

TITLE	Customer Experience Strategy
FOR CONSIDERATION BY	The Executive on 29 June 2023
WARD	(All Wards);
LEAD OFFICER	Chief Operating Office - Sally Watkins
LEAD MEMBER	Executive Member for Climate Emergency and Resident Services - Sarah Kerr

PURPOSE OF REPORT (INC STRATEGIC OUTCOMES)

The draft Customer Experience strategy requires Executive approval as it 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, before onward public consultation. Following consultation, a final draft will be produced for Executive sign off.

RECOMMENDATION

The Executive to approve the draft Customer Experience strategy, for onward 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.

Summary of considerations for this decision:

- It is a 5-year strategy, Wokingham Council does not currently have a Customer Experience Strategy that sets direction or areas of focus for improvement
- The strategy aligns to the Council Plan around 'Changing the way we work for you' and 'Being the best we can be'. It also aligns to the Equality Plan
- Within the strategy the Customer Charter defines the type of experience customers should receive when they interact with the Council

- The strategy drives the use of Customer data and insight as part of driving a more customer centric culture based on a foundation of continuous improvement across the Council
- Savings could be realised as a result of better customer experiences, reducing the cost of failure and avoidable demand, and channel shift to improved digital services
- The term 'customer' refers to anyone that interacts with the Council – it is terminology that will be tested again during public consultation
- The format has been designed in a way that makes it easy for people to understand – an Easy Read version will also be available

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 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.

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 OFP programme and this strategy should assist in delivery of those savings.

Stakeholder Considerations and Consultation

Formal public consultation.

Engagement with service areas to ensure the strategy is embedded across the organisation and is used to inform service plans.

The strategy will come back to the Executive following stakeholder consultation, consideration of the feedback and any amendments to the strategy in September 2023.

Public Sector Equality Duty

Public sector equality duty completed.

Climate Emergency – *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*

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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