



Service area	Customer Services
Date of assessment	July 2013 updated September 2013
Name of strategy/policy/function/service to be assessed	Customer Service Strategy
Is this a new or existing strategy/policy/function/service?	Existing
Name of manager responsible for strategy/policy/function/service	Julia Barber
Names of people conducting the assessment	L Sboui & K Sexton
Step 1 – Description of strategy/policy/function/service	
Describe the aims; objectives and purpose of the strategy/policy/function/ service (include how it fits in to wider aims or strategic objectives).	<p>The vision for the Council is to offer:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accessible services that provide customers with choice as to where, when and how they access services. • Good quality services which exceed customer’s expectations and resolve enquiries, where possible, during the customer’s first contact. • Reliable services which are cost effective, efficient and delivered through a highly trained workforce. <p>The Strategy is aligned with the Corporate Plan, Corporate Consultation & Engagement Strategy, Web Strategy and Single Equality Scheme.</p> <p>The strategy aims to ensure that delivering high quality customer service is at the heart of everything the council does. Annex 2 and 4 of the strategy focuses on customer contact channels and recognises the role of different delivery channels</p>



	<p>(telephone, online, in person etc) and managing the drive to improve customer service and reducing the cost of service management which will include encouraging online self serve where appropriate.</p>
<p>The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, the Council also needs to demonstrate its compliance with the Equality Duty. The Council therefore needs to understand how its decisions and activities impact on different people, specifically employees and how they are affected by policies and practices. An Equality Impact Assessment is the current method by which the Council can assess and keep a record of the impact of new or amended strategies, policies, functions or services.</p> <p>The council retains these duties even when outsourcing services or providing shared services.</p> <p><i>Definition of Adverse Impact - occurs when a decision, practice, or policy has a disproportionately negative effect on a protected group.</i> <i>Adverse Impact may be unintentional</i></p> <p>Adverse impact can be measured statistically:</p>	
<p>Are there any (existing) equality objectives of the strategy/policy or function/service</p>	<p>The Strategy makes clear that that the delivery of local government services in Huntingdonshire are built around the needs of customers alongside the need to deliver improved services through available channels within a changing financial environment.</p> <p>The Strategy commits to finding out more about our customers, what their needs are and how best these needs can be met and acknowledges that a better understanding of customers will help the council to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of the community being harder to reach or may not access services.</p> <p>There are two specific objectives relating to equality:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure our services are accessible to those who cannot travel –



	<p>offer mobile and flexibly delivered services where there is a clear business case, particularly in rural locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ensure services are accessible to all regardless of protected characteristics and that staff are sensitive to needs of all customers – ensure continued attendance on equality & diversity related awareness courses
<p>Who is intended to benefit from the strategy/policy/function/service and in what way?</p>	<p>The customer – improved and consistent customer service no matter who each customer contacts the council or how. Employees – empowering employees to help more customers and try new things may be motivational. The Council/ Members – putting the customer at the heart encourages us to think differently, improve processes and become more efficient. This can help either save money or save services.</p>
<p>What are the intended outcomes of this strategy/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>Overall the council wants to deliver good customer service and value for money for the taxpayer. More specifically the Strategy sets out where the council want to be in five years time:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To ensure that the customer is at the heart of everything we do as a council. • To get it right first time. • To be clear about what we can and can't do and what we aspire to achieve. • To meet the rising demand of our services and the needs of our customers without costing the tax payer more money. • To motivate our staff to deliver excellent services and empower them to try new things in order to provide a high standard of service. • To work innovatively together as an authority in order to recognise



	<p>where we can improve and streamline services to reduce cost and improve efficiency.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage and work with external partners to find ways of improving the way we handle customers and reduce costs by sharing resources. • To utilise our resources (staff, contact channels, software etc.) in the most efficient way. To shift appropriate transactions to self-service channels to free up resources for the more complex cases and residents that require more assistance than others.
<p>Step 2 – Data</p>	
<p>What baseline quantitative data (statistics) do you have about the strategy/policy/function/service relating to equalities groups (e.g. monitoring data on proportions of service users compared to proportions in the population), relevant to this policy?</p>	<p>Minimal information currently, but customer services has recently started asking E&D information during satisfaction surveys.</p>
<p>What qualitative data (opinions etc) do you have on different groups (e.g. comments from previous consumer satisfaction surveys/consultation, feedback exercises, or evidence from other authorities undertaking similar work), relevant to this strategy/policy/function/service?</p>	<p>In 2012/13 - Customer satisfaction for the call centre was 97%. For the CSC, it was 95%. For the website, it was 80%.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on different racial groups; this refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. Gypsy/Travellers are distinct group within this category.</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There is evidence of varying levels of awareness and take-up of statutory services. However, staff do attend equality & diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>

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<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on younger or older people?</p> <p>For some services this should include consideration of impact in terms of safeguarding young people.</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Older people can find it harder to get to services and may be less familiar with modern technology. mobile services may be very important to this group. Older people in both rural and urban areas can experience higher levels of social exclusion; they may also experience particular issues in accessing timely and responsive transport which can impede access to many services.</p> <p>Appendix 1 Digital Inclusion and Exclusion considers access to the internet by age and disability.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on gender, including transgender people?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Men and women may access services in different ways and at different times. However, staff do attend equality & diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on part time/full time employees?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on disabled people?</p> <p>What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Annexe 1 Digital Inclusion and Exclusion considers access to the internet by age.</p> <p>Pathfinder House is an accessible customer service centre and staff attend awareness sessions which consider disabilities and the barriers people experience and how to provide assistance.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of marriage and civil partnership</p>	<p>N/A</p>

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<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of pregnancy and maternity (e.g. pregnant or breast feeding women)</p>	<p>No adverse impact identified</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on lesbian, gay man, bisexual or heterosexual (straight) people? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>Research undertaken by Stonewall has demonstrated that many LGB people can still experience discrimination in their everyday lives. From police stations to family courts and from housing to health services, gay people remain uncertain of fair treatment, and uncertainty which is often derived from personal experience However, staff do attend equality & diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact on grounds of religion or belief? What evidence do you have for your answer?</p>	<p>There is evidence of varying levels of awareness and take-up of statutory services. Staff do attend equality & diversity awareness training to improve understanding and awareness of all equality groups.</p>
<p>Are there concerns that the strategy/policy/function/service could have a differential impact in terms of specific characteristics of Huntingdonshire e.g. Rural isolation</p>	<p>Older people in both rural and urban areas can experience higher levels of social exclusion; they may also experience particular issues in accessing timely and responsive transport which can impede access to many services. The Strategy includes an objective to ensure services are accessible to those who cannot travel – to offer mobile and flexibly delivered services where there is a clear business case, particularly in rural locations.</p>



Findings

The Strategy aims to balance the delivery of services that are built around the needs of customers alongside the need to deliver improved services through available channels within a changing financial environment. The Strategy commits to finding out more about customers, what their needs are and how best these needs can be met and acknowledges that a better understanding of customers will help the council to remove any barriers which result in some sectors of the community being harder to reach or may not access services. The only area where there could be potential for adverse impact is around the focus on channel migration to online services, this may exclude some people from accessing services or information about services due to age, disability, ethnicity or socio economic status. Currently information about customers in terms of their protected characteristics is not available, with careful management; the new CRM system will provide an opportunity to gather data about customers in a more systematic manner.

Recommendations

- Use CRM system to gain a better understanding of the demographic profile/protected characteristics of customers.