

<b>Title of Report</b>	<b>CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2026 -2028</b>	
<b>Presented by</b>	Paul Stone Strategic Director of Resources	
<b>Background Papers</b>	<a href="#">Customer Experience Strategy 2026-2028 - Cabinet 28 October 2025</a>	<b>Public Report:</b> Yes
<b>Financial Implications</b>	There are no financial implications arising from this report.	
	<b>Signed off by the Section 151 Officer:</b> Yes	
<b>Legal Implications</b>	There are no legal implications arising from this report.	
	<b>Signed off by the Monitoring Officer:</b> Yes	
<b>Staffing and Corporate Implications</b>	There are no staffing and corporate implications arising from this report.	
	<b>Signed off by the Head of Paid Service:</b> Yes	
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To provide Corporate Scrutiny with a draft of the Council's revised Customer Experience Strategy that has been through a period of public consultation during the period 31 October 2025 to 20 November 2025.	
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>THAT CORPORATE SCRUTINY</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>1. NOTES THE DRAFT CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE STRATEGY 2026 -2028 SET OUT IN APPENDIX ONE</b></li> <li><b>2. NOTES THE CONSULTATION RESPONSES AS SET OUT IN APPENDIX TWO</b></li> <li><b>3. PROVIDES ANY COMMENTS FOR CABINET FOR CONSIDERATION AT ITS MEETING ON 17 DECEMBER 2025.</b></li> </ol>	

## 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.

## **2.0 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 public consultation period has run from 31 October 2025 to 20 November 2025 using a range of media to engage with residents and communities and staff. A total of 863 responses were received.
- 3.4 In summary, the responses indicated that the preferred ways to contact the Council are by phone or via website/online forms, though email and in-person options remain important. Key priorities include clear information, speaking to a real person, and fast responses. While many rate their online experience highly, some find it only fair or poor due to unclear information and lack of responsiveness indicating room for improving digital services, further details are shown in Appendix Two.

<b>Policies and other considerations, as appropriate</b>	
Council Priorities:	A well-run council
Policy Considerations:	Relevant policy considerations 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:	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. 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.  An equality impact assessment has been completed.
Customer Impact:	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

	<p>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>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. 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 ensures that these environmental benefits are achieved without compromising inclusivity or service quality, aligning environmental responsibility with improved customer outcomes.</p>
Consultation/Community Engagement:	<p>There has been a period of consultation with residents and staff throughout November 2025.</p>
Risks:	<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</p>

	Council. Absence of strategic direction can result in fragmented processes, duplicated efforts, and missed opportunities for digitalisation, which may increase costs and reduce overall efficiency.
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