



Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board
26 January 2016

Customer Service Excellence in Highways & Transport

Purpose of the report: To provide an update to the Economic Prosperity, Environment and Highways Board on the customer service within, and resident satisfaction relating to Surrey Highways & Transport and the work being undertaken to improve customer service through the Customer Service Excellence Standard.

Introduction:

1. Surrey is a county that is on the move, with high levels of car ownership among the 1.13 million residents and an extensive public transport network. The county has some of the busiest roads in the country and there are significant challenges maintaining the network while keeping it moving. Surrey Highways and Transport (H&T) Service want to bring a customer focused service to all customers, and want customers to help shape our service into the future. This will be an integral part of the new 5 year Business Plan for Highways & Transport (H&T).
2. In 2013 H&T chose to use the Customer Service Excellence Standard as a framework to help achieve this goal. Accreditation was achieved in 2014 and until very recently H&T were the only county highway authority to achieve accreditation.
3. A cross party Member Reference Group made up of volunteers from the former Environment & Transport Select Committee was created to provide a member perspective on future performance criteria; provide insight and challenge of the current delivery strategies and support the service in improving customer service.

Customer Service Excellence Standard

4. Customer Service Excellence is a framework developed by the Government and is designed to help review and drive continuous customer focussed improvement.

5. The Customer Service Excellence framework has five key themes: Customer Insight, Culture, Information, Delivery and Timeliness & Quality. To achieve accreditation H&T had to demonstrate how they met the criteria and were subject to both a paper based and a three day on site assessment by an independent external assessor.
6. Following independent assessment H&T was recommended for accreditation and the report highlighted areas for improvement and good practice. The assessor praised the attitude and commitment of staff to improve the service and highlighted Operation Horizon as a good example of how customer feedback was used to influence service delivery. Areas of improvement included using the Horizon example to use customer feedback more consistently across the service. In addition the follow up to enquiries and keeping the customer informed through the life of their enquiry was in need of development.
7. H&T used the report to produce an action plan and concentrated its efforts on addressing the five themes

Customer Insight

To gain additional insights from our customers H&T are using:

- The Highways Customer Panel has been established to improve the Services ability to listen, understand and respond to customer feedback. In 2015 existing customers were asked to join a customer panel to provide views, three times per year, on the service they receive. We now have over 1,000 volunteers and are working closely with our Member Reference Group to analyse the data and develop the questions for future surveys. Latest report at Annex 1.
- Annual National Highways & Transport survey assesses resident satisfaction with service provision. For the first time customer contact has been measured and the results are shown at Annex 2. This is a postal survey of approx 4,500 residents with a 20% response rate.
- Surrey Residents Survey provides quarterly customer satisfaction data (see annex 3)

Culture

Customer Service Excellence forms one strand of the new Highways & Transport for the Future: People Strategy (HTftFPS) and will also address:

- Communication and engagement
- Leadership and management development
- Skills and opportunities

The recent H&T restructure has addressed contract management responsibility to bring decision making closer to the local area

Led by level 5 managers through increased networking and closer working H&T are driving service change.

Information

Customer service was at the heart of the recent service restructure and as part of this a new Works Communication Team has been created. This team will be responsible for ensuring that residents and Members are proactively informed of upcoming works, publishing programme information and handling related customer enquiries.

We have worked with a company called Elgin to develop the www.Roadworks.org webpage to provide the single point of information for planned works. This links to our Streetworks system to include utility company works and additional information allowing customers to self serve. Along side the website we have worked closely with SCC corporate Communications Team to redesign our signage and advance notification letters.

A new Works Management System (WMS) has been developed and installed to handle customer enquiries and works orders. The system provides greater transparency and ability to track customer contact.

Delivery

H&T regularly reviews its delivery standards in conjunction with the Member Reference Group. Feedback from the Customer Panel has been used to support this.

Compliments and complaint data is regularly reviewed to identify areas for improvement

Timeliness & Quality

Scrutiny Boards have been established to monitor, challenge and improve contract performance

H&T work closely with SCC Customer Services, which includes the Contact Centre, with the aim of managing enquiries at the first point of contact. To further improve relationships and understanding an ongoing programme of feedback, training and job swaps is taking place.

Annual Assessment:

8. To retain accreditation H&T has to demonstrate continuous improvement at its annual assessment. In April 2015 accreditation was retained and the assessor highlighted the following areas of good practice:
 - Commitment and approach to customer service
 - The Service has been instrumental in the introduction of customer service satisfaction questions within the National Highways & Transport (NHT) survey.
 - The Service has taken a lead in working with Elgin to improve the level of information being published on 'Roadworks.org' website to give members of the public more detailed information on roadwork's in Surrey

- Increased levels of customer feedback to develop services,
 - As part of the HTftFP key competencies have been developed around customer service including training, personal development and recruitment
9. Customer Service Excellence is an ongoing process and the assessor also highlighted area where further work is required:
- WMS has delivered improvements and a plan is in place to roll the system out to other areas of the Service. This area should be considered a priority.
 - Community Highway Officers were not able to update electronic systems while away from the offices. Providing remote technology could give significant advantages.

Conclusions:

10. The H&T Service receives a high volume of enquiries and complaints and has developed processes to ensure performance has increased in relation to these. However it is also recognised that there is room for improvement and work is being undertaken to achieve this through the Customer Service Excellence, Highways for the Future projects and an ongoing review of roles and responsibilities.

Recommendations:

11. That the Board note the contents of this report and the Highways and Transport Services work to improve Resident Experience.

Next steps:

Through the Customer Service Excellence project and its day to day operations H&T will seek to improve customer satisfaction and resident experience.

Report contact: Mike Dawson, Customer Service & Improvement Manager

Contact details: 0208 541 8019, miker.dawson@surreycc.gov.uk

Sources/background papers:

National Highway and Transport Survey
Surrey Resident Survey
Surrey Works Management System
SCC Feedback Database