

Introduction:

The 2012/2015 Access & Customer Care Strategy has been completed with the establishment of the customer service centre and partnership working with Suffolk Libraries, to enable a joined up approach for the customer through area based working.

Customer expectations are continuing to increase especially due to changes in social media, the use of new technologies such as tablets and smart phones, the continuing challenging economic environment and other changes such as Welfare Reform.

More and more people are using the internet to purchase goods and services, and the Government is also pushing the 'digital by default' agenda for those people needing to access public services. This presents an opportunity for the Partnership to improve customer access and reduce costs.

The 2015/2019 Access & Customer Care Customer Journey to Excellence Strategy (CSJES) outlines the strategic aims for the Partnerships approach to customer service taking into account the continuing challenging financial environment but also the opportunities available through advancements in technology and making more use of systems that have already been invested in.

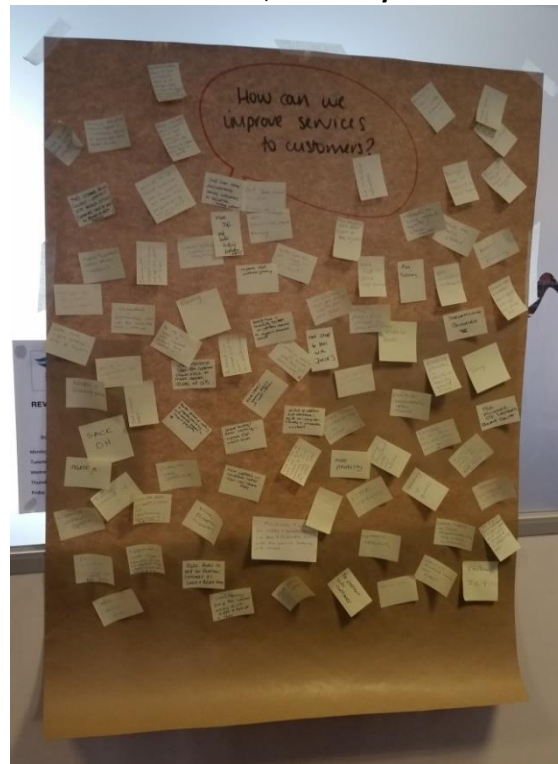
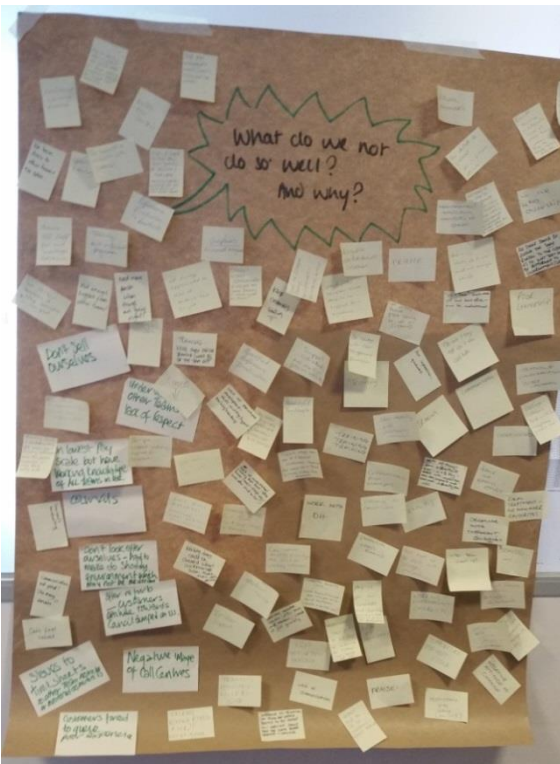
The CSJES supports the objectives set out in the Partnerships East Suffolk Business Plan 2015-2023.



Councillor TJ Haworth-Culf
Cabinet Member for Customers, Communities & Leisure
Suffolk Coastal District Council



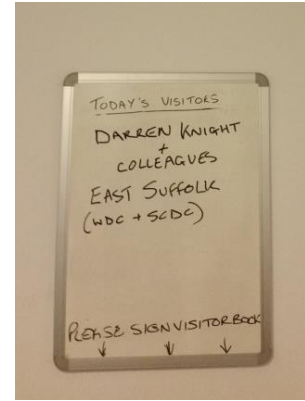
Councillor Frank Mortimer
Cabinet Member for Customer Service &
Communities, **Waveney District Council**



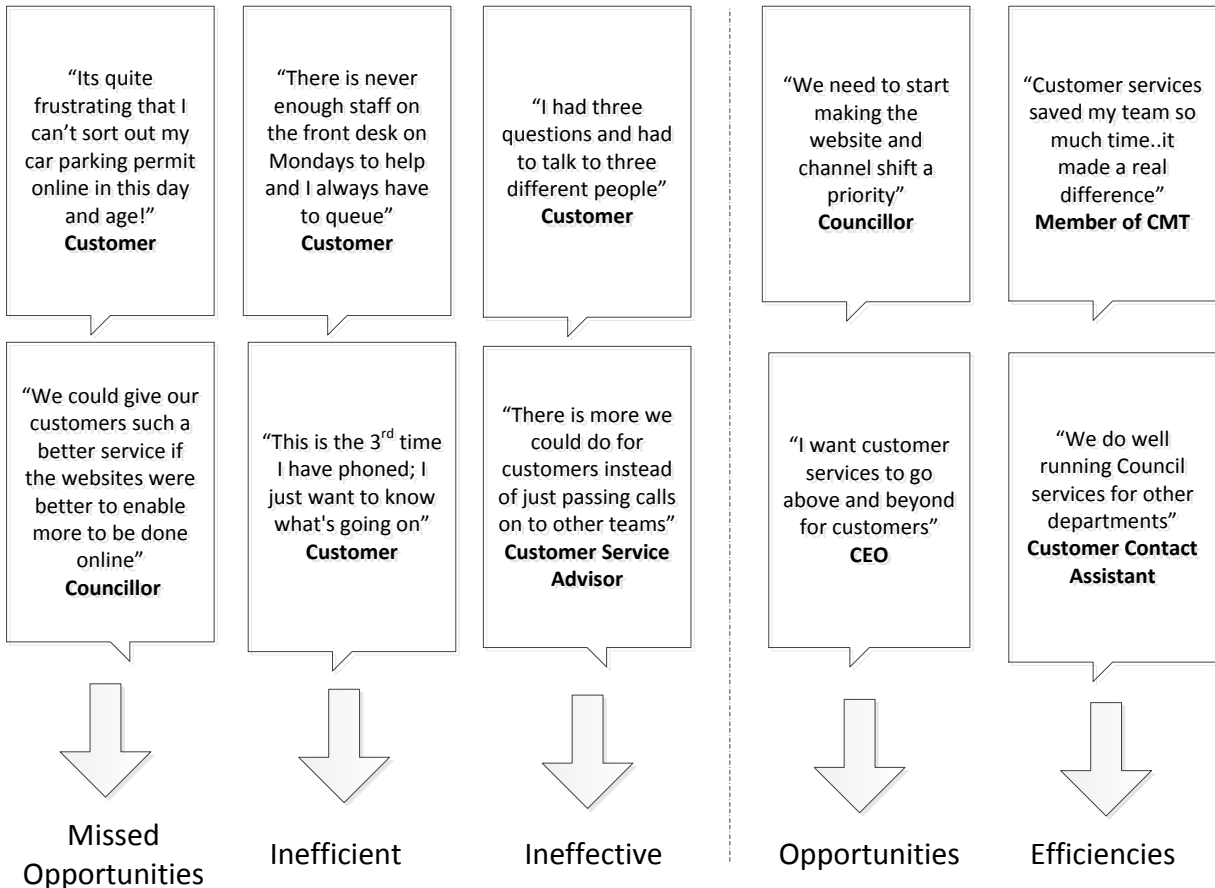
2015...What people say:

CSJES has been developed through the following:

- Strategic consultation with Cabinet Members for Customer Service and Strategic Management Team on the purpose and strategic direction for customer service across the Partnership
- PESTLE and extended SWOT analysis
- Learning identified from other organisations; looking at models of customer service delivery
- Staff engagement and consultation events



Real world...



"It's not the strongest of species that survives...but the most responsive to change"
(C.Darwin)

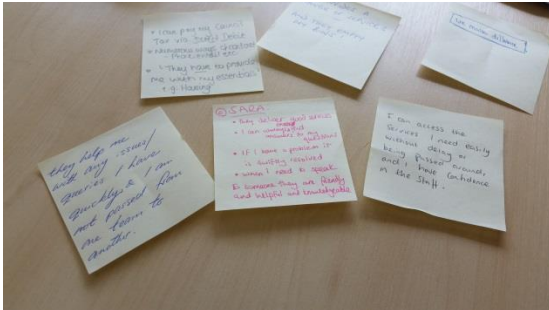
Purpose for Customer Service:

The purpose of Customer Service at Suffolk Coastal District and Waveney District Council is to...

“Provide exceptional, consistent and holistic customer service by acting as an advocate for our customers, meeting their expectations with empathy and promptly resolving their query to its end the first time, every time.”

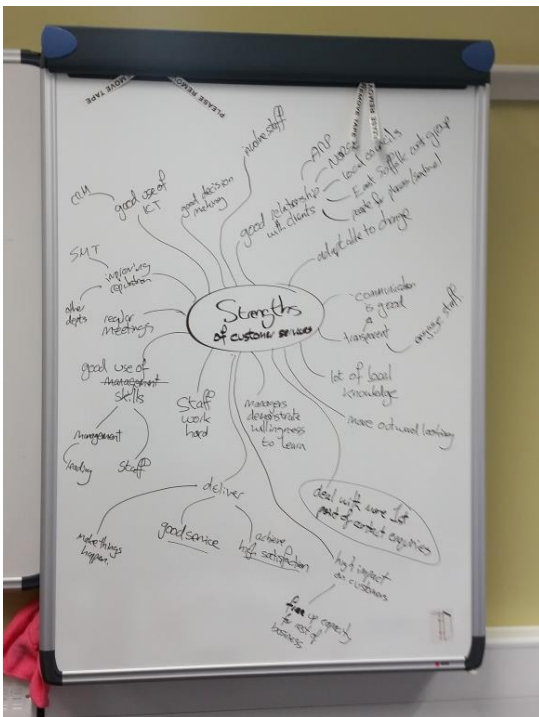
Underneath this purpose there are five principles which will enable this to happen:

1. To resolve, signpost or enable our customers to self-serve easily
2. To facilitate the delivery of council services, information, signposting, advice and dispute resolution to all customers both internal and external, via multiple channels
3. To inform customers (current and potential) of Council services in the most effective way possible
4. To provide customers with a central, consistent, accurate and holistic service at the first point of contact
5. To enable the partnership to achieve efficiencies by using customer services to support business areas and free up resources



Strategic Aims:

The CSJES has five strategic aims, which will ensure that customer access to services is easy, ways of working are efficient, advancements in technology are maximised to improve customer experience, costs are reduced and value for money is achieved for the taxpayer.



The five strategic aims are:

1. Improving customer access to services
2. Proactively managing customer demand
3. Continuously improving our performance
4. Making every contact count
5. Effective stakeholder relations

“Being challenged in life is inevitable, being defeated is optional”
(R. Crawford)

Aim 1: Improving customer access to services

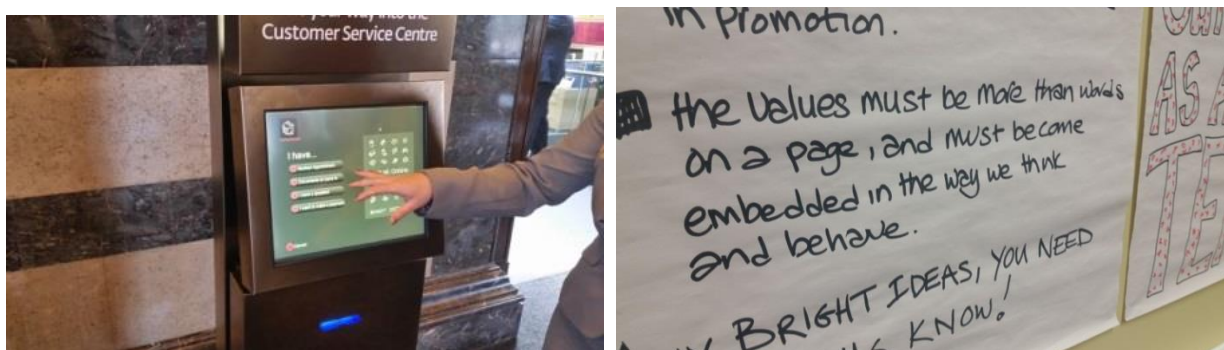
We want to achieve the best services we can with the resources that we have available. Providing customers with easy access to services and information is a key way of helping to achieve this.

Customer access means different things to different people; some prefer face to face contact, whilst other customers would prefer to minimise costs and will use more cost effective ways of contact, for example via the website.

We aim for customers to be able to access services and information when it is convenient for them. This can be achieved through maximising the advancements in technology in order to provide 24 hour a day/7 days a week electronic services.

Across the Partnership we will develop a customer first culture; which is based around enabling customers to help themselves, considering the customer journey when processes are designed and empowering staff to do the right thing for customers.

We will actively explore opportunities to work in partnership to achieve a 'one Suffolk' public sector approach to deliver joined up services for customers.



Aim 2: Proactively managing customer demand

Customer demand on services is likely to increase and so being able to effectively manage this will be a priority to ensure that customer expectations are managed and resources are efficiently used through applying effective demand management techniques.

What is demand management? Demand management is:

- Addressing mismatched expectations through changes in process and communication
- Ensuring that over-supply is reduced
- Reducing the costs associated with those who do have needs by tapping into citizen-driven innovations; personalisation with a purpose
- Building community skills and capacity to take on more responsibility and reduce needs in the long term – transforming the relationship with the customer

Customer Services Team will work with services across the Partnership to enable effective demand management by ensuring that:

- Understanding the customer journey is a core element when processes and procedures are designed or reviewed
- Valueless customer contact is identified and eliminated
- Learning is identified and implemented to ensure recurrence of problems is prevented

Changes in customer expectations and advancements in technology both provide opportunities for customers to access services and information themselves – to ‘self-help’ - which also presents possibilities for the Partnership to work more efficient and effectively, and so developing and encouraging self-service and channel shift will be a priority.

What is channel shift? This is a strategy for moving as many customer interactions as possible to lower cost channels, while at the same time improving customer experience.

The ‘digital by default’ agenda will be a strategic priority for the Partnership which will help improve access services and reduce costs by maximising advancements in technology.

The Partnerships websites will become a key driver for customer transactions to free up resources and reduce costs. All areas and levels of the Partnership will promote and enable customers to help themselves to access services and information.

What is self-service? This is defined as ways for customers to access information and services by themselves, without dealing directly with a member of staff.

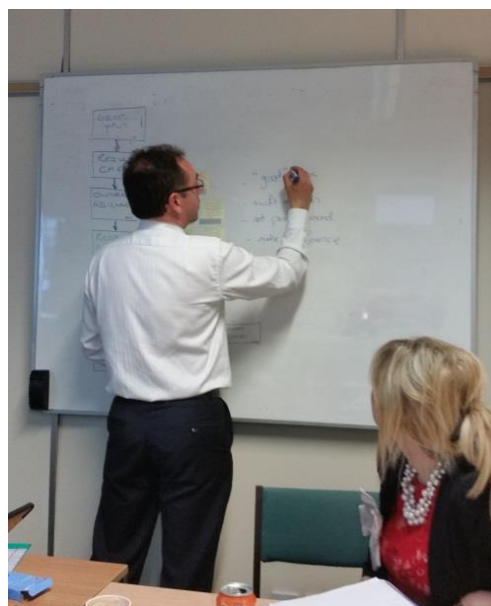
The Partnerships websites represent huge opportunities to reduce costs and increase access to services and information by becoming more transactional; and this will become a key priority over the coming years, with customer services taking a leading responsibility for the development of this area.

Aim 3: Continuously improving performance

In order to provide excellent services to customers a continuous improvement culture will be established within the Customer Service Team in order to:

- Improve services to customers by increasing capacity to do more with existing resources
- Increasing first contact resolution
- Effectively planning resources Vs demand
- Enabling channel shift
- Making evidence based/data driven decisions
- Providing a consistent, accurate and holistic service

Performance metrics will be developed to ensure that the strategy delivers measurable improvements in service, which will be monitored through a ‘Channel Shift Dashboard’ and having indicators that ensures that ‘day to day’ operational performance is maintained and improved.



Customer consultation can highlight problems with services if conducted at an early stage because it allows organisations to identify what is working well and what might need improvement. Acting on information gathered through customer consultation can help to make organisations more effective and efficient, benefiting both the organisation and the customer. This can lead to better services, fewer complaints, and ultimately, improved outcomes for customers.

Gathering evidence of how well a service is doing and what difference it is making to customers provides useful evidence for commissioning purposes, and demonstrates that the organisation is focused on learning. A range of methods will be used to consult with customers on change that may affect them to ensure the best decisions are made for the customer and the Partnership.

Target customer service operating model:

The target customer service operating model outlines how services will be delivered to customers through the following channels:

Provide access to services and information:

- Via self-service methods (internet, mobile, text and phone); making this the 'preferred choice'
- Through a single contact centre for the partnership providing a 'one stop shop'
- Through social media (Facebook and Twitter)
- Face to face (at our chosen locations or others that may become available/subject to demand/funding)
- In writing (email or letter)

Our customers will be offered services in a range of ways including:

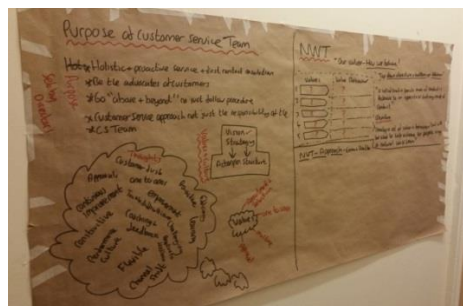
- Self-service (the customer helps themselves on a 24/7 365 (24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year basis)
- Assisted service (we enable the customer to help themselves)
- Mediated service (we help the customer)
- Signposted service (if we can't help the customer we find someone that can)

Achieving value for money:

The National Audit Office (NAO) uses three criteria to assess the value for money of government spending i.e. the optimal use of resources to achieve the intended outcomes:

- Economy: minimising the cost of resources used or required (inputs) – spending less;
- Efficiency: the relationship between the output from goods or services and the resources to produce them – spending well; and
- Effectiveness: the relationship between the intended and actual results of public spending (outcomes) – spending wisely.

The CSJES will adopt this approach to ensure value for money is achieved for the taxpayer.



A 'Postcard from the Future'; what difference will the strategy make?

'Postcard from the Future'...This is a concept used to illustrate a high level description of the Partnerships future state for customer service. Its purpose is to creatively illustrate a vision and to help keep stakeholders focused on the objectives during the duration of the strategy.



March 2019

Dear TJ & Franke,

Hope you are well! Thought I would drop you a line to let you know the difference we have made...

Lots of customer enquiries are being resolved at the first point of contact.

Huge numbers of customers are using the website for doing business with the councils.

Costs have been reduced every year.

Staff have been empowered to help customers help themselves.

Resources have been freed up across the councils.

Learning has been identified and changes made following customer feedback.

Kindest regards,

Darren Knight
Head of Customer Service

Ps....we have just been awarded Customer Service Excellence Accreditation!



Cabinet Members for Customer Services

Suffolk Coastal and

Waveney District Councils

East Suffolk

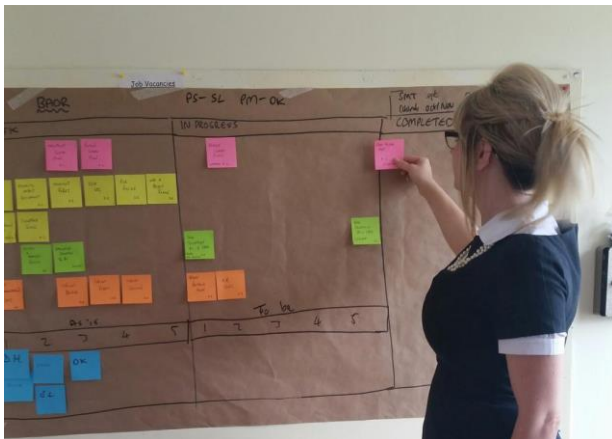
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Action plan:

The CSJES is supported by a comprehensive service improvement plan, which is based around:

- SMART objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time bound)
- Customer and business outcomes
- Level of impact
- Measurement & value



Links to other strategies:

This strategy links with the Council's other strategies; including:

- Corporate Business Plan
- Enabling Communities Strategy
- Communications Strategy
- Digital Transformation Strategy

Contact:

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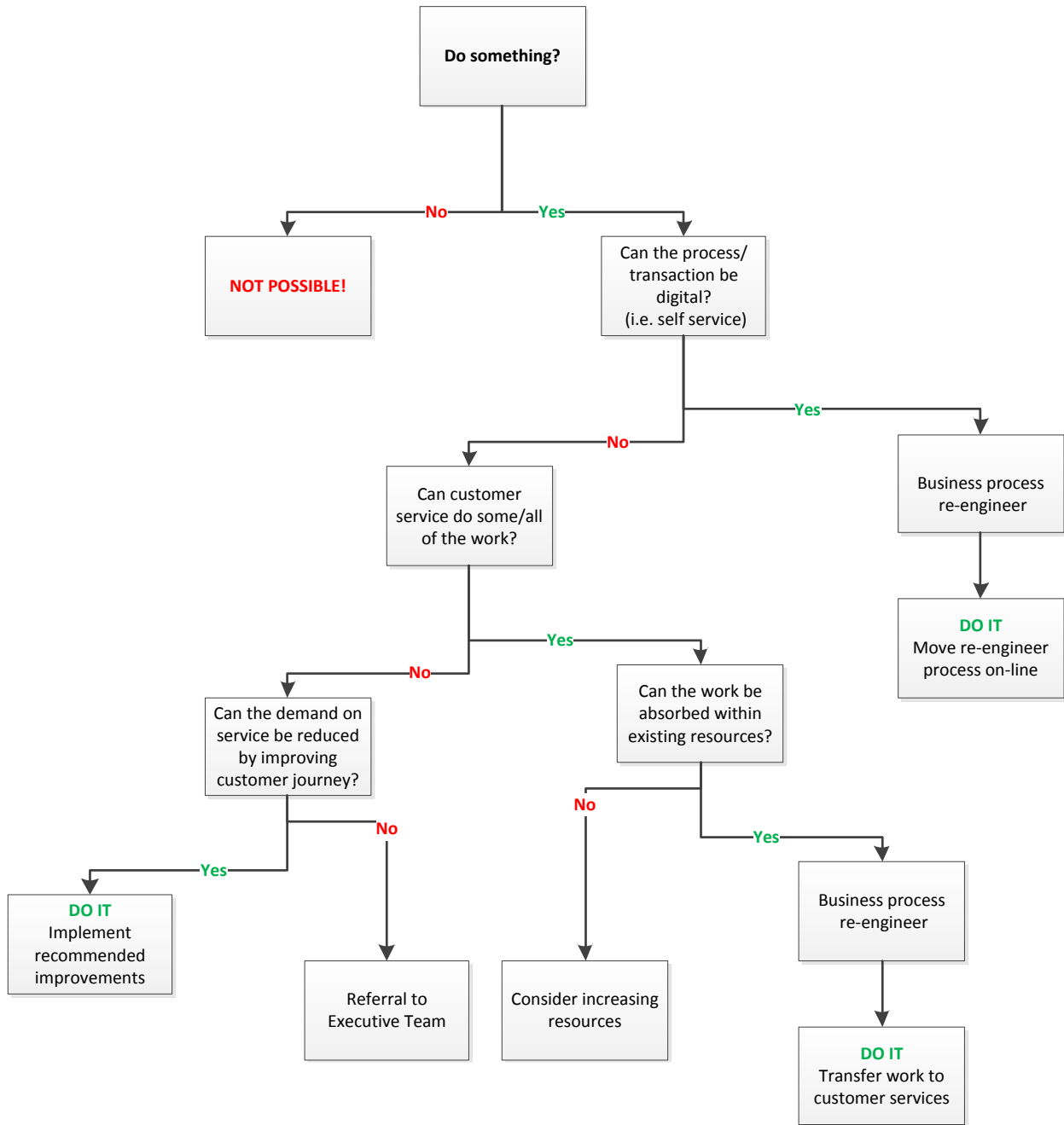
Document Control:

Version	Action	Comments	Date	
1	Reviewed by SMT	SMT approved draft strategy	12.07.2015	
2	Reviewed by CMT	Amendments made following comments from members of CMT	24.07.2015	
3	Reviewed by Portfolio Holder SCDC	No additional comments from TJ Haworth-Culf	03.08.2015	
4	Reviewed by Portfolio Holder WDC	No additional comments from Frank Mortimer	03.08.2015	
5	External Peer Review	No additional comments	03.08.2015	
6	Cabinet Briefing SCDC			
7	Cabinet Briefing WDC			Strategy Approved
8	Cabinet Approval SCDC			
9	Cabinet Approval WDC			

Document Status:	Draft
Author:	Darren Knight Head of Customer Service
Version:	5

Appendix 1:

Customer process/transaction decision tree:



Appendix 2:

Customer Service approach to Business Process Re-engineering:

