

Divisions Affected – Not applicable.

**Performance and Corporate Services Scrutiny Committee
– 19 January 2024**

Customer Experience Strategy 2024-2027

**Report by Director of Customer and Culture,
Mark Haynes**

RECOMMENDATION

1. **The Committee is recommended to consider the draft Customer Experience Strategy and to agree any recommendations it wishes to make to Informal Cabinet arising therefrom.**

Feedback from the Committee on the following items/issues would be particularly welcomed:

- **Any comments on the outline of the strategy**
- **Advising on specific actions that could sit within the strategy.**
- **Providing contacts and advice on which external groups to consult with**

Executive Summary

2. Improving the customer experience is a key theme for the organisation and collectively officers have completed several key priorities recently – from a new complaints policy to renewed focus on FOI's and developing stronger working relationships across services.

Under the Delivering the Future Together programme and new ways of working model, customer experience remains a key area for development in the organisation. There is an 'improving the customer experience' workstream that has been created and it has been agreed at the strategic transformation board level that this is an A programme sitting under the place shaper of choice. The CEO's ethos is for all colleagues to be more customer centric in their thinking.

One of those underpinning and fundamental parts to the 'improving the customer experience' programme is the development of a new Customer Experience Strategy. The Customer Experience Strategy is important as it sets the direction for how we want our interactions with residents, partners, and employees to take place as well as emphasising the importance of our cultural values programme (delivering the future together) as an organisation.

The Customer Experience Strategy will be launched in April. We have been developing this strategy through internal consultation with employees and we will undertake external consultation over the next few months before it is launched. The aim of this strategy is to demonstrate to customers we are putting them first and make sure everyone across the council understands the importance of good and consistent customer service regardless of their department. To note, that this is a corporate strategy for customer experience and not restricted to just the Customer Service Centre.

Background:

3. As a council, we do not currently have a Customer Experience Strategy. We have a set of standards [Customer Service Charter and Standards | Oxfordshire County Council](#). These standards had limited engagement and are not easily recognised by all employees. This new strategy is particularly important to formalise with employees the positive vision we have for our customer experience.

Wider context shows we are now moving into a post pandemic world and operating in a cost-of-living crisis. We now have access to better data which shows our residents priorities and how to best support them as well as their relationship with the council. We are also in a time with more digital opportunities. This strategy draws on these reflections to ensure we are doing the best for our customers today as a council. Therefore, some of the exciting initiatives this strategy will advance involve telephony system work and the development of our corporate technology including AI to drive automation, consistency of service and efficiencies.

It is also an important time for this strategy as the recent resident's survey shows we need to build back trust with our customers and provide better value for money and clearer communication. This strategy recognises customer feedback and shows a commitment from the council to want to continuously improve.

Timeline of Engagement:

4. The below timeline showcases where the Customer Experience Strategy has been socialised and at what point in the process, we are engaging Scrutiny. After Scrutiny Committee it will go to Informal Cabinet and Cabinet before it launches.
 - Council Management Team, Transformation Delivery Board- 28th November
 - Engagement with DTFT Champions: 23rd and 28th November
 - Internal consultation and drop-in sessions for employees- Over December and January
 - Strategic Leadership Team, Strategic Transformation Board -10th January
 - **Scrutiny- 19th January**

- Informal cabinet – 6th February
- All members briefing – February TBC
- External consultation period–February and March
- Cabinet- 23rd April
- Launch strategy with DTFT- 29th April.

Corporate Policies and Priorities

5. The Customer Experience Strategy intersects with several of the Council's Strategic Priorities in particular:
 - Tackling inequalities in Oxfordshire
 - Prioritise the health and wellbeing of our residents.
 - Support carers and the social care system
 - Create opportunities for children and young people to reach their full potential.
 - Play our part in a vibrant and participatory democracy.
 - Work with local businesses and partners for environmental, economy, and social benefit

Financial Implications

6. There are no direct budgetary implications associated with the strategy. Any budgetary implications that arise from actions will be managed within individual Directorates and Service areas as required.

Comments checked by: Ian Dyson, Assistant Director of Finance,
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Legal Implications

7. There are no legal implications associated with the strategy.

Comments checked by: Paul Grant, Head of Legal, Paul.grant@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Staff Implications

8. The delivery of actions within the strategy will be delivered within existing council resources.

Equality & Inclusion Implications

9. The development of the strategy will have a positive impact on equality, diversity, and inclusion for people with protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and more widely. This is because the plan will take a data driven approach to understand the needs of our customers better and equip employees with relevant training. The plan also sets out to better understand the various channels different groups need to access our services and where we can automate in some areas to spend more time on complex matters that require face to face or phone calls, so no one is digitally excluded.

As we put the strategy into action we will ensure people from different backgrounds, languages and access needs can easily contact us and feed into this work. Therefore, this strategy does not have any negative impacts on equalities.

Sustainability Implications

10. The action plan may have a positive impact on sustainability as there is a more appropriate and considered use of physical and digital resources when contacting customers which might support less resource wastage. There is also the potential that through linking this work with strategies such as digital inclusion we can support the use of reusable technology. Finally, through improving customer interactions, for example through better partnership working, we can work more effectively complete sustainability initiatives as set out in the council plan.

Risk Management

11. There is a risk that by not completing the strategy, the Council would not be equipped to best support customers and there would be a lack of direction and consistency around customer interactions. This could perpetuate the residents perception of us being an inefficient organisation and worsen public perception.

Consultations

12. This strategy will undergo a round of both internal consultation and external consultation. We have worked with the engagement and consultation team to plan this out and ensure we are meeting a range of stakeholders.

For internal consultation we are utilising the delivering the future together champions to gather feedback from team meetings. For external consultation we will be holding focus groups, particularly ensuring we have sessions for those with protected characteristics.

Mark Haynes,

Director of Customer and Culture

Annex: Annex 1- Presentation Slides outlining the draft Customer Experience Strategy

Contact Officer: Susmita Dave, National Management Trainee

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