



REPORT of DIRECTOR OF SERVICE DELIVERY

to
STRATEGY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE
14 MARCH 2024

REVIEW OF CUSTOMER STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To provide an update on the significant progress that has been achieved in delivering our Customer Strategy.
- 1.2 To approve a new Customer Commitment Statement (**APPENDIX 1**) regarding our service commitments to our residents, businesses, customers and visitors to the District.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) That Members consider report and note the significant progress that has been made in delivering improvements to the way in which we deliver our services;
- (ii) That Members approve the Customer Commitment Statement at **APPENDIX 1** which will be published on its website together with a summary of existing customer service standards.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

- 3.1 In 2016 / 17 Members approved a Customer Strategy (the Strategy) that set the direction of travel for the delivery of our services. The report highlighted that the Strategy would:

“help us to deliver the highest quality customer services to our customers, in the most efficient and cost effective way. It will ensure that we provide the services in the way that customers need them, offering self-service options through our website, whilst continuing to support our most vulnerable customers. It will ensure that customers can be clear about the standards of service they can expect from us”

- 3.2 The Strategy identified 8 key principles aimed at embedding an approach to delivering services based on
 - getting things right;
 - resolving issues when people first contact us;
 - helping customers to use online services;
 - looking at things from the customers perspective, and designing services to meet customer need;
 - having a positive customer focused culture;

- learning from customer feedback;
 - working with partners to support our customers.
- 3.3 An action plan was developed to deliver the Strategy, which together with the Council's Transformation programme in 2018 / 19 and subsequent business improvement work delivered:
- a redesign of our website to make it easier to use;
 - new online forms to enable more services to be accessed 24/7;
 - services redesigned to make it easier for customers to use;
 - new telephone system making it easier for customers to contact us;
 - increased options for being able to make payments to us;
 - dedicated, skilled customer service team to deal with all enquiries;
 - support for our customers to help them use our online services;
 - an increase in the number of partner services that are delivered from the Council Offices;
 - investment in new technology to enable us to work in a more agile way;
 - a strong focus on our customer culture and behaviours;
 - a programme of continuous improvement, with focus on making them easy to use, efficient and effective;
 - dedicated resources to continue to deliver service improvement programme of work;
 - embedding of a data led approach to service design and performance management.
- 3.4 As a result of this investment in our services and technology we were well positioned to respond to the challenges that the pandemic presented and were seamlessly able to continue delivery all of our key services.
- 3.5 We will continue to build upon the great work that has been delivered, and to work with our partners to deliver the good quality services that meet the needs of our residents and businesses.
- 3.6 Our Customer Strategy has now become our "business as usual" work as the principles set out in that strategy have become embedded in the way we deliver services.
- 3.7 Our "Commitment" at **APPENDIX 1** replaces the previous Customer Strategy with a clear statement of what our residents, businesses and customers can expect from us.

4. CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report recognises the significant journey the organisation has been on and the significant progress that has been made to improve the way in which we deliver services, and to how our residents, businesses and customers can access our services.

- 4.2 Our “Commitment,” statement at **APPENDIX 1** sets out Council’s ongoing commitment to deliver good quality services, and ensures our residents, businesses and customers understand what they can expect from us.

5. IMPACT ON PRIORITIES AS SET OUT IN THE CORPORATE PLAN 2023 - 2027

5.1 Supporting our communities

- 5.1.1 Our “Commitment” statement sets out how we will support our residents, businesses and customers, clearly setting out the standard of service and support that can be expected. This commitment is underpinned by ways of working that will deliver good quality customer services, in the most efficient and cost effective way. By embedding this approach we will ensure that we remain focused on providing easy to use services in the way that customers need them, offering self-service options through our website, whilst continuing to support our most vulnerable customers with telephone and face to face support.

5.2 Smarter finances

- 5.2.1 The delivery of our “Commitment” will have a focus on continuous improvement of our services, ensuring that we continue to maximise efficiency, with the aim to deliver financial as well resource capacity.

5.3 Provide good quality services.

- 5.3.1 At the heart of our “Commitment” is the delivery of good quality services that are focused on the needs of our residents, businesses and Customers.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – Embedding our “Commitment” into our day to day delivery of services and future service design ensures we are putting the needs of our residents, businesses and customers first. The focus on delivery of good quality easy to use services ensures that we can provide the right level of support to some of most vulnerable residents.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk (including Fraud Implications)** – None.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – There is no specific financial cost as our “Commitment” is embedded as part of the day to day work of each service. Any specific projects requiring funding will need to be considered as part of business case, with the efficiency and financial savings clearly identified.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** There is no specific staff impact as our “Commitment” is embedded within the day to work of the services.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to: Sue Green, Assistant Director Service Delivery.