

Title of Report	CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY - CONSULTATION	
Presented by	Councillor Andrew Woodman Housing, Property and Customer Services Portfolio Holder <div>PH Briefed <input type="checkbox" value="Y"/></div>	
Background Papers	None	Public Report: Yes
		Key Decision: No
Financial Implications	There are no financial implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Section 151 Officer: Yes	
Legal Implications	There are no legal implications directly arising from this report	
	Signed off by the Monitoring Officer: Yes	
Staffing and Corporate Implications	There are no staffing and corporate implications arising from this report.	
	Signed off by the Head of Paid Service: Yes	
Purpose of Report	To provide Cabinet with a draft of the Council's revised Customer Experience Strategy that has been prepared for consultation and to set out the period of consultation that will commence with residents and other interested parties.	
Reason for Decision	The Council should consult on strategies impacting residents and stakeholders. The consultation period must be clearly communicated, and the relevant Scrutiny Committee consulted before final approval and review of outcomes. As Cabinet will be asked to approve the final draft strategy, it is appropriate for Cabinet to review the draft prior to consultation.	
Recommendations	THAT CABINET: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> APPROVES THE DRAFT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2026 - 2028 FOR CONSULTATION. NOTES THE TIMEFRAME FOR CONSULTATION AS SET OUT IN PARAGRAPHS 3.3 AND 3.4 OF THE REPORT. 	

1.0 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Council's current Customer Experience Strategy (the "Strategy") covers the period 2022 to 2025. Its core objective is to place customers at the heart of everything the Council does, ensuring that every interaction is accessible, consistent, efficient, and simple.
- 1.2 The Strategy aims to transform how the Council interacts with its diverse customer base including residents, businesses, visitors, partners, and suppliers by:
 - Modernising customer service through digital innovation.
 - Empowering staff to deliver excellent service tailored to customer needs.
 - Improving accessibility for all, including support for those less confident with digital channels.
 - Ensuring value for money by streamlining services and using data effectively.
 - Embedding customer experience into the Council's core values and operations.
- 1.3 It builds on previous achievements such as website accessibility improvements, telephony upgrades and Customer Service Excellence accreditation, while responding to challenges such as reduced government funding and changing customer expectations.
- 1.4 In light of evolving priorities and the Council's forward-looking agenda, the Customer Experience Strategy now requires a refresh to ensure alignment with the Council's strategic direction for the next three years. This update will guarantee that customer-centric principles remain integral to our ongoing transformation and service delivery.

1.0 CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2026 – 2028

- 2.1 The Customer Experience Strategy 2026 – 2028 sets out the Council's approach to transforming how it serves its customers over the next three years. The document explains that customer experience is now seen as a responsibility for the whole organisation, not just one team, and is central to the Council's vision and values. It describes how the Council has already made significant progress, including the introduction of digital forms, a modern website and high levels of customer satisfaction, while maintaining face-to-face and telephone services for those who need them.
- 2.2 The Strategy recognises the challenges posed by financial pressures, rising demand for services and the rapid pace of technological change. It highlights the need to harness digital technology and artificial intelligence to improve efficiency, accessibility and service quality, while ensuring that no one is excluded from accessing council services. The document outlines the Council's aims to make every customer interaction positive, accessible, consistent and efficient, and sets out principles such as putting the customer first, promoting digital inclusion and using data to drive improvements.
- 2.3 A three-year plan is included focusing on reducing avoidable contact, expanding digital services, embedding customer standards and exploring the use of AI. The strategy also emphasises the importance of staff training, community engagement and continuous measurement of success through customer satisfaction and service improvements. Overall, the strategy aims to create a modern, responsive and inclusive council that puts customers at the heart of everything it does.
- 2.4 A draft of the Strategy is shown at Appendix One.

3.0 CONSULTATION

- 3.1 It is considered good practice to consult on strategy documents, particularly when the strategy will have a direct impact on the Council's residents, customers and partners. Engaging with stakeholders during the development of a strategy ensures that their views, needs and concerns are understood and taken into account. This collaborative approach helps to build trust, foster transparency and increase the legitimacy of the Strategy, making it more likely to gain broad support and be successfully implemented.
- 3.2 Consultation enables the Council to identify potential challenges, unintended consequences, or areas for improvement that may not have been apparent from an internal perspective alone. It also demonstrates a commitment to inclusivity and responsiveness, ensuring that the Strategy aligns with the diverse needs of the community. By involving residents and partners early on, the Council can co-create solutions, enhance service delivery and ultimately achieve better outcomes for everyone affected by the strategy.
- 3.3 The consultation period will run for several weeks throughout November 2025 using a range of media to engage with residents and communities.
- 3.4 The outcome from the consultation will then be presented to Corporate Scrutiny Committee alongside the draft final Strategy on 4 December 2025, prior to approval being sought from Cabinet on 17 December 2025.

Policies and other considerations, as appropriate	
Council Priorities:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- A well-run Council
Policy Considerations:	Relevant policies include the Council's Transformation Delivery Plan, which closely aligns with the Customer Experience Strategy due to its focus on digitalisation. The integration of digital services, reduction of avoidable contact, and the adoption of innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence are all central to both documents, ensuring a coordinated and modern approach to improving customer service and organisational efficiency.
Safeguarding:	None
Equalities/Diversity:	<p>It is important to ensure that the Strategy promotes fair and inclusive access to services for all individuals, regardless of their background or characteristics. This involves identifying and addressing potential barriers faced by people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.</p> <p>This includes ensuring digital services are accessible to all, including those with disabilities or limited digital literacy, by providing alternative contact methods and accessible online platforms.</p>

Customer Impact:	<p>By aligning with the Council's Transformation Delivery Plan and focusing on digitalisation, customers will benefit from more efficient and accessible services. The Strategy aims to reduce avoidable contact and streamline interactions through innovative technologies such as artificial intelligence, making it easier for customers to get the help they need quickly and effectively. Furthermore, the strategy emphasises fair and inclusive access for all individuals. This means that services will be designed to cater to people with diverse needs, including those with disabilities or limited digital literacy. Customers will have access to alternative contact methods and accessible online platforms, ensuring that no one is left behind and everyone can engage with council services comfortably.</p>
Economic and Social Impact:	<p>Economically, by streamlining interactions and embracing digitalisation—such as reducing avoidable contact and adopting innovative technologies like artificial intelligence—the strategy can lead to increased organisational efficiency and cost savings. Improved efficiency allows resources to be reallocated towards service enhancements or other priority areas, potentially supporting local employment and economic development.</p> <p>Additionally, as services become easier to access and more responsive, customer satisfaction may increase, which can further enhance the reputation of the Council and attract investment or partnerships.</p>
Environment, Climate Change and Zero Carbon:	<p>By prioritising digitalisation and reducing the need for physical interactions—such as paper-based correspondence and in-person visits—the strategy contributes to lowering the organisation's overall carbon footprint.</p> <p>Moving services online and utilising innovative technologies, such as artificial intelligence, not only streamlines customer interactions but also reduces energy consumption associated with traditional service delivery.</p> <p>Additionally, the strategy's focus on efficient processes and resource allocation can lead to indirect environmental benefits. By minimising unnecessary travel and physical resource use, the Council supports its commitments to sustainability and zero carbon targets.</p> <p>The adoption of accessible digital platforms</p>

	ensures that these environmental benefits are achieved without compromising inclusivity or service quality, aligning environmental responsibility with improved customer outcomes.
Consultation/Community/Tenant Engagement:	This report marks the start of consultation with residents and other key stakeholders.
Risks:	<p>Risks of Not Having a Customer Experience Strategy.</p> <p>Without a clear customer experience strategy, services may become inconsistent, difficult to access, or unresponsive to residents' needs, leading to frustration and diminished trust in the Council.</p> <p>Absence of strategic direction can result in fragmented processes, duplicated efforts, and missed opportunities for digitalisation, which may increase costs and reduce overall efficiency.</p>
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