A Selection of Feedback from our Extensive Consultation Exercise – (Internal to OCC and External Customers Views)

This insight from our customers will be reviewed by the Improving the Customer Experience board on the 16th May and a streamlined set of actions will be approved by Quarter 1 2024/2025.

An annual update will be provided to both the Council Management Team and the Performance and Corporate Services Overview Scrutiny Committee.

Having a 'customer first' approach across the council

How	Selection of Customer Feedback
Create a culture where delivering a good customer experience is everyone's job.	- Ensure that the Customer Ethos and delivering an 'excellent' customer experience' is a key part of our **Transformation programme.** - Use this **strategy as a live document** and form teaching sessions, guidance, and conversations around with our value champions. **Collect and monitor key performance metrics** across services to keep employees accountable for good customer service. **Train our managers** to embed practical steps that enable their teams to deliver our standards of experience expected. **Display our customer principles** and photos of customers across council buildings and our website. **Consider a designated Customer service centre contact/partner** for each service area **Implement shadowing days** where employees across the council can shadow frontline customer service teams
Provide clear information that sets out what our customers need to do, and what they can expect from us.	**Become more visible to our customers** through drops in and situating ourselves across Oxfordshire ensure opportunities to interact and signpost. **Develop more case studies** around good and poor customer experience and communicate widely across the council. - Consider **adding customer experience-based competencies in role descriptions** and using these competencies to frame interview questions.
Ensure our team members are highly trained and take	**Train all our employees** on how to deliver a world-class service. This could use a passport system where dependent on the role employees need to have proof of certain levels of training, such as role play based training.

personal responsibility to meet customer needs.	• **Provide clear guidance to our employees** on what we expect in delivering excellent customer service and a world-class experience and how handle customer inquiries effectively. • Provide our employees with the **opportunity to achieve qualifications** in Customer Excellence; and recognise this as a professional qualification. • **Upskill our employees in the latest technology** to deliver a better service. • Ensure our **employees are happy and supported at work** and have a strong wellbeing offer to improve retention and to deal with customer burdens.
Provide an empathetic approach to more complex matters and listen to your issues and needs.	• Provide our employees with the **right knowledge, skills, tools, and technologies** to be able to deliver that world-class service in more difficult cases. • Have **specialist support in teams** where needed to provide advice and expertise e.g. SEND specialist in the customer service centre. • **Follow clear organisational values** that embed what excellent customer experience means to us.
Ensure that customer experience is at the forefront of our thoughts as we continue to evolve what we do and how we do it.	• **Regularly engage with our employees** to understand how things are going from their perspective. • Learn from our employees about barriers or problems that stop them delivering that excellent customer experience; and remove those. • **Empower our employees to amend** their processes and ways of working to improve the customer experience, for example creating readily available forms and templates. • **Sharing best practice and lessons learnt** across the organisation around customer practice through an ongoing publication and reports tailored for each service area. • Achieve a Council wide **Customer Excellence Industry Recognition** through the CAA Accreditation

Having a better understanding of our customers and what they want from us.

How	Selection of Customer Feedback

Develop a better understanding of our customers; their diversity, and their differing expectations, needs and preferences.	**Gather Data:**
	• **Engage in comprehensive research** that encompasses a wide range of demographics, including age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and abilities. Use surveys, focus groups, and interviews to gather insights as well as data across the council.
	• **Develop a Framework** to capture and share our customer insight across the council.
	• **Engage with our Customers**, including households, individuals, businesses, and visitors to understand.
	    ○ how and when you want to access our services
	    ○ if you have any specific requirements or need any support that would make requesting or receiving services from us easier.
	    ○ if you have any barriers to accessing services
	    ○ What your preferences are; and what you expect from us
	• **Consult with you** to understand which services you are interested in, and what you are not. (rather than those imposed on you)
	• **Listen Actively** and encourage open dialogue with customers. Actively listen to their feedback, concerns, and suggestions. Use multiple channels (online, in-person, phone) to capture diverse perspectives.
	• **Partner with local organisations**, community leaders, and advocacy groups. Their insights can provide valuable context and help bridge gaps.
	• **Train employees** to empathise with diverse customer experiences. Foster cultural competence and sensitivity.

Ensure that we understand the needs of our more vulnerable customers, those that rely heavily on our services, or	• **Reach out directly to vulnerable customers** through phone calls, home visits, or personalised letters. Understand their specific challenges. • **Signpost to community networks/** groups for vulnerable individuals and training sessions that empower vulnerable individuals to navigate services independently e.g. around digital inclusion. • **Invest in multilingual support and translation software**, clear signage, and accessible technology. • **Partner with local social service** agencies, nonprofits, and shelters. Leverage their expertise to address and signpost complex requirements.

have more complex requirements.	• **Scope options for flexible service**, such as extended hours, home delivery, or virtual consultations. Accommodate health limitations. • **Train employees to recognise signs of vulnerability** and respond compassionately. Provide guidance on handling sensitive situations. • **Regularly check in with vulnerable customers** to assess their well-being and address any emerging needs. • Use **plain language and visual aids** to communicate valuable information. Ensure that instructions are clear and easy to follow. • **Develop contingency plans** for emergencies (e.g., extreme weather, power outages) for vulnerable customers.

Develop customer insight which sets out the profiles of our differing customer groups and support us in designing an excellent customer experience.	**Analyse the Date:**
	
	• **Regularly analyse qualitative and quantitative data** on customer interactions, behaviour, and preferences. Identify patterns and trends.
	• **Examine our complaints, comments, and compliments** to identify what is working well, and what is not so good, and address those areas.
	• **Create Personas**: Develop detailed customer personas representing different archetypes within your audience. Understand their motivations, pain points, and goals to inform decision-making.
	
	Use the data to improve your experience:
	
	    • Use this insight to **redesign the way that we work,** to meet your needs and expectations, and ensure that we are not exclusionary
	    • Keep our **customer profile information up to date** to ensure we can adapt to the changing needs of our customers in the future.
	    • Create a **Single View of the Customer Concept,** which is where all information about a customer is stored in one place.
	    • Create and use **customer video avatars** as an educational tool.

Keep abreast of changing expectations, to ensure that we	• **Stay informed about customer shifts**, technological advancements, and emerging customer preferences through conferences and publications. • **Anticipate potential changes** (e.g., economic shifts, policy updates) and create contingency plans.

continue to meet our customer's needs.	**Benchmark our services** to other local authorities and learn from their strategies to gain best practice. **Continuously analyse customer interactions** across the council and identify opportunities for improvement. - Embrace an **agile approach to service design.** **Equip teams with the autonomy** to adapt to evolving customer expectations and encourage a culture of innovation. Recognise and reward teams that proactively respond to evolving needs **Consider a centralised data hub** that reflects the work happening across the council to improve joint working and better outcomes for customers. **Ensure customer service centre colleagues are informed** of the latest policy and strategy changes happening across the council.

Improving customers' access to our services

How	Selection of Customer Feedback

Appendix 1: High Level Action Plan

Provide a modern range of access channels that meet the needs of our diverse customers, and through which our customers can either:
   ▪ **serve themselves, or**
   ▪ **gain assisted service by interacting directly with our frontline service teams.**
	• Provide a **choice of access channels** that our customers want to use, whilst ensuring a seamless transition between channels.
	• Provide a **range of digital channels** that allow convenient access to information and request services including virtual assistants.
	• **Continue to provide phone and face to face services** during normal office hours, through our libraries, receptions, and other locations.
	• **Focus our resources on the more complex enquiries,** for those customers who are unable to use digital channels.
	• **Reduce the number of contact telephone numbers** that we have.
	• **Make use of automated technology** and **Self-Service Options** where customers can find answers independently.
	• **Make our channels simple and accessible** so everyone can access them no matter your skills or abilities.
	• **Focus on improving website functionality** as a fast, accurate and user-friendly website is essential.
	• Use **visual content, such as videos, infographics**, and interactive elements, to convey information effectively.
	• Regularly **seek feedback from you** about how easy it is to access services and where automation would be most beneficial.

Have a joint up approach across channels so, no matter how many access methods are used, and how often contact is made, all relevant information is available to assist resolution of the contact.	• J**oin up our contact channels; into one omni-channel experience**; so that all contacts and interactions are known when you interact with us. • Define **clear escalation paths** for complex issues. If a chatbot cannot resolve a problem, they should seamlessly transfer the case to a specialised team. The customer should not have to repeat their issue. • **Tag interactions based on topics, issues, or customer segments**. These tags help quickly locate relevant information when handling similar queries across channels. • Integrate our **customer relationship management (CRM)** system with all communication channels. This allows agents to retrieve customer previous interactions seamlessly. • **Implement a robust case management system** that tracks customer inquiries, complaints, and requests. When a customer contacts you through different channels, the system should link related cases.

	• **Maintain an up-to-date knowledge base** accessible across channels, for standardised answers, troubleshooting steps, and frequently asked questions. Consistency in responses improves customer satisfaction. • **Train employees to navigate multiple channels proficiently**. They should understand how to retrieve information from various sources. • **Periodically audit our channels** to ensure consistency and accuracy.
Join up our data, so you only need to tell us things or send up documentation once.	• **Create a centralised database** where all customer information is stored. When a customer provides information once, it should be accessible across all touchpoints. • **Standardise data collection processes** across channels. Ensure that the same fields are captured regardless of the touchpoint. • **Provide self-service portals where customers can update their information directly**. If they change their phone number or marital status, they can make the update themselves. • **Periodically review and clean up the database**. Remove duplicate records, outdated information, or irrelevant data. • **Train employees on accessing and utilising customer data** efficiently. They should know where to find and interpret information. • Join up information about our customers, their requests and services (to provide a **single view of the customer (SVOC)** • Provide open access to personal and service data (SVOC) to our customers; whilst ensuring that we keep their **information protected.** • Ensure that **updates made in one channel reflect instantly in others**.

Appendix 1: High Level Action Plan

Focus our resources on supporting and maintaining the channels our customers want to use; and reducing resources on channels that are either no longer wanted, causing excessive effort from customers and employees, or are ineffective and costly.	• **Provide a consistent approach** to ensure that no matter which channel you use, you receive the same level of service. • **Streamline processes** within existing channels to reduce effort. • **Improve the technology that supports our employees**, ensuring they have the tools to fully support customers. • **Evaluate each communication channel** based on usage, customer feedback, and cost-effectiveness. Allocate more resources (employees, technology, training) to the preferred channels. • **If certain channels are rarely used**, consider phasing them out. • **Assess the cost of maintaining each channel** against its benefits. If a channel is costly and ineffective, explore alternatives.
Significantly improve our first contact resolution rates (FCR), by ensuring comprehensive information is available to resolve the query. This means we resolve a customer's issue during their initial contact, eliminating the need for follow-up interactions.	• **Track how many calls or inquiries come from the same customer** within a specific time frame. Use feedback to gauge whether issues were resolved during the first contact. • **Identify internal issues causing customers to return** repeatedly and address broken processes that stop FCR. • **Enhance self-serve options** to reduce support requests. • **Route tickets based on employee expertise**. Assign complex issues to experienced employees. • **Proactively reach out to customers** who expressed dissatisfaction. Ensure their issues are fully resolved. • **Use employee and customer insights** to refine processes.

Designing an excellent customer experience, from beginning to end

How	Selection of Customer Feedback
Change the way we design our processes and systems to put our customers' needs and expectations at the heart of how we operate and work.	**Map the end-to-end customer experience** from simple to complex cases. Identify touchpoints, interactions, and pain points. - Design our simple processes in a way that uses a '**standard format'**, which reduces the need for costly bespoke processes and systems and makes it easier for you to use. **Understand our customers' preferences, and goals** through engagement. - Work with **customers/partners to co-design services** ensuring that we maximise the skills available, supporting people to help themselves. **Design services to focus on prevention** and early intervention to reduce costs while improving outcomes for individuals and families. **Have clear roles and responsibilities to avoid duplication** particularly around complaints processes. **Work with districts and town and parish Councillors** to effectively signpost to services **Learn from:** - best practise in public/private sector to deliver world-class customer experience. - Keep abreast of emerging initiatives and technology that we can adopt. - Regularly use process improvement methodologies, to be more effective

Ensure that our processes and ways of working do not exclude anyone from receiving our services.	**Conduct an assessment of existing processes** and systems. Identify barriers that might exclude certain groups (e.g., people with disabilities, non-native speakers, elderly individuals). - Involve **diverse user groups in the design** process. - Use **plain language** in all communications. Provide information in multiple formats (text, audio, visual). **Train employees on inclusive practices** and encourage empathy and understanding. **Establish channels for feedback from users.** Actively listen to concerns and suggestions to improve processes.
Resolve queries and provide information at the first point of contact and focus our service delivery on 'getting it right first time' (for the customer).	**Get the Customer to the best person** who can help making best use of the Councils resources, and individual employee's skills, experience, and knowledge. **Develop a knowledgebase of information and** integrate that with AI or bot technology for self-service queries. - Improve **liaison between council services** and across the council to signpost effectively. **Provide employees them with the necessary tools and knowledge to address queries promptly** and learn active listening. Avoid assumptions and seek clarification when needed. **Optimise self-service options** (websites, chatbots, FAQs). Prioritise real-time communication channels (phone, live chat). **Minimise wait times** for customers. **Investigate recurring issues.** Identify patterns and underlying causes. **Regularly assess service interactions**. Monitor call recordings, chat logs, and email exchanges. Provide constructive feedback to employees.
For those that cannot be resolved at point of contact, ensure that we gather everything we need from you at the point, so you need to do no more.	**Train employees to ask relevant questions** during the initial interaction. Gather essential details related to the query. Ensure completeness to avoid follow-up. **Create standardised checklists or templates** for different types of queries. Use these tools to systematically collect necessary information. **Maintain detailed records of interactions.** Capture relevant data, timestamps, and customer preferences. Use a centralised system for these documents.

	• **Continuously improve the intake process** based on feedback. Regularly review and update checklists.
Maximise the use of information we collect from you, so you don't need to keep providing it to different departments.	o **Design processes to maximise information** we have previously gathered. o Build a **rich and comprehensive database of Customer data**, interactions, and requests (SVOC), ◦ Only collect **personal information when it's proportionated** to solving the specific o **Limit the retention period for personal information based on its purpose** and do not unnecessarily store data.
Streamline our more complex processes to make it as easy as we can for you to access that service and make the whole process as quick and efficient as possible.	• Take **advantage of emerging tools and digital technologies**, which can improve the way we process information, so we can make decisions more quickly and easily. • **Invest in and join up enabling technology** to identify where we are with processing your request and make that information readily available to you. • **Understand customer needs and frustration points**. Conduct user research, usability testing, and gather feedback. • Design processes with the end user in mind. **Simplify steps, reduce jargon, and provide clear instructions.** • **Map out existing processes** to identify inefficiencies. • **Provide concise and relevant information** at each stage of the process. • **Integrate data** across departments to avoid redundant data entry and have robust data sharing agreements. • **Monitor performance metrics** (e.g., completion time, error rates) and iterate based on data.
Improve the content of correspondence sent to you during the process, so customers are clear on what we are communicating, and don't	• Ensure we **build regular communication points** into our processes to let you know what we are doing and when you will get your service, decision, or update. • Work within **set timeframes.** • Ensure employees who are away have **proper handovers, so customers do not get lost between teams.** • Use **simple to understand, non-technical language** in our communication.

need to contact us to ask questions, or clarify things.	**Break down information** into digestible chunks. Use short sentences and bullet points. **Organise content logically**. Start with a summary or introduction, followed by relevant details. Use headings, subheadings, and numbered steps. **Provide context for each communication.** Explain why the customer is receiving the correspondence and what action they need to take. **Use visuals** (such as diagrams, screenshots, or infographics) to illustrate complex processes. **Anticipate frequent questions** and address them in the correspondence. - Clearly state the desired next steps. **Use actionable language** (e.g., "Click here," "Complete the form," "Reply with…"). **Provide contact information** (phone, email) for further assistance

Listening to and learning from customer feedback

How	Selection of Customer Feedback
Implementing a better complaints management system	**Begin by mapping out existing complaints handling process**. Identify bottlenecks, gaps, and areas for improvement. **Engage relevant teams** (customer service, operations, legal, etc.) to gain insights on the process and collaborate on resolving complaints. **Create a streamlined process** that ensures timely acknowledgment, investigation, resolution, and follow-up. **Implement a centralised platform** (such as a CRM) to track all complaints. **Collect essential information**—customer details, complaint type, severity, date, and resolution status. **Minimise manual data entry by integrating systems.** **Define clear escalation paths based on complaint severity**. Ensure that frontline employees know when and how to escalate. **Provide guidelines for handling common complaints**. Equip them with decision-making authority to resolve issues promptly. Regularly train employees on complaint handling techniques, active listening, and empathy. **Send an immediate acknowledgment** to the complainant for transparency. **Keep customers informed throughout** the resolution process. **Notify customers when their complaint is resolved**. Seek feedback on their experience. **Investigate the underlying causes of recurring complaints.**

	• **Use data analytics** to identify patterns of specific services, or processes consistently causing dissatisfaction. • **Close the loop by sharing insights from resolved complaints with relevant teams.** • **Encourage innovative solutions** based on customer feedback. • **Establish and monitor key performance indicators (KPIs)** related to complaint resolution time, customer satisfaction, and resolution rates. • **Understand legal requirements** related to complaints handling (e.g., GDPR). • **Maintain detailed records of complaints**, investigations, and resolutions and use as a learning tool.
Encouraging feedback more proactively	• **Offer multiple avenues for feedback**—online surveys, email, social media, and in-person interactions and ensure that feedback options are visible. • **Request feedback immediately** after a customer interaction (e.g., purchase, support call, or service completion). • **Explain how customer feedback directly influences improvements.** Show examples of changes made based on past feedback. • **Encourage two-way communication** rather than one-sided requests. Respond promptly to feedback. • **Train** employees on handling feedback positively. Teach active listening skills. • **Organise special sessions** where customers can provide input in person or virtually and consider how to reach those seldom heard. • **Be honest and clear with customers on where to feedback if they are unhappy.** • **Guidance for colleagues on what to do when you cant help a customer**
Collaborating with customers to jointly create, design,	• **Identify interested Customers with user experience**: • **Involve customers in early stages of product development** e.g new technology. • **Equip customers with the right tools and spaces** to communicate their ideas. • **Continuously refine our approach** based on feedback and insights.

and develop products, services, or solutions.	• **Encourage involvement** across the organisation, not just within the customer service team
Learning from feedback and insight to design better processes for our customers.	**Use our customer insight and feedback to:** • **Design service processes around the needs and preference** of the customers that utilise that service, rather than a generic approach. • Use your **feedback and our data to continuously review** our services. • **Review our approach to complaints management** to ensure that lessons learnt are widely shared across the organisation. • **Enhance our processes to be able to offer you services** from ourselves or our partners, that you may be interested in or will benefit you. • **Trial a panel comprising diverse customers**. Seek their input on service improvements and future directions. • **Conduct surveys to gauge satisfaction levels** and identify areas for improvement. • **Mystery shop and review our processes** from a customer's perspective, to understand what it is like to be our customers. **Use our service data and performance measurements to:** o **Identify when we are not meeting our service standards**, review why that is the case, and make changes to address those issues. o Identify **where improvements are needed**; and make the required changes. o Recognise **when service take-up is increasing or decreasing;** and match our resources appropriately. o **Benchmark** against other public sectors to see how we compare