



Report to: Cabinet Meeting – 11 July 2023

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Paul Peacock, Strategy, Performance & Finance

Director Lead: Deborah Johnson, Director - Customer Services & Organisational Development

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Report Summary	
<b>Type of Report</b>	Open report, key decision
<b>Report Title</b>	Customer Experience Strategy 2023-2027
<b>Purpose of Report</b>	The Customer Experience Strategy and the Customer Promise, which, subject to approval, will go out for public consultation before being finalised and used to shape all Council delivery.
<b>Recommendations</b>	That Cabinet: (a) approve, in principle and subject to consultation, the Customer Experience Strategy and Customer Promise; and (b) approve the proposed pilot (as detailed in Paragraph 2.3 of the report).
<b>Alternative Options Considered</b>	Continue with no Council wide strategy and see no improvements.
<b>Reason for Recommendations</b>	The Council does not currently have a Customer Experience Strategy, this is a document which sets out our key principles to guide all customer interactions. Whilst the Customer Experience Strategy and Customer Promise do not directly link 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. The Customer Experience Strategy and Customer Promise are important as they shape the quality of our customer interactions.

## 1.0 Background

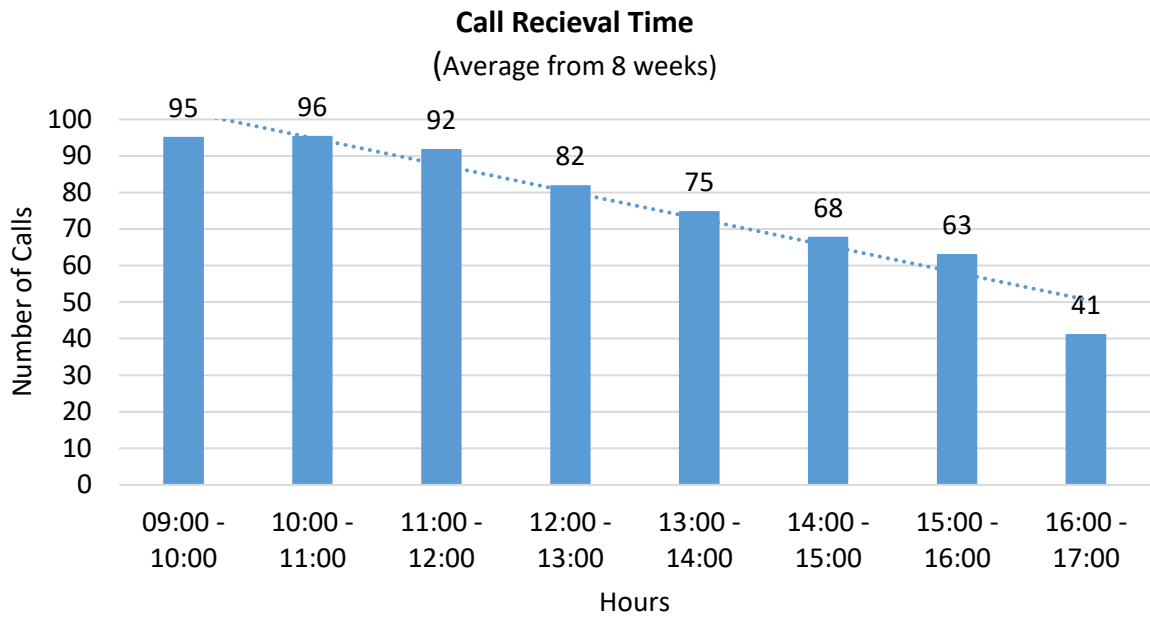
1.1 In the 2022 Resident Survey, residents were asked to rate their satisfaction with the Council as well as give specific feedback on areas of improvement. A key area of improvement identified was Council communication. As a result of this, the Policy and Performance Improvement Committee (PPIC) set-up 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 Between September 2022 and February 2023, the working group 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, the Customer Promise (Page 3, **Appendix One**) was developed. This promise is a customer facing document highlighting the behaviour we will follow when interacting with customers. The Customer Promise and proposed pilot have been endorsed by PPIC. Following the feedback of PPIC a supporting Customer Experience Strategy (**Appendix One**) was developed to provide further detail on how the promise would be embedded. Following approval by Cabinet, this strategy will be used to develop staff training to embed these values within the Councils interactions with all customers.

## **2.0 Proposal**

- 2.1 The working group developed the Customer Promise document (Page 3, Appendix One) as the key principles to guide all customer interactions. The Customer Promise document was reviewed and endorsed by PPIC on 6 March 2023. The Customer Experience Strategy (Appendix One) has subsequently been developed alongside the Customer Promise. Subject to Cabinet approval, the Customer Experience Strategy and Customer Promise will go out for public consultation prior to implementation across the Council.
- 2.2 One of the principles laid out in the promise is that “we will be here for you, in the way that works best for you, whether that’s digitally, on the telephone or face-to-face.” This led the working group to consider the opening hours of our Customer Contact Centre considering whether the opening hours of our non-digital services are suitable for all our customers. For example, customers who work full time or work nightshifts may not be able to contact us between 9am and 5pm. Therefore, to meet the needs of these customers, the working group proposed piloting additional opening hours. This will be piloted for a period of 12 weeks and the findings reviewed. If this is found to be successful, the additional opening hour will be made permanent and other pilots may also be explored.
- 2.3 The proposal is for the additional opening hours to be on a Monday (our busiest day). The additional opening will be for the Customer Contact Centre with customers able to contact by phone, e-mail, social media, and webchat. This additional opening pilot could be for 8-9am or 5-6pm. PPIC members unanimously voted in support of early opening. This is supported by customer data which shows that the majority of calls on a Monday are in the morning (see graph below). Subject to approval, the aim is for the pilot to be undertaken from September and the results reviewed with Members.



### 3.0 Implications

In writing this report and in putting forward recommendation’s officers have considered the following implications; Data Protection, Digital and Cyber Security, Equality and Diversity, Financial, Human Resources, Human Rights, Legal, Safeguarding, Sustainability, and Crime and Disorder and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.

#### **Financial Implications (FIN23-24/8968)**

The strategy and promise alone do 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.

[Customer Promise and Customer Strategy working Group Update, PPIC, 6 March 2023](#)