

Report to: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 4 July 2016

Report Title: Customer First Strategy and Action Plan

Report By: Jane Hartnell
Director of Corporate Services and Governance

Purpose of Report

To consider and adopt the Customer First Strategy

Recommendation(s)

That the Customer First Strategy is adopted

Reasons for Recommendations

The Customer First Strategy is all about putting our customers at the heart of what we do. We are committed to providing excellent services which our customers can access when and how they need to. The strategy states how we will improve access to services and the customer experience. It is our public commitment to Customer First.

The strategy provides a framework for the management of customer contact, information management and access to our services, bringing together a number of projects all working towards the same objectives.

The action plan provides the details for how we will achieve and implement the strategy; which will be reviewed and updated regularly.

Introduction

1. The Council has made a commitment in the Corporate Plan ‘to be more Customer First focused and efficient in the design and delivery of services’. The Customer First Strategy sets out the vision of how Hastings Borough Council will put customers at the heart of service delivery, ensuring value for money, flexibility and choice.
2. The strategy will seek to drive both cultural and technological improvements, it describes our aspirations of how we will behave with customers and how we will manage accessibility to the Council’s services, with an emphasis on efficient and transparent service delivery. Customers include people who live, work or visit the Borough as well as businesses, agencies, elected members and colleagues who use the services provided by the Council.
3. Every service provided by the Council has a customer whether it is internal or external. The Community Contact Centre alone deals with 121,000 telephone calls across all services per year and 20,000 face to face customers for Revenues and Benefits per year. External contact to the Council is increasing and much of this is repeated contact for the same issue and avoidable contact. Improvements to how we deliver our services such as redesigning our processes to meet customers needs, providing a choice for customers of when and how they can access our services, improving communication and working together as one Council will deliver the aims of the Customer First Strategy.

Overview of the strategy

4. Customer First focuses on the needs of individual customers by providing efficient and easy to access ‘joined up’ services. It’s all about improving access to services for customers, as well as improving the experience.
5. The strategy has four main principals:
 - 5.1. Meeting customer needs
 - 5.2. Being accessible
 - 5.3. Improving customer experience
 - 5.4. Providing value
6. The strategy also specifies our Customer First Standards and the expectations for customer contact with the Council.

Action Plan

7. An action plan is included which provides the details for how we will achieve and implement the strategy.
8. There are three main priorities of the action plan, internal communication of the Customer First Strategy, external communication to our customers of the strategy and the implementation of the strategy i.e how we actually deliver what we have promised to customers. Every member of staff in the Council has a role to play

and must be signed up to customer first. Senior management and Member commitment to the strategy along with effective communication and training for staff is key to the success of the strategy. There is currently a disparity across the organisation of how we deal with customers. The action plan aims to ensure we provide an excellent service to all our customers regardless of who they contact.

9. The action plan brings together numerous work strands and projects, some of which are well underway and are already delivering an improved service to our customers. For example under the My Hastings project which provides self-service access for customers to a number of our services, we have seen that 52% of all cases logged on Firmstep have been via self-service. Our customers want a choice of how and when they can access our services.
10. The Corporate Customer Services Manager is working with service managers to identify improvements and redesign processes to provide high quality services in the Community Contact Centre and ensure the customer at the heart of our business.
11. The strategy and the action plan will be reviewed and monitored regularly to ensure its success. Feedback from customers through available data, satisfactions surveys, mystery shopping and service reviews will constantly inform the actions required to deliver our customer first aims.

Wards Affected

All

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	Yes
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	Yes
Organisational Consequences	Yes
Local People's Views	Yes
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

Appendix 1. Customer First Strategy 2016-2018

Appendix 2. Customer First Strategy Action Plan 2016-2018

Officer to Contact

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