

TITLE	Customer Experience Strategy – New (Final)
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on Thursday 26 th October 2023
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Operating Officer - Sally Watkins
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services - Sarah Kerr

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

Approval of the Customer Experience strategy, following formal consultation. The strategy sets out the direction and focus around improving the experience Wokingham customers have when they interact with the Council.

The strategy aligns to the strategic outcomes within the Council Plan - 'Changing the way we work for you' and 'Being the best we can be'. It also aligns to the Equality Plan.

This report outlines the proposal for the Executive to consider, following formal public consultation.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive to approve the draft Customer Experience strategy, following public consultation.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The strategy addresses several 'pain points' for our customers that were identified through more robust and frequent gathering of feedback, over the last 12 months. Feedback and input has been gathered from the workforce, residents, businesses, partners and Community groups to inform the content and design of the strategy – including the Equality Forum, CLASP and the Youth Council.

We know that people have inconsistent customer experiences when they interact with the Council – there are pockets of excellence, but the customer experience is not owned by everyone. The strategy outlines the vision and ambition around improving a more consistent customer experience.

The strategy was created following 12 months of resident, community and group engagement with a wide section of our community. The strategy was then presented to CLT, Overview and Scrutiny Committee and Executive, before being taken through a formal consultation process.

Summary of headlines following formal consultation:

- Views were sought across 6 elements in the strategy:
 - Ambition – 84% agreed
 - Customer Charter – 79% agreed

- Strategy focus overall – 72% agreed
- Inclusivity of the strategy – 72% agreed
- Key areas for us to focus on – 82% agreed
- Measures – 78% agreed
- 74 consultation responses received, and a separate workshop held with CLASP
- 78% agreed that the strategy had the right focus overall, across the 6 elements
- A small number (13) fed back on the council, rather than the strategy itself
- 48% of respondents that disclosed their age were over the age of 60, and 53% male
- 28% of respondents live in Wokingham town, and 18% Woodley

Whilst some comments included elements that were already in the strategy, the language and intention has been made clearer and more obvious in some areas.

The following additions in the current version were made following consultation feedback:

- Defined the term ‘customer’
- ‘Be data driven’ changed to ‘Be information driven’
- Make clear that an action plan will support delivery
- Multiple information sources will be used to measure performance
- Include acknowledgement for CLASP who supported with the easy read version
- Make sure we have an external review of our performance

A year 1 plan has been drafted which includes the actions needed to implement the strategy. The key high-level themes are:

- Developing a customer centric culture
- Voice of the customer – using data and insight to inform improvements
- Process redesign
- Digital – develop effective and accessible digital solutions
- Measurement of outcomes

BACKGROUND

We know that people have inconsistent customer experiences when they interact with the Council – there are pockets of excellence, but the customer experience is not owned by everyone.

There is no current customer strategy meaning there is a gap in vision and ambition around ensuring a more consistent customer experience, that supports the strategic outcomes in the Council Plan.

We have gathered feedback and input from the workforce, residents and community groups, and they tell us that there are 4 things that make a difference to how they feel about their overall experience:

- Feeling listened to
- Being able to get what they need
- Trusting in the council to spend money wisely
- Feeling valued as a customer

The strategy addresses what customers have told us by setting the direction around 3 key areas of focus:

1. Being insight driven - Putting people at the heart of our services by listening to what they tell us, so we can better understand customer needs and priorities
2. Being outcome focused - Making sure services deliver value for money, and are designed to help customers achieve the right outcomes
3. Continuously improving - Getting the basics right and use customer feedback to inform service design in line with changing customer needs and expectations.

Key success indicators are defined for each area of focus. As part of the strategy's supporting action plan, specific customer experience KPI's are being developed with Services to be included within the quarterly monitoring report.

Equality, diversity and inclusion is the golden thread throughout the strategy. It reflects the aims of our Equality Plan to ensure we develop the right level of insight from all of our communities to inform service design.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces unprecedented financial pressures as a result of; the longer term impact of the COVID-19 crisis, Brexit, the war in Ukraine and the general economic climate of rising prices and the increasing cost of debt. It is therefore imperative that Council resources are optimised and are focused on the vulnerable and on its highest priorities.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	Costs contained within existing directorate budgets.	Costs contained within existing directorate budgets.	Contained within existing budgets, any further financial expenditure would be addressed via the Medium Term Financial Plan process.
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	Costs contained within existing budgets, any further financial expenditure would be addressed via the Medium Term Financial Plan process.	Costs contained within existing directorate budgets.	Contained within existing budgets, any further financial expenditure would be addressed via the Medium Term Financial Plan process.
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	Costs contained within existing budgets, any further financial expenditure would be addressed via	Costs contained within existing directorate budgets.	Contained within existing budgets, any further financial expenditure would be addressed via the Medium Term

	the Medium Term Financial Plan process.		Financial Plan process.
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Other Financial Information
Improving the customer experience and reducing repeat customer contact should result in savings for the council. Savings are included in the MTFP(23/24 OFP budget) for the Customer Excellence programme and this strategy should assist in delivery of those savings.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation
<p>Informal public engagement to create the strategy.</p> <p>Formal public consultation completed July/August 2023.</p> <p>Engagement with service areas to ensure the strategy is embedded across the organisation and is used to inform service plans.</p> <p>External communication to our communities once the strategy is approved.</p>

Public Sector Equality Duty
Public sector equality duty completed.

Climate Emergency – <i>This Council has declared a climate emergency and is committed to playing as full a role as possible – leading by example as well as by exhortation – in achieving a carbon neutral Wokingham Borough by 2030</i>
Provision of improved and accessible Digital services that act as an enabler for reducing Customer travel to offices and more efficient and effective ways of working.

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2
N/A

List of Background Papers
N/A

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