**POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - 21 JANUARY 2020**

**PART I – PART DELEGATED**

### 7.     CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY
   (DoF)

**1     Summary**

1.1     The Customer Experience Strategy 2019-23 builds on the existing good work from the Customer Programme Strategy from July 2012 which focused on 'changing the face of Customer Services'. Its aim was to identify how customers accessed our services. The 2012 strategy delivered a number of successes in creating and implementing digital platforms, including a new customer relationship management system. This will allow for continued customer channel migration in the new Customer Experience Strategy, which will help us make further improvements to the services and experience we provide to our residents, businesses, stakeholders and visitors.

1.2     The Customer Experience Strategy will also bring the current redevelopment project for Three Rivers House into one strategy. Excellent work has already taken place with the relocation of office staff to the first floor. The strategy will now look at making the reception area and customer facing areas welcoming, modern, flexible and able to support staff in delivering the strategy.

**2     Details**

2.1     Following the work undertaken through the 2012 strategy, we now have the opportunity to build on this by continued customer channel migration and ensuring that services are delivered by the most appropriate channel. This is the reason for developing the Customer Experience Strategy which will be a working document as it continues to develop.

2.2     The vision for the Customer Experience Strategy is to be open, honest and respectful to our customers. We will listen and learn from feedback to find solutions and take responsibility for service delivery. We will also work smartly for our customers by ensuring services are delivered via the most appropriate channel.

2.3     The guiding principles of the strategy are to: Take Responsibility; Be Open, Honest and Respectful; Work Together to find Solutions; Listen and Learn; and Work Smartly. Full details of this can be found on page 5 of the strategy.

2.4     It is key that in order to ensure the needs and requirements of all customers are met, that we consult with different user groups. The aim will be to establish why customers choose to interact with us in the way they currently do and if there are any barriers to prevent them from interacting in different ways.

2.5     As the strategy will be a working document, it is split into three key areas:

- **Discovering** – understanding the needs of our customers. This phase requires consultation with our customers in order to gain a better understanding of who they are, why they contact us and what barriers (if any) they have to online services.

- **Shaping** – making services more efficient and easier to access. Following the feedback from the *Discovery* phase, *Shaping* intends to evolve the way the Council

delivers services and the contact streams/environment they are accessed through. This includes reviewing processes across all departments.

- **Delivering** – measuring, improving and learning. Following the reviews and new processes developed in the *Shaping* phase, *Delivering* focuses on the Council consistently evaluating and improving the customer experience.

2.6 Further details can be found in the strategy, attached at appendix 1. An accompanying Action Plan is attached at appendix A of the strategy.

**3 Options and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1 Customers have changed how they communicate with us from 2015/16 compared to 2018/19; there is a clear preference for online platforms rather than telephone calls. Although it should be noted that face-to-face interaction is not currently measured.

3.2 Feedback from the budget consultation in 2019/20 also indicated that there was a desire for more online services so it is important that we listen to our customers.

3.3 It should also be noted about the cost implications of the more traditional methods of communication, all of which are documented within the strategy.

3.4 It is therefore recommended that Committee adopt the new Customer Experience Strategy to ensure the Council provides an excellent service to our customers by using technology to help deliver our services in a quick, efficient and cost-effective way.

**4 Policy/Budget Reference and Implications**

4.1 The recommendations in this report are not within the Council's agreed policy and budgets.

4.2 The purpose of the proposed strategy is to make the services provided by the Council available digitally (where appropriate) and, as a result, make the services provided more efficient as the service can be delivered via the appropriate channel. It is anticipated that in the life cycle of the strategy the agreed actions will be achieved.

4.3 The proposed strategy will impact on a number of performance indicators. It will mainly impact on the performance indicators used by the Customer Service Centre, as the strategy will look to produce new performance indicators that reflect the changes in the way people use our services. However, it will also impact on other departments and relevant performance indicators will be reviewed and developed through the *Shaping* phase.

The impact of reviewing the performance indicators will be that departments have relevant indicators that will provide a better indication of how we are meeting and managing customers' expectations.

**5 Legal, Environmental, Community Safety, Public Health, Risk Management and Health & Safety Implications**

5.1 None specific.

**6 Financial Implications**

6.1    If the Customer Experience Strategy is approved, some existing budgets that have an impact on customer experience will be combined to sit within the remit of this strategy. These budgets are detailed in 6.2 Table 1 below. It should be noted that both of these projects are still required and therefore the budget will be spent on this purpose. It is recommended that these are brought together into one budget. The details are in Table 1 below.

6.2    Table 1 – realignment of existing budgets.

| Current Project | Budget code | Budget | Predicted spend on project |
|---|---|---|---|
| Website review | 3248 D0625 | £50,000 | £50,000 |
| Redesign of reception area | 7970 X2029 | £244,000 | £244,000 |
| TOTAL | | £294,000 | £294,000 |

6.3    However, in order to achieve the other actions set within the strategy, and any emerging actions, there will potentially be additional budget requirements. It is proposed that an additional budget requirement of £100,000 is established to help deliver the Strategy. The types of projects that this is expected to cover can be seen in Table 2. The approval of individual projects would be subject to business cases for approval.

6.4    Table 2 – potential additional budget requirements

| Project | Expected cost | Current budget allocated |
|---|---|---|
| Councillor portal up to 31 March 2022 | £17,025 | £0 |
| Chatbots up to 31 March 2022 | £18,750 | £0 |
| Council Tax single sign on up to 31 March 2022 | £3,110 | £0 |
| 8 Consultancy days up to 31 March 2022 | £10,000 | £0 |
| Three year platform licence up to 31 March 2022 | Paid | £55,516 paid till 31 March 2022 |
| Three year My service App up to 31 March 2022 | Paid | £9,000 paid till 31 March 2022 |
| Promotion of online services | £5,900 | £0 |
| **Total cost up to 31 March 2022** | **£54,785** | **£0 (exc costs already paid)** |

6.5     Table 3 at 6.6 highlights the cost of the renewal of the platform and all applications mentioned, for the period April 2022 – March 2025.

6.6     Table 3 – renewal costs for applications currently purchased

| Period | Elements to be renewed in the period | Cost |
|---|---|---|
| 01 April 2022 – 31 March 2025 | Councillor Portal<br><br>'Chatbots'<br><br>Single sign on Council tax<br><br>Platform Licence<br><br>6 Consultancy days | £27,000 per year, based on a 10% uplift on current prices. This will be built into the existing budgets on an annual basis from 2022/23. |

## 7     Staffing Implications

7.1     If the strategy is approved, an apprentice will be recruited, from existing budgets, in order to support the project. In order for the project to achieve its targets every department will be required to contribute staff time. This will vary from department to department depending on which parts of the strategy are taken forward, this will ensure that we get the correct information to take the project forward in the right direction.

## 8     Customer Services Centre Implications

8.1     Current targets around call handling and call information will be reviewed to reflect the changes in the way people are choosing to contact us and support channel migration. We will look to move away from targets on how quickly a call is answered to targets regarding first point resolution.

## 9     Communications and Website Implications

9.1     How we communicate will change and updates will be provided regularly to all departments. Social media, internet and focus groups will be used to keep users updated. As part of the strategy we will also be looking at the user-ability of our website in order to try to make it more interactive.

## 10     Equal Opportunities Implications

10.1    Relevance Test

| | |
|---|---|
| Has a relevance test been completed for Equality Impact? | Yes |
| Did the relevance test conclude a full impact assessment was required? | No |

10.2    The relevance test showed that a full impact assessment was not required as sufficient provision is made within the strategy to address relevant points.

10.3    Any risks resulting from this report will be included in the risk register and if necessary managed within the relevant service plan.

**11      Recommendation**

11.1    That the Committee agree:

o   the realignment of budgets as set out in 6.2;

o   the appointment of an apprentice post to support the delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy.

o   that £100,000 to support the delivery of the Customer Experience Strategy is considered as part of the budget setting process.

11.2    That the Committee recommend to Council

o   the adoption of the Customer Experience Strategy.

Report prepared by: Carl Harris, Customer Contact Programme Manager.


**Data Quality**

Data sources:

-   Cost of contact provided by the DWP and Adult Social Services

-   Data for what we know about our current customer experience provided by reports in Firmstep, Hootsuite, Website Reporting and data collected by individual departments

Data checked by:

Carl Harris, Customer Contact Programme Manager

Data rating:

| 1 | Poor | |
|---|------|---|
| 2 | Sufficient | ✓ |
| 3 | High | |

**APPENDICES / ATTACHMENTS**
Appendix 1   Customer Experience Strategy
Appendix A   Customer Experience Strategy Action Plan