



CABINET - 13TH APRIL 2016

SUBJECT: DRAFT CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2016-2020

REPORT BY: ACTING DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE SERVICES AND SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 1.1 The attached report, which provided details of the draft Customer Service Strategy 2016-2020, was considered by the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016. The report sought the views of Members on the draft Strategy prior to its presentation to Cabinet.
- 1.2 Members were advised that the Council's Customer Service Strategy has been in place since 2006 and has been partially updated on a number of occasions. However, the financial environment in which the Council operates has changed significantly in the last few years, as have the expectations of customers who are increasingly expecting services to be available on-line, and so there is a clear need to put a new Strategy in place.
- 1.3 Officers outlined the main strategic outcomes of the Strategy which are: to improve the consistency of customer service across the organisation; to meet customer expectations that services will be available online which will also reduce the cost of customer contact; and to develop in-person customer service so that it is more focused on delivering complex services or dealing with more vulnerable or disadvantaged customers. A copy of the draft Strategy was appended to the report.
- 1.4 Officers explained that once formally agreed, the Customer Service Strategy will be supported by a Delivery Plan that will be monitored by the Corporate IT Strategy Group (CITSG), of which the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Corporate Services is a member.
- 1.5 A copy of an email detailing the Trade Unions response to the proposed Strategy was tabled at the meeting. Members noted the key comments contained therein, including a need to involve and consult with all service areas and wider stakeholders identified within the Strategy to deliver the programme, and the need for a measured, pragmatic and holistic approach in delivery to ensure that department reconfigurations are not focused within one specific service area.
- 1.6 During the course of the ensuing debate, concerns were expressed regarding the personnel implications in respect of the proposals, particularly in relation to possible redundancies and a change in staffing hours. Further information was also sought on the financial savings that could be achieved as a result of the proposed Strategy. Officers explained that it was difficult to project savings at the present time but that the Strategy will support the aims of the Medium Term Financial Plan. However, there was an expectation that the need for customer-facing services could reduce in future years, leading to Customer Service opening hours being reduced in accordance with these principles. Members were advised that further reports on this matter would be brought to the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee accordingly.
- 1.7 Members expressed the importance of maintaining customer-facing services, together with a need to retain a customer service presence in local communities and Officers explained that the Strategy was not proposing to remove face to face services. Discussion also took place

regarding departmental response times arising from initial customer services calls, together with customer engagement processes and the methodology used in monitoring customer feedback/satisfaction.

- 1.8 Queries were raised regarding the strategic direction and focus of the document, with Members expressing a need for customer-facing services to be maintained, including the retention of a customer service presence in local communities, and for it to be considered how the Strategy is fed back to customers. Officers confirmed that they would take into account the comments received at the meeting, and the Scrutiny Committee requested that their views on this matter be reported to Cabinet.
- 1.9 Following consideration of the report (and subject to the incorporation of the views received at the meeting) the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee unanimously recommended to Cabinet that for the reasons contained therein, the Customer Service Strategy as set out in the Appendix to the report be adopted.
- 1.10 Members are asked to consider the recommendation.

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Appendices:

Appendix 1 Report to Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on 19th January 2016 – Agenda Item 14