

Title of Report	CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY	
Presented by	Cllr Roger Bayliss Cabinet Member for Housing, Property and Customer Services	
Background Papers	<u>Corporate Scrutiny Report – Dec 2021</u>	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: Yes
Financial Implications	No direct financial implications.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	None not addressed in the report	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	No direct staffing implications – the approach accords with the new working model and the CDP	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To seek Cabinet approval of the new Customer Experience Strategy 2022-2025	
Reason for Decision	The previous Customer Experience Strategy has expired and to ensure the Council retains its focus of putting the customer at the heart of everything we do, a new Strategy is needed to set a clear commitment and plan for the organisation and our customers	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. APPROVE THE CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2022-2025 2. APPROVE THE DRAFT ACTION PLAN CONTAINED IN ANNEX 4 AND DELEGATE TO THE DIRECTOR WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR CUSTOMER SERVICES ITS FINALISATION POST THE ACCOMODATION MOVE OF THE CUSTOMER SERVICES CENTRE. 	

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 North West Leicestershire District Council has made a commitment to prioritising the needs of it is customers. This strategy seeks to build the on the previous Customer

Experience Strategy (2018-2021) and reinforces the importance of keeping our customers at the heart of everything we do.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 Over the last 3 years the Council, through the Customer Experience Strategy has made significant steps towards improving the outcomes experienced by our customers. Our commitment to keeping our customers at the heart of what we do has meant we have introduced new technology offering greater functionality and resilience, changed and updated processes to make things easier and quicker and invested in our employees to ensure they have the necessary skills and knowledge to maintain our standards of service.

2.2 However, much has changed over the last three years and it is appropriate for us to review the strategy to make sure that it reflects the both the current and future needs of our customers and the organisation.

2.3 The most significant changes have resulted from the impacts of Covid, effecting our businesses, communities, customers, visitors and our way of life. We have seen people changing the way they do things at a pace never experienced before and we have a responsibility to respond to these changes and meet the ongoing needs of our customers.

2.4 Never before have technology and digital channels been more important, we have more people than ever utilising digital channels in their everyday life from social media and online shopping to banking, accessing health and medical care and Council services. At the same time, we recognise that there are people who either choose or do not have the skills required in order to interact in the digital world and so we must remain committed to ensuring we provide easy access to our services for everyone.

2.5 In addition, the difficult financial position caused by ongoing reductions in central government grants and impacts of the pandemic creates its own challenges for the Council, as an organisation we must strive to look for new and efficient ways to do things so we can maintain the services our customers deserve.

2.6 Cabinet and Council have also agreed funding for a new accommodation strategy that moves our front door much closer to our communities in the heart of Coalville. Whilst separate to this strategy work, nevertheless it has a strong bearing on it. Likewise, the new way of working model also impacts on the way we will delivery service in the future.

3.0 STRATEGY OVERVIEW

3.1 Keeping customers at the heart of what we do is integral to the way that the Council delivers its services – the Council is after all a primarily service-based provider. The updated strategy (Annex 1 to this report) sets out how the Council intends to develop its customer service offering over the next three years to meet the changing needs of our customers. Delivering a positive customer experience is the responsibility of every officer and stakeholder across the Council, with each interaction providing the opportunity to develop productive relationships with our customers. The Strategy outlines how we will adapt to the changing needs of our customers and reinforces our commitment to providing fair and open access to our services

3.2 The Strategy recognises the challenges the organisation faces particular around our finances, advances in technology, changing customers behaviours and needs and our plans for new ways of working. In considering these challenges and the part they will play in shaping our organisation for the future the strategy reinforces our commitment to our customers and refreshes the six principles that will guide the delivery of the strategy.

- **Customer First:** Placing customers at the heart of the organisation. Empowering our staff to provide their very best customer experience in a way that customers tell us that they want to.
- **Customer Access:** A modern, fresh approach to customer experience and spaces, whether physical or digital. Light, clean and welcoming environments.
- **Digital by Default:** Digital experiences so good that they are the channel of choice.
- **Inclusion:** Recognising our customers' unique circumstances and in doing so ensuring that those that need our services are not excluded.
- **Customer Insight:** Consistently measuring our customer experiences. Knowing our customers and their needs. Understanding why things go wrong and learning from this to improve our services.
- **Value for Money, Efficiency and Return on Investment:** Recognising the financial climate, benefit focused outcomes, business minded decision making.

3.3 As part of the development of the strategy we sought the views of our customers. Over 2600 customers responded to our survey which was conducted in person, over the phone, via email and through our website. The results have provided a great deal of insight into how our customers want to interact with us and what's important to them when they do and has been weighted to be reflected of the entire district. In headlines - 35% of our customers advised they prefer to contact us on the phone, 32% via our website, 29% by email and only 2% preferring to see to us face to face. Furthermore, people felt that getting through quickly, speaking to someone that could help them and finding what they needed online were the most important things when contacting us. The full results of the survey can be found in Appendix 2 of this report.

3.4 This is the first time where we have undertaken a survey of such size and representative nature of our customers. It has helped us understand the wants and needs of our customers and has changed the shape of some of our developing provision. Of particular importance in this regard is the very low percentage of face-to-face preference. Whilst it is highly likely that some of our more complex and time-consuming contacts will be in this number and therefore it is right that we are able to provide for them, it is also clear that the vast majority of our customers do not desire face to face contact as their prime means of contact.

3.5 The strategy objectives provide a focus on putting our customers at the heart of what we do, reducing digital exclusion, harnessing the opportunities of digital technology whilst involving the whole organisation. It also sets out actions that will drive the delivery of this strategy. The Strategy also considers how we will work with our partners, in ensuring that they are also able to signpost potential customers to the best and available means of contact for them. In line with the extremely low desire for face to face contact the strategy does not pursue other models of provision such as distributed contact centres or access points as they are not where the demand from our customers sit.

4.0 **CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 Consultation has been completed both internally and externally through the Senior Leadership Team, Corporate Leadership Team, Extended Leadership Team and wider organisational engagement, as well as through an external survey with our customers. Consultation has provided consistently positive feedback which has been carefully reviewed and where appropriate reflected in the final version of the strategy.
- 4.2 The Strategy was considered at Corporate Scrutiny in December last year. Annex 3 contains the extracted minutes. In summary comments were made around the length and detail of the report, the clarity of the action plan, commentary regarding the linkages the Council Delivery Plan, location and how to deliver face to face services in other areas and references to how to best help the more digitally isolated. In addressing the comments from scrutiny, the strategy attached has been updated by:
- Moving the principles of the strategy further to the front of the document
 - Extracting the draft action plan into a more tabular form (Annex 4)
- 4.3 As members are aware the accommodation programme will see the Customer Services Centre move location in Spring/Summer 2022. The Head of Service for this function and Team Manager is also currently subject to recruitment. The draft action plan will remain in draft form until the move and recruitments have concluded. Following this the draft action plan will be assessed for deliverability and actioned through the Team Plan process that guides the work of all of our teams. The recommendations delegate this last step to the Director covering this area of activity.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	The strategy impacts on all of the council priorities in some way: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Supporting Coalville to be a more vibrant, family-friendly town - Support for businesses and helping people into local jobs - Developing a clean and green district - Local people live in high quality, affordable homes - Our communities are safe, healthy and connected
Policy Considerations:	Corporate Delivery Plan The People Plan ICT Roadmap and Technology Strategy
Safeguarding:	N/A
Equalities/Diversity:	Equalities impact considerations will be made as and when detailed proposals come forward so that implications are addressed at that point.
Customer Impact:	The Strategy ensures equal and fair access to all customers
Economic and Social Impact:	The strategy addresses the developing social impacts of changing nature of service provision across the service sector.
Environment and Climate Change:	In increase in the use of digital channels will reduce the amount of paper and postage and therefore

	could have a positive impact on reducing our carbon emissions
Consultation/Community Engagement:	A customer survey was undertaken as part of the development of the strategy, over 2600 people responded
Risks:	As part of its Corporate Governance arrangements, the Council must ensure that Risk management is considered and satisfactorily covered in any report put before elected Members for a decision or action.
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