



## Report to Customers and Communities Committee

26 February 2015

**Title:** Customer Service Excellence

**Report of:** Involvement and Diversity Manager

### Purpose of Report

1. To provide the committee with an update on the recent Customer Service Excellence assessment.

### Background

2. Customer Service Excellence (CSE) is a standard which was introduced by the government in order to ensure that services are efficient, effective, excellent, equitable and empowering. Fundamentally they expect organisations to put customers at the heart of service provision.
3. The company was first accredited with the CSE Standard in March 2011, and subsequently was subject to further visits for the following 2 years to ensure that we had continued to maintain this standard. In our last assessment the company was found to be fully compliant in all areas.
4. Achieving Customer Service Excellence was identified as a key action for the company in 2014/15 and a report was presented to committee in May 2014 outlining our plans for reaccreditation.

### Summary

#### Assessment process

5. The assessment was carried out in three parts:
  - Self-assessment, which involved collecting a range of evidence against the various criteria for us to demonstrate how we met the different requirements. This was submitted to the assessor in September 2014.
  - A mock assessment with the assessor was carried out in October 2014 to identify if there were any significant gaps or areas for concern carried out
  - A two-day onsite assessment with the assessor took place in November involving a range of employees (selected by the assessor) and customers.

6. In order to prepare for the assessment, working groups of officers and customers were set up.

### **Outcome of the assessment**

7. The company was assessed as meeting the standard in all areas of the assessment. In particular, five areas were highlighted as positive practice (compliance plus).
8. The assessor highlighted in the report that, while the organisation has faced significant changes and budget restrictions since the last full assessment, we continue to deliver high-quality services.
9. The full report has been provided on the Board Members website.
10. The particular areas of strength highlighted were:

### **Customer insight**

- The assessor found that the company uses the range of information we know about our customers and potential customers to understand their needs and deliver services to meet these.
- In particular they mentioned the work carried out before the welfare reform changes, using the information to understand who would be affected to target support and advice.
- They found there to be a strong structure of involving and consulting customers, ranging from tenants being on the Board, and TALISMAN, through to attending Estate Tours or carrying out inspections in multi-storey blocks.
- In particular, the work carried out through our forums (including the Disabled Persons Forum, BME Forum and LGBT forum) help to make sure we are considering any barriers to people accessing our services.

### **Information and access**

- Our approach to ensuring that people receive and understand information was highlighted, in particular noting the pre-sale interviews carried out for people considering buying the Leasehold to their property to fully understand what they are undertaking and the Home**Welcome** visits carried out for new tenants
- Our work with partners was identified as an area of “compliance plus”, with the assessor recognising the way the company works with organisations in the wider community to help us sustain our neighbourhoods.

### **Next Steps**

11. Following this accreditation, we now follow a three-year cycle to maintain the standard.

This involves:

- **2016** - Check against all elements of the standard and full assessment against any areas of partial compliance (one-day visit)

- **2017** – Light-touch assessment to look at any changes in the company and check on any areas of partial compliance
- **2018** – Full reassessment.

### **Link to values**

12. This report links to the following values:

- Being a listening and learning organisation
- Being customer focused, innovative and professional
- Caring and respecting

### **Impact on tenants**

13. The aim of maintaining the company's accreditation of CSE is to ensure that we continue to provide excellent customer service to our tenants and leaseholders. The criteria within the assessment provides a clear framework for ensuring that we continue to provide timely and effective services.

### **Risk Management Implications**

14. Failure to focus on the customer has been identified as a strategic risk for the company. Maintaining Customer Service Excellence accreditation and committing to the framework associated with this ensures that we continue to work to ensure we provide good quality, timely services.

### **Financial Implications**

15. The Head of Corporate Services confirms a budget to meet the cost of the ongoing assessment process for Customer Service Excellence. Any other costs arising during this process would be reported back to this committee.

### **Equality and Diversity Implications**

16. The first criteria of the framework is Customer Insight and expects organisations to have an understanding of who their customers are to be able to demonstrate that the services being provided meet their needs. This is part of our overall approach to collecting and reporting profile information.

### **Value for Money Implications**

17. There are no direct value for money implications arising from this report.

### **Health Implications**

18. There are no direct health implications arising from this report.

### **Environmental Implications**

19. There are no direct environmental implications arising from this report.

### **Consultation carried out**

20. A working group of tenants and leaseholders supported the company through the assessment process reviewing the evidence being provided and also being interviewed directly by the assessor.

### **Recommendation**

21. The committee is recommended to note the findings of the assessment.