

**GROWING SUCCESS: CUSTOMER SERVICE, COMMUNICATION AND
MARKETING AND CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES**

(Report by the Chief Officers' Management Team)

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek the Cabinet's endorsement to three updated Corporate Strategies – Customer Service, Communications and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement – which have a significant role in the achievement of the Council's overall aims and objectives as set out in Growing Success, the Corporate Plan. The three strategies are mutually supportive and are inherently connected in terms of the objectives they are seeking to promote. By presenting them collectively it provides the Cabinet with an opportunity to gauge their respective contributions, to ensure consistency in approach and avoid duplication.
- 1.2 The strategies have been considered by the Overview and Scrutiny (Corporate and Strategic Framework) Panel and their views have been incorporated in the individual strategy documents or included in this report as appropriate.

2. SUPPORTING/BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 In June 2007 a revised version of Growing Success was adopted which articulated both aspirations for Huntingdonshire's communities and aims for the Council itself in terms of the organisation and operation of services to facilitate the achievement of the wider community objectives. Since that time reviews of a number of strategies, policies and plans have been carried out to ensure that they –
- reflect the Council's strategic approach set out in Growing Success;
 - recognise the achievements and changes implemented since they were last reviewed; and
 - are up to date, reflecting current best practice.
- 2.2 To achieve the aims and objectives for Huntingdonshire's communities, the Council recognises that we must continue to improve our systems and practices. To encourage this we have set several objectives –
- to provide high quality customer services;
 - to be good at communicating with and listening to people and organisations;
 - to improve access to our services;
 - to be clear about what we can do and aspire to achieve;
 - to enable Councillors to carry out their leadership role effectively;
 - to be part of effective partnerships; and
 - to strengthen our commitment and capacity to achieve equality, diversity and inclusion.

- 2.3 The achievement of these objectives means that the Council must be excellent at understanding the needs of the users of our services and those we represent and in organising services around those needs. This requires excellent customer service standards and practices, communications, marketing, consultation and engagement activities.
- 2.4 While the three Strategies stand alone and make individual contributions, when considered together they provide a framework which both directs and supports the Council and individual services to plan and deliver activities. Each Strategy will be supported by a three year action or delivery plan and it is expected that individual services generally will include relevant supporting actions in their own service plans. These action plans are dynamic and will change as activity is completed, targets achieved and new baselines established. The draft plans appended to the strategies represent work to date and final versions will be developed. This strategic approach is based on the principle that responsibility for customer service, communications and marketing or consultation and engagement must remain with individual services but that there should be a corporate approach and that services should be supported in these activities. The approach adopted in the Strategies builds on previous policies of the Council, which are consistent with National policy and accepted good practice.
- 2.5 In the last 12 months or so organisational changes have been made to enhance support for communications, marketing and consultation activities by bringing together and re-organising existing services in the Policy and Strategic Services Division. The Council has also adopting an approach towards neighbourhood management, promoted by the Environmental and Community Health Division, in three localities in the District. It is suggested also – in the proposed Customer Service Strategy - that overseeing and promoting customer service and specifically the arrangements for contact with customers should be the responsibility of a single Head of Service.

3. CONCLUSION

- 3.1 The purpose of the review of the Strategies is to help ensure the continued momentum to achievement in three important areas which will have a significant contribution to meeting the Council's overall aims and objectives. The review has taken account of the Council's other Strategies and policies along with good practice in other councils and organisations.

4. RECOMMENDATION

- 4.1 The Cabinet are requested to adopt the revised Customer Service, Communications and Marketing and Consultation and Engagement Strategies and to note the development of supporting action plans.

Background papers

Current Customer Service Strategy and Communications & Consultation Strategy

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