

**ORDINARY MEETING****23 NOVEMBER 2011****17**

## SERVICE QUALITY STRATEGY 2011-2014

Mike Cole: 1/3/116: #3390440

**RECOMMENDATION**

**That Council adopt the Cairns Regional Council's Service Quality Strategy 2011-2014.**

**INTRODUCTION**

During 2010 Council established the 'Connecting program' which through the assistance of a company called *The Customer Connection* provided the framework for Council to improve the service/s offered to the Community and its customers.

The Service Quality Strategy 2011-2014 (The Plan) is intended to be the primary direction setting document for Council's Service Quality Strategy. The Plan will provide direction and key areas of focus for staff during the period with identification of projects and programs designed to keep services of a quality standard and meeting the community's expectations.

**BACKGROUND**

In 2011 the Service Quality branch was formed at Cairns Regional Council to drive the Connecting program and implement a new full strategy which would be owned and driven by Council staff.

The Service Quality branch set its mission statement as; *To lead and foster effective services, partnerships and programs across Council in order to create delightful experiences for our customers.*

During the first 3 months of the 2011 fiscal year a review of the current program was undertaken taking into account several key factors including: customer survey results, program outcomes, best practice and future requirements.

The Strategy has been developed using a people based methodology. It focuses on supporting, training and providing the necessary tools for staff to deliver service improvements across Council. The Connecting program as developed in 2010 now forms one of six key themes which provide a more comprehensive outline intended to drive real outcomes to our customers and the Community.

## **ACTION AND IMPLEMENTATION**

The Service Quality branch will drive implementation of the strategy focus areas in conjunction with leaders across Council.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Critical alignment with the Corporate Plan 2009-2014**

The Corporate Plan is Cairns Regional Council's medium term planning document which will be linked to the newly adopted Community Plan.

The Service Quality Strategy will assist Council meet its goals through changing the way officers work together and with the Community, specifically The Plan significantly contributes to several objectives as outlined in goal six, Striving for Organisational Excellent including:

- 6.1 Have excellent leadership throughout, all working together to create a great culture and to achieve our corporate goals.
- 6.2 Understand our business environment and effectively set strategy, deploy resources, monitor and report.
- 6.3 Collect, interpret, manage and capture data and information to inform good decision making.
- 6.4 Operate effectively and efficiently with engaged and committed people who are capable and motivated to work together to identify and implement ways of doing things better.
- 6.5 Work to constantly improve knowledge of community needs and inform the community of what Council can provide and how decisions are made.
- 6.7 Consistently perform better, deliver on our objections and operate sustainably.
- 6.9 Provide exemplary customer service.

## **Statutory**

Although there is no statutory requirement for Council to develop a Service Quality Strategy, it is clear that best business practice is derived from knowing the business, knowing your customers and what they want, and engaging the staff in clear directions and actions linked to organisations goals, values and excellence in service provision.

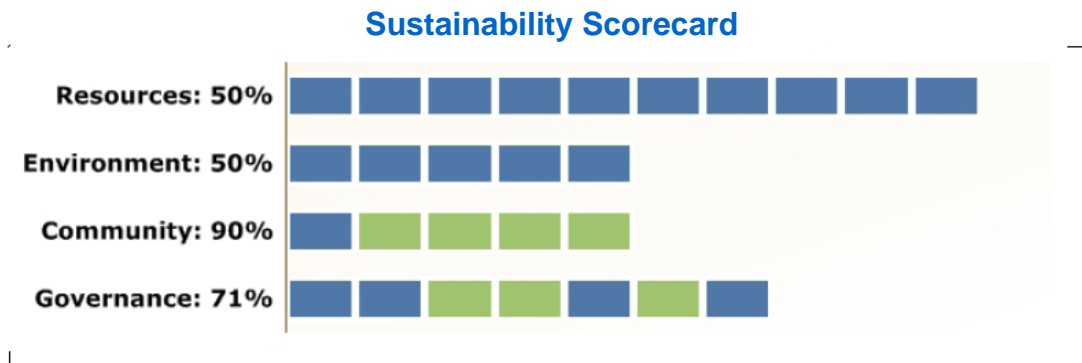
## **Policy**

Council Corporate and Operational Plans will be reviewed and amended based on the Community Plan. Council's processes, procedures and performance measures will be modified as these strategies are implemented across Council. This strategy will be reviewed, as required, as these plans are amended.

## **Financial and risk**

During FY2011 external services to continue to implement the Connecting program will cost \$54,000 which is within approved budget. A key part of the strategy will be to transition these skills and activities in-house by the end of the fiscal year.

## Sustainability



### Scorecard Interpretation

1. Improving resource efficiency  
This project does not impact on resource efficiency as it is a strategic plan. Impacts may occur when the strategies are delivered or operationalised.
2. Conserving biodiversity  
No impact on biodiversity as this is a strategic plan. The strategic intent is to conserve biodiversity.
3. Enhancing community health and wellbeing  
This project will enhance the delivery of Council services, through delivery of its key focus areas.
4. Delivering sound governance and economic management  
The delivery of the outcomes and service improvements resulting from this plan will require ongoing financial commitment and resources.

## OPTIONS

1. That Council resolve to adopt the Service Quality Strategy 2011-2014.
2. That Council resolve to adopt the Service Quality Strategy 2011-2014 with amendments.

## ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Service Quality Strategy 2011-2014

Mike Cole  
**Manager Service Quality**

Linda Kirchner  
**General Manager Corporate Services**

Attachment 1



## Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide a road map for Council to meet its goals around Service Quality ('delighting our customers and completing the communication loop'). It outlines the major themes & sub topics which are a key focus areas over the coming 3 years.

This plan looks at current needs and plans for potential future needs using both customer driven data and best practice methodology including benchmarking data. The key focus of this strategy is supporting and assisting our people to improve the service we deliver to each other and the community.

## Structure

This plan contains three major elements:

1. Links to Council Goals.
2. The 6 key strategic themes and sub topics.
3. A summary/explanation of each theme and sub topic.

## 1. Our Goals

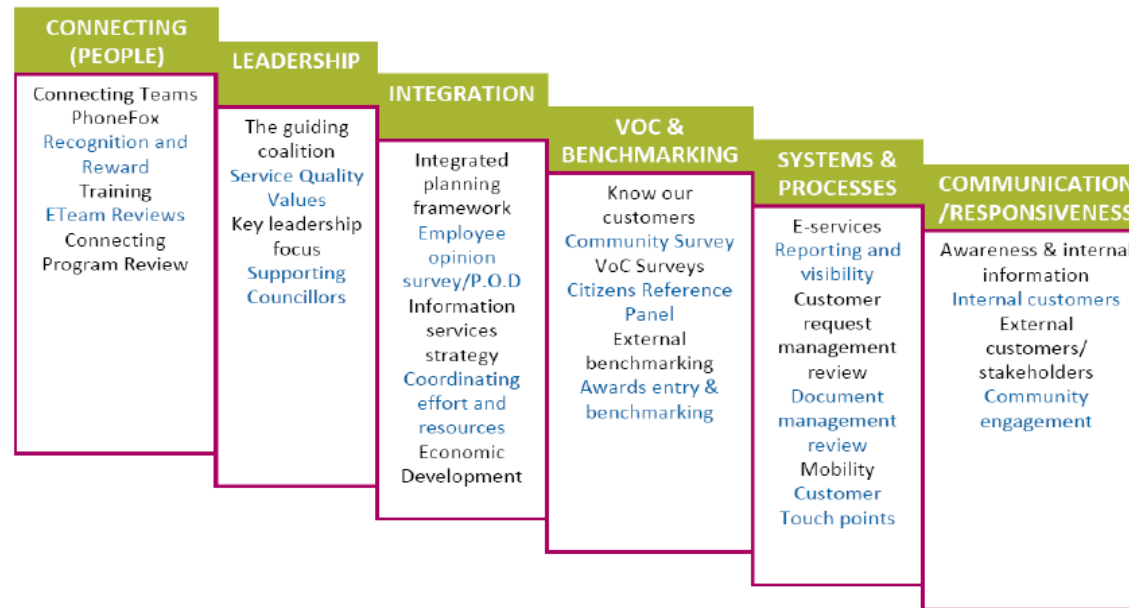
Our goals are linked to community expectations, corporate plans and the CEOs goals:

1. CEO Goal 3 – Customer Satisfaction  
Accelerate the implementation of Council's Connecting service quality program across all Council departments
2. Corporate Plan goal 6  
Striving for Organisational Excellence



## 2. Key Themes & Sub Topics

CONNECTING FROM BRAMSTON TO BLOOMFIELD



### 3. The Strategy

This section provides a summary of each theme and sub topic.

#### Theme 1 – Connecting (people)

A large part of this strategy focuses on improving the service we deliver to each other and the community by ensuring our people are trained and supported to deliver the required outcomes.

We have branded our Council wide service improvement program as 'Connecting', this program is Council wide and has several different elements listed below. We recognise that this approach will assist Council move to a Service focused organisation and will be supported by the other 5 key themes.

##### Connecting Teams

Connecting teams have been established throughout Council and use data based problem solving to drive service improvements across their respective work areas. These teams use feedback obtained from their customers to drive their improvement initiatives. The service quality branch will continue to support these teams to use the Connecting process as outlined in DM#2513085. A yearly review of the teams will be conducted to ensure the process is producing the desired outcomes and new teams established as required.

##### PhoneFox

PhoneFox aims to measure Council employee's responsiveness when they are contacted via phone. This assists us to provide answers when our customers require them in a timely manner. The program uses an external mystery shopper 3 times a year to measure the ability to 'get a hold' of Council employees by phone.

This program will continue to be conducted with a key focus being around maintaining current access results and reducing voicemail usage. We will ensure we celebrate our successes and work on the areas we can improve. The program will be expanded to include out of hours 'on call' contacts as used by our out of hours provider.

##### Recognition & Reward

A successful part of any service delivery program is recognition and reward. We will develop a yearly service awards evening to celebrate our successes with the Connecting program based on our customers feedback and peer recognition.

The Service Quality branch will provide input into EBA discussions to ensure this program is recognised in the agreement and possible reward outcomes are explored for Council employees linked to service improvement outcomes.

##### Training

We will continue to ensure training is rolled out to all Council employees and review the training material as required. A new advanced training program will be developed to be rolled out to teams as their understanding of the Connecting program advances.

##### ETeam Reviews

Each Connecting team presents to the executive team twice a year on their progress. A review of this process will be undertaken to ensure value is being achieved for both Council and the Connecting teams.

### Connecting Program Review

A full review of the Connecting program in its current format will be undertaken towards the end of this strategic period to ensure it is still providing value and achieving the required outcomes.

## Theme 2 – Leadership

The Service Quality Strategy is a key component of and a focus for Councils leadership. Implementing actions that demonstrate the values associated with Customer Satisfaction and Organisational Excellence is evidence of the commitment Councils leaders have to the Community, our elected representatives and to Councils employees. The Service Quality Strategy is a shared focus across all Departments and functions, drawn together through a guiding coalition of leaders with supporting tools and training.

### The Guiding Coalition

All levels of leadership – team leaders, managers and general managers will be supported and provided with training to enable them, in turn, to support the Connecting Program and their Connecting Teams, to address customer feedback and implement desired changes. The Guiding Coalition of Leaders across Council will also ensure the integration of the Service Quality Strategy with other key strategies and initiatives across Council to ensure a high degree of congruence with Council's overall direction and vision.

The possibility of Branch Managers from different functional areas working together to explore and address service improvement through a Branch Manager Connecting Program will be explored, with benefits for both internal and external customers.

### Service Quality Values

The Service Quality Strategy is fundamental to and an integral part of the culture change evident throughout Council. The Strategy is embedded in our fundamental values of Service and Excellence, however to ensure the Strategy is linked to employee activity across Council, the Guiding Coalition will develop a Service Charter, Service Value Statements and behaviours related to Service Quality that will be published across Council and into the Community.

### Key Leadership Focus

The Guiding Coalition of Leaders, supported by the Service Quality Team will identify and develop key areas of focus to ensure high standards of service are met and maintained without loss of continuity and in accordance with the principles and standards of Local Government. Key areas will include:

The role of Service Managers – as identified and created within the Asset Management Development Program, to be reviewed.

High Standards of Governance – consistent with community and legislative expectations and specified in Councils Code of Conduct

Measurement of Outcomes – with key performance outcomes identified and used as internal and external benchmarks and linked to whole of Council performance monitoring

### Support for Councillors

With a reporting framework developed to ensure Councillors understand our progress towards the achievement of Service Quality standards and the implications of the Service Quality Strategy for the community, as well as Council operations.

### Theme 3 – Integration

This plan forms part of an overall framework to ensure Council delivers as per the Community and Corporate plans. We will work with key areas of Council to ensure this plan is aligned with their strategic plans and are working towards the same outcomes. A key focus will be ensuring efforts are not duplicated.

#### Integrated Planning Framework

We will work to ensure service planning is a key part of the planning framework including service measures/levels and proactive planning to deliver Councils goals.

#### Employee Opinion Survey/People and Organisational Development

The Service Quality branch will work with POD to increase the service focused results coming out of the Employee Opinion Survey and assist drive cultural change around service and accountability.

#### Information Services Strategy

We will work with Information Services to ensure their strategy takes into account future service requirements driven by changing trends in our customers behaviour and our customers current expectations.

#### Coordinating Effort & Resources

The Service Quality branch will work to ensure efforts are not unnecessarily duplicated across Council. We will work with other Councils where possible to share resources and ideas.

#### Economic Development

We realise that our community is a large service based industry. We will work with the relevant groups within the community to support service excellence within the community. A customer service week for the Cairns Regional Council area will be explored at an appropriate time.

### Theme 4 – Voice of our Customer and Benchmarking

An important part of any long term Service improvement strategy is to ensure the main initiatives are driven by our customers' current and future needs. The VoC (Voice of our Customer) surveys ensure we are using customer's feedback to achieve this. We understand that it is not possible to survey every service area of Council and will also ensure we benchmark against not only other Councils but other industries with the aim to implement best practice methodologies.

It is understood that our customers these days compare our performance against all industries not only government experiences.

#### Know our Customers

We need to continually review our understanding of who our customers are and their needs, both internally and externally to ensure the services we are providing meet their current and future requirements.

#### Community Survey

The Service Quality branch will assist coordinate the actions arising from the community satisfaction survey as it relates to Council services and plan to improve the survey techniques for the upcoming surveys as required.

**VoC Surveys**

A review of the format of Voice of our Customer surveys and associated reports will be completed. The majority of these surveys will be completed by in-house resources by July 2012.

**Citizens Reference Panel**

The Service Quality branch will work with Marketing and Communications to ensure this panel achieves the desired outcomes and leverage the work already completed for upcoming service initiatives.

**External Benchmarking**

We will undertake external benchmarking against both other Councils and non local government industries as required.

**Awards entry and benchmarking**

We will enter into selected awards to promote our efforts and gain learning's from the process including providing another avenue for benchmarking and sharing of ideas.

**Theme 5 – Systems and Processes**

While this strategy focuses on developing and empowering our people to improve the customer's experience there is a need to ensure we support our people through customer experience driven systems and processes. Many of these processes can be reviewed and changed to achieve this outcome by our Connecting teams. At times a cross functional or Council wide approach will be required to ensure the technology and processes we use when servicing our customers support and enable the desired outcomes.

**e-services**

We will work with relevant areas of Council to develop an e-services strategy with a key focus of improving our responsiveness to our customers, access to information and self service capabilities. This will assist in driving cost reduction and timeliness of actioning our customers requests for action or information.

**Reporting and Visibility**

To assist us drive cultural change and increase accountability around service delivery we will work to increase the visibility of our performance across all areas of Council through dash boarding and also our planning and reporting frameworks.

**Customer Request Management review**

We will conduct a review of how we manage our customer's requests coming via all avenues. This review will not centre around the current system but start from where we need to be before looking at what our current capabilities are. A single customer data view providing a snapshot of all activity will be worked towards to ensure we understand our customer's needs and their past, current and possible future interactions with Council.

**Document Management Review**

A review will be conducted around how we manage documents across Council with the aim to improve responsiveness and the quality of how we manage our customer's requests. We will work with IS to assist with possible system upgrades to ensure any solution is customer centric and supports the concept of a single customer view which is accessible online as required by our customers.

**Mobility**

We will work with IS and other relevant Council areas to introduce a suite of products to allow our people in the field to access corporate information and systems so they can in turn provide better information to our customers and increase their responsiveness.

**Customer Touch points**

We will investigate how we can better understand our customer touch points both internally and externally throughout our processes with the aim to interact better when required and reduce our customer's effort when transacting with Council including through our shop fronts. A key outcome is to ensure our customers have minimal contact requirements to achieve the purpose for conducting business with Council.

**Theme 6 – Communication & Responsiveness**

A key focus area across Council is how we communicate with our customers both internally and externally. Our survey results have highlighted issues with 'closing the loop'. This section of the strategy will look to address this concern from both a Council wide view and through the Connecting teams activities.

Responsiveness addresses how well we respond to our customers needs. Those needs may be expressed and identified through a variety of means such as direct contact with Council, community planning and/or community consultation processes.

**Awareness & internal information**

A key area of focus is ensuring we raise the awareness of the Connecting program across Council and provide regular updates throughout the year on program initiatives. We will continue to increase information sharing by several different means to reach the whole of Council and the community.

**Internal Customers**

We will continue to work with Connecting teams and all branches across Council as required to improve our communication to internal customers which in turn will improve our service delivery to external customers and stakeholders.

**External Customers/Stakeholders**

Our VoC results to date have highlighted communication with external customers as our main issue. We will support the Connecting teams and work at a cross functional level to improve how we communicate, investigating different methods to 'close the loop' after customer requests/interactions.

**Community Engagement**

We will work with the areas of Council who need to engage with the community to ensure our engagement model meets their (the Communities) expectations as customers and communicates the process as required. A review with relevant areas of the engagement policies will be undertaken.