

HUNTINGDONSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Title/Subject Matter: Customer Service Strategy

Meeting/Date: Overview & Scrutiny (Economic) – 8th December 2015
Cabinet – 10th December
Council – 16th December

Executive Portfolio: Executive Councillor for Customer Services

Report by: Head of Customer Service

Ward(s) affected: All

Executive Summary:

Members provided feedback on a proposed revised Customer Service Strategy earlier in 2015. A summary 'on a page' was produced and this has been revised in light of feedback.

In addition, and as discussed with Members previously, this summary has been developed into a wider and more comprehensive document. 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.

Once approved by Members the new Strategy will be communicated to the organisation and delivery of actions will begin. Key to this is the mandatory inclusion of actions to deliver this Strategy in all Service Plans that will be produced by the Senior Management Team in 2016/17.

Recommendation(s):

It is recommended:

That the Cabinet, having assessed any feedback from the Overview & Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel, recommend to Council approval of the revised Customer Service Strategy.

1. PURPOSE

- 1.1 This paper is intended obtain the endorsement of the Cabinet, prior to the revised Customer Service Strategy being recommended for approval by Full Council.

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. It is an important document for Officers, and allows the Council to look ahead and focus on what it needs to do to deliver good customer service.
- 2.2 The current version of the Customer Service Strategy was approved 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.
- 2.3 Earlier in 2015 Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet both reviewed and commented on a simple summary 'on a page' that would be developed in light of Member feedback. This summary was also to be expanded to provide a more comprehensive document suitable for Officer and Member use.

3. ANALYSIS

- 3.1 Officers 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 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. This was confirmed in the feedback received on the draft summary 'on a page'.

- 3.5 The final Customer Service Strategy is attached, and contains:

- A one page introduction from Executive Councillor for Customer Service
- A single page showing the summary 'on a page'

- A page for each of the principles that expands and explains in more detail what each means
- Some pages explaining how achievement of the strategy will be monitored

3.6 The Strategy has developed since Members gave their feedback, and of particular note is:

- The specific inclusion of the wording for the Strategic Aims and Objectives from the Council's Corporate Plan. This will strengthen the links between this Strategy and the Council's key forward planning document.
- Simplification of the summary on a page, making it easier to understand.
- The inclusion of examples of good practice across the Council to make the document more 'real' for staff and encourage Officers to generate and deliver their own actions alongside other colleagues.

4. COMMENTS OF OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY PANEL

4.1 Due to the date of the Overview and Scrutiny (Economic Well-Being) Panel meeting and the date of the agenda dispatch of the Cabinet Agenda the comments will be circulated subsequent to the Panel meeting on the 8th December 2015.

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 on the Strategy 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
Dec -15	Approval of the Strategy by Members	Signs this off as a key corporate strategy
Jan -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:

- Cabinet
- Overview and Scrutiny (Economic)
- 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 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.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

9.1 No Legal implications.

10. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

10.1 No Resource implications

11. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

11.1 None.

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 proposed summary of the new Strategy was produced and in the light of feedback has been developed. This fuller revised document is now ready for approval and delivery.

12.3 It is recommended:

- Overview & Scrutiny (Economic) provide any necessary feedback on the Strategy
- Cabinet, having assessed any feedback from Overview & Scrutiny (Economic), recommend to Council approval of the revised Customer Service Strategy.

13. LIST OF APPENDICES INCLUDED

Appendix 1 – Customer Service Strategy

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

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