

## North York Moors National Park Authority Finance, Risk, Audit and Standards Committee

3 February 2020

### Customer Service Excellence

#### 1. Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the changes Officers intend making to the frequency of external verification of the Customer Service Excellence (CSE) standard and plans to continue to improve to the delivery of services to customers.

#### 2. Background

- 2.1 The Government wants public services that are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering – with customers' needs at the heart of service provision. With this in mind CSE was developed to offer organisations delivering services a practical tool for driving customer-focused change.
- 2.2 The CSE standard tests those areas that research has indicated are a priority for customers, with focus on delivery, timeliness, information, professionalism and staff attitude. There is also emphasis placed on developing customer insight, understanding the user's experience and robust measurement of service satisfaction.
- 2.3 CSE is designed to operate on three levels:
- As a driver of continuous improvement. By allowing organisations to self-assess their capability, in relation to customer focussed service delivery, identifying areas and methods for improvement;
  - As a skills development tool. By encouraging individuals and teams within the organisation to explore and acquire new skills in the area of customer focus and customer engagement, therefore building their capacity for delivering improved services;
  - As an independent validation of achievement. By giving organisations the opportunity to seek formal accreditation to the CSE standard, demonstrate their competence and identify key areas for improvement.
- 2.4. The Authority has placed great value on this type of external assessment and has held CSE and its predecessor, Charter Mark, since 1997. This covers the whole organisation, not just part of it. The CSE standard is made up of 5 criteria with 57 elements in total. Assessment is carried out annually via a desktop review by an authorised assessor followed by a one day site visit. Each annual visit assesses one third of the 57 elements. As well as viewing physical documentation, and carrying out observations, the assessor speaks to customers, staff and partners to review the Authority's attitudes and working practices along with details of their customer focussed initiatives and performance.
- #### 3. Current CSE Performance and Future Plans
- 3.1 The Authority has been highly successful in its CSE Assessments, being fully compliant in all 57 elements, and being considered to be 'Compliance Plus' (best practice) in 12 of these at the 2019 assessment.

- 3.2 The Authority has opted to have annual assessments until now, but Officers have considered whether the effort spent on this process is the optimum use of available resources to continue to improve customer service. There is an option to revert to assessments taking place every three years on all 57 elements. This would enable the Authority to retain CSE and also spend time on developing new activities. These activities would both improve Officers' understanding of actual performance against the Authority's established customer service standards and improve skills.
- 3.3 In the years when there wasn't a full CSE assessment, Officers propose spending the time and small amount of money saved on other initiatives designed to continue the themes of external assessment of our work and continuously improving customer service. This would include initiatives such as;
- engaging mystery shoppers to sample all services, both face to face and electronically, with a detailed report of findings;
  - delivering customer service training bespoke to the needs of different staff groups;
  - assessing processes from a customer point of view to ensure that they are as user friendly as possible.
- 3.4 Officers' view is that actions such as these are likely to both improve customer service and provide enhanced evidence for the triennial CSE assessment.

#### 4. **Financial, Staff and Legal Implications**

4.1 None at this stage.

#### 5. **Recommendation**

- 5.1 That Members approve the contents of the report, including;
- the change in assessment time periods for the CSE standard; and
  - the development of other customer service related work to continue to improve service delivery.

Contact Officer  
Ian Nicholls  
Head of Corporate Services  
Tel No 01439 772700

Background Documents

<https://www.customerserviceexcellence.uk.com/> provides information about Customer Service Excellence.