

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Executive Committee (Special)
Date of Meeting:	9 March 2016
Subject:	Customer Care Strategy
Report of:	Communications and Policy Manager, Clare Evans
Corporate Lead:	Mike Dawson, Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Councillor M Dean, Lead Member for Customer Focus
Number of Appendices:	One

Executive Summary:

In our Council Plan, we make the promise that we will put the needs of our customers at the heart of what we do and listen to what they say, treating people fairly and without bias. This Customer Care Strategy is an important step to making this a reality.

This Customer Care Strategy details how we plan to deliver our customer care and outlines the organisational commitments we will make to our customers.

In addition, our action plan, attached at Appendix 1, shows where we want to be and explains how we will monitor and report our progress in achieving these pledges. As part of our commitment to customer care, we will encourage the adoption of common customer care standards across the Council.

The strategy was taken to an Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop on 11 January 2016, where Members of the group endorsed it. The strategy was formally considered by Overview and Scrutiny Committee at its meeting on 23 February 2016 and it was recommended to Executive Committee for approval.

Recommendation:

To APPROVE the Customer Care Strategy and action plan.

Reasons for Recommendation:

We want to provide the best possible service to all of our customers, particularly in terms of resolving queries at the first point of contact. We recognise how important first impressions are, and how vital it is to get things right from the start.

Every time a customer contacts us, we must remember that the way they are treated, the standard of customer care they receive, and the quality of the outcome all influence their opinion of us.

Resource Implications:

None directly resulting from this report.

Legal Implications:

None directly resulting from this report.

Risk Management Implications:

Without clear customer care standards there is a risk to our reputation.

Performance Management Follow-up:

Delivery of the strategy is monitored by Overview and Scrutiny Committee on an annual basis.

Environmental Implications:

None.

1.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Our Council Plan highlights our value that we will always put our customers first. We make the promise that we will put the needs of our customers at the heart of what we do and listen to what they say, treating people fairly and without bias. Supporting our values we also have an ethos that whatever we do will be 'better for customers, better for business'. This Customer Care Strategy is an important step to making these commitments a reality.
- 1.2 The standards within the strategy are fully supported by the Corporate Leadership Team, Group Managers and Operational Team Managers.

2.0 PURPOSE OF THE STRATEGY

- 2.1 While customer care is clearly important to us as a Council, we have never had a Customer Care Strategy before.
- 2.2 This Customer Care Strategy aims to:
- Introduce a set of customer service standards for staff to follow.
 - Make it easier, simpler and more convenient for customers to interact with us when requiring a service.
 - Use feedback from our residents' survey to help shape future service delivery.
 - Make sure our staff are equipped with the skills to deliver high quality customer service.
 - Promote approaches to delivering services that are more convenient for customers and less expensive to deliver for the Council.
 - In line with the Council's emerging digital strategy, utilise technology to manage and serve our customers' changing access needs better.
 - Work with our partners in the Public Services Centre to ensure our customers experience a seamless and worthwhile experience when visiting the offices.

3.0 CUSTOMER CARE STANDARDS

3.1 This strategy details a set of customer services standards which outline, for the first time, what our customers can expect from their experience with us.

3.2 The standards will be adopted and embraced across the Council, and we will continue to work towards them to become a truly customer focused organisation. They cover what customers can expect from us generally, as well as when they:

- Phone us.
- Email us.
- Send a letter.
- Visit in person.
- Make an enquiry online.
- Make a formal complaint.

4.0 THE ACTION PLAN

4.1 To help us achieve the commitments we set out in this strategy, it is supported by an annual action plan – which can be found as an appendix to the strategy. The action plan details how we will achieve our commitments to customer care and progress on this action plan will be reported each year to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

5.0 OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE REVIEW

5.1 The strategy was originally on the Executive Committee Agenda for 13 January 2016. This was deferred to allow Overview and Scrutiny Committee the opportunity to review the strategy. This was a result of concerns raised by Members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee who had experienced poor customer service within certain service areas.

5.2 A workshop was held on 11 January 2016 for the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to take them through the draft strategy in particular, the customer care standards. Supporting this was a presentation from the Customer Services team to provide Members with an overview of the recently completed customer services review. A key message from officers, and supported by the Lead Member for Customer Focus who was in attendance at the workshop, was that customer service is a responsibility across the whole of the Council and not just that of the Customer Services team. For this reason, it has been called a Customer Care Strategy rather than a Customer Service Strategy.

5.3 Members who attended the workshop fully endorsed the strategy, in particular the move to introduce customer care standards. The strategy was formally discussed at Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 23 February 2016 where again it was fully supported and recommended to Executive Committee for approval.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 None.

7.0 CONSULTATION

7.1 The strategy was taken to a workshop of Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 11 January 2016.

The Customer Care Standards were reviewed by the Corporate Leadership Team, Operational Team Managers and Group Managers prior to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee workshop.

8.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

8.1 The Council Plan and emerging Digital Strategy.

9.0 RELEVANT GOVERNMENT POLICIES

9.1 None.

10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (Human/Property)

10.1 None directly.

11.0 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS (Social/Community Safety/Cultural/ Economic/ Environment)

11.1 None.

12.0 IMPACT UPON (Value For Money/Equalities/E-Government/Human Rights/Health And Safety)

12.1 None.

13.0 RELATED DECISIONS AND ANY OTHER RELEVANT FACTS

13.1 None.

Background papers: None.

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Appendices: One – Customer Care Strategy action plan.