

# Operational Excellence Strategy

2017 – 2020

Leadership  
Process  
Excellence  
Culture  
Agile  
Growth  
Improvement  
Pride & Energy  
Standards  
Strategy  
Improvement  
Values



South  
Northamptonshire  
Council

*Cherwell*  
DISTRICT COUNCIL  
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

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# Our operational excellence goal

To create a blueprint for the **delivery of leading edge public services to customers** and prepare services to transition into the confederation model, including opening up new markets/territories.

## Our operational excellence strategy

Our strategy for business success is:

- To create and implement a **culture** driven by customer experience, operational excellence, continuous learning and added value.
- To ensure **continuous improvement** sits at the heart of all operational services.
- To remove all barriers that get in the way of providing a **whole council approach to service delivery**.
- To focus on a dual strategy of delivering core operational services that **meet local community and business demand** and transferring our sector expertise into our new **commercial operating model**.
- To continually **develop and grow our core services**, working effectively with our communities/customers, partners, suppliers, stakeholders and our people by integrating “**excellence in operation**” and customer feedback into everything we do.
- To create a **culture of pride and energy** amongst our workforce.
- To build an **agile** workforce and adopt a **matrix management** operating principle.
- To **recruit** and **retain** a workforce that blends **the best of private and public sector expertise** and to **develop** them to excel in all that they do, such that they can leave us, but choose not to.

# Our values

Our values set out what it is like to work for the councils and how we attain excellence in the delivery of our services. They describe how we conduct ourselves every day. We are proud of them.



We **continuously develop** our knowledge to apply the highest level of **professional standards**, conduct and outcomes.

We are **polite** and **respectful** at all times to each other and to everyone we come into contact with.

We are **reliable**.

We are **flexible** and **agile**.

We work beyond usual boundaries.

We demonstrate **accountability** for our actions.

We take **pride** in our personal image.

We deliver **seamless services**.

We use **creativity, innovation** and new ideas to achieve our goals.

**Managed risk taking** is expected.

Risks are **well managed**, well reported and always owned.

We are willing to fail from time to time, in **pursuit of excellence**.

We do not confuse risk taking with being reckless.

We all lead by example; with **integrity, trust** and **respect**.

We are **honest**.

We are **ethical**.

We **keep our promises**.

When we have got something wrong, we take **responsibility**. We put it right. We are upfront and we learn from it.

We hold difficult conversations **respectfully**.

We take pleasure in working to **provide innovative solutions** for our customers when things become difficult.

We work tirelessly to **exceed expectations**.

We show **care and consideration** for all of our customers.

We will never **deliver a service** that we wouldn't accept for ourselves.

We actively **seek feedback** from our customers and act on it where there is something to learn.

We work as '**One Council**'.

We communicate in a **clear** and **customer friendly** way.

We believe excellence is inspired by positive leadership and **continuous improvement**.

We **lead developments** in our sector.

We **learn from each other** and from other sectors.

We conduct **quality assurance** checks against all our outputs.

We are **rigorous** in reviewing our processes to remove waste and duplication.

We all take **personal responsibility** for putting things right when they are wrong.

We don't make the same mistake twice.

We challenge and confront anything that does not represent our **standard of excellence**.

# Our culture

At the heart of our culture is a commitment to operational excellence in all our services. This is achieved through the highest levels of measurable performance, customer satisfaction and continuous improvement.

We believe that with the right support and encouragement every one of our employees has the

potential to excel in their working lives by pushing boundaries and seeking out the art of the possible in whatever they do.

We have a shared belief that excellence can be found in every corner of the two organisations and that it is our people who take pride in making that happen.

## Our five point business operating model

**Customer experience; excellence in delivery; seamless services.**

Operational excellence	Our people	Business insight	Collaboration and partnership	Growth and sustainability
Customer experience	Work together	Customer feedback	Communities	Economic growth of our areas
Customer satisfaction; creating a lasting impact and positive memory	Can do attitude	Complaints	Businesses	Financial independence
Service Level Agreements / Contract management	Commercially minded	Performance metrics	Suppliers	Procurement
Performance indicators	Commercially skilled	Legislation	Local authorities	Commercial Development and Innovation strategy
Quality services and products	Innovative	Environment	Public service agencies	New markets and clients
Continuous learning and innovation	Take personal responsibility	Benchmarking (private and public sector)	Customers	Income generation
Forward looking	Adopt a seamless approach to service delivery	Continuous learning from other sectors	Government	Profitability
Waste avoidance	Use proven best practice	Market assessment for competitive advantage and opportunity	Auditors	Environmental and social responsibility
Process improvement	Demonstrate courage	Identification of customer demand	Private sector	Long term success
Channel shift	Agile	Commissioning services and suppliers	Stakeholders	Service development to set a blue print for 21st century public services
Commercial operating principles	Learn continuously		Volunteers	
	Develop and excel through a career of choice		Due diligence of prospective partners, suppliers and business relationships	
			Leading our communities	



# Our corporate excellence model

In 2017/18 a corporate excellence model will be introduced to ensure operational excellence and leading edge public services are attained. Our adopted model is EFQM (European Foundation for Quality Management)

It will build upon the standards of excellence that already exist in some of our operational services. All services will set out their excellence objectives in their business plans.

In recognition of the wide range of diverse services we provide there will be two entry points for excellence in all our services:

- The corporate standard, or

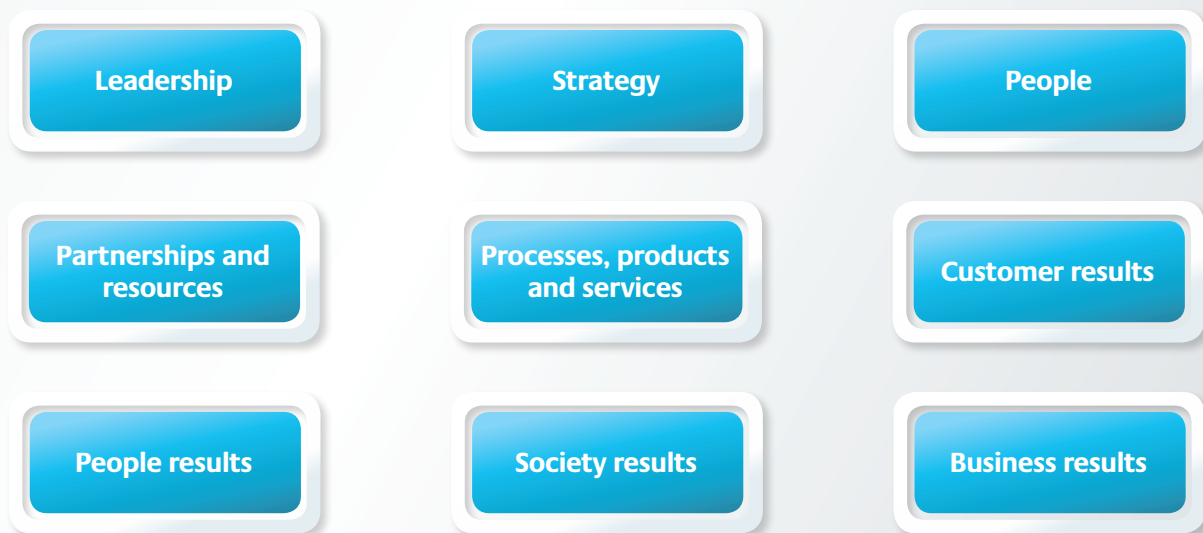
- Specialist standards most appropriate to the nature of the service

Every service will be associated with one or the other as a minimum.

## Specialist standards/accreditations

A number of services are already beacons for excellence and have been awarded industry standard accreditation for their performance or quality management regimes.

In other services the industry specific standard is recognised as holding a commercial or reputational value that will support our commercial development and innovation strategy but have not yet been fully achieved. These will both continue to be the recognised standard of excellence for those services.



## Our excellence standards

### What is operational excellence?

If you put a group of people in a room and ask them what excellence is, you'll receive many different answers but they should have something in common:

Excellence is about achieving and sustaining outstanding levels of performance and continuous improvement. By nurturing a culture of excellence we will create a path to organisational growth and success.

Essentially operational excellence is all about culture. Like any strategy it only works if it becomes embedded in the fabric of the organisation and receives total management support and leadership. Operational excellence is not just a system but a new way of working.

# Key components of an operational excellence plan

Operational excellence is defined by the values and culture of our two councils and will be measured through both qualitative and quantitative criteria including:

- leadership
- customer insight
- continuous improvement
- performance management
- performance indicators
- process improvement
- identification and adoption of best practice
- people development
- further and accelerated preparation for trading our services on a business to business basis
- more rigorous use of the improvement loop
- transfer of all first point of customer contact functions to our Customer Services team
- channel shift

The on-going drive for high performance and continuous improvement will lead to operational excellence, customer satisfaction and ultimately the growth and sustainability of both councils. Our operational plan for excellence includes a combination of the five point business model and:

## More rigorous use of the improvement loop

Services will focus on better use of customer intelligence drawn from the complaints system, customer insight sources and customer satisfaction/ other customer surveys to embed more strongly customer driven improvements in service planning and service improvement.

## Service level agreements

Service Level Agreements (SLAs) will be introduced to ensure that the same emphasis of customer satisfaction and opportunity for feedback is given to our internal customers as is to our external customers. They will be used to ensure that the highest levels of performance are measured and attained in the following internal support services:

- Human Resources and Organisational Development services
- Legal services
- Finance and procurement
- ICT services
- Property and asset management services
- Customer services
- Communications and marketing service
- Performance and insight service
- Democracy

## Commissioning and contract management

Due diligence of all potential suppliers of goods and services will continue to be conducted prior to entering into contracts with third party suppliers, ensuring that they reflect our core values and excellence standards.

High levels of performance are expected from all third party suppliers commissioned on behalf of the councils. Contracts for services will reflect this by setting out qualitative and quantitative performance standards and appropriate penalty clauses.

Commissioners of services will hold routine performance management meetings with suppliers to ensure effective contract management throughout the term of the commission and ensure those high levels of standards and outcomes are achieved. Risk within contract management and delivery will be carefully managed.

## Best practice / research and development

A more structured approach to the identification and use of best practice and research and development will be developed by the performance and insight service to ensure that we learn from others, including the private sector.

## Transfer of all first point of contact functions to Customer Services

A more structured programme of transfers of first point of customer contact functions will be supported by skilled business analysts to deliver this on an 'all services' front to identify economies in processes, what functions should transfer and at what point in the service delivery process. This will be on an 'all services' basis.

## Channel shift

We will identify and move maximum service information and transactions on-line as part of the push for demand led, cost effective service delivery. This will have a strong link to the redesign of the corporate websites to ensure maximum move of information and end to end on-line transactions. It will also extend to the expanded first point of contact functions within Customer Services which will use the wider on-line information and transaction capability as its main customer response.

## Agile and efficient working - process improvement

We will reassess and review the smart use of technology by services and agile working to maximise efficiency and stop wasteful and/or no added value processes. A benefits realisation plan will be developed for each of these activities to secure identified efficiencies.

## Delivery of the medium term revenue plan

A programme of benefits realisation reviews of all shared services is underway to ensure all planned efficiencies, improvements and key objectives of the medium term revenue plan are realised. This process will be extended to capture all planned service

change in the original business cases and will continue to be a key driver of our improvement journey.

## Preparing services to trade on a business to business basis

The three current Services for Business work streams are focussed upon developing the organisational culture to support new and existing businesses in the districts, removing unnecessary 'red tape', and developing a whole council approach to selling services to businesses. This will increase business rates take-up whilst supporting economic growth and prosperity.

Some progress has been made in this area but the pace needs to be accelerated to be better focussed and extended by incorporating the learning from the successful Organisational Awareness days and commercial skills programme for income generation purposes.

Specific new objectives with a renewed emphasis on developing a 'One Council' relationship with our community based business partners will focus upon:

- Developing a menu of business support functions and standards – largely regulatory but presented as a comprehensive offering to all businesses to build a positive relationship.
- Developing a menu of discretionary 'charged for' council services which can be promoted by all services with a business interface for income generation purposes. The pricing strategy will be directed by the commercial skills programme.
- Determining the most appropriate and effective methods of business interface to sell individual and collective council services. This again will be informed by the commercial skills programme.
- Producing a corporate directory of local businesses as a resource for all council services
- Setting up a business intelligence hub to provide the most cost efficient internal information sharing resource on local businesses which have just opened, others which may be struggling and need support, those who want to expand or have other business needs, and to establish the most cost efficient support to the BSU to maximise NNDR income.
- Developing a brand and 'USP' for a 'One Council' business relationship. Again, this will be influenced by the commercial skills programme.



# Implementation

An operational excellence plan draws together the key elements of high performance and continuous improvement (as summarised in the five point operating model), and as typically associated with an excellence framework. Operational excellence will lead us naturally to commercial success and growth.

The plan is both wide ranging and comprehensive. As such, implementation will be approached in two phases.

## Phase 1

- Implementation of the EFQM excellence model and corporate values in all services
- Maintaining delivery of core services and developing operational excellence
- Implementation of the commissioning strategy
- SLAs for internal services
- Redefining procurement and contract management of third party suppliers
- Commercial up-skilling and development of our people
- Transition of services to the confederation model

## Phase 2

- Implementation of the commercial development and innovation strategy
- Commercialisation and trading with public services, SMEs and private sector
- Continuation of transition of services to the confederation model

