

## CONTRACT SERVICES COMMITTEE - 2 JUNE 1998

## SERVQUAL

## REPORT BY CONTRACT SERVICES MANAGER

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this report is to seek Members' homologation for the Leisure Management Section of Contract Services to participate in the Accounts Commission's pilot exercise using the SERVQUAL Model.

**1. RECOMMENDATION**

It is recommended that the Committee homologate participation by Contract Services in the Accounts Commission's pilot of the SERVQUAL Model.

**2. BACKGROUND**

SERVQUAL is an approach which was developed in the United States to assess service quality. Customers' perceptions are expressed in response to a questionnaire which also asks customers their views on the importance of the various dimensions of the Model, i.e. tangibles, reliability, responsiveness, assurance, empathy are all rated by customers. SERVQUAL has been applied in the private sector, within Community Education, Libraries and also the voluntary sector. A seven point scoring scale is used indicating a gap score in each dimension which enables performance to be tracked over time with the issue of further questionnaires. It also enables comparisons to be made between different departments or even different Councils.

The Accounts Commission is to identify a few departments within two local authorities who are willing to participate in a pilot exercise using the SERVQUAL Model. The results of this exercise will be written up as an informal discussion paper for circulation to other local authorities.

Following a presentation by Mik Wisniewski, Management Studies, Accounts Commission, given to the Best Value Customer Care/Valuing Staff Group meeting held on 11 March 1998, all the members of the Group expressed an interest in piloting the model. After deliberation the Group suggested that the Model be piloted in the Housing and Planning Departments, and Contract Services' Leisure Management Section.

**3. CURRENT POSITION**

Contact has been made with the Accounts Commission to try and further evaluate the SERVQUAL Model and its possible relevance and benefit to the leisure section and the department as a whole, also to try and evaluate any possible staffing or budgetary consequence of taking part in the pilot.

**4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no direct financial implications associated with this report as the cost can be met from existing budgets.

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## 5. CONCLUSIONS

The SERVQUAL Model is a useful tool in that the process measures customers' expectations of service delivery against customers' perceptions of services actually received. The process results in the production of a gap analysis which will highlight possible areas for improvement within service delivery in line with the Council's Best Value submission. It also allows continued monitoring of the outcome of any measures put in place to bring about these improvements. The results will also assist in the preparation of the department's Business Plan and budget for 1999/2000 by prioritising requirements in areas highlighted for improvement.

There will be staff implications in participating in the pilot scheme, however a firm quantification of this cannot at present be given, as this is dependent on the methods used for preparing the SERVQUAL questionnaire and inputting the results from same. However, advice from the Accounts Commission indicates that the staffing requirement could be met by existing staff working a fairly minimal amount of overtime, with the costs being contained within the department's existing budgets. If this proves not to be the case a further report will be issued to the Committee for their approval.

The draft timescale for the pilot is:

1. Design, prepare and print questionnaire - 1 September 1998
2. Issue questionnaire to customers - mid-September for return mid-October
3. Input returns and copy to Accounts Commission for analysis - mid-November
4. Analysis and preparation of results and report by Accounts Commission - End January 1999

## 6. CONSULTATION

The Chief Executive, Director of Finance, Director of Personnel and Director of Law and Administration have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

**M P Graham**  
**Contract Services Manager**  
**18 May 1998**

No background papers, as defined by Section 50D of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973 (other than any containing confidential or exempt information), were relied on to any material extent in preparing this report.