

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter:	Customer Service Strategy - 2015-2018
Meeting/Date:	Overview & Scrutiny (Social Well-Being) - 2 nd June 2015 Cabinet – 18 June 2015
Executive Portfolio:	Executive Leader, Chairman of the Cabinet and Executive Member for Strategic and Delivery Partnerships, and Executive Councillor for Customer Services
Report by:	Head of Customer Service
Ward(s) affected:	All

Executive Summary:

This paper is intended to update Members on work to produce a revised Customer Service Strategy, and to consult on the outputs of the work to date – prior to submission of the final strategy later in 2015.

A summary 'on a page' has been produced. This takes the foundation of the previous Strategy and has updated the content to reflect other Council Strategies and Policies. The summary also takes into account customer feedback – and has passed through a number of Officer groups.

The views of Members are now being sought to ensure the strategic direction being adopted is sound.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended that:

- O&S (Social Well-Being) and Cabinet provide feedback on the summary document, prior to a full Strategy being produced later in 2015

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This paper is intended to update Members on work to produce a revised Customer Service Strategy, and to consult on the outputs of the work to date – prior to submission of the final strategy later in 2015.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Customer Service Strategy is a key corporate document. It sets out how the Council will deliver customer service across the Council and underpins much of what the Council does.
- 2.2 The current version of the Customer Service Strategy was approved by Council in 2013. Since that time considerable change has happened at the Council and it is prudent to ensure the document is fit for purpose and compliments other strategic plans.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 Officers have reviewed the content and layout of the previous strategy. The document contained useful content and ideas, many of which remain relevant today.

- 3.2 However this assessment has also identified that:

- The current plan is extremely ambitious and stretches to 36 pages in length. It is not easy to quickly grasp the key elements of the Strategy.
- The focus of many actions is on the Customer Service Team – rather than the Council as a whole. This focus has inevitably meant the delivery of the Customer Service Strategy has not ‘reached out’ into the organisation as intended.
- The number of actions is considerable and many are specific to certain services or tasks – and don’t impact across the Council.

- 3.3 Officers have also examined a number of key documents, including the:

- Corporate Plan – to ensure its objectives are supported by the emerging Customer Service Strategy
- Council’s Code of Conduct – to ensure the Core Values of the Council are woven into the emerging Customer Service Strategy
- ‘Plan-on-a-page’ – making sure the Customer Service Strategy compliments the strategic aims of the Council and the financial challenges faced.
- Latest feedback we have from Customers on what the Council does, and what the Council’s priority services should be

- 3.4 Having completed the review it has become apparent a revised Customer Service Strategy should be shorter, simpler to understand and relevant to Officers and Members alike.

- 3.5 The final Customer Service Strategy is likely to contain:

- A one page introduction from the Managing Director and the Executive Leader of the Council;
- A single page showing the summary ‘on a page’

- A page for each of the objectives which expands and explains in more detail what each means
- A single page explaining how the strategy will be delivered and monitored

3.6 A key principle of the revised Customer Service Strategy is a 'one-page' summary that all can quickly understand and work towards. This is primarily aimed at Officers and Members, although the vision and objectives also have value for our customers. This draft 'one-page' summary is shown at Appendix 1.

3.7 At this stage the intention is to generate feedback on this summary, prior to a final version of the Customer Service Strategy being presented to Members in 2015.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 Comments to be sought from O&S (Social) – see recommendations.

5. KEY IMPACTS/RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?

5.1 Customer Service means many things to many people – including every comment and idea from consultation will not be possible. By involving key stakeholders and listening to their views the Strategy should meet the needs of most contributors.

5.2 The Strategy may be seen as owned by the Customer Service Team – not every Council service. The Senior Management Team and all Portfolio Holders will play a key role in ensuring this does not happen.

6. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 The timetable for implementation of the strategy is shown below:

Date	Action	Notes
June-15	Consultation with Officers and Members	Covering the principle content of the Customer Service Strategy
July & Aug -15	Refinement of the Customer Service Strategy, including some Customer consultation	Using the feedback develop the document
Sep-15	Final Customer Service Strategy passed to Officers and Members for approval	Document will be focussed and easy to read
Sep-15	Communication of the Customer Service Strategy	Will require a detailed communications plan
Jan-Apr 16	Integration into Service Plans for 16/17	Senior Management Team to consider how their teams can contribute to the Strategy
Apr-16 onwards	Ongoing management & delivery becomes Business As Usual	Annual review and progress updates within monitoring of the Corporate Plan and Service Plans

7. LINK TO THE CORPORATE PLAN

7.1 This Strategy directly supports the Council Objective 'Ensure we are a customer focussed and service led Council' – but it also contributes to all the strategic priorities and objectives.

8. CONSULTATION

8.1 To date the summary has been developed in light of feedback from:

- Corporate Director (Services)
- The Customer Service Governance Board
- The Senior Management Team
- A number of operational staff – for example Call Centre and CSC staff

8.2 The Strategy also examined the findings from the most recent survey of customers. The 'Balancing the budget - Have your say' consultation was aimed at providing residents, businesses and the voluntary sector, with the opportunity to comment on service priorities. The process also raised awareness of what the council does and the financial pressures it faces. Over 700 responses were received.

8.3 The survey showed that most customers are focussed on the delivery of high quality visible services such as Waste Collection, Parks & Open Spaces, Environmental Health etc. Services such as Markets, Street Rangers and Customer Service were scored as less relevant for Customers – but these services also scored highly as 'don't know' indicating many customers do not fully understand what services these teams provide.

8.4 Alongside this assessment of the services provided by the Council the 'free-text' responses from customers were assessed. Findings in this area focussed on car parking, the local economy, areas outside of the Council's control (e.g. Parish/County issues) and income generation.

8.5 This consultation exercise was useful in determining priorities for the budget setting process. Understanding what is important to customers gives the Council a clear focus on ensuring priority services (e.g. waste collection) continue to provide good quality service within the context of a revised Customer Service Strategy – something the Zero Based Budgeting exercise will help achieve.

8.6 It is intended to deliver a further round of consultation on the proposed strategy. This is planned to take place in the summer of 2015 once feedback from Members has been received.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

(Comments from the Acting Legal Services Manager / Solicitor)

9.1 No Legal implications.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

(Comments from the Head of Resources)

10.1 No Resource implications

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The implementation of the Strategy will have continued implications for the Website. It will need to remain customer focussed and fit for purpose. A new website is due to be launched in Autumn 2015. The site:
- Will have less content – being focussed on the information and services customers need
 - Works on mobile phone/tablets - more than 50% of customers access our website using these devices
 - Can rapidly change/develop - there is a high degree of flexibility to alter the website
 - Will be developed using customer feedback – as part of the project customers will be invited to use the ‘new’ site alongside the ‘old’, and give feedback direct to the Project Team.

12 REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDED DECISIONS

- 12.1 The Customer Service Strategy is an important document, and is ready for a revisit.
- 12.2 A summary ‘on a page’ has been produced. This takes the foundation of the previous Strategy and has updated the content to reflect other Council Strategies and Policies. The summary also takes into account customer feedback and has passed through a number of Officer groups.
- 12.3 It is now recommended that:
- O&S (Social) and Cabinet provide feedback on the summary document, prior to a full Strategy being produced later in 2015.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Draft Customer Service Strategy ‘on a page’

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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Appendix 1 – Draft Customer Service Strategy ‘on a page’

