

36. CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

The Customer Services Lead presented the report to Members providing an overview of the proposed strategy.

A concern was raised about the proposed new way of working, particularly in relation to the relocation of the customer service centre into the town centre of Coalville. It was claimed that some local residents did not support the use of a business unit in the town centre for this purpose. An observation was also made on the use of the five priorities within the Council's Delivery Plan that were referred to within the document as it was felt by a Member that there was little evidence to support that these were being achieved.

Officers noted the comments and reminded members that Cabinet had already made the decision about the form and location of services, the report was related to the overall Customer Services Strategy and its delivery.

A comment was made that the strategy needed to be carefully considered to ensure it delivered what promised. It was agreed that putting the customers at the heart of the service was important, but it should be in conjunction with other priorities as it would not be achieved in isolation.

A suggestion was made to include further detail about how much more efficient the service would be with digitalisation as it was a huge move forward and therefore would be helpful to see the impact.

A discussion was had on the how the digitalisation of the service would affect the people in the district that are unable to access services, some concerns were expressed that these people would be left behind. Members were reassured that the strategy did recognise that there would always be customers who would require face to face or telephone support and this service would continue to be available. Members were reminded that there was a three-year digitalisation plan in progress which included an element of support for residents to enable them to learn how to self-serve which would benefit them as well as the Council. The Portfolio Holder acknowledged the concerns and also reassured Members that support would be available for residents in whichever form they required.

A suggestion was made to supply these services in other areas of the district to allow residents outside of Coalville easier access to the face-to-face support. Members were reminded of the survey work informing the strategy which highlighted that the need identified for face to face in other locations was very low.

A Member urged officers to ensure that the system used for self-serve was accessible on all user platforms as it was important to not put obstacles in people's way that could deter them from using the service.

During a discussion on the format of the strategy, a comment was made that it was a lengthy document that contained technical language. It was also felt that more detail on the three-year plan could have been included.

The cost of educating residents in the use of self-serve was questioned, along with the resources required to deliver it. It was confirmed to Members that this would be covered within the resources for the new Customer Services Centre.

The Chair thanked Members for their contributions and confirmed that all comments would be presented to Cabinet when considering the strategy.