

HAMBLETON

DISTRICT COUNCIL



A BLUE PRINT FOR CUSTOMER SERVICE

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A VISION FOR OUR FUTURE

Putting our customers first

A service which is **socially inclusive**, providing services right to the heart of the community.

A service which is **responsive** to **changing customer expectations**.

A service which is **accessible**, to disabled groups, to hard to reach groups, to all our customers including those in our Rural communities.

A service which is delivered to a **consistent quality standard**, as agreed with customer groups and underpinned by external accreditation where appropriate

A service which balances **cost** and **quality**.

A service which uses **all available channels** as appropriate, building on the quality of existing channels and developing new electronic channels.

A service which recognises that it has **different customers**, with different requirements:

- Residents (Council Tax, Environmental Health etc.); People who come to the area to work; Visitors (including Tourists); Business Community

A service which gives our Customers more **choice**, as to when and where they access Council services.

A service which is delivered in **Collaboration** with other organisations, and not just other local authorities.

A service delivered in **Partnership** with others.

A service which can respond not only to direct service requested (e.g. a planning application) but can also deliver a District Council service based around major events in our customers' lives ('**Life Events**').

A service which is **measured and accountable**, publishing and marketing standards and performance.

A service which provides and encourages greater public engagement in the **democratic** processes of the Council.

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FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES

These are the guiding principles which underpin the 'blue print'.

Working in partnership with others

Future service delivery will be built around strong partnerships.

- **Local Strategic Partnership:**
bringing together local authorities with other key service providers
- **Community Investment Prospectus:**
taking account of the requirements within local communities
- **North Yorkshire ICT Partnership:**
service delivery partnership with North Yorkshire County Council and the private sector
- **Community Safety Partnership:**
working with the Police and other agencies to improve quality of life and reduce crime
- **Rural Transport Partnership:**
working with others to develop transport strategies

Using Innovative Technology

Adopt new technology where appropriate and cost effective. New technology will be required to underpin changes in the way the service is delivered.

Using quality systems, policies and procedures

Key to a quality service is to ensure consistency in service delivery. This will be achieved by developing, managing and monitoring clear and agreed standards for service delivery.

Developing a culture of a customer focussed organisation

Services will be built around the customer and not departments.

Developing the capacity of the organisation to respond to change quickly

A well informed workforce and a flexible corporate structure will enable the Council to react quickly to change.

A clear marketing strategy

Making sure our customers get a common message. Publishing standards – customer charter. Create a 'visible' Hambleton.

Consulting our customers and responding to local needs

Regular consultation with customers is important in understanding what people need and in supporting the development of the Council's vision and setting priorities.

Ensuring employees have the skills needed to deliver a quality service

A customer first approach training programme will be at the heart of employee development.

Flexible working arrangements

A flexible workforce with the appropriate tools will help to ensure the service is delivered in the most cost effective way.

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HAMBLETON'S PRIORITIES

Customer satisfaction ratings for council services is extremely high as can be seen from the tables below:

Satisfaction – visiting Council Offices					
wait to be seen	dealt with polite & friendly	accessible for disabilities	opening times convenient	office conv. to get to	dealt with efficiently
95.8%	95.8%	93.5%	92.7%	89.7%	89.6%

Satisfaction – telephoning Council Offices					
dealt with polite & friendly	answer phone quickly	opening times convenient	easy to get through to right person	dealt with efficiently	received response using voice / answer.
97.9%	95.3%	95.3%	89.9%	86.1%	70.9%

Based on customer consultation, the suggestions for improvements in customer service which have been implemented are:

- A single phone number to access all District Council services.
- Opening hours extended for telephone contact to 8am to 5:30pm Monday to Friday.
- District services delivered from one-stop shops or service centres.
- Better information about services.
- Simpler forms.
- The introduction of a new free concessionary fares scheme.

- The ability to access District and County Council services from the same place.

Electronic Channels

The lowest priorities for improvements in service delivery were around the use of the new electronic channels. However, 40% of the population of Hambleton have access to new technology, most of these are in the age groups 16 – 40, which suggested that there is a potential latent demand which will need to be catered for in the future.

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NATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

All services must be capable of being delivered electronically by 2005.

Local authorities are responsible for ensuring that there is an increasing take up of the new 'cheaper' self service electronic channels such as:

- Internet.
- interaction Digital TV.
- short message service via mobile phone.

Local authorities need to ensure that there is equal access for all, responding to the Social Inclusion agenda. This may include:

- ensuring people have the skills to use the new technology
- provision of electronic access points in the community (electronic village hall, kiosks)
- ensuring the wide spread availability of broadband

Local authorities should become more efficient using new technology and business process re-engineering to change the way in which the service is delivered.

Joined up local government means breaking down the barriers of local government and removing the problems created by multi-tier authorities by delivering services in partnership.

Local authorities should become community leaders by listening to and responding to the needs of the local community.

Local authorities should ensure that all its strategies are 'joined-up' and that means making sure the E-government strategy underpins the other national priorities:

- Transport
- Employment
- Environment
- Crime Reduction
- Health and Social Care
- Education
- e-Democracy
- e-Citizen

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A CUSTOMER SERVICE

Service Changes

Contact Centre Approach

A contact centre approach has been adopted to respond to the following requirements:

- changes in hours
- one phone number for District services
- District and County services from same point of contact

It is necessary for the contact centre to manage calls to ensure a consistent service. This is done by monitoring trends, looking for problems (problem management) and working with business units to manage peaks (such as annual Council Tax billing).

Longer Hours

Survey information suggests that longer opening hours would benefit some customers.

Following a successful pilot the telephone contact centre opening hours have been extended. Customers can now contact the council by telephone between 8am and 5:30pm Monday to Friday.

District and County services from same location

It is important to first of all establish a new way of working, then look at how services can be improved to take on additional calls.

Also consideration should be given to shared office resources when opportunities arise particularly in locations where the District currently has no presence.

Front Office / Back Office Split

The way in which the services are delivered needs to be fundamentally changed over a period of time.

A phased approach to front office / back office split has been adopted. This is where employees in the front office (either the contact centre or the desk) answer a number of queries on behalf of all the services. There is a cut-off point for each service and at that point, the enquiry is passed to the back office professional to complete.

This aims to deliver the following developments:

- single point of contact
- joined up services with the County
- one-stop shop – the ability to deliver a range of services from area offices or a single counter at the Civic Centre

The benefits of this way of delivering the service is that all calls are managed centrally and all the customer information is also captured at this point. It is also possible to accurately monitor the response to the initial enquiry and ensure the call has been followed through.

Locations

All the Council's existing locations and other possible locations need to be considered for extended service delivery.

Area Offices - The Area Office at Stokesley has been developed as a Service Centre to act as remote Contact Centre and is also available

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for hotdesking. In Easingwold, a partnership is looking at the options of shared services between the County and District Councils, the Primary Care Trust and the Police.

Leisure Centres – are already open extended hours, what can they provide which doesn't impact on what they already do?

Tourist Information Centres – are in locations where the Council doesn't have an area office

- leaflets
- kiosks / public access points
- post box facilities for Council related mail

All locations – self help local access points within each location which could include video conferencing, provision of surgeries or displays.

A key part of the strategy is to consider developing 3 one stop shops facilities in the North and the South of the District and in Northallerton. The greater use of mobile working (going to the customer) should also be a fundamental element of the Strategy.

[Access Channels](#)

The preferred method of contact is still telephone, followed by face to face, with electronic channels lower on people's preference. However, Broadband take up by Hambleton residents is between 27 - 31% and 15% of all planning applications are now made on line.

In the short term, enhancements have been made to the existing web-site. In the medium to longer term, self service, on-line transactions with the Council are being developed and implemented. This has included making enquiries, making payments and applying for services etc. It is planned to have all services available electronically by 2008.

Customer Consultation

Service delivery needs to be built around the needs of the customer. To understand these requirements, consultation is already undertaken on a regular basis:

- service specific consultation
- access to services consultation
- community safety consultation
- community Investment prospectus consultation

This needs to continue with particular engagement (where possible) with hard to reach groups:

- older people
- young people
- disabled
- ethnic minorities

Engaged in Democracy

Ideas for engaging the community in the democratic process include:

- E-mail for elected members
- Access to meetings
- Web-casting of meetings
- Consultation on the web site
- E-voting
- Discussion Forums on web site
- Young People Council

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A SERVICE FOR EVERYONE

Transport

In a rural area which has little transport, this was one of the major issues raised by the Community Investment Prospectus groups.

A number of proposals have been put forward for dealing with this issue and they will be included as part of the Community Plan and therefore will not be specifically dealt with as part of this work.

However, it does raise the issue of ensuring that if people can't get to services then perhaps services should go to the people:

- rural access points
- home visits
- PC's in the community
- libraries

The solution will depend upon the community itself and the Council's partners.

Mobile Services

The Community Safety Partnership has had success in using a mobile unit to take services out to people in the community.

The Council will undertake a trial of delivering its services in the rural communities – taking the services out to the people who need them.

A pilot is taking place in the Benefits and Building Control Services to have a visiting officer with access to mobile technology.

Disabled Access

The disability group consulted on access didn't raise any major areas for concern. But there are some issues for consideration:

- future developments (new counters) will be built with the disabled in mind
- use plain English so it is easier for people to understand forms and information provided

Involving Young People

Young people expressed their willingness to be more involved and understand more about the Council.

Community Driven

Where possible communities should be encouraged and supported to develop their own web content.

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SAY WHAT WE DO

It is clear from the evidence of the consultation that our customers don't all understand what we do.

There needs to be a 'visible' Hambleton. This means ensuring that customers know who is delivering their service, and that there is a clear identity.

The Council needs to develop a marketing strategy which should be built around three principles:

- **tell people what they can expect** – service standards, citizen charter
- **tell people how we are performing** against those standards – publish key performance indicators and improvement plans
- **tell people what we do** and how they can get help

It is important to work with the County and the Parish Council's to make sure that people are not confused by local government structures – this is one of their biggest issues.

DO WHAT WE SAY

Key Performance Measures

Possible key performance indicators are:

- BVPI157 – the move towards electronic service delivery
- Customer satisfaction – maintaining and improving satisfaction levels
- Employee satisfaction – happy well trained people deliver better services
- Take up of channels – measure the take up of the new electronic channels

Recognised accreditation

Build on recognised accessibility standards for Web-site and all other material:

- Ability Net - www.abilitynet.org.uk
- Royal National Institute for the Blind - www.rnib.org.uk
- Plain English - www.plainenglishonline.com

Get recognised for delivering quality services:

- Investors In People (quality, well trained employees)
- Beacon Council
- Charter Mark (customer services)

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PARTNERSHIPS IN ACTION

Service Delivery Partnership

The North Yorkshire ICT Partnership has procured the new technology which is required to deliver the new services.

The elements provided by the partnership include:

- › customer relationship management system
- › integration between the front office and the back office systems
- › advise on business process re-engineering

Wider more regionally focussed partnerships will investigate solutions for:

- › the use of smart card technology
- › ensuring broadband is available so that people can use electronic channels
- › provision of training to people in the community

Access Partnerships

Community access points – partnership with Police, Fire Authority and others.

There is a need to consider other potential service providers when looking at the community access strategy. It will be important to work with people who already have a presence in the community – it will not be practical for Hambleton to create access points on its own.

Also need to look at where people are:

- › Broadacres – people in sheltered homes

- › NYCC – libraries

For information dissemination:

- › Drs Surgeries
- › Dentist
- › Supermarkets
- › Other potential local access points

Strategic Partnerships

A Local Strategic Partnership has been constituted and sets targets for the District which will impact on the future service delivery strategy of the Council.

Community Partnerships

A number of Community partnership already exist and these will also feed into the strategic service delivery programme.

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QUALITY AND STANDARDS

To ensure a clear and consistent way in which all front line services operate, it has been necessary to develop a set of policies and standards which all staff adhere to.

A service plan complements this process as the Council moves towards recognising that the service is built around the customer not the departments.

It is necessary to consult customers and employees on service standards on a regular basis. It is also important to have an effective complaints system.

Policies

Policies have been developed in the following area:

- customer care
- use of e-mail
- use of voice-mail
- use of answer machines

Standards

Performance standards are set out in the service plan and monitored regularly (monthly) using the Council's corporate performance monitoring system. Standards have been developed for:

- time to respond to and deal with e-mails
- length of time to answer phone calls
- waiting times for face to face contact
- time to respond to and deal with letters

- in addition service standard leaflets for each service have been produced.

TECHNOLOGY AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

The Council's Implementing Electronic Government Statement reflects the technology, information management and process changes which are delivering the 'Blue Print for Customer Service'. Some of the key systems are set out in this section.

Technology

- gazetteer management system (GMS) - single address
- customer relationship management system (CRM) - single customer view
- extranet - shared network for all joint service providers
- electronic forms - complete forms on-line
- intranet - FAQ's, information
- geographical information systems (GIS) - map based information / demographics
- document image processing (DIP) and electronic document and record management (EDRM) required to share documents

Information Systems and Process Change

- all processes need to be examined in order to redesign service delivery (BPR)
- frequently asked questions need to be revised frequently - easy / complex
- Phased approach to service transformation

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A LEARNING ORGANISATION

To respond to this new agenda, the Council needs to build its capacity for change.

Skills

- › Business process re-engineering – change the way services are delivered, more efficient, reduce duplication in information and work
- › Project management skills are required to implement the programme
- › Customer care skills
- › ICT skills

Resources

To deliver the changing agenda the Council needs good quality employees who are well trained and enthusiastic about the change agenda.

Customer service should be at the heart of what everyone does, specifically front line employees should have excellent customer care skills and this should be reflected in job descriptions and person specifications.

The Council needs a flexible work force and the following ideas are being developed:

- › flexible hours
- › conditions (P/Time)
- › home working
- › use of portable technology to reduce the need for visiting employees to come to the office

Members

Members play a key role in the development of the organisation and are key enablers of change.

Continuous Review

The Council needs to ensure it learns from what it does and becomes a learning organisation which is built on a philosophy of continuous improvement.