

Agenda Item 10

Cabinet Member	Councillor Osborne-Patterson
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Date	Tuesday 26 March 2019
Ward (s) affected	The Customer Services Strategy affects the whole District
Key Decision	No

Subject	Customer Services Strategy 2019-24
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Recommendation

The Cabinet is asked to approve the Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 set out at Appendix A.

Executive Summary

The Mole Valley District Council Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 sets out the guiding principles for customer service delivery together with the three main outcomes deliverable through the implementation of the strategy over the next five years. It supports the guiding principles of the Council Strategy.

There are two appendices to this report:

1. Appendix A – Mole Valley District Council Customer Services Strategy 2019-24
2. Appendix B – Equalities Impact Assessment for the Mole Valley District Council Customer Services Strategy 2019-24

Corporate Priorities

The Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 is intended to provide a framework for customer service delivery over the next five years and supports the Council in delivering the Guiding Principles of the Council Strategy with effect from 1 April 2019.

The Cabinet has the authority to determine the Recommendation.

1.0 Background/Introduction

- 1.1 The Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 is a high level strategic document which sets out the guiding principles and strategic outcomes for customer service delivery over the next five years.

Developing the Strategy

- 1.2 The draft Strategy was developed through a series of consultation events to identify the aims and aspirations of the authority in relation to customer service delivery.
- 1.3 These events included a staff survey, drop-in session, briefings and various workshops.
- 1.4 As a result, it was proposed that the draft strategy should be high level, outcome focused and give direction and structure for service developments over the next five years. It was anticipated that the strategy would deliver a framework for a consistent approach to Customer Service delivery across the authority.
- 1.5 The Strategy document was one side of A3 to reflect the high level strategic nature of the document and to ensure that it would be accessible.
- 1.6 Once drafted, the document went out to public consultation.

Consultation on the draft Strategy

- 1.7 Consultation took place for just over five weeks from 13 December 2018 to 18 January 2019. Stakeholders including residents, businesses, partners and staff were invited to complete an online survey. An evening drop-in session was also held at Pippbrook and hard copies of the survey were available for those who needed it.
- 1.8 A stakeholder engagement plan was developed which included:
- A video of the Cabinet Member promoting the consultation
 - An article on the home page of the website
 - A press release
 - Messages on the MVDC intranets (Molly for staff and MOSS for members)
 - An MV e-newsletter article
 - Social media coverage
- 1.9 The online consultation was also promoted at meetings of the Parish Clerks and Residents Associations and via the Business Reference Group.
- 1.10 In total we reached nearly 2,000 people of which 58 viewed/read more detailed information.
- 1.11 35 written responses were received. All feedback was considered in drawing up the final version of the Strategy.

Consultation feedback

- 1.12 There was clear support for the Strategy. A number of minor changes were made to wording and some amendments made to the meaning and actions associated with the identified outcomes as follows:

Outcome	What this means	What we will do
Better Customer Experience	Minor changes to wording made	One action revised for clarification
Digital First	Some further meaning has been added to this area relating to ease of use for online services	Some amendments to wording to clarify the actions proposed The addition of further actions to improve online forms and to reflect the desire to be able to upload photographs when reporting issues via the website
Better Engagement revised to Improved Engagement	The removal of the reference to using text to provide updates as this duplicated an action under 'Better Customer Experience'. Replaced with a commitment to designing services and processes with the customer in mind	The addition of two further actions to continue to review letters and leaflets for plain English and to engage on key service changes

The Strategy

1.13 The Strategy (attached at Appendix A) identifies three key outcomes and a number of actions the authority will undertake over the next five years in order to meet those desired outcomes.

Implementation

1.14 An internal action plan is being finalised to support the Strategy and to ensure that MVDC makes progress in achieving the outcomes identified. For Year 1, those actions will include:

- Through implementation of the new Customer Relationship Management system Firmstep, begin to improve the availability of self-serve facilities such as:
 - Online bookings
 - Uploading photographs to report issues
 - Tracking progress
 - Automated updates
- Procure a new platform to facilitate the re-design of our corporate website
- Review and improve the customer care training course for all staff
- Update 'You Said, We Did' on our website to demonstrate how customer feedback continues to improve service delivery
- Continue to review our letters and leaflets for plain English
- Review our reception services and identify any changes we need to make in

order to ensure that we are providing the right support for those who visit us

- Undertake a corporate review of how we deliver telephone services, including the procurement of a new telephony system

Monitoring Success

- 1.15 People currently interact with the Council for a wide variety of reasons including seeking information, making payments, requesting a service and providing feedback. These interactions involve personal visits, contacting us by post, completing e-forms on our website or those of other agencies, and phoning and emailing the Customer Services Unit and officers direct. In addition, people can access a very wide range of information on our website.
- 1.16 While we currently monitor usage of some of these access channels we do not monitor all, particularly those contacts which do not go via the Customer Service Unit. This makes setting a baseline and specific targets difficult.
- 1.17 The Strategy has five guiding principles, two of which are 'Digital First' and 'Support where needed'. Success will strike the right balance between maximising efficiency and delivering improved customer service 24/7 by moving people to digital while still maintaining other channels for those who need them. As such, we would expect to see a gradual increase in the number of people seeking information from our website. We would also expect a greater percentage of requests for service to come in via our e-forms with a decrease in the percentage of such requests coming in via phone and personal visits.
- 1.18 With regard to these key metrics, our baseline data from 2017/18 is as follows:
- E-forms – 7%
 - Calls to CSU – 67%
 - Personal visits – 26%
 - Website Usage – approx. 370,000 users looking at 1,500,000 pages
- 1.19 Following feedback from Scrutiny Committee, it is intended that we will use Year 1 of the Strategy (2019-20) to track progress against these baseline figures, which we will review at year end with a view to setting quantitative targets if appropriate.
- 1.20 We will also continue to monitor feedback through complaints and the feedback forms in reception and on our website.
- 1.21 The Strategy will be reviewed in 2023-24 to ensure there is an updated Strategy in place from April 2024.

Financial Implications

- 1.22 None from approving this Strategy. Any projects identified as being deliverable as part of the implementation of this Strategy will be considered against a relevant business case.

Legal Implications

- 1.23 There are no legal implications in approving this strategy.

2.0 Options

- 2.1 The Cabinet has two options for consideration:

Option One: The Cabinet can approve this strategy as set out in Appendix 1. Given the level of consultation and feedback that has taken place in formulating this

strategy, this is the recommended option.

Option Two: The Cabinet could ask that the strategy be given further consideration by officers and a revised strategy be submitted to the next meeting of the Cabinet.

- 2.2 The risks and opportunities associated with each option are set out in the risk implications section below.

3.0 Corporate Implications

Monitoring Officer commentary

- 3.1 The Monitoring Officer has confirmed that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account.

S151 Officer commentary

- 3.2 The S151 Officer has confirmed that there are no financial implications arising from the approval of the Strategy.

Risk Implications

- 3.3 Approval of Option 1 would provide MVDC with a strategic framework for customer service delivery for the next five years. It will also provide support for the implementation of the Council Strategy 2019-24 and particularly reflects the guiding principles and Values.
- 3.4 Should the Cabinet choose Option 2 there would be a risk of a lack of a framework to deliver customer service improvements. There would be no set direction for customer service delivery and there would be a risk of services becoming misaligned.

Equalities Implications

- 3.5 An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and this is attached as Appendix B to this report. The assessment has identified three areas where the Customer Services Strategy will have a positive impact; these areas are disability, carers, and rural/urban access issues. No negative impacts have been identified. Once work is underway to progress areas of work that deliver against the Customer Services Strategy, additional Equality Impact Assessments will be completed where relevant.

Employment Issues

- 3.6 None for the purposes of this report.

Sustainability Issues

- 3.7 None for the purposes of this report.

Consultation

- 3.8 Consultation was undertaken as part of the development of the Strategy which is explained in more detail above. This report will also go through Scrutiny before being taken to Cabinet for approval in March 2019.

Communications

- 3.9 A stakeholder engagement plan was used to support this project.

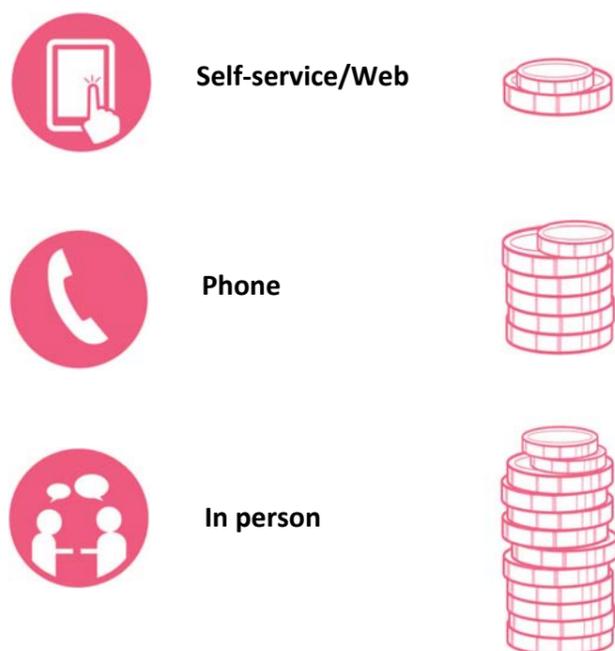
A press release was sent out and a video was filmed and used to promote the consultation.

The Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 will be made available to the public once adopted via the MVDC website.

Guiding Principles

- **Customers.** We will place the customer at the heart of what we do.
- **Our Values.** Our customer service delivery will focus around our 5 Values.
- **Digital First.** We will reduce the need to contact us by phone or in person by making our processes more effective and customer focussed.
- **Self-serve.** We will make our website easy to use to encourage access to online services 24/7.
- **Support where needed.** In person and telephone support remain in place during office hours for those who need extra assistance or where self-service is not available.

Did you know the difference in cost of contacting us in these ways?



We want to put our customers at the heart of everything we do. The first guiding principle of our Council Strategy 2019-24 is **Putting People First**. We will ensure a people focussed culture in our organisation to provide the best possible experience and services for our residents, businesses and visitors. Our second principle relates to **Openness and Accessibility**. We will listen to and engage with people and give clear, timely and transparent information that enables residents, businesses and visitors to help themselves, while still providing support for those who need it.

Outcome	What this means	What we will do
Better Customer Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increased first point of contact resolution to avoid unnecessary multiple contacts Keeping you informed Quick, efficient, professional services Making best use of resources and technology Easily accessible services Support for our more vulnerable customers and those with complex enquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Introduce a new IT system that will improve the customer experience Provide progress updates via online tracking or email Take forward our Economic Prosperity Strategy to enable us to become more business-friendly Support our staff to promote a consistent and customer focussed approach Reduce the need for you to chase us for a response to your query Review our reception services to make sure we are providing the right support for your needs
Digital First	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information is easy to find on our website Increased opportunities to self-serve 24/7 Our online services are easy to use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve the layout of our website to make it more visually appealing Make more online payment options available Improve our online forms Introduce the option of a customer account facility to give a more personalised service Improve the search facility and navigation on our website Deliver end to end transactions—no need to download and print off forms or make payments separately Make good use of technology Offer online booking facilities for more of our services Introduce the facility to upload photographs when reporting issues
Improved Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listening to our customers Provision of good quality, reliable information in a variety of different ways Services and processes that are designed with the customer in mind 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue to learn from your feedback to help us improve our services Be clear about what you can expect from us Signpost to those who can help if we do not have the answers Review our use of social media to improve how we communicate with you Continue to review our letters and leaflets for plain English Engage with you on key changes to our services

About Mole Valley

Did you know there are nearly 87,000 residents in Mole Valley and almost 4,000 businesses?

On average Mole Valley District Council receives almost 300,000 calls and visits a year.

Our customers contact us for all sorts of reasons such as:

- Reporting issues
- Making payments
- Asking us for information
- Requesting specific help or support

Values

-  We Listen
-  We Trust
-  We Care
-  We Respect
-  We Lead

Equality Impact Assessment

Customer Services Strategy 2019-24



Section 1: Introduction and background

What is being assessed?	Customer Services Strategy 2019-24
Business unit	Customer Services
Job title of assessor	Customer Care Manager
Strategic Management Lead	Jasvir Chohan
Date of assessment	06.02.19
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New Strategy

Description of the function or policy, including:

- **The aims and scope**
- **The main beneficiaries or users**
- **The main equality issues and barriers, and the protected characteristics¹ they relate to (not all assessments will encounter issues relating to every protected characteristic)**

The Mole Valley District Council Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 sets out the guiding principles for customer service delivery together with the three main outcomes deliverable through the implementation of the strategy over the next five years. It supports the guiding principles of the Council Strategy 2019-24 which is also subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

The Customer Services Strategy 2019-2024 is a strategic planning document which provides a framework for the delivery of five guiding principles which are:

- **Customers.** We will place the customer at the heart of what we do.
- **Our Values.** Our customer service delivery will focus around our 5 Values.
- **Digital First.** We will reduce the need to contact us by phone or in person by making our processes more effective and customer focussed.
- **Self-serve.** We will make our website easy to use to encourage access to online services 24/7.
- **Support where needed.** In person and telephone support remain in place during office hours for those who need extra assistance or where self-service is not available.

The Customer Services Strategy will impact on residents, businesses and visitors of Mole Valley. This was taken into consideration during the development of the Strategy. It is intended that the Strategy will have a positive impact and this is reflected in this assessment. No negative impacts have been identified. Three areas of positive impact have been identified and these are:

- Disability
- Carers
- Rural/urban access issues

¹The protected characteristics are age, sex, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership (Source: Equality Act 2010)

Description of how the function or policy fits into the Council's Corporate Priorities or other local, regional or national plans and priorities

The Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 is intended to provide a framework for customer service delivery over the next five years and supports the Council in delivering the Guiding Principles of the Council Strategy with effect from 1 April 2019.

Section 2: Analysis and assessment

Indicate for each protected characteristic whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact – using a tick <input type="checkbox"/> in the appropriate columns				
Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Age			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's age
Sex			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's sex
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			The guiding principle of Support where needed expresses the Council's commitment to help provide support in person and/or by telephone for those who need extra assistance or where self-serve is not available. The principle of Digital First will positively impact those who find it difficult to attend the Council offices or use the telephone due to a disability.
Pregnancy and maternity			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on people who are pregnant or on maternity leave
Race and ethnicity			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's race or ethnicity
Religion and belief			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's religion or beliefs
Gender reassignment			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	It is not considered that the Council Strategy will have a

				significant impact, positive or negative, based on people who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment
Sexual orientation			√	It is not considered that the Council Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's sexual orientation
Marriage and civil partnership			√	It is not considered that the Council Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on whether a person is married or in a civil partnership
Other aspects to consider	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Carers	√			Potential for a positive impact for carers in relation to Digital First and Self-serve . Carers may be able to make use of online services on behalf of (and with the permission of) the resident concerned so avoiding the need for the resident to visit or telephone the Council.
Rural/urban access issues	√		√	Potential for a positive impact in relation to the Self-serve and Digital First principles for those residents where there is suitable broadband connectivity in place.
HR issues (how will staff with protected characteristics be affected?)			√	No immediate implications

What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts?

Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified, and is it lawful?

No negative impacts have been identified. MVDC will continue to work with Surrey County Council (SCC) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to ensure good broadband connectivity across the whole of the District.

Where there are positive impacts, what changes have been or will be made?

Who are the beneficiaries? How have they benefited?

The Customer Services Strategy will be delivered over the next five years. It is one of several strategies that supports the Council Strategy.

Delivering the Customer Services Strategy will positively impact on residents, businesses and visitors who wish to contact MVDC by offering improved access to services 24/7 via our website. This will enable contact to be made at a time to suit them and will potentially avoid a visit or call to the Pippbrook offices in many instances.

The desired outcomes of the Strategy make a clear commitment to a better customer experience, offering a digital first approach and improved engagement with our customers to help us deliver better services.

In relation to those who may need extra assistance support, perhaps due to disability or for other reasons, or where self-serve is not available, there is a clear commitment to ensuring that telephone and face to face support remains in place during office hours.

Section 3: Evidence gathering and fact-finding

What evidence is available to support your views above?

Please include:

- A summary of the available evidence
- Identification of where there are gaps in the evidence (this may identify a need for more evidence in the action plan)
- What information is currently captured with respect to usage and take up of services.
- What the current situation is in relation to equality and diversity monitoring (where relevant)

The development of the strategy entailed gathering the views of all stakeholders during the formulation of the draft document and through public consultation of the draft Strategy. Respondents were supportive of a 'Digital First' approach and access to services 24/7 via the website is welcomed, as long as telephone and/or face to face support is also available for those who need it. The Customer Services Strategy takes into account the following challenge considered through the Council Strategy:

- Cross cutting issues like the reduction in funding to our partners and growing public expectations for access to services at all hours of the day

How have stakeholders been involved in this assessment?

Who are they, and what is their view?

No stakeholders have been directly involved in this assessment. Feedback from stakeholders has been taken into account in the formulation of the Strategy.

Recommendations

Summary of the main recommendations (if any) arising from the assessment

None

Section 4: Action Plan – N/A

Actions needed to implement the EqIA recommendations (if any)

Issue	Action	Expected outcome	Who	Deadline for action

