENGTHS

Sections: **1.3.1, 1.3.2, 1.3.3, 2.1.1, 2.1.3, 3.3.3, 4.1.3, 5.1.1**

Over the last three years the Council have embedded a survey mentality, which results in every service using regular surveys to obtain feedback and derive customer satisfaction scores. There have been 17 service surveys since 2020, with 11 ad hoc surveys on specific initiatives, such as various grant schemes. This approach has led to the establishing of customer satisfaction scores for every service area, as well as finite services. In addition, a comprehensive action plan of improvements for all areas surveyed has been created. Satisfaction scores and the progress with improvement actions, are promoted to residents via the newsletter and website. (Reference Compliance Plus for Elements 1.3.1 & 1.3.2)

The vast majority of questions in surveys are based on customer insight. The survey mentality is based out on 'let's test our assumptions'. For example, several comments about waiting times in Revenues and Benefits, led to a survey which included questions around this aspect. Similarly, comments from food establishments about not knowing how to move to a five-star rating, led to a survey with questions around this - 'All our surveys are informed by customer insight'. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 1.3.3).

A corporate commitment to putting customers at the heart of service delivery, has been refreshed and strengthened through the creation of the new values, with staff deciding 'Putting Customers First' should be the number one value. In addition, this statement is common to the organisational purpose and the corporate objectives. It is also integral to the appraisal process. A comprehensive Customer Experience Strategy has also been created to ensure everyone is accountable for putting the customer first. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 2.1.1).

The comprehensive Customer Experience Strategy incorporates every aspect of delivering excellent services, such as consultation and feedback, measuring customer satisfaction, targets, standards and complaints. as well as a Customer Charter. It was produced in consultation with customers and staff - 'This Strategy sets out how we want to deliver an outstanding service'. The Strategy makes people accountable, and as such supports the rights of customer to expect excellent levels of service. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 2.1.3).

The new premises at Brocks Hill are modern, attractive and light, with numerous private rooms for customer conversations. The reception is particularly attractive, warm and inviting, with great use made of pop-up banners promoting services and initiatives. In addition, there is a large video screen providing up to date information, with a telephone in reception for customers to use to ring service areas with the help of a permanent receptionist. (Reference Compliance Plus for Element 3.3.3).

There has been a massive consultation with all stakeholders in the creation of the Customer Experience Strategy, which defines the standards for delivering excellent services. In addition, staff in all service areas have been consulted on how to raise the stretch for their standards for timeliness. As a result, 17 targets for response times have been increased. (Reference Compliance Plus for Elements 4.1.3 & 5.1.1).

4. AREAS FOR CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

Sections: **1.3.1, 1.3.4, 2.1.6, 4.3.4, 5.1.1, 5.1.2, 5.2.1, 5.2.5**

Targets for the timeliness of service are not currently being achieved, and consideration may be given as to how this can be addressed. Any actions could further demonstrate the delivery of excellent services. (Reference Partial Compliances for Elements 4.1.2 & 5.3.2).

The main measure for overall satisfaction with services is derived from the score for satisfaction with Customer Services, with a target of 90%. However, satisfaction scores are also obtained for the main service areas as well as finite services. Consideration may therefore be given as to whether to set targets for these areas as well. This could help further drive continuous improvement. (Reference Element 1.3.4).

The Council have been considering the creation of a Continuous Improvement Strategy over the last two years, but other work has taken precedent. Consideration may now be given as to whether this should be resurrected and how it might be achieved. Several organisations have introduced strategies, which outline to continuous improvement tools which can be used. Staff are already empowered to deliver excellent services, and any actions could further enhance this empowerment and drive continuous improvement. (Reference Element 2.1.6).

Along with many other organisations, the Council share the belief that first-time resolution is now extremely important for customers. Consideration may therefore be given as to whether first-time resolution targets could be set where appropriate. Consideration may also be given as to how the achievement of first-time resolution could be supported by scripts, updates and team meetings. Any actions could improve the quality of customer service. (Reference Element 5.1.2).

There is only one person currently staffing the reception area at Brocks Hill. At the moment service has been delivered without wait times for visiting customers. However, volume may increase, and consideration may be given as to how 'queue-busting' could be introduced involving other staff. This could ensure that excellent face-to-face services are maintained at the reception desk. (Reference Element 5.2.5).

Some negative comments were made about Planning, and consideration may now be given as to how to check out with Planning customers if they have similar concerns. Actions could help identify and prioritise the issues to be addressed. (Reference Element 4.3.4).

There is an excellent Customer Charter. However, it is displayed on a small poster in reception, out of the eyesight of customers. Consideration may be given as to how to make this more prominent. This could help make customers more aware of the Charter. (Reference Element 5.2.1).

In addition, two Areas for Improvement are carried over from 2023, as the Council's priorities were a) moving to new premises, and b) introducing a comprehensive Customer Experience Strategy. These are: -

Although methods to measure customer satisfaction are comprehensive (see Areas of Strength), the Council are still considering the possible use of 'Smiley Faces' on email footers. Consideration may be given as to whether to pursue this line of action and where and how it could be used. This could potentially result in further increases to response rates. (Reference Element 1.3.1).

There is a possibility that Live Chat may be introduced. Consideration may therefore be given as to how the standards for Live Chat could be set for both the timeliness and quality of responses. Many organisations have experienced problems with out-of-hours live chat, and the Council may also wish to consider how they can avoid these. This could help ensure a high quality Live Chat service. (Reference Elements 5.1.1 & 5.1.2).

5. ASSESSOR'S FINDINGS

- Not Compliance
- Partial Compliance
- Compliance
- Compliance Plus
- N/A

I - 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.**

The Council conducted a new demographic analysis of all customers in December 2022. The resultant Demographic Insight document contains a very comprehensive breakdown of customer categories and behaviours. The document will be regularly updated.
- **1.1.2 We have developed customer insight about our customer groups to better understand their needs and preferences.**

Through extensive consultation with local residents, the Council identified a strong need for face-to-face contact to be available on reception at Brocks Hill. This has been accommodated. In addition, appointment hubs in Community Centres in local town centres, have also been set up to meet the need for face-to-face contact.
- **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.**

The Council have several initiatives to engage with hard-to-reach groups. An example shows how the Community and Wellbeing Team engage with young people involved in anti-social behaviour through sporting projects, such as Leicestershire Riders.

1.2 Engagement & 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.**

A specific strategy was created for the recent large-scale consultation to create a Customer Experience Strategy. Extensive consultation was undertaken using a wide range of methods. Examples include 'Thursday Pop-Ups' at various locations throughout the Borough - 'Take part in our survey about the future of customer services'.
- **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.**

Through creating the new Customer Experience Strategy through consultation, the Council now have a comprehensive action plan of planned improvements, which comprises 23 actions. For example, to explore the use of virtual appointments and improve digital inclusion.
- **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.**

The consultation for the Customer Experience Strategy was based on a review of what would work best. One decision was to use 'Thursday Pop-Ups'. In addition, a new consultation protocol has been created. The protocol aims to standardise and improve consultation, and makes a clear distinction between consultation and engagement. It also lists the issues on which the Council will consult.

1.3 Customer Satisfaction

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

This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

- **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.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).
- **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.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).
- **1.3.4** **We set challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and our levels are improving.**
The main indicator for customer satisfaction is the score for overall satisfaction with Customer Services. The target is for over 90%, with the most recent score being 99%. This has increased on the previous score of 97%. Where satisfaction scores are available for finite services, these have also increased. Private Housing are currently at 100% satisfaction.
- **1.3.5** **We have made positive changes to services as a result of analysing customer experience, including improved customer journeys.**
The creation of a permanently manned reception at Brocks Hill, was based on feedback that customers wanted this facility. Positive changes have been made to the call transfer rates between Customer Services and Council Tax. The Customer Service Improvement team introduced a priority form for customer services to complete on behalf of the customer. The Customer Service Team were also upskilled to resolve more enquiries at first point of contact. This saw 71% of calls answered and dealt with by the Customer Service Team, and allowed the Council Tax team to reduce their processing times.

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.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).
- **2.1.2** **We use customer insight to inform policy and strategy and to prioritise service improvement activity.**
Extensive consultation, mentioned previously, has influenced the creation of the new Customer Experience Strategy - 'You can help us shape our future customer services provision'. As part of this process, the decision has been taken to offer a face-to-face service at Brocks Hill reception - 'Its what residents wanted most'.
- **2.1.3** **We have policies and procedures which support the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service.**
The Council have a Customer Charter, comprehensive Service Standards and a Vexatious Customer Policy. In addition, there is an Equality and Diversity policy, as well as Safeguarding policies for adults and young people. A Compliment, Comments and Complaints policy exists, and through comments and complaints, customers can give feedback if they have not received excellent levels of service.
- **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.**
The policies and procedures outlined in Element 2.1.3, are also designed to uphold fairness. An example of the Council's fairness agenda shows how funding for community projects is weighted so as to favour the areas with the highest level of deprivation. The philosophy around the new Customer Experience Strategy, is also based around fairness - 'We want to do what they want us to do'.

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

A tour was undertaken of the Brocks Hill offices. This revealed that there were numerous sound-proofed rooms which afforded customer privacy and confidentiality. The Council also have policies and procedures to ensure Data Protection and these are compliant with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations). These include an IT Software Security and Licensing Policy and two RIPA (Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act) Policies for Human Intelligence and Directed Surveillance. All staff have received appropriate training with regard to Data Protection, GDPR and the implications for customers.
- **2.1.6 We empower and encourage all employees to actively promote and participate in the customer focused culture of our organisation.**

This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

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.**

New starters confirmed a strong focus on customers within their recruitment experience - 'From the onset I could see they really do put customers first'. There is also a dedicated Customer Focus section in induction. 'Putting Customers First' and 'Connecting with our Customers' are now mandated training courses for all staff. A People Strategy document also has a strong customer focus.
- **2.2.2 Our staff are polite and friendly to customers and have an understanding of customer needs.**

Politeness and friendliness are referred to within the Customer Charter under the Promises heading - 'Ensure our staff are polite and friendly'. Within the content of the mandatory 'Putting Customers First' training there are key messages on understanding customer needs and being polite and friendly. Telephone calls to Customer Services are also regularly monitored for this aspect, with tips to improve given where necessary. Questions relating to politeness and friendliness are also incorporated in surveys where appropriate.
- **2.2.3 We prioritise customer focus at all levels of our organisation and evaluate individual and team commitment through the performance management system.**

The Council has recently reviewed the staff performance management approach and have designed new 121 forms and appraisal forms. There is also a section to review how staff are working towards the 'Putting the Customer First' value - 'Give some examples of how you have demonstrated our organisational values and vision'. In addition, progress against agreed objectives is reviewed - 'The majority of my objectives relate to customers'.
- **2.2.4 We can demonstrate how customer facing staff insights, and experiences are incorporated into internal processes, policy development and service planning.**

All staff interviewed felt their opinions, suggestions and comments are encouraged and valued. This also applies to new starters. An example of listening to staff and using their insight is the adoption of the 'Putting the Customer First' value - 'This is what the staff wanted. We didn't impose it' The Council has created a suggestions form on the intranet, which allows staff to give their views and ideas - 'These might relate to improving customer satisfaction'.
- **2.2.5 We value the contribution our staff make to delivering customer focused services, and leaders, managers and staff demonstrate these behaviours.**

The Council hold quarterly staff briefings. The CEO uses these as an opportunity to highlight achievements and give a particular team a special mention. There is also a Values Award nomination scheme, as well as 'Thanks Badges', which are also linked to the Values. Staff feel leaders are role models for customer focused behaviours because they treat staff as customers, and conduct surveys to establish staff satisfaction and identify areas for improvement - 'The management here really care about us'.

- **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.**

The Council have a comprehensive website, and this provides information on all the finite services in an A-Z section. There is a 'contact us' banner at the foot of all pages, and details are provided on who is in charge. Increasing use of social media is also allowing the Council to put out up to date information on services. There are also leaflets available at the Customer Service Centre as well as noticeboards, pop-up banners and a video display screen.

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

A full schedule of charges are published on the website. Fees are also stated on the appropriate page, for example the Garden Waste and Building Control pages. Fees and charges are also stated at the beginning of any forms which need to be submitted, e.g. for Garden Waste. All payment options are listed on a 'Payments to the Council' webpage. Payment options have recently been extended to include Paypoint.

- **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.**

Many channels are used to provide information. These include the website, social media, leaflets, newsletters, noticeboards and face-to-face. There are noticeboards throughout the Borough, with three electronic noticeboards in town centres. The Council also use an interpreter service (Language Line) and can arrange for a British Sign Language interpreter where appropriate.

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

To check out if customers have received and understood information provided on the website, there is a "Did you find this page useful?" function. There is an E learning training course for staff to understand effective writing. This was in response from feedback from customers that letters to customers were confusing and created lots of unnecessary contact. The Communications Team have also produced a Writing Style guide.

- **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.**

In conjunction with the Communications Team, Customer Services have created a new online form so that information can be quickly changed. Email templates for Customer Service Officers, have also been introduced for responding to customer emails to ensure a consistent quality response. The business newsletter has been improved, with a new business app introduced. A Members Panel has been set up to oversee all communications with residents - 'They know best what residents want to hear about'.

- **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.**

All of the steps mentioned in Elements 3.2.1, 3.2.2 & 3.2.3 previously have also contributed to making information more current and accurate. An ASB (Anti Social Behaviour) Community Trigger Process was introduced to allow customers to ask for an independent review on ASB investigations. The review will look at the accuracy of information, fair judgements and if there were any missed opportunities to progress the investigation. The Council treat staff as a distinct customer group, and provided them with guidance information on how the new appraisal process works.

- **3.3.1 We make our services easily accessible to all customers through provision of a range of alternative channels.**
Access channels to services include telephone, email, via the website using online forms, in writing and via social media. As a result of the comprehensive consultation, face-to-face contact has been preserved, with a physical presence at Brocks Hill reception. There is also a telephone near reception so that customers can contact any department, with assistance from the receptionist if required. Appointment Hubs are also used in three town centres.
- **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.**
The creation of a face-to-face service at Brocks Hill, was based on an evaluation of what residents want. In addition, the Council conduct an ongoing evaluation of enquiry type via their CRM system. This allows adjustments to be made to increase and improve information on the most popular topics. An example of this was identifying a high rate of enquiries on a Household Enquiry form which had been sent via email. As a result, a further email was sent to reassure customers that this was genuine, with guidance given on how to use the Household Enquiry form.
- **3.3.3 We ensure that where customers can visit our premises in person, facilities are as clean and comfortable as possible.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

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.**
Two partners interviewed, the University of Leicester and the Blaby Community and Wellbeing Partnership, described very positive and beneficial working relationships with the Council. Through a long-standing partnership with the University, residents have access at no cost to University owned areas and facilities, including the Botanical Gardens. Working with the Blaby Partnership allows residents to receive funding for various community projects. Part of this process involved a weighted allocation of funds so that areas of deprivation benefit.
- **3.4.2 We have developed co-ordinated working arrangements with our partners that ensure customers have clear lines of accountability for quality of services.**
Both partners confirmed how they agreed responsibilities with the Council. There is a Shared Service Level Agreement with the Blaby Partnership. This details how funding will be allocated to partners and who is responsible for evaluating the impact of any projects. Weekly meetings and quarterly reports take place to ensure partners are fulfilling their responsibilities. There is a University Partnership Agreement to define responsibilities. The Borough was seen as a 'cultural dessert', so objectives were agreed as to what the Council and the University needed to do to raise the profile.
- **3.4.3 We interact within wider communities and we can demonstrate the ways in which we support those communities.**
Essentially, the work of the Council impacts on wider communities in numerous ways. Examples include economic regeneration through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and renewed engagement with the business community through networking events and a new app. The Housing Team have arranged a pantomime for this Christmas, and the Council are working in collaboration with VAL (Voluntary Action Leicester) to increase the amount of volunteers within the Borough. Sporting initiatives are being used to engage with young people at risk of ASB.

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.**
The Council now have service standards for its main services as well as many finite services. In addition, there are corporate KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) which are contained within the Corporate Plan. Many of these are based on the national agenda for local government. There are 31 continuous improvement KPIs and 36 statutory 'business as usual' KPIs.
- **4.1.2 We monitor and meet our standards, meet departmental and performance targets, and we tell our customers about our performance.**
This Element is a Partial Compliance. (See Areas for Improvement).
- **4.1.3 We consult and involve customers, citizens, partners and staff on the setting, reviewing and raising of our local standards.**
This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

4.2 Staff Professionalism and Attitude

- **4.2.1 We agree with our customers at the outset what they can expect from the service we provide.**
A Customer Charter lays out what customers can expect with regard to the quality of services. The Service Standards show what customers can expect in terms of the timeliness of service. Any online forms clearly indicate the turnaround times so customers know what to expect and how quickly their enquiry will be processed. The Customer Service Team advise customers of the Service Level Agreements in place for individual enquiry types. A Member Guidance document also gives details of turnaround times.
- **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.**
To supplement the high customer satisfaction scores, customers were asked for their comments on the satisfaction with services they had received - 'I have had dealings with some wonderful people. So understanding, kind and helpful'. Another customer said - 'Their listening skills are excellent. They totally understood my problem and resolved it'. One customer had serious issues with neighbours and commented - 'They showed empathy and support in a very difficult situation. I can enjoy my Christmas thanks to them'.
- **4.2.3 We can demonstrate that we benchmark our performance against that of similar or complimentary organisations and have used that information to improve our service.**
Benchmarking is conducted across the Council, and Customer Services participate in a local benchmarking group with other Leicestershire Councils. There are several other specific benchmarking groups, for example, the DWP (Department for Work and Pensions) Benefits Performance Management Group. As a result of benchmarking with regard to planning processes, the Council have streamlined their process so that now they lead in terms of decision times. The management of extensions has also been improved.
- **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.**
The Head of Customer Service & Transformation and the Customer Service Improvement Manager did a presentation to a group of other Councils, sharing their approach to Service Reviews. The Strategic Director has introduced best practice from East Staffordshire Council by way of 'Star Chambers- which are a means whereby budgets are scrutinised in order to establish if they provide good value for money.

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.**

A dip in performance was recently experienced with regard to the processing of Council Tax. This was caused by staff shortages, labour turnover and sickness. As a result, a call-back process was introduced, and staff were upskilled so as to increase right-first-time resolution, which increased from 36% to 70%. A new Service Level Agreement was created for the team, and customers were told of the new processing times.
- **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 reasonable time limit.**

There is a Compliments, Comments and Complaints Policy. This is clearly accessible via the website and is displayed within the Customer Service Centre. The complaints process is focused on early resolution. The Customer Service Team triages all complaints with the aim of resolving issues at first point of contact. If this is not possible, a stage 1 complaint will be raised with the relevant service manager for investigation and resolution. If this is not possible, a full investigation will take place and a response letter will be issued within 10 working days.
- **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.**

Training on complaints is mandatory for all staff. All managers and senior officers also have mandatory training on handling and Investigating complaints, and have also undergone a recent face-to-face refresher course on this. A Brief Review document has also been issued to managers and senior officers. The Policy, Compliance and Data Protection officer attends external training by the Ombudsman and other outside agencies, to ensure the Council is providing the best possible complaints guidance.
- **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.**

The Council produce a Complaints Trends Analysis document and a Lessons Learnt Register. There is also a You Said We Did page on the website to show how they have reacted to comments and suggestions. The most recent Trends Analysis document shows that Revenues and Benefits billing errors is the predominant trend with 16 complaints over the last 12 months. The majority of these were not upheld. However, the process for reviewing bills and sending out reminders has been amended.
- **4.3.5 We regularly review and improve our complaints procedure, taking account of the views of customers, complainants and staff.**

The Council conduct a survey on the complaints procedure, and results are scrutinised, with changes made where appropriate. A Complaints Review document is produced annually for this purpose. The 2023 versions shows that a template is being developed to help improve response times for stage two complaints with Planning.
- **4.3.6 We ensure that the outcome of the complaint process for customers, whose complaint is upheld, is satisfactory for them.**

The Complaints Survey results show that 89% of complainants are satisfied with the outcome of their complaint. This is an increase from 70% last year.

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.**

This Element is Compliance Plus. (See Summary of Strengths).

- **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.**

Standards for the quality of services are basically incorporated in the Customer Charter. This includes a list of promises to customers under headings for finite aspects of service. For example, 'When you visit our offices we will'. There is then a list of undertakings such as 'greet you politely and promptly' and 'provide a comfortable and pleasant environment for you to wait and be seen in'. One of the main measures for the quality of service, is the score for overall satisfaction with each finite service.

5.2 Timely Outcomes

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

Both the Customer Charter and the Service Standards are available on the website. Turnaround times are also clearly stated on all forms that are required to be submitted by customers. Examples include a Garden Waste application/renewal form as well as a Planning form. With the latter it states 'you will be contacted within five working days'.
- **5.2.2 We identify individual customers 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.**

Staff within Customer Services are trained in identifying customers needs at first point of contact. In addition, there is a questions technique guide for staff. The overarching objective is to achieve first time resolution at the first point of contact. If a Customer Service Officer is unable to resolve an enquiry at point of contact, they can pass the enquiry through to individuals or teams instantly via a DASH system. This ensures that the enquiry is dealt with by the correct person in a timely fashion.
- **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.**

The CRM system allows Customer Service Officers to immediately pass enquiries (that they cannot resolve) to back office teams, thus reducing unnecessary contact customers. A Tell Us Once form is also used when a death is registered. Information is then passed to all relevant departments. First Contact Plus is a referral system delivered by Leicestershire County Council in partnership with GPs, the Police, health organisations, voluntary groups and social care departments. This helps referrals much easier for customers who only have to complete one form.
- **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.**

There are instances where services are not completed at the first point of contact. Examples include Large Bin and Assisted Collections Assessments. The Customer Service Officers taking the initial call will check eligibility and if the customer is eligible, they will pass details on to the Waste Team. The Customer Service Officer then explains the next steps of each process and timescales to customers. Staff use Process Control charts to ensure they adhere to the correct procedure.
- **5.2.5 We respond to initial enquiries promptly, and if there is a delay we advise the customer and take action to rectify the problem.**

There are occasional instances when unexpected delays can occur. These are usually due to call management within the Customer Service Centre. Staff use a Keeping the Customer Informed procedure to ensure they tell customers about any problems that are currently being experienced with call centre performance. A call centre telephony system displays real time call performance, and allows managers to address the situation by re-deploying staff to take calls.

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.**

Managers are responsible for reporting on their team's performance against Service Standards on a monthly basis using a Service Standard dashboard. Monthly performance review meetings are held, where the results are discussed, problems are identified and solutions put in place. Calls to the Customer Service Team are monitored regularly for quality purposes. Remedial action, such as further training, is taken where appropriate.

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

This Element is a Partial Compliance. (See Areas for Improvement).

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

Through the benchmarking exercises mentioned in Element 4.2.3, the Council can be seen to be ahead of other local Councils with regard to planning decision times. Comparisons with two local Councils, also show that the Council are ahead on quality, with their score of 99% customer satisfaction.

6. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There are no actions that require immediate attention and I am pleased to pass on to Assessment Services Ltd's Certification Committee my recommendation that Oadby and Wigston Borough Council be certificated as meeting the Customer Service Excellence Standard. Certification is valid for three years from the Certification Committee's decision date and subject to ongoing annual reviews as follows:

Annual Review Year 1 – December 2024

Annual Review Year 2 - December 2025

3-Year Review - December 2026

I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your kind hospitality and cooperation during this assessment.

Neil Potentier

CSE Assessor for Assessment Services Ltd

21st December 2023

7. COMPLIANCE AGAINST THE CUSTOMER SERVICE EXCELLENCE STANDARD

1 - Customer Insight

	Element	Accreditation
1.1	1.1.1	● Compliance
	1.1.2	● Compliance
	1.1.3	● Compliance
1.2	1.2.1	● Compliance
	1.2.2	● Compliance
	1.2.3	● Compliance
1.3	1.3.1	● Compliance Plus
	1.3.2	● Compliance Plus
	1.3.3	● Compliance Plus
	1.3.4	● Compliance
	1.3.5	● Compliance

2 - The Culture of the Organisation

	Element	Accreditation
2.1	2.1.1	● Compliance Plus
	2.1.2	● Compliance
	2.1.3	● Compliance
	2.1.4	● Compliance
	2.1.5	● Compliance
	2.1.6	● Compliance Plus
2.2	2.2.1	● Compliance
	2.2.2	● Compliance
	2.2.3	● Compliance
	2.2.4	● Compliance
	2.2.5	● Compliance

3 - Information and Access

	Element	Accreditation
3.1	3.1.1	● Compliance
	3.1.2	● Compliance
3.2	3.2.1	● Compliance
	3.2.2	● Compliance
	3.2.3	● Compliance
	3.2.4	● Compliance

	Element	Accreditation
3.3	3.3.1	● Compliance
	3.3.2	● Compliance
	3.3.3	● Compliance Plus
3.4	3.4.1	● Compliance
	3.4.2	● Compliance
	3.4.3	● Compliance

4 - Delivery

	Element	Accreditation
4.1	4.1.1	● Compliance
	4.1.2	● Partial Compliance
	4.1.3	● Compliance Plus
4.2	4.2.1	● Compliance
	4.2.2	● Compliance
	4.2.3	● Compliance
	4.2.4	● Compliance
4.3	4.3.1	● Compliance
	4.3.2	● Compliance
	4.3.3	● Compliance
	4.3.4	● Compliance
	4.3.5	● Compliance
	4.3.6	● Compliance

5 - Timeliness and Quality of Service

	Element	Accreditation
5.1	5.1.1	● Compliance Plus
	5.1.2	● Compliance
5.2	5.2.1	● Compliance
	5.2.2	● Compliance
	5.2.3	● Compliance
	5.2.4	● Compliance
	5.2.5	● Compliance
5.3	5.3.1	● Compliance
	5.3.2	● Partial Compliance
	5.3.3	● Compliance