

Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee Meeting, 17 October 2022

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<b>Report Summary</b>	
<b>Report Title</b>	Reviewing our Customer Communication
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To provide members with additional detail on the customer communication topic raised by residents in the 2022 Resident Survey consultation.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Members set-up a working group to review customer communication experiences and feed these reflections into the development of the Customer Strategy.</li> <li>b) Members add a review of the Communications Strategy to the Committee Work Programme to ensure this strategy appropriately considers/responds to resident feedback.</li> </ul>

## **1.0 Background**

- 1.1 It is part of Newark and Sherwood's vision to be driven by what matters most to its residents, and therefore the Council wants to consider the views and priorities of residents in the development of the next Community Plan (to cover 2023 to 2027). As such, the Council undertook district wide consultation, the 2022 Resident Survey, to inform the development of the plan in 2023. The results of this consultation were presented to Policy and Performance Improvement Committee members on the 26 September 2022.
- 1.2 This consultation was three-pronged with the elements being, an open survey, a representative survey (which was gathered to sense check the open survey), and a series of focus groups.
- 1.3 As part of the open survey, respondents were asked to rate their satisfaction with their local area and their experience with the Council. Underneath this question was a comment box requesting specific feedback and areas for improvement. 919 comments were submitted in this box and the comments were analysed and grouped into themes. The largest theme, with 260 comments, was 'Council Communication'. Members requested further information on this topic with the intension of setting up a working group to look at this issue. This working group would review the customer experience in relation to residents communicating with the Council and tie the findings into the development of a Customer Strategy.
- 1.4 The Customer Strategy is currently in development for decision at Cabinet in 2023. This working group would be an opportunity for customer experience to feed into this strategy to ensure the strategy results in customer led processes, and the setting and embedding of high-quality customer care standards.

## 2.0 Proposal

2.1 The 'council communication' theme can be further broken down into three elements.

<b>Quantity of, and Approach to, External Communication</b>	<b>Quality of Service Communication</b>	<b>Consultation</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•This communication is to inform residents about the work of the Council</li><li>•Some survey respondents felt they did not understand the work of the Council and want to know more about its work to achieve greater transparency. Respondents also expressed a wish for this communication to be via a range of media e.g. community notice boards, social media</li><li>•The approach to developing the Council's external communication will be part of the Communications Strategy currently in development and on the Forward Plan for decision in 2023.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•This communication is related to the Council's response to complaints, and other feedback as well as service requests</li><li>•Some survey respondents felt that their service requests were not always replied to or the reply took too long. Whilst others felt that some processes were complex and it wasn't clear what would happen next in the process e.g. when to expect a response</li><li>•Some survey respondents also felt their feedback wasn't acknowledged and their feedback was not taken seriously enough</li><li>•The approach to developing the Council's communication with residents is within the Customer Strategy on the Forward Plan for decision in 2023.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Some residents don't feel listened to and want to be consulted with more</li><li>•The principles of consultation and engagement with residents are laid out in the Consultation and Engagement Strategy.</li><li>•The effectiveness of this strategy will be reviewed by Policy and Performance Improvement Committee after one year of implementation, and this would be an appropriate time to reflect on this feedback.</li></ul>

2.2 Therefore, this report proposes that members add a review of the Communications Strategy (currently in development) to this Committee's Work Programme. To ensure this strategy appropriately considers/responds to resident feedback. It also proposes that members set-up a working group to undertake a review of customer communication to feed this valuable customer experience insight into the development of the Customer Strategy.

2.3 This review of customer communication would cover three key areas. Each area would be reviewed, looking at the current practices and processes, to ensure they are of good quality and fit for purpose when compared to customer experiences and needs. The three areas are;

- To review how customers get in touch, considering method and hours of contact,
- To review how the council handle enquiries, considering tone of staff and style of communication (aiming for clear and proactive communication), and
- To review how the council constantly improves its customer service and learns from customer feedback, considering performance measures and improvement procedures.

## 3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations' officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity,

Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding and Sustainability, and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

**Background Papers and Published Documents**

Resident Survey Outcomes Presentation to the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee on 26 September 2022.

[Code of recommended practice on local authority publicity](#)