

TEWKESBURY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee
Date of Meeting:	7 March 2023
Subject:	Customer Care Strategy
Report of:	Head of Corporate Services
Head of Service/Director:	Chief Executive
Lead Member:	Lead Member for Customer Focus
Number of Appendices:	Two

Executive Summary:

The Council Plan makes the promise that the Council will put the needs of customers at the heart of what it does and listen to what they say, treating people fairly and without bias. The Customer Care Strategy plays a crucial role in helping the Council to deliver this promise.

The commitment throughout the strategy is to have a proactive approach and to support customers by going the extra mile for them.

The strategy has an annual action plan which details what customer care improvements will be delivered for the year ahead. This report provides an update on the 2022/23 actions and introduces a new set of actions for 2023/24.

Recommendation:

To CONSIDER the progress made against the actions within the Customer Care Strategy during 2022/23 and to ENDORSE the action plan for 2023/24.

Financial Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Legal Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Environmental and Sustainability Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Resource Implications (including impact on equalities):

None other than officer time to implement the action plan.

Safeguarding Implications:

None directly arising from this report.

Impact on the Customer:

The Customer Care Strategy sets out how the Council plans to deliver its customer care and outlines the organisational commitments made to customers. The 2023/24 action plan within this report provides a range of ways intended to proactively improve the customer care approach.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1** A key value within the Council Plan is that the Council will always put customers first. It makes the promise that the Council will put the needs of our customers at the heart of what it does and listen to what they say - treating people fairly and without bias. Supporting this value, there is an ethos that whatever the Council does will be 'better for customers, better for business'. The Customer Care Strategy is an important step to making these commitments a reality.
- 1.2** It is important to recognise that customer care is a Council-wide priority. While the Council has a dedicated Customer Services team, which acts as the front face of the Council for many visitors and callers, valuing customer care needs to be embedded in the culture for everyone who works for Tewkesbury Borough Council.
- 1.3** The Customer Care Strategy was approved in 2020 so this year marks its final year before a new strategy is introduced for 2024/25.. The new strategy will continue to support the Council's digital ambitions, be shaped around plans for a modernised phone system, and ensure that the most vulnerable customers are able to access the Council in ways that best suit them.

2.0 PROGRESS ON 2022/23 ACTIONS

- 2.1** To help achieve the commitments in the Customer Care Strategy, it is supported by an annual action plan. The action plan is focused on the strategy's themes and details how the Council will achieve its commitments to customer care. Good progress was made against the 2022/23 actions, with 12 out of the 18 actions achieved as shown in Appendix 1. Highlights include:
- Improving the online experience for our garden waste and bulky waste services – with more customers choosing to interact with us online than over the phone.
 - Improving the accessibility at one of our busier advice and information centres through working with our Parish Council partner.
 - The delivery of customer care sessions to support the development management review.
 - Ensuring our online services are shaped around the needs of our customers by using real user feedback to make improvements or changes.

2.2 Three of the actions were not achieved, and these have been pulled forward as actions to deliver in 2023/24:

Action	Reason
1a. Deliver a staff briefing to refresh all staff on the importance of delivering our customer care standards	The briefing was not delivered in 2022/23 due to additional demands on the team such as business grants and food voucher scheme administration. The briefing will be delivered in 2023/24.
2a. Investigate the option of introducing automated short customer services satisfaction surveys after accessing our services online.	This action will be picked up through the review of the corporate website. Following the successful recruitment of a Web Developer at the end of 2022, the website will go live in June 2023.
2c. Identify a team structure that fits with the current demand.	This has not been delivered but will be moved across to the 2023/24 action list. Monitoring of phone activity has provided information on busy periods, quiet times, call times, and busy areas so the team can be better managed to suit demand.

3.0 NEW ACTIONS FOR 2023/24 AND MONITORING

3.1 A set of new actions are proposed for 2023/24 as set out at Appendix 2.

4.0 CONSULTATION

4.1 Not applicable to this specific report but consultation on our Customer Care Standards will be carried out as part of an action for 2023/24.

5.0 ASSOCIATED RISKS

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

6.0 MONITORING

6.1 The progress of the 2023/24 actions will be reported to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7.0 RELEVANT COUNCIL PLAN PRIORITIES/COUNCIL POLICIES/STRATEGIES

7.1 Council Plan 2020-2024
Digital Approach
Communications Strategy

Background Papers: None

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Appendices: Appendix 1 - Action plan update 2022/23
Appendix 2 - Action plan for 2023/24
Appendix 3 - Customer Care Strategy
Appendix 4 - Customer Care Standards