

DECISION-MAKER:	CABINET
SUBJECT:	Customer Access Strategy
DATE OF DECISION:	20 December 2021
REPORT OF:	COUNCILLOR HARWOOD CABINET MEMBER FOR CUSTOMER AND TRANSFORMATION

<u>CONTACT DETAILS</u>			
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STATEMENT OF CONFIDENTIALITY

None

BRIEF SUMMARY

<p>The Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026 is intended to replace the current Customer Strategy 2018-2022. It outlines the council's strategic vision to put customers at the heart of everything it does, and sets out how it intends to deliver services going forwards in an ever changing digital world. It will contribute towards achieving the outcomes detailed in the Corporate Plan 2021-2025. It links closely to, and is supported by, the IT Strategy, which is also being presented to Cabinet in December 2021.</p>

RECOMMENDATIONS:

	(i)	To approve the attached Customer Access Strategy and adopt the principles and approaches outlined in the strategy. Ensuring that all council services are designed or working towards being customer focused and easy to access.
	(ii)	For the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026 to supersede the current Customer Strategy 2018-2022
	(iii)	To delegate authority to the Executive Director Business Services to make minor amends to the Customer Access Strategy during its period of effect following consultation with the Cabinet Member for Customer and Transformation

REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

1.	To ensure the council has an agreed and published statement setting out its strategic approach to delivering services, to drive improvements for customers accessing and using council services.
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ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED
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2.	An alternative option is to do nothing and not to revise the current Customer Strategy. This option is not recommended as it is important for the council to
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	refresh its strategy in order to help customers, communities and staff understand the council's vision.
3.	The council could choose not to have any customer strategy but this risks not being clear with the organisation about the expected standards and the direction of travel.
DETAIL (Including consultation carried out)	
4.	The Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026 will set out how we will improve access to our services for our customers. We want to make dealing with the council as quick and easy as possible, making the best use of technology whilst working in a cost-effective way. We want customers to have the best possible experience when they use our services, and we recognise that people contact us in many ways – one size does not fit all. This strategy will outline how we will develop a variety of access channels for our customers and continue to improve the quality and consistency of our services, outlining principles which will guide the design and delivery of services.
5.	The strategy sets out the context for the current work intended to make us easier to deal with for residents, visitors, businesses and other stakeholders. We want to put our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide appropriate support to those who need it, ensuring that customer experiences are easy, effective and convenient.
6.	The strategy outlines the council's commitment to customers through three key customer service principles which will direct activity, and deliver improvements while reducing costs and creating efficiencies: 1. Keep the customer central – when designing changes use customer data and test with users, understand the experiences from the users perspective and collect regular user feedback to support continuous improvement. 2. Aim to resolve things in one contact – first time resolution should always be the aim, reducing the amount of times people need to tell their story and gathering all the information needed to resolve their issue. 3. Always be clear about expectations and keep customers in the loop – letting a customer know how long things will take to complete and keeping them up to date throughout reduces unnecessary contact and ensures the customer is clear about what is happening at every point.
7.	In addition to the high-level actions included in the strategy, detailed action plans are being developed and will be reviewed and updated regularly as this programme of work develops. Much of the work to achieve the desired strategic outcomes is being managed by the Customer Experience Programme and managed through the programme board.
RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS	
<u>Capital/Revenue</u>	
8.	There are no direct financial implications arising from the adoption of the Customer Strategy. The majority of activity to deliver the outcomes of the strategy are covered by the Customer Experience Programme. Any indirect financial implications will need to be contained within existing budgets.
<u>Property/Other</u>	
9.	No direct implications however this strategy will inform decisions about how customers use buildings over the strategy period.
LEGAL IMPLICATIONS	

Statutory power to undertake proposals in the report:	
10.	S.111 Local Government Act 1972 – power to do anything calculated to facilitate the delivery of the council's primary functions.
Other Legal Implications:	
11.	The Customer Access Strategy has been assessed in accordance with the council's duties under the Equalities Act 2010 and in particular s.149, the public sector equality duty. All forms of customer interaction and strategic engagement must be delivered in accordance with these duties and the need to deliver services having due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.
RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS	
12.	Strategic risks are managed through an existing framework of the Corporate Risk Register, the Contract Procedure Rules and the Financial Procedure Rules and Public Procurement Law. Adoption of the Customer Access Strategy will help to reduce these risks for the council, for example risks concerning customer service, data security, service transformation and partnership working.
POLICY FRAMEWORK IMPLICATIONS	
13.	The proposed strategy supports the delivery of the Corporate Plan 2021-26, with the priority of; Improve the customer experience through developing a greater customer service focus, supporting the improvement in digital literacy in the city, and improving and expanding services available online.

KEY DECISION?	Yes
WARDS/COMMUNITIES AFFECTED:	ALL
<u>SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION</u>	
Appendices	
1.	Customer Access Strategy
2.	Equality and Safety Impact Assessment
Equality Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require an Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) to be carried out.	Yes
Data Protection Impact Assessment	
Do the implications/subject of the report require a Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) to be carried out.	No