

CABINET

25 April 2017

Title: Customer Access Strategy	
Report of the Cabinet Member for Economic and Social Development	
Open Report	For Decision
Wards Affected: All	Key Decision: Yes
Report Author: Claire Symonds, Chief Operating Officer	Contact Details: Tel: 020 227 5513 E-mail: claire.symonds@lbbd.gov.uk
Accountable Director: Claire Symonds, Chief Operating Officer	
Summary <p>The Council is looking to meet the needs of its customers against a backdrop of budget challenges, increasing demand, and raising expectations. To address these needs, as part of the Council's wider transformation programme, we have reviewed the current level of customer service provision and identified potential changes for how our customers access and experience our services. The Council will deliver these changes through a renewed approach to the implementation of high quality customer services across a range of different touch-points, primarily through digital and voice channels. Our vision is to provide excellent customer services that are easily accessible and tailored to customers' needs.</p> <p>This strategy outlines how the Council will support customers while delivering fast, easy to access council services, efficient and cost-effective service delivery and high levels of customer satisfaction. This strategy is an inward-looking document, mainly aimed at explaining how we will improve services.</p>	
Recommendation(s) <p>The Cabinet is recommended to approve the new Customer Access Strategy at Appendix 1 to the report.</p>	
Reason(s) <p>In order to support our customers against a backdrop of budget challenges, increasing demand and raising expectations, we must have a strategy and delivery plan in place to ensure we can meet these diverse needs.</p>	

1. Introduction and Background

- 1.1 The Council's current customer strategy was agreed at Cabinet in March 2010 and focused on the development of a range of digital services, with the majority of customer contacts being delivered by our joint venture partner, Elevate.

- 1.2 Despite a potential funding gap of £63 million by 2020, the Council continues to provide a full range of public services, offering customers a variety of contact channels. However, the authority acknowledges that the status quo is no longer possible and is embarking on a programme that proposes to balance growth and cost cutting with an innovative range of approaches to service delivery. As part of this activity we have reviewed how we provide front line services to our customers and have identified a number of changes and improvements to how, in future, these will be delivered.
- 1.3 It is acknowledged that customer expectations are ever increasing and that these have not always been met, indeed there have been some significant problems with customer services delivery over the last year. Work has been undertaken to improve this situation and the new Strategy will set a direction of travel that will enable continual improvement.

2. Proposal and Issues

- 2.1 The new customer strategy recognises that improvements in Customer Services are an essential part of the wider Council transformation programme. Alongside this, in a separate improvement plan now being jointly delivered by Elevate and the Council, recent concerns over the standard of current service delivery are being addressed in detail.
- 2.2 The main focus of the new strategy will be on developing and implementing new technology, service standards and entire organisational transformation to achieve our vision to provide easily accessible excellent customer services, tailored to customers' needs. The strategy document at **Appendix 1** will be a living document that sets out our operating procedures and design principles which will then be progressed in line with our service re-design, rather than a rigid framework that prescribes in detail how we will ensure the delivery of high quality customer services.
- 2.3 The key aims for the future include enhanced levels of customer service for all individuals and households, through the delivery of:
- easier availability, access and delivery of services provided
 - utilisation of innovative technology for more efficient and cost-effective service delivery
 - improvements in how we engage with customers and obtain feedback
 - effective measurement of customer service levels and performance
 - a flexible approach to demand management that will support service delivery and income generation
 - a targeted approach to ensure all customers get the right level of support
- 2.4 The Council will achieve these aims through the provision of services across a range of different touch-points, primarily through digital and voice channels. As part of a targeted approach, we will ensure that appropriate face-to-face support is also available for individuals and households to meet their specific needs.
- 2.5 The longer-term vision is for fast, easy access to council services, efficient and cost-effective service delivery, and high levels of customer satisfaction. The

strategy document at **Appendix 1** outlines how the Council will support customers and so achieve our vision for customer access.

3. Options Appraisal

- 3.1 Given the nature of the funding gap and the Council's need to transform the way it delivers services to meet this challenge, the only viable option considered was to transform our delivery of front line services to our customers.

4. Consultation

- 4.1 Consultation has taken place with Members and the Council's joint venture partner, Agilysis and Elevate.

5. Financial Implications

Implications completed by: Stephen Hinds, Chief Accountant

- 5.1 As part of the MTFs and budget setting process, both revenue and capital funding was allocated to supporting the Customer Access Strategy. £700k of Revenue Funding was earmarked during 2017/18, along with a number of capital schemes with funding totalling over £4m (funded from borrowing and flexible use of capital receipts).
- 5.2 It is imperative that the strategy is fully supported and the funding actively managed to ensure the success of the strategy as failure to deliver would add to the financial pressures the organisation faces.

6. Legal Implications

Implications completed by: Dr Paul Field, Senior Governance Solicitor

- 6.1 As a public authority the Council is bound by the Equality Act 2010. This Act requires that we, as a local authority, must consider all individuals when carrying out our day-to-day work. This includes shaping policy, delivering services and how we treat our employees.
- 6.2 More broadly, under the Equality Act, we will ensure that we are taking steps to:
- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act;
 - advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
 - foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 6.3 Any move to online services will adequately ensure that access to, and the provision of, services is not reduced in such a way that disadvantages people with a protected characteristic.

6.4 An equalities impact assessment has been undertaken and the final service delivery model has been designed to take into account those sections of society with a protected characteristic, so they are not left behind.

7. Other Implications

7.1 **Corporate Policy and Customer Impact** – The implementation of the customer strategy will have a major impact on the future design, development and delivery of customer services, fuller details of which are outlined in the strategy document.

Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None

List of appendices:

- **Appendix 1 - Customer Access Strategy**