Customer Access Strategy: Outline Approach and Key Principles

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Purpose of the Report

To inform Members that a Customer Access Strategy is under development and to engage with you in ensuring it reflects the needs of our customers and local communities. This determines the way in which we will engage with our customers and communities in the future and will underpin the principles that will guide the development of our future actions around channel shift, moving customers away from traditional (face-to-face/'phone) ways of contacting the Council and towards lower cost, self-service options, including the website and customer-facing parts of the Council.

Actions Required

To consider the principles which underpin the Customer Access Strategy and contribute to shaping its further development

Background

Our customers need services that are easy to access, simple to use, reliable and cost effective. When they need information, it should be easy to find and easy to understand. These are fundamental and unchanging requirements. However, external factors may prompt a change in our approach to meeting these needs.

1. The availability of new technologies will help us deliver services in new ways. More widely available internet access and mobile technology mean that customers expect to access services and be able to connect with us anytime and anywhere. Being able to self-serve offers our customers a way of interacting with us when it is most convenient to them and is attractive to many
2. The budget pressures that Councils have been experiencing means that, if there are ways of delivering services more cost effectively, without impacting on the quality of our service, we should explore that
3. Capturing customers' interactions with the Council digitally permits us to capture an electronic record of the customer journey whilst also minimising human error

We know that some of our customers are either not able or choose not to access our services in this way. The strategy, whilst embracing the shift to digital channels and self-service, needs also to ensures that customers who need to access services either face-to-face or over the 'phone will have their needs met.

Report

The Customer Access Strategy will set out our aspiration for customer access, the principles that shape what we do and how we will engage customers and other stakeholders in its delivery. Further details of the core principles supporting our strategy, key actions emanating from it and the measures

for evaluating our performance will be shared via a brief presentation to Scrutiny Members at the meeting.

Financial Implications

As the document is strategic rather than related to a specific project or programme, there are no financial implications

Council Plan Implications

The Customer Access Strategy sets the direction for assuring the accessibility of our services for customers, with a focus on moving many of our services online. Our stated aims emanate from two of the Council's objectives, incorporated within the Council Plan:

a) In order to protect front line services, we will transform customer services through technology, and
b) Provide access to services to suit our customers' needs

Background papers

None