

Executive

On 20th March 2007

Report Title: **WOW! Awards – corporate roll-out**

Forward Plan reference number (if applicable): **[add reference]**

Report of: **Corporate Customer Focus Manager**

Wards(s) affected: All

Report for: non-key decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To report on the success of the pilot participation in this Awards scheme and to recommend corporate roll out in 2007.

2. Introduction by Executive Member

- 2.1 Our residents deserve good quality customer-focused services. A key way to develop good customer service is to encourage and motivate staff. The WOW! Awards pilot scheme has already shown its value in doing just that.
- 2.2 The Awards are for staff who have acted over and above the course of duty and I have been very impressed by the nominations so far. I've also seen just how much it means to staff to receive an Award.
- 2.3 The scheme also provides an opportunity for the public to show their appreciation of a professional and friendly service. Staff have been delighted to have their work recognised and this has been a real boost to morale. Residents also seem pleased that there is a channel through which they can compliment and thank staff.
- 2.4 Although the scheme has only been running in two services this hasn't stopped members of the public nominating staff from other services. Overall there is a strong case for rolling the scheme out across the Council.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 That the WOW! Awards scheme be rolled out corporately across the organisation encompassing all services provided directly or on behalf of Haringey Council from 1st May 2007
- 3.2 That the Central Feedback Team be responsible for the overall implementation, organisation and control of the scheme with Directorate complaints teams taking on nomination administration, as detailed in this report.

- 3.3 That the Head of Communication and Consultation devise an effective launch and staff briefing campaign and refine the design of posters and leaflets to reflect lessons learned from the pilot.
- 3.4 That future reports from the Central Feedback Team incorporate the WOW! Awards scheme.
- 3.5 That the scheme be reviewed 12 months after implementation.
- 3.6 That the Head of Policy and Performance and the Head of OD&L consider how the WOW! Awards are best integrated into the overall reward and recognition framework for performance excellence.
- 3.7 That future consideration be given to extending the WOW! Awards to encompass staff who do not work on the front line.

Report Authorised by: **Assistant Chief Executive (PPP&C) Justin Holliday**

Contact Officer: Chris McLean, Corporate Customer Focus Manager
Tel: 020 8489 2636

4. Executive Summary

- 4.1 The WOW! Awards scheme is a unique reward system whereby staff and organisations can be nominated by customers for an Award – based on their experience of great customer service. The sole purpose is to help raise standards of customer service across the UK by encouraging and motivating staff and holding up examples of good practice.
- 4.2 A pilot scheme was launched in the Registrar's and Libraries, Arts and Museum services in June 2006. Its success has exceeded all expectations. Haringey is not only the first local authority to participate in this scheme but the first public sector organisation too.
- 4.3 This report seeks approval to roll out the WOW! Awards scheme corporately, subsuming the existing compliments scheme and puts forward draft procedures for consideration. It was endorsed by the Customer Focus Streamboard on 19th January.

5. Reasons for any change in policy or for new policy development (if applicable)

- 5.1 The importance and significance of customer perceptions of Haringey's services together with the ease and attractiveness of opportunities for feedback are key concerns for the council. The WOW! Awards scheme could provide a further channel for such feedback. Its positive nature will help to further promote and reward the customer-focussed thinking and behaviour that is integral to delivering excellent services.

6. Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985

- 6.1 None.

7. Background

- 7.1 The WOW! Awards, established in 1999, is a non-profit making organisation whose work has been provided completely free of charge to Haringey council. Its creator (and funder) is Derek Williams, whose own business has received many customer service and business awards. He is also Chief Executive of the Society of Consumer Affairs Professionals.
- 7.2 The WOW! Awards are based on 3 criteria:
- The scheme is only open to UK businesses
 - Businesses themselves cannot enter WOW! Awards. They can only receive the award based on a genuine 3rd party customer nomination
 - The nomination has to be one that makes the judging panel go WOW!
- 7.3 The concept is simple. After registering with the WOW! Awards, a business determines for itself how to publicize and market the scheme to its customers, encouraging those who have received exceptional service to nominate a staff member or team for a WOW! Award. Nominations can either be sent (on a card or via the web) to a central point in the business for onward transmission or directly to the WOW! Awards team. The team then decides whether the nomination merits an award; if yes, the member of staff receives a WOW! Award certificate.
- 7.4 The business is free to publicise receipt of such awards as it sees fit, bearing in mind the expected usual restrictions of using the WOW! Awards registered trademark. The WOW! Awards will also publicise winners themselves through its own press releases and via its electronic newsletter (subscribed to by over 3000 individuals and businesses). Successful organisations can purchase merchandise to further publicise their achievement (trophies, plaques, coasters and the like).
- 7.5 The WOW! Awards also have their own category within the high profile annual National Customer Service Awards. It is the only category where customers nominate entries; all others are on a self-entering basis, thereby affording great credence to winning this category.

8 Description

Operation and success of the pilot

- 8.1 Members approved the concept of a pilot scheme (Customer Service Member Working Group, September 2005) and after undertaking risk assessment, the Executive Member for Community Involvement and CEMB approved the detail in March 2006. The scheme was launched in the Registrar's and the Libraries, Arts and Museum services on 21st June and is currently being administered by the Corporate Customer Focus team. Heads of Service were fully consulted and taken through the scheme; they in turn briefed their own staff.
- 8.2 Posters advertising the scheme are on display in the Registrar's office and all libraries and Bruce Castle Museum, along with supplies of nominations forms and suggestion boxes. If customers feel that they received exceptional service, they simply fill out a form and drop this into the suggestion box, return it to us post-free or do it on-line.
- 8.3 Nominations are collected together weekly and logged, classified, analysed and filed until the next scheduled meeting (initially every 6 weeks and now every two months) with the respective Heads of Service and a colleague from the Communications team. These meetings have been used to reflect on the pilot's operation, to identify the really exceptional nominations to be forwarded for the WOW! organisation's consideration and also to pass over all nomination forms to the Heads of Service so that (template) letters of congratulation can be sent out to

all staff nominated (whether or not passed upwards to the WOW! organisation). Within 2 weeks, the WOW! panel get back to us with their panel's decision as to whether our submissions have been successful.

- 8.4 Attached at **Appendix A** is a table showing the rate of return per service since the pilot's launch as well as the method of return. The initial high interest has dropped to a lower level – this fits with the experience of other participating organisations. There are also dips at holiday periods as would be expected. Most nominations (54%) have been returned using a freepost service – indicating perhaps that most customers prefer to fill the form in after the event. The on-line method has proved least popular (5%), coming a very poor third.
- 8.5 The Libraries and Registrar's services are quite different in both nature and size – and this is reflected in the volume of nominations made. Libraries have a number of well placed sites, have a regular customer base and provide feel-good services. The Registrar's on the other hand provide very specific and targeted services, have a single base and customer contact tends to be on one-off issues – some of which can be distressing.
- 8.6 However, analysis of nominations between Library service sites has shown marked differences in levels of interest. This is unlikely to be caused by differing levels of service and is more likely to be a factor of many things, such as how well placed the posters are, whether the leaflets are readily and easily seen – and the enthusiasm of staff for the scheme. The profile of the local customer base is also likely to be a significant issue.
- 8.7 In terms of the reasons given for nominating staff, it would be fair to say that although some do show where staff have acted over and above the course of duty, and some have received multiple nominations, the vast majority are general compliments where staff have been very helpful and demonstrated empathy. Nevertheless, all of these nominations are extremely valuable and welcome. Staff have been delighted to have had their personal service appreciated in this way and there is no doubt that this has raised morale and provided an impetus to others to aspire to nominations themselves.
- 8.8 So far, we have submitted nominations for nine staff (or groups of staff) to the WOW! panel – based on either evidence of staff doing something quite exceptional or attracting a high number of nominations - one member of staff got a staggering 26 nominations in the first six weeks. We have been delighted that all nine have been considered worthy of the national WOW! Awards. Presentation of the certificates to date has been made by the Leader or Deputy Leader and publicised in Haringey People and within the organisation via Smart Talk and the Customer Focus Network newsletter.
- 8.9 The overall success of the pilot has proved a positive experience all round and neither of the identified potential risks (failure to engage the public or it being used as another avenue to complain, thereby providing opportunities for negative press coverage) materialised.
- Customers have a new and quite different opportunity to give feedback on service received; staff feel better and more directly valued; remarkable front-line behaviour that would perhaps have not been brought to the attention of managers and the Heads of Service is now done so formally and last but not least, the scheme has provided very positive publicity for Haringey in both the local and trade press.

Corporate roll-out – considerations and implications

- 8.10 The success of the pilot has exceeded all expectations. Within the first 3 months

225 nominations were received - this compares with 147 compliments received for the entire council in 2005/6 under the existing compliments scheme. Nominations were attracted not only for the two services in the pilot but others as well, including two for contracted staff. These have been submitted by a wide range of customers too – including those whose first language is not English, children and businesses. It is clear that the scheme has captured the public's imagination and that customers are increasingly sharing the council's confidence in front line services and the staff who deliver them.

- 8.11 It is proposed that the WOW! Awards scheme be rolled out corporately and apply to all council services regardless of who they are delivered by – a matter largely irrelevant to our customers anyway. Homes for Haringey are also interested but it is not appropriate for them to join with us at this point in time. They will reconsider later in the year and develop their own branding if they decide to go ahead.
- 8.12 The scheme should subsume the existing compliments provisions of the customer feedback scheme, so that any compliments received by any means are counted and included under the WOW! scheme.
- 8.13 The success of the pilot is a factor of its simplicity, ease of access and lack of bureaucracy and so we should look to run the corporate scheme along the same lines. The scheme should be publicised and enabled by putting posters up at all service delivery points (much as with publicity for the complaints scheme), along with leaflets and suggestion boxes. The posters and leaflets were designed for the pilot with a view to corporate applicability; apart from minor alterations, no work is required here. It makes sense for suggestion boxes to be corporately branded with a leaflet holder attached.
- 8.14 More needs to be done to encourage on-line nominations, a mixture of better publicity on the website and education through articles in Haringey People and local press.
- 8.15 As with the differences between the two services in the pilot, some services by their very nature are likely to attract greater volumes of nominations than others. Further, given that the scheme is about recognising great customer service, staff who have little or no (external) customer interaction are unlikely to receive recognition through this route. Both of these aspects will need to be thought about when considering workload implications, staff briefing and buy-in.
- 8.16 Experience in the private sector indicates that those that complain are also the most likely to make the effort to extend compliments. Using Haringey's complaints statistics for 2005/6 as one possible barometer of where the WOW! scheme may generate most public interest, the business units that generated the largest volume of complaints are listed in **Appendix B**. I also attach details from the just-released annual residents' survey showing details of rising perceptions of service delivery as well as where perception is poorest, at **Appendix C**. However, these must be treated with caution as they provide no indication of possible volumes, just possible relative interest.
- 8.17 It is proposed that the administration of the WOW! Awards is merged with that of compliments under the customer feedback scheme. The Central Feedback Team should take on the overall organisation and control of the scheme with directorate complaints teams taking on nomination administration. The existing Respond database can be used to log nominations and capture end results. Draft processes and procedures drawn up in collaboration with the Central Feedback Team Manager are attached at **Appendix D**.

- 8.18 There are already workload concerns within both these groups of staff regarding workload increases arising from the complaints scheme and Freedom of Information requests. Because of this, extra effort has gone into ensuring that the tasks involved in administering the WOW! Awards is kept to a bare minimum and only those that add any real value to the process have been included.
- 8.19 WOW! nominations have not been acknowledged during the course of the pilot (with the exception of on-line nominations which are automatically) and there has been no demonstration of an expectation to do this. However, this contrasts with the current established good practice of acknowledging compliments within 2 days of receipt and also the recommendations of the WOW! organisation. Whilst it is accepted that providing acknowledgments does provide value-added over and above good practice compliance, this needs to be balanced with potential workload implications, depending on the volume of nominations made. Initially, at least, nominations will not be acknowledged.
- 8.20 The Central Feedback Team already regularly report complaint and compliment statistics to directorates, CEMB and Members. Reports will in future include details and analysis of WOW! Award nominations received.
- 8.21 It is suggested that presentation of future Award certificates be made by respective Directors and Heads of Service every two months or as appropriate.
- 8.22 The Head of Communication and Consultation has been asked to develop an effective launch campaign; this needs to take into account the need to encourage nominations to be made on-line.
- 8.23 The set-up and ongoing costs of participating in this scheme – for posters, leaflets, suggestions boxes, postage and occasional other promotions are anticipated to be minimal. However, the Central Feedback Team at present has no budget provision for this. It is proposed that initial set-up costs up to a maximum of £10,000 be met from the Customer Focus budget and that Central Feedback seek adequate budget provision for 2008/9 and subsequent years via the usual planning process.

9. Consultation

- 9.1 Public participation in the pilot has been used as evidence of the potential benefits to all stakeholders in rolling the WOW! Awards out corporately. Appropriate discussions have been held with the WOW! organisation, colleagues and input sought from staff in Central Feedback and Directorate complaints teams. The Customer Focus Streamboard endorsed this report on 19th January.

10. Summary and Conclusions

- 10.1 Rolling out the WOW! Awards scheme will bring benefits to all stakeholders – a means of feedback to those who receive our services, personal recognition for those who deliver them well and aspiration for others to do so. It should also help build on the council's improving reputation both locally, in the field of local government as well as within the customer service industry.
- 10.2 In line with the experience of the pilot and other participating organisations, high initial interest in the scheme should be anticipated but this should soon level out as the scheme becomes embedded and the first flush of novelty wears off. To help accommodate this peak, the Corporate Customer Focus team have offered assistance for the first few weeks of operation.
- 10.3 The WOW! Awards scheme has been designed specifically to enable genuine 3rd parties – i.e. external customers - to nominate staff for awards. This will

necessarily exclude those who have no direct dealings with external customers and so raises the issue of the internal customer and how we all collaborate to provide excellent services for local people.

- 10.4 Whilst there are pockets of excellence amongst our support services, there is a general recognition that we need to improve the customer focus of support services too.
- 10.5 In tandem with this point, the organisation also needs to consider how the WOW! Awards integrate with the council's overall approach to recognising exceptional performance. In addition to the existing annual Xtra Mile and Achievers scheme, there are the Better Haringey Awards and other directorate- based staff recognition systems.
- 10.6 One of the larger organisations who participate in the WOW! Awards – Ladbroke's - has extended the scheme to enable internal customers to nominate colleagues who have proved especially helpful. This maybe something that Haringey wishes to consider once the corporate roll out has embedded.

11. Recommendations

- 11.1 That the WOW! Awards scheme be rolled out corporately across the organisation encompassing all services provided directly or on behalf of Haringey Council from 1st May 2007.
- 11.2 That the Central Feedback Team be responsible for the overall implementation, organisation and control of the scheme with Directorate complaints teams taking on nomination administration, as detailed in this report.
- 11.3 That a decision is made as to whether nominations should be acknowledged.
- 11.4 That the Head of Communication and Consultation devise an effective launch and staff briefing campaign and refine the design of posters and leaflets to reflect lessons learned from the pilot.
- 11.5 That future reports from the Central Feedback Team incorporate the WOW! Awards Scheme.
- 11.6 That the scheme be reviewed 12 months after implementation.
- 11.7 That the Head of Policy and Performance and the Head of OD&L consider how the WOW! Awards are best integrated into the overall reward and recognition framework for performance excellence.
- 11.8 That future consideration be given to extending the WOW! Awards to encompass staff who do not work on the front line.

12. Comments of the Director of Finance

- 12.1.1 The Director of Finance notes that set up costs incurred during 2007/08 will be met from the Customer Focus budget whilst the day to day administration will be undertaken by the Central Feedback Team and the Directorate complaints teams within existing budget resources.
- 12.1.2 Recommendation 3.6 is for a review after 12 months which will allow emerging issues over capacity and on-going budget requirements to be picked up.

13. Comments of the Head of Legal Services

- 13.1.1 There are powers under the Local Government Acts to incur expenditure for purposes that facilitate the effective discharge of a Council's functions and this award scheme should come within these powers.

14. Equalities Implications

- 14.1 Haringey has significant numbers of residents who are excluded and disadvantaged and for whom good quality, easy to get services are crucial to their quality of life. The entire thrust of Customer Focus is to ensure that Haringey puts its customers at the heart of service design and delivery. By placing the user experience at the centre of how we deliver services, we will contribute to reducing inequality through making services more accessible and responsive.

15. Use of Appendices / Tables / Photographs

- 15.1 Appendix A – WOW! nominations by service over time
15.2 Appendix B – Complaints volume by Business Unit – top ten
15.3 Appendix C – extract from annual residents' survey (conducted Nov 06)
15.3 Appendix D - Draft procedures for scheme operation

Appendix A

WOW NOMINATIONS RECEIVED	Source				Service		
Date	Suggestion Box	Free Post	On- Line	Totals	Libraries	Registrars	Other Services
30th June	7	14	2	23	20	3	0
7th July	3	17	0	20	19	1	0
14th July	4	13	1	18	16	2	0
21st July	23	0	0	23	23	0	0
28th July	8	10	2	20	16	0	4
4th Aug	1	5	0	6	6	0	0
11th Aug	6	10	0	16	16	0	0
18th Aug	5	9	1	15	10	5	0
25th Aug	5	11	1	17	16	0	1
1st Sept	3	9	0	12	11	1	0
8th Sept	18	5	0	23	22	1	0
15th Sept	5	6	0	11	9	1	1
22nd Sept	4	13	4	21	17	3	1
29th Sept	2	3	0	5	4	1	0
6th Oct	5	1	1	7	5	1	1
13th Oct	0	11	0	11	9	2	0
20th Oct	0	8	0	8	7	0	1
27th Oct	6	6	0	12	10	1	1
3rd Nov	0	1	1	2	1	1	0
10th Nov	0	3	0	3	1	2	0
17th Nov	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24th Nov	2	0	0	2	0	2	0
1st Dec	3	0	0	3	1	2	0
8th Dec	0	0	1	1	1	0	0
15th Dec	5	0	1	6	5	1	0
22nd Dec	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
29th Dec	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
5th Jan 07	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
TOTALS	115	155	15	285	245	30	10

Appendix B

(This appendix is included solely because it is a possible indicator of relative future interest in the WOW! awards scheme)

Business Units generating most complaints at stage 1 in 2005-06

Council Services

Access Services:	134
Adult Services	55 (22 corporate scheme, 33 NHS Act)
Benefits & Local Taxation	444
Children & Families	67 (34 corporate scheme, 33 Children Act)
Enforcement	148
Housing Strategy & Needs	153
Older People's Services	56 (26 Corporate, 30 NHS)
PEPP	35
Recreation	68
Streetscene	396

Homes for Haringey

Homes & Buildings	333
Housing Management	147

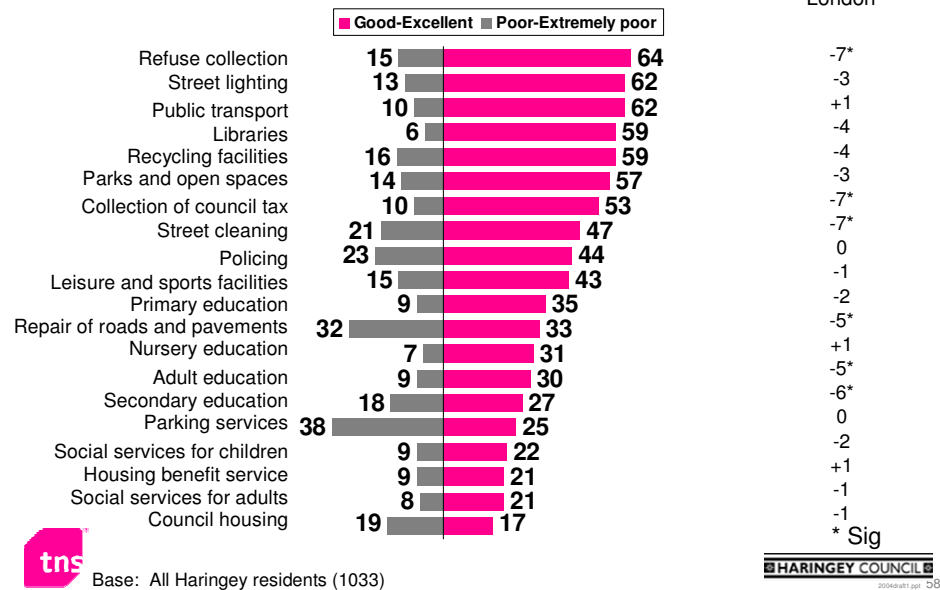
Appendix C

(This appendix is included solely because it is a possible indicator of relative future interest in the WOW! awards scheme)

Annual Residents' survey Field work conducted Nov 2006

Perceived service delivery

% Saying Good - Excellent



Appendix D

Draft processes and procedures

- WOW! nominations/compliments will be welcomed by any method, but we will concentrate publicity on freepost, suggestion boxes, on line forms and the customer feedback forms
- The freepost address will be the Central Feedback Team, but they will forward nominations they receive by this and other methods to the complaints teams. On line forms will be transmitted to the relevant complaints team, and other formats will be directed to complaints teams
- Complaints teams will record basic details of nominations on the corporate complaints database
- Central Feedback will send to complaints staff a bi-monthly report of nominations received.
- Directorate staff will arrange consideration of all nominations within their BUs/directorate approximately every two months - in the light of guidelines to be developed.
- Directorate staff will pass to Central Feedback the small number of exceptional nomination forms (retaining a copy for their records) to be considered for submission for a national award.
- Central Feedback will coordinate the corporate assessment process and refer chosen cases to the WOW! organisation, retaining copies of those posted on and returning those not chosen to directorates.
- The WOW! organisation will send all Award certificates to the Central Feedback team who will disseminate to the relevant service.
- It is proposed that these should be presented to staff by their Director and business unit head.