



Report to: Policy & Performance Improvement Committee - 6 March 2023

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Report Title	Customer Promise
Purpose of Report	To present the Customer Promise, an outcome of the Customer Strategy Working Group, which will be the keystone of the Council’s Customer Experience Strategy.
Recommendations	That the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee: (a) endorse the Customer Promise (a customer facing document which outlines how we will interact with our customers); and (b) reflect and provide comment on the proposed pilot (3.2)

1.0 **Background**

- 1.1 In the 2022 Resident Survey, residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Council as well as give specific feedback on areas of improvement. A key area of improvement identified was Council Communication. As a result of this, the Policy & Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) set-up a working group to develop a Customer Experience Strategy to improve the quality and consistency of customer experience. Looking at elements such as how customers get in touch, how enquiries are handled and how the Council constantly improves its customer service and learns from customer feedback.
- 1.2 Since September 2022, the working group has met 3 times to look at various aspects including customer data, case studies, processes and what good customer service looks like. The working group also identified some minor improvements to the website that have now been implemented.
- 1.3 As a result of the working group, a Customer Promise document has been designed. The Customer Promise is a customer facing document which highlights the behaviour the Council will follow when interacting with customers. The Customer Promise has been designed to be accessible for the customer and as such is in an impactful and easily digestible format. This will be the key document used to deliver the message of the Customer Experience Strategy.

- 1.4 Although the Customer Promise is not directly linked to the Community Plan it relates to every service, as it outlines the behaviours all Council Employees and Representatives will embody when interacting with customers. As such, the Customer Promise will have an impact on all business units.

2.0 Proposal and Reason for Recommendations

- 2.1 The working group developed the Customer Promise document (**Appendix One**) as the key principles to guide all customer interactions. The aim is for this Customer Promise document to be review and endorsed by Members and, once their views have been fed in, a supporting Customer Experience Strategy will be built. The aim is for this strategy to go in draft to Cabinet in April before going out for public consultation.
- 2.2 To agree and implement a customer centric Customer Experience Strategy centred on key customer promises and shape a pilot which is informed by the needs of our customers.

3.0 Next Steps

- 3.1 The Customer Promise will work in conjunction with the Customer Experience Strategy to shape and define the approach the Council takes when interacting with customers. This may mean that some service areas will face operational changes to ensure that they meet the promises. For example, the adoption of the Strategy and Customer Promise will coincide with some bespoke training to all staff who work with customers.
- 3.2 The working group considered the need for operational changes to meet the promises proposed and the main area for improvement was around availability outside of usual working hours. This is so we are available to our customers when it works for them. The working group reviewed a series of pilot projects and will suggest to Customer Services to pilot additional opening on a Monday. This will be an additional hour on Monday (our busiest day) opening on the phones, e-mail, social media and webchat. Working group members welcome feedback on where this additional opening would be best for 8-9am or 5-6pm. Subject to approval, the aim is for the pilot to be undertaken from May/June and the results tested and reviewed for decision by Cabinet.

4.0 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.

4.1 Financial Implications (Ref: FIN22-23/8568)

The promise alone does not have any direct financial implications; however, any follow up actions, such as customer experience training, will need to be considered individually to ensure they are delivering in line with the strategy and are proportionate to the change.

All training expenditure will be captured within the HR training budget.

The pilot proposed will impact on staff, but by introducing a rota system for the pilot scheme, so there will be no additional costs. The outcome of the pilot will determine if additional resources are required going forward.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

Reviewing our Customer Communication, PPIC, 17 Oct 2022