

REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 7
DATE OF MEETING:	08 JUNE 2023	CATEGORY: (See Notes) DELEGATED or RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (SERVICE DELIVERY)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	CATHERINE GRIMLEY (catherine.grimley@southderbyshire.gov.uk)	
SUBJECT:	CONSULTATION OF CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY 2023-2026	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	ALL	TERMS OF REFERENCE: (See Notes)

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Committee considers and approves the Customer Access Strategy for public consultation.
- 1.2 Committee considers and approves the scoping document that outlines the parameters for consultation.
- 1.3 The Customer Access Strategy and supporting documents will be returned to a future committee meeting for final approval.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 To gain feedback from Committee members on the draft Customer Access Strategy, scoping paper and key project plan to inform the final document and work packages.
- 2.2 To gain approval from committee to progress the Customer Access Strategy consultation as detailed in the scoping paper.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 South Derbyshire District Council is currently developing its Customer Access Strategy. The aim of the strategy is to shape how the Council will serve its customers in the years to come, and to define the projects and initiatives it needs to deliver in order to achieve its ambitions.
- 3.2 It is important to define the scope of the strategy and to do this a customer definition is required. In terms of this strategy the 'customer' is defined as all those who benefit

from the services we provide, and therefore, everyone in the chain that supports the final delivery of front-line services, has customers. Our customers are those people for whom we work to commission, contract, deliver, and enable services. They are also local citizens, or people coming into the South Derbyshire area to work or visit. They may be direct service users, employees of the council, employees of other organisations, elected members or partners.

- 3.3 The Customer Access Strategy will set out how we will improve access to our services for our customers. We want to make dealing with the Council as quick and easy as possible, making the best use of technology whilst working in a cost-effective way. We want customers to have the best possible experience when they use our services, and we recognise that people contact us in many ways – one size does not fit all.
- 3.4 This strategy will outline how we will develop a variety of access channels for our customers and continue to improve the quality and consistency of our services, outlining principles which will guide the design and delivery of services. Most of all though we want to commit to seeing customers as people and ensuring that systems work for them.
- 3.5 Everyone in the Authority has a role to play in putting customers first and ensuring that we are truly meeting their needs. This strategy will be supported by robust monitoring of clear and transparent standards that customers can understand and expect.
- 3.6 The draft strategy is heavily informed by the following existing strategies and plans:
 - Corporate plan 2020-2024
 - Transformation & Business Change Plan 2020-2024
 - Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan 2021-2025
- 3.7 The Customer Access Strategy and Key Project Plan is our proposal for the channels we will use to deliver services to, and interact with, our customers. It explains how we will meet the contact demands of our customers using the resources we have available with the needs of the customer being our priority. It is also imperative that we continue to move forward with the digital changes needed to meet the needs of our customers.
- 3.8 The new Customer Access Strategy 2023 to 2026 will set out how, while facing increasing budget pressures, we will further strengthen customer relationships, improving experience and increasing satisfaction, by working closely with our customers to ensure our services are provided in the way our customers require them.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 The starting point for the creation of the draft strategy began with an assessment of existing current customer access across the council. This was followed by an assessment of the commitments laid down in the key informing strategies detailed above.
- 4.2 The strategy and action plan sets out the context for the current work intended to make the Council easier to connect with for residents, visitors, businesses and other stakeholders. We want to put our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide appropriate support to those who need it, ensuring that customer experiences are easy, effective and convenient.

4.3 From this process, a draft Customer Access Strategy was created that includes three overarching customer access commitments that were developed to aid consultation and discussion.

ACCESS	<i>We will provide clear, consistent and accessible services to all our customers</i>
CONTACT	<i>Improve the way our customers can contact us</i>
ENGAGE	<i>Engage our customers and keep them up to date</i>

4.4 The Council plan to consult with a wide variety of audiences to test the three customer access commitments and proposed projects within the key project plan.

The stakeholder groups identified include:

- The Transformation Steering Group
- Employee Forum
- Area Forum
- Council Members
- Local Community Representatives and/or groups through the assistance of the CVS
- Residents, Customers and Businesses, including key groups such as housing tenants.
- Trade unions

4.5 A Scoping paper (appendix 2) has been created in order to map the consultation process and further details the wide audience we intend to reach out to for feedback.

4.6 This consultation is expected to last up to twelve weeks. Following evaluation of all feedback received the strategy will then be bought back to F&M Committee for final approval before publication.

4.7 The introduction of an enhanced customer experience and multi-channel action plan has previously been identified in the Transformation and Business Change Plan as a core building block of the Councils future success. As such, provision has been identified to resource the projects required internally, indeed members have already agreed several of the projects needed for delivery.

4.8 Projects will be subject to the corporate project management methodology and shall be overseen by the Head of Business Change, Digital & ICT in line with current process. Progress on these projects will be reported through existing routes, with a particular focus on the annual summary report.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report. Any costs associated with producing the consultation documents will be taken from existing departmental budgets. Costs for projects outlined in the Key Action Plan will be subject to standard processes which will stress test the business case through the PMO and Transformation Steering Group and subsequently present a report to Finance and Management committee as appropriate.

6.0 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 6.1 There are no employment implications arising from this report.

Legal Implications

- 6.2 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

Corporate Plan Implications

The Customer Access Strategy will contribute towards the following Corporate Plan targets:

- E2.1A - Reduce South Derbyshire District Council carbon emissions.
- P3.1A Increase the number of customers who interact digitally as a first choice.
- P3.2A Reduce face-to-face contact to allow more time to support those customers who need additional support.
- P3.3A Number of customer telephone calls answered by Customer Service
- P3.3B Increase digital engagement (Twitter, Instagram, Facebook)
- F3.1A Deliver against the Transformation Action Plan

Risk Impact

- 6.3 There are no risks arising from this report.

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

- 7.1 With the assistance of the CVS, community representatives and groups will be asked to consider our draft Customer Access Strategy. We are keen to understand if they think there is anything else the Council could do to ensure its services are accessible to all and in particular the groups they represent.

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 7.2 A full EDIA will be completed as part of the Customer Access Strategy Consultation process. The strategy will have a positive equalities impact by enabling an increased focus on digital inclusion and accessibility. Enabling those residents who are able to self-serve to do so will also help us to focus our support on those who need it. We are also keen to engage with individuals or organisations that have an interest in any of the protected characteristics set out in our Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion Action Plan, hence our contact list will mimic those consulted as part of that exercise.

In order to ensure there is fair and equal access to the consultation we will need to offer a range of engagement options which include:

- Face to face - CVS to co-facilitate with SDDC.
- Virtually - via 'Teams'
- Telephone conference
- Email – CVS to distribute the consultation pack to all groups identified in the District

Social Value Impact

- 7.3 The Customer Access Strategy will improve social value outcomes by enabling residents to have improved access to services, information and advice in the way that suits them most.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.4 There are no risks arising from this report.

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 The three Customer commitments and the Key Project Plan will help us to achieve the overall aims of the Council ensuring the customer comes first, such as first-time resolution, and adding value to the user and working as a single organisation.
- 8.2 The successful delivery of this strategy will result in a real positive change to the way in which our customers will access our services. New technologies will be exploited to make access even easier and a wide range of departments will be working closer together in order to integrate service delivery.

9.0 Background Papers

- 9.1 Appendix one – Draft Customer Access Strategy 2023-2026
- 9.2 Appendix two – Draft Customer Access Scoping Paper
- 9.4 Appendix three – Customer Standards