

WELWYN HATFIELD BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET– 3 APRIL 2018

‘CUSTOMER FIRST’ - CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY

1 Executive Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present to Cabinet the proposed Customer Service Strategy for Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council.
- 1.2 The Customer Service Strategy sets out how the council will deliver on the six agreed principles for customer service.
- 1.3 Sitting alongside the Customer Service Strategy will be a three year delivery plan. The delivery plan will set out the steps which will need to be taken by the council in each of the six areas. The delivery plan will be monitored by the Customer Service Steering Group and it will be evaluated annually.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Customer Service Strategy and
- 2.2 Delegates authority for the Executive Director (Housing and Communities) in consultation with the Executive Member for Business, Partnerships and Public Health, to oversee the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy Delivery Plan.

3 Explanation

- 3.1 A new Steering Group was established in 2016 with the aim of developing a joined-up approach to delivering excellent customer service across the council and the housing trust. Subsequently the housing service has been reintegrated with the council and this work has continued.
- 3.2 The Steering Group consulted widely in identifying the six key principles for customer service in Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council. The principles were subsequently agreed by lead Members in June 2017. The six principles are:
 1. Be customer focussed – understand who our customers are, acting on what they tell us, so they are at the heart of our services
 2. Be accessible – make it easier for all of our customers to contact us and do business with us, by offering a wide range of customer service options
 3. Be reliable – get it right first time, serving customers consistently in a single transaction wherever possible
 4. Be clear – ensure that our customers know what they can expect from us, and that our teams are clear about the quality of service they must deliver

5. Be efficient – make the best use of our resources and new technology, delivering value for money without sacrificing quality
6. Be transparent – be open about how we perform and the services our customers receive.

Together the six principles reflect the vision of ‘Customer First’ and this is the brand name given to the Strategy by the steering group.

- 3.4 Since the six principles were approved a number of task and finish groups were created from the steering group with the purpose of developing a three year delivery plan for developing the systems and approaches necessary to realise the council’s ambitions for excellence in customer service.
- 3.5 It is recognised that whilst there are some ‘quick wins’ within the delivery plan there are also some major projects, which may take more than three years to deliver. For this reason the delivery plan will be a dynamic document, which will be regularly reviewed and updated as required. Importantly the Delivery Plan provides structure to the framework of actions needed by the different teams within the council and this in turn provides accountability for seeing through the agreed actions.
- 3.6 Much of the Delivery Plan is around carrying out further exploration and review so that the best approach for delivery can be fully assessed. Further decisions arising from the delivery plan will be brought back to appropriate bodies for approval, in line with the council’s constitutional requirements.

Note for Members:

The council’s revised Business Plan objectives will be incorporated into the relevant area of the strategy document once these have been approved by Cabinet. Currently the existing objectives are included.

4 Financial Implication(s)

- 4.1 Specific projects arising from the Delivery Plan will be assessed on an individual basis, with financial implications reported appropriately as set out in 3.6 above. The greatest potential for spending will be linked to the new Information Communication Technology and Digital strategy.
- 4.2 Overall the Customer Service Strategy has been developed to drive greater efficiency across the council, although investment will be required to put in place the appropriate measures to generate these efficiencies in the future.

5 Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. The Customer Services Steering Group will be mindful of the new GDPR 2018 when considering the actions it will take around customer insight and expanding digital services within the council.

6 Risk Management Implications

6.1 The Customer Service Strategy takes into account customer expectations and aims to increase customer satisfaction. The effective implementation of the Strategy should therefore reduce reputational risk.

7 Security & Terrorism Implication(s)

7.1 There are no known security and terrorism implications associated with this recommendation

8 Procurement Implication(s)

8.1 There are no direct procurement implications associated with this recommendation.

9 Climate Change Implication(s)

9.1 There are no climate change implications associated with this recommendation.

10 Link to Corporate Priorities

10.1 The subject of this report is linked specifically to the Council's Corporate Priority: Engage with our communities and provide value for money.

11 Equality and Diversity

11.1 An EqIA will be carried out for each new policy or working practice introduced as a result of the implementation of the Customer Service Strategy.

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