

Briefing on New Customer Service Arrangements For Planning Services



North Area Committee Briefing – 10 June 2010

Background

1. From 1 April, the Council's Customer Service Centre (CSC) became the first point of contact for customers to access services provided by Environment & Planning. The 2nd floor Reception at The Guildhall closed on 31 March.
2. We have implemented a new tool for customers to access planning application information online to enable customers to engage with the process at a time and place that suits them. This new tool is called Planning Public Access.
3. We have worked closely with representatives from the City's Residents Associations to understand customer key requirements and to consider issues and challenges around the transfer of planning services.
4. We are presenting this briefing paper at the Area Committees during June and July to raise awareness of the changes, to receive feedback and comments and to publicise the new online Planning Public Access tool by way of a short demonstration (venue restrictions may apply).
5. The changes stem from the Council's Customer Access Strategy (CAS), which was agreed by the City Council in July 2006. The strategy is based on:
 - encouraging and facilitating access for all sections of the community;
 - at least 80% of customer transactions being dealt with at first point of contact;
 - all services being offered over the web (with this method of delivery being encouraged);
 - face-to-face contact only being encouraged when a service is complex or best delivered that way;
 - technology being exploited to streamline processes and generate efficiencies

What the Customer Service Centre offers

1. Planning services enquiries are handled at the Customer Service Centre via a check-in area separate from the main reception point available from 8am – 6pm Monday to Friday. A duty Planning Officer is based at the CSC between 10.30am - 3.00pm each day. The CSC has 12 PCs available for accessing Council services online, including two computers with large (27 inch) screens for online planning services. There are three meeting rooms available, as well as an informal meeting area and a model/display table. The CSC is also able to accept payments in cash, by cheque or by debit/credit card.
2. Customers are still able to phone their case officer direct about on-going applications, and can also arrange to meet him/her. These scheduled meetings will be held at The Guildhall.

Planning Public Access

Plans, drawings and documentation for planning applications can now be viewed online at www.cambridge.gov.uk/planningpublicaccess. Comments can be made online and customers can create an account and register to receive email alerts about new planning applications in their area. Customers who do not have a computer at home can access our online services by using computers at the Customer Service Centre, local City Homes offices or local libraries.

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