

## Rother District Council

<b>Report to:</b>	Cabinet
<b>Date:</b>	4 October 2021
<b>Title:</b>	Results of Customer Survey
<b>Report of:</b>	Joe Powell
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>	Councillor Susan Prochak
<b>Ward(s):</b>	All
<b>Purpose of Report:</b>	To update Members on the progress of the development of a Corporate Customer Service Strategy and mark National Customer Service Week 2021 (NCSW) with an initial summary of the results of a recent customer survey and internal staff and Member survey, conducted in partnership with the Institute of Customer Services.
<b>Decision Type:</b>	Non-Key
<b>Officer Recommendation(s):</b>	It be <b>RESOLVED</b> : That the results of the recent customer survey and internal staff and Member survey conducted in partnership with the Institute of Customer Services be noted.
<b>Reasons for Recommendations:</b>	The survey results will help us identify our objectives for the new Corporate Customer Service Strategy, as part of the Corporate Plan priority objective to be a more open Council and place customers at the heart of everything we do. The customer survey results will also be used to compare our present customer service performance to that of other local authorities and benchmark future performance monitoring.

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## Introduction

1. Rother is now a member of the Institute of Customer Service (ICS) and we have teamed up with them to develop a new Corporate Customer Service Strategy and campaign to transform our approach to serving the public: putting customers at the heart of everything we do. The ICS will provide us with the guidance and support we need to develop a strategy that can build on our existing customer service standards. The ICS will also assist with the delivery of the strategy and enable us to achieve the transformational change required to put customer experience at the heart of all the services we deliver.

2. In recognition of National Customer Service Week (NCSW) we are bringing before Members an initial summary of the responses received from two recent surveys. On the 8 September 2021 the first survey was directed at 4,000 residents that had recently been in contact with the Council through the various communication channels available. The customer contact details were drawn from a range of Council services, approximately proportionate to the level of customer contact that service area receives.
3. The survey sought to understand from customers the experience they had when engaging with the Council and their levels of satisfaction. A total of 527 survey responses were received which exceeds the 10% response target from the 4,000 survey invitations sent. A copy of the external customer survey can be found at Appendix A.
4. On the 13 September 2021 the second survey was directed at internal colleagues and Members to understand what value we place on the customer experience as an organisation. A copy of the internal staff and Member survey can be found at Appendix B.
5. An initial summary of the survey results and a narrative of the implications of these will be forwarded as Appendix C as soon as possible. The survey results will be compared to the standards of other local authorities so that we can identify how we are performing. In addition, the survey results will provide a benchmark for our current customer service performance and allow us to monitor our progress as we develop and then implement a Corporate Customer Service Strategy.
6. The main purpose of the two surveys is to identify where we are effective at meeting the needs and expectations of our customers and where we need to improve. The areas for improvement will inform the objectives of the Corporate Customer Service Strategy that we will now develop and bring to Overview and Scrutiny Committee for consideration in early 2022. The ICS will continue to provide us with the guidance and support we need to develop a strategy that can build on our existing customer service standards and improve our performance. The ICS will also assist with the delivery of the strategy and enable us to achieve the transformational change required to put customer experience at the heart of all the services we deliver

## **Strategy Development**

7. The Corporate Customer Service Strategy will support the Council to achieve its vision, stated within the Corporate Plan: to provide our customers with the best experience possible, putting them at the heart of everything we do. In order to realise this vision, the Council will need to make changes to the way it delivers many of its services. The strategy will enable the Council to set its aims and objectives and enable it to embark upon the programme of cultural transformation required to achieve these aims and objectives and realise its vision. While the programme of cultural transformation envisaged is likely to take time to fully realise, the strategy will identify quick wins as well as short and

medium-term objectives, setting clear targets and measures for quantifying the level of our success.

8. The development of the strategy will require a more detailed review of the results of the two surveys and be used to inform how we will achieve our aims. We know from the advice and guidance already received from the ICS to date, that for the strategy to be effective it will need to introduce transformational change to our **strategic approach**; review and improve our internal and external **processes** and empower our **people** with the training and resources they need to be more effective.
9. We will need to develop a strategy that is dynamic and flexible enough to allow us to manage our customers' expectations and achieve the best service outcome our resources and various legal duties will allow. We know that customers value having their expectations met and that different customers have different expectations. Customer expectations may vary depending on the nature of their transaction with the Council as well as a range of other factors that will need to be considered, including the age of the customer or their socio-economic group, for example.
10. We will not be able to achieve our aims and objectives alone and a new strategy will need to have partnership focus, to identify roles and responsibilities of the full range of internal and external stakeholders, including our customers themselves. In this way we will ensure that our corporate strategies, processes and people are maximising the support and resources of the wider public sector, as well as local businesses, community groups and voluntary sector organisations.
11. The draft strategy that we will bring forward to Cabinet will also quantify the value of the Council investment in becoming a more customer focused organisation. These value metrics will also provide us with the performance measures we need to monitor and continuously improve our customer service standards across the whole organisation now and into the future.
12. Officers have begun to form an internal group of key internal stakeholders that will lead the development of the strategy proposals and the internal and external communication approach. The group will then lead and oversee the implementation of the strategy action plan.

## Conclusion

13. The results of the two surveys will now be used to inform the development of a draft Corporate Customer Service Strategy. The draft strategy and its action plan will be taken to Overview and Scrutiny and then recommendations made to Members for approval in early 2022, from where the programme of transformational cultural change required to achieve our Corporate Plan ambitions will be implemented.

## Financial Implications

14. The report introducing the draft Corporate Customer Service Strategy will identify any financial implications.

## Legal Implications

15. None

## Human Resource Implications

16. The report introducing the draft Corporate Customer Service Strategy will identify any human resource implications.

## Environmental

17. The report introducing the draft Corporate Customer Service Strategy will identify any environmental implications.

Other Implications	Applies?	Other Implications	Applies?
Human Rights	No	Equalities and Diversity	No
Crime and Disorder	No	Consultation	No
Environmental	No	Access to Information	No
Sustainability	No	Exempt from publication	No
Risk Management	No		

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Proper Officer:	Joe Powell
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e-mail address:	
Appendices:	A Customer Survey B Staff and Member Survey C Summary survey results – TO FOLLOW
Relevant Previous Minutes:	
Background Papers:	None
Reference Documents:	None

## Customer Survey

**Q1.** Thinking about your most recent contact with ROTHER COUNCIL, did you deal with them... **(Mark one only)**

- In person
- Over the phone
- Email
- Text
- Web Chat
- Social Media
- In writing (letter)

**Q2.** And what was the **main** purpose of your most recent contact with ROTHER COUNCIL ? **(Mark one only)**

- Looking at the products or services
- Making a purchase
- Enquiry/asking a question
- About a problem or complaint
- A regular appointment/check
- An appointment made due to an issue or problem
- Checking information following receiving a letter or email
- ROTHER COUNCIL contacted me to follow-up on an issue I raised
- Other **(Record comment)**

Exceptionally dissatisfied					Exceptionally satisfied					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	N/A
<p><b>Section 1: Last Experience</b></p> <p>Thinking about this last experience of ROTHER COUNCIL , what score would you give for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ service range</li> <li>▪ service quality</li> <li>▪ service reliability</li> <li>▪ Being kept informed</li> <li>▪ Ease of dealing with ROTHER COUNCIL</li> <li>▪ Billing/Invoicing</li> <li>▪ Price/cost</li> <li>▪ Speed of service/response</li> <li>▪ Explaining information clearly</li> <li>▪ Making it easy to contact the right person to help</li> <li>▪ Ease of using the website</li> <li>▪ Helpfulness of staff</li> <li>▪ Competence of staff</li> </ul>										

**Section 1: Last Experience**

Thinking about this last experience of ROTHER COUNCIL , what score would you give for:

- service range
- service quality
- service reliability
- Being kept informed
- Ease of dealing with ROTHER COUNCIL
- Billing/Invoicing
- Price/cost
- Speed of service/response
- Explaining information clearly
- Making it easy to contact the right person to help
- Ease of using the website
- Helpfulness of staff
- Competence of staff

## Section 2: Overall

Now, thinking about how you see ROTHER COUNCIL overall, what score would you give for

- Ability to interact with ROTHER COUNCIL in the way you prefer
- ROTHER COUNCIL cares about their customers
- ROTHER COUNCIL designs the experience around its customers
- ROTHER COUNCIL keeps their promises
- ROTHER COUNCIL makes you feel reassured
- ROTHER COUNCIL are open and transparent
- ROTHER COUNCIL does the right thing in business practices (e.g. for employees/for society)
- You trust ROTHER COUNCIL

**Q3.** How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with ROTHER COUNCIL overall?

Exceptionally dissatisfied      Exceptionally satisfied  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Q4.** Thinking about your overall experience of ROTHER COUNCIL , if you had the choice, how likely would you be to:

- Stay as a customer of ROTHER COUNCIL
- Buy another service from ROTHER COUNCIL

Extremely unlikely      Extremely likely  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 N/A

**Q5a.** Thinking about your overall experience of ROTHER COUNCIL , if you had the choice, how likely would you be to:

- Recommend ROTHER COUNCIL to others

Extremely unlikely      Extremely likely  
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 N/A

**Q5b.** Please indicate how you would rate the reputation of this organisation?

Poor Reputation      Excellent reputation  
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 N/A

**Q6.** How much effort did you have to make to complete your transaction, enquiry or request on this occasion?

A lot of effort      Very little effort  
10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**Q7.** Give up to three words which best describe how you felt after your most recent experience with ROTHER COUNCIL ?

**Q8a.** Thinking about your most recent contact with ROTHER COUNCIL , was everything right first time?

- Yes
- No {ROUTE TO Q8b}
- Don't know/Not applicable

**Q8b. If 'No' – Did you need to make follow up contact as a result of this?**

- Yes {ROUTE TO Q8c}
- No
- Don't know/Not applicable

**Q8c. If 'Yes' – How many times? (Record number)**

<p><b>Q9.</b> Have you had any kind of problem or bad experience with ROTHER COUNCIL in the last 3 months?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yes {ROUTE TO Q10}</li> <li>▪ No {ROUTE TO Q12}</li> </ul>
<p><b>Q10.</b> Did you tell anyone at ROTHER COUNCIL about your problem?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Yes {ROUTE TO Q11}</li> <li>▪ No {ROUTE TO Q12}</li> </ul>
<p><b>Q11.</b> Please give a score out of 10 to indicate how satisfied or dissatisfied you feel with the items below. If your complaint is not yet resolved please click the N/A button for 'the outcome of your complaint'.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The outcome of the complaint</li> <li>▪ The handling of the complaint</li> <li>▪ The attitude of staff</li> <li>▪ Speed of resolving your complaint</li> </ul> <p>Exceptionally dissatisfied                      Exceptionally satisfied</p> <p>1   2   3   4   5   6   7   8   9   10   N/A</p>
<p><b>Q12.</b> What is the one thing ROTHER COUNCIL could do to improve their service?</p>
<p><b>Q13.</b> Any other comments?</p>
<p><b>Q14.</b> How long have you been using ROTHER COUNCIL ?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Less than a year</li> <li>▪ 1-2 years</li> <li>▪ 3-5 years</li> <li>▪ 6-10 years</li> <li>▪ 11-20 years</li> <li>▪ Over 20 years</li> <li>▪ Not applicable/Don't know</li> </ul>
<p><b>THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY YOUR VIEWS ARE APPRECIATED</b></p>

Staff and Member Survey

Strategy & Culture - Commitment	
1.1 The Councillors believe that great customer service is extremely important to our business performance	By 'Directors we mean the most senior decision-making body e.g. owner/partners/council/board of directors. They should have a clear personal and collective view that quality of service is a key business imperative.
1.2 The Leader of the Council and CEO fully promote the importance of customer service	The Leader of the Council/CEO should take responsibility for customer service through establishing, maintaining and communicating a quality service ethos. It is not intended that the CEO should take operational control but he/she should visibly champion quality customer service throughout the organisation.
1.3 The Heads of Service and your line manager measure customer service performance against our goals and supports any action required for improvement	The Heads of service and your manager should monitor customer service goals and objectives and there should be regular and systematic reviews of customer service performance. Quality of service should be an agenda item on all Board and other executive meetings which should review all customer service metrics and take action where required.
1.4 Our organisation has a vision, a mission and goals that encourage and deliver great customer service	The customer service mission and vision, which should be communicated and understood throughout your organisation, and may be promoted externally, should be expressed by a clear statement which is appropriate to your organisation and customer expectation.
1.5 The CEO/Heads of Service see customer service as vital to the success of our organisation	
1.6 Our organisation puts the customer at the heart of everything we do	A central focus must be given to customer satisfaction and loyalty – it should be the basis for setting goals and objectives within your organisation.
1.7 Advertising and promotional material aligns with our core values and ethical standards	Advertising and promotional material should be honest and accurate. It should reflect the services/products offered and portray the core values and ethical standards of your organisation.
1.8 We value our reputation and do everything possible to protect it	Your organisation should have objective evidence to support the claim of valuing its reputation and brand. This could be through customer feedback from direct contact or forums or indeed the use of market research to monitor customer perception of the organisation's reputation. Use of tools such as the UKCSI may also be considered



1.9 We have consistent customer service standards covering:	
1.9.1 Quality of the products and services we deliver	Written customer service policies covering at least these statements should be clear and understood by all employees and may be made available to customers
1.9.2 Timeliness of our response to customers	Written customer service policies covering at least these statements should be clear and understood by all employees and may be made available to customers
1.9.3 Getting things right first time for customers	Written customer service policies covering at least these statements should be clear and understood by all employees and may be made available to customers
1.9.4 How we respond when things go wrong	Written customer service policies covering at least these statements should be clear and understood by all employees and may be made available to customers
1.9.5 When, how and if we offer compensation	Written customer service policies covering at least these statements should be clear and understood by all employees and may be made available to customers
1.10 We apply the same level of (customer) service to both internal and external customers	There should be a culture of 'Internal Customers'. This may involve developing internal contracts, service level agreements or memorandums of understanding between work areas
1.11 Everyone in our organisation understands how they contribute to the customer experience, even if they do not deal directly with customers	
1.12 We measure what is important to our customers by evaluating their service experience	Customer service experience may be measured in many different ways. The key requirement here is measuring what's important to your customers.
1.13 We have a process to find out what customers think of us (e.g. we ask them to complete surveys)	A customer's perception of a service may be different from their actual experience. Data can be gathered by informal or professional research methods. Your organisation should also benchmark against others and could, for example, use ICS Touchstone or subscribe to the UKCSI.
1.14 We ask our employees what they think about our organisations' customer service	Your organisation should encourage formal or informal feedback from employees to evaluate their perceptions of the service offered. For example, staff opinion surveys or ICS ServCheck could be used.
1.15 We use an independent organisation to measure our levels of service	Examples of how this can be achieved could be by internal observation or by using a third party such as a market research or mystery shopping organisation.
1.16 We measure our customers' experiences in all areas of our business	Factual evidence produced from internal or external sources could be evaluated and used as a basis to

	introduce changes to objectives or goals.
1.17 We make changes that demonstrate we have listened to feedback from customers and employees	
1.18 We treat our customers as individuals by responding flexibly to their needs	Your organisation should consider how to optimise access to its services according to the varying needs of its customer base. Employees should be empowered to deal with 'out of the ordinary' customer needs and encouraged to use their initiative.
1.19 Our organisation shares customer service performance details with key external stakeholders	
1.20 Our organisation shares customer service performance details with employees	
1.21 Our organisation understands its customers and their needs	
1.22 Our organisation makes effective use of customer insight in order to improve customer service	
1.23 Our organisation's customer service strategy helps it achieve its business goals	
1.24 My personal objectives include objectives related to customer service	
1.25 Our organisation rewards people based on customer satisfaction performance	

People - Capability	
2.1 We recruit people who demonstrate excellent customer service skills and behaviours	Required staff competencies should be identified and customer service should have a high priority. Advertising, recruitment, job specification and training should encompass customer focused qualities. Interviewing strategies should focus on service competencies using tests such as ICS FirstStep
2.2 Our people reflect the organisation's desired image and reputation	Clearly, this is very subjective and might range from a firm of solicitors that expects its staff to portray a sober, conservative image to an avant-garde advertising agency whose staff might be expected to be funky and hip. You decide what is appropriate.
2.3 Our induction process includes sufficient focus on the importance of customer service and our service objectives	Your organisation should have a formal induction programme where initial training and awareness focuses on the importance of the customer relationship.
2.4 Our people are fully informed about:	
2.4.1 The products we offer	All employees should be fully informed on these items and be able to demonstrate their knowledge to a level

	relative to their role, e.g. sales people would need a higher level than data processors.
2.4.2 The services we offer	
2.4.3 Features and benefits of our products/services	
2.4.4 Prices/costs	
2.4.5 How to act when things go wrong	
2.4.6 Our customers' needs	
2.4.7 How different parts of our organisation work together to achieve excellent service	
2.4.8 Our process for dealing with customer complaints	
2.5 Our people are encouraged to improve their customer skills through training, coaching, qualifications or professional development.	Employees should be encouraged to develop a personal development plan perhaps including access to the ICS Professional Awards. Resources should be in place to deliver suitable training and coaching and ICS ServiceFocus could be considered.
2.6 Our organisation is committed to the continuing professional development of our people	Your organisation could be IIP accredited and should commit to continual development of employees – perhaps by encouraging use of the ICS Professional Awards leading to the Continuous Professional Development programme.
2.7 Our people are encouraged to obtain professional qualifications in customer service related disciplines.	Employees should be encouraged to achieve a customer service related qualification, e.g. an NVQ/SVQ, Irish Traineeship, Advanced Apprenticeship or an ICS Professional Award.
2.8 Our people are flexible, proactive, use their initiative and have a positive attitude to internal/external customers	Your organisation should encourage staff to be flexible and proactive towards customers. Training, the initial recruitment process and performance management encourage these behaviours and skills.
2.9 Our people are assessed on their customer service skills and behaviours	Criteria for assessing employees on their customer service skills should be established within the normal performance review cycles. Skills assessment should form part of the supervisory roles within the organisation.
2.10 Our people are empathetic listeners and show concern for others	Training and initial induction could include understanding customer needs training for employees when and where appropriate. Examples of these skills could be collected from employee and customer feedback which may be reviewed during staff appraisals.
2.11 Our managers understand how to use technology to improve our customer service	All managers should be able to identify the best technology available to them and understand how it could be used in a practical, service-related application.
2.12 Our organisation delivers a consistent	This means whether we communicate face to face,

service through all the communications channels customers use to interact with us	email, letter, telephone, customer service is as important and delivered to the same high standards
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People - Continuity	
2.13 Every manager and team-leader values their people, demonstrated through their behaviour	There are a whole range of strategies that every manager/ team-leader should be able to demonstrate how they value their people. Team meeting minutes, one-to-one meetings, staff appraisals and 360 feedback could show how this is being achieved.
2.14 A team approach, characterised by respect for and commitment to colleagues, is encouraged	Organisations may have internal and external team building training or team events. There may be team awards or a collective approach to deliver outstanding customer service.
2.15 There is an effective balance between the needs of the individual, their colleagues, and the organisation	Feedback from staff appraisals could identify the need for work/life balance research.
2.16 Our organisation supports people appropriately when things go wrong	Your organisation should encourage a 'no blame' culture. Proper root-cause analysis should be in place to establish why something went wrong rather than who caused it.
2.17 Our organisation values the diversity of its people	Your organisation should encourage diversity in the context of people being themselves and the way they act. Staff should be encouraged to weigh their actions against their conscience.
2.18 The service performance of our people is a key element of our performance management system	Service performance measurements should involve all employees. Performance management systems for all staff should include metrics based on customer service. Where there are departmental (not individual) targets these should be reinforced by a 'team' philosophy.
2.19 People who deliver superior customer experiences are rewarded and recognised	Recognition and reward schemes should be in place for superior service achievements. Achievements could relate to career progression within the organisation.
2.20 Achievement in customer service delivery and innovation positively influences career development	Outstanding individual achievements are a consideration for career progression. Promotion prospects for service achievement and innovation should be encouraged through the staff appraisal process

Processes - Consistency	
3.1 We design our processes and systems with the customer in mind	the customer perspective should be an important consideration. It may be achieved through focus groups or independent research and a thorough investigation of the customer's needs must be taken into account prior to the process being introduced
3.2 Our processes ensure we deliver a	Processes should be developed with quality and

quality product and/or service	fitness for purpose as a desired and defined outcome. A 'sign off' at each stage may be considered ensuring that the process meets the outlined requirements
3.3 Internal and external communications display a consistent commitment to customer service	Internal and external communication should emphasise your organisation's commitment to customer service. You could include sales literature, letter headings and website
3.4 Customers are kept informed about progress when dealing with us	Processes should be in place so that the customer is aware of what is happening either in the normal sales/service process or within the complaint handling process.
3.5 We ensure we have a sufficient number of people or the technology in place to meet the service demands of our customers	Your organisation should ensure that adequate staff levels, correct equipment to service the demand and relevant information to enable the customer to deal with the organisation are all in place. The organisation's business plan should identify these resources and allocate budgets accordingly.
3.6 We have arrangements for customers who need special assistance because of disabilities or language/cultural differences	Typical examples could include (but not be limited to) large print documents, having deaf loop aids installed and disabled access arrangements. Staff training could include cultural awareness and diversity training.
3.7 Documents for customers are written in plain English or other languages that reflect our customer base	Note may be taken of the Plain English campaign. All documents for customer consumption should be clear and unambiguous
3.8 Our physical resources (buildings, furniture, equipment, manuals, etc.) are designed for and meet our customers', suppliers' or partners' expectations (where applicable)	All physical resources should be laid out or designed to meet customer expectations. Customers with disabilities should be considered and appropriate provisions made
3.9 Our technology supports our customer-centric culture and service aspirations	All technology-based systems should support customer service and not be a limiting factor. User-testing should focus on customer requirements
3.10 Our technology helps us minimise errors when dealing with customers	Technology used should be 'tried and tested' to minimise errors and data should need to be input only once to reduce processing error.
3.11 We use accreditations and/or industry best practice guidelines to help us deliver an excellent customer experience	This could involve using established 'best practice' principles, guidelines or principles from the organisation's trade association or by other recognised third party principles such as the EFQM, ISO 9001:2000, Customer Service Excellence or ICS ServiceMark.
3.12 We benchmark our customer service against organisations in our sector	This could be achieved through benchmarking information available from trade associations or through the ICS business benchmarking survey
3.13 We benchmark our customer service against organisations outside our sector	
3.14 Our organisation is good at managing change in order to respond to changing	A business function is set up to manage business change e.g. projects, with clear methodologies in place

customer needs	to ensure customer impact and service is considered with at least the same priority as other business interests.
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Processes - Creativity	
3.15 Our Senior Leadership Team encourages us to be creative in order to deliver the best customer experience	Reward systems, financial and otherwise, could be used to encourage and stimulate creativity in employees. Senior management should encourage staff participation in the customer process and encourage feedback
3.16 We have a suggestion scheme (or other system) for employees to put forward ideas to improve customer experience	Innovation is the lifeblood of any organisation. There should be systems in place to develop ideas for service improvements – these could include suggestion boxes or staff focus groups. In addition, all internal and external feedback should be considered.
3.17 Our organisation innovates to improve customer service	‘Innovation’ could cover a range of ideas/implementations from a better way of doing something that improves an outcome for a small number of customers to a large service implementation requiring cross-functional commitment.
3.18 Suggestions for service improvement are taken seriously	All suggestions for change should be considered positively and implemented where appropriate.
3.19 There are clear reasons for the introduction of new or changed services	A new or changed system should be developed in a logical way. It may be prudent to run a risk analysis or a pilot prior to being used by customers.
3.20 We understand the impact on customers and employees before introducing changes to our products or services	Customers and staff should be considered before any change is introduced. This could be through focus groups or surveys.
3.21 Customers are involved in the development of new products and services	
3.22 Employees are recognised for and kept fully informed of progress on their suggestions for service improvement	Suggestions should be assessed quickly and a process in place to keep originators informed. This could be through the internal communications process or a dedicated intranet facility.
3.23 We regularly learn better methods or approaches to service from other organisations inside and outside of our industry sector	Organisations may consider benchmarking themselves against other organisations in their sector or other sectors. There should be a systematic search for best practice and use of local Chambers of Commerce, visits to competitors or the use of an external independent organisation to carry out benchmarking.