

Democratic Services Officer: Erica Fredericks (Ext. 37547)

9 May 2013

## **HOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP**

A meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will be held in Committee Room 1 at the Arun Civic Centre, Maltravers Road, Littlehampton on **Thursday, 23 May 2013 at 6.00 pm** and you are requested to attend.

Members: Membership to be confirmed at Annual Council on 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013  
Councillors Clayden (Chairman), Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Bicknell, Mrs Bower, Chapman, Mrs Goad, Mrs Harrison, Haymes, Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate, Oppler, Pendleton, Squires

### **A G E N D A**

1(a) ELECTION OF CHAIRMAN AND VICECHAIRMAN

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Please send your apologies to Erica Fredericks – tel: 01903 737547 or e-mail: [erica.fredericks@arun.gov.uk](mailto:erica.fredericks@arun.gov.uk)

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and Officers are reminded to make any declaration of personal and/or prejudicial/pecuniary interests that they may have in relation to items on this agenda.

You should declare your interest by stating:

- a) the item you have the interest in
- b) whether it is a personal interest and the nature of the interest
- c) whether it is also a prejudicial/pecuniary interest

You then need to re-declare your interest and the nature of the interest at the commencement of the item or when the interest becomes apparent.

3. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 (which have been previously circulated.)

4. ITEMS NOT ON THE AGENDA THAT THE CHAIRMAN OF THE MEETING IS OF THE OPINION SHOULD BE CONSIDERED AS A MATTER OF URGENCY BY REASON OF SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

To agree the Terms of Reference for this Working Group

6. MINUTES

To approve as a correct record the Minutes of the meeting of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group held on 27th February 2013

7. CUSTOMER SERVICE ACCESS STRATEGY

This report describes the background to the Customer Access Strategy, presents the proposed Strategy and sets out a high level list of proposed actions.

8. WORK PROGRAMME 2013/14

To prepare and agree a work programme for 2013/14. Suggested key issues will be submitted by the Lead Officer

## HOUSING &amp; CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP - TERMS OF REFERENCE APRIL 2013

<b>Working Group</b>	<b>HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES</b>
<b>Established</b>	Established following the decision taken at the Full Council Meeting on 24 March 2011 to change the arrangements for meetings for the new Council year 2011/12
<b>Background</b>	Following Consultation with working parties and all Members the Overview Select Committee meeting on 15/3/2011 recommended that Working Groups be introduced. This was agreed by Cabinet on 7 <sup>th</sup> March 2011 and forwarded to the Governance Committee so that changes to the Constitution could be made. The Full Council meeting on 24 March 2011 made the decision to implement the recommended changes. This Working Group has operated for just over a year and no change was made to the Working Group's remit following review in March 2012. In July 2012 there was a review of responsibility of Working Groups following a management restructure and reallocation of Cabinet Portfolios.
<b>Membership</b>	<b>Membership as at April 2013</b> (Confirmed at Annual Council on 22 May 2013)  Cllrs; Bicknell, Mrs Bower, Chapman, Clayden, Edwards, Mrs Goad, Mrs Harrison, Haymes, Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate, Oppler, Mrs Pendleton, Squires  <b>Quorum</b> – 4 Members
<b>Chairman/Vice-Chairman</b>	The Chairman and Vice Chairman will be nominated by the members of the Working Group at the first meeting of the Municipal Year.
<b>Aim of Working Group</b>	To consider policies and strategies and to review performance and other issues relating to the Housing & Customer Services Portfolios. The Working Group may be requested to consider issues by referral from the Overview Select Committee, Full Council and Cabinet. The Working Group may also determine its own work and propose items to be included in the Work Programme.  The Working Group will not consider issues dealt with by existing Committees or Sub-Committees of the Council unless items are referred to it by such a Committee. It may, however, consider any outcomes from such Committees.
<b>Work Programme</b>	The Work Programme to be agreed and reviewed by the Working Group. Terms of Reference to be reviewed annually by the Working Group.
<b>Reporting arrangements</b>	Working Groups can report into the Overview Select Committee, Cabinet, and Full Council
<b>Open to the public?</b>	Yes
<b>Term</b>	Ongoing
<b>Programme of meetings</b>	Regular meetings will be held at least once per meeting cycle. Agreed dates for 2013/14 are: 23 May 2013, 16 July 2013, 10 September 2013, 07 November 2013, 09 January 2014, 19 March 2014
<b>Consultation programme</b>	Consultation to be carried out as required and agreed by the Working Group.
<b>Research/documents</b>	As required.
<b>Lead Officers</b>	Brian Pople and Jackie Follis
<b>Support Officer</b>	Democratic Services Officer (EF)

## HOUSING AND CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP

### Minutes of a meeting held on 27<sup>th</sup> February 2013 at 6pm (to be agreed at the next meeting of the Working Group)

Present: Councillors; Clayden (Chairman), Edwards (Vice-Chairman), Bicknell, Mrs Bower, Chapman, Mrs Goad, Mrs Harrison, Haymes, Mrs Oakley, Oliver-Redgate [from Minute 48], Mrs Pendleton, Squires [from Minute 1 to Minute 50]

Also

Present: Councillor Elkins (Cabinet Member Housing), Councillor Dingemans (Cabinet Member Customer Services) Councillor Gammon (Deputy to Cabinet Member Housing)

Officers: Housing Projects Manager, Democratic Services Officer, Head of Human Resources and Customer Services (Leader Officer), Head of Housing (Lead Officer), Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager

### RECOMMENDATIONS

***The Housing & Customer Services Working Group recommends to Cabinet that:***

#### **Housing Complaints Arrangements**

1. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the Chairman of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group, in consultation with the Assistant Director Customer Services, act as the Designated Person for Housing Complaints. In the event that the Complainant is a Constituent of the Chairman of the Housing & Customer Service Working Group or the Chairman is unavailable, the Vice-Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will deputise.
2. Arrangements are put in place to recruit Council tenants to form a Designated Tenants Panel to take over the Designated Person role from the Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group at the appropriate time.
3. The Council's Complaints Procedure is amended to identify the Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group as the Designated Person for Housing complaints, with the Vice-Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group deputising.

#### **Tenancy Fraud Prevention**

The Council introduces a photographic ID for all named tenancy holders from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. This would coincide with the implementation of the Allocations Policy and Tenancy/Strategy Policy and the introduction of Flexible Tenancies which became live on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013. This recommendation should be considered as a way of tackling tenancy fraud. Cabinet Members are asked to approve the proposal to undertake a pilot project for one year, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

***The Housing and Customer Services Working Group recommends to the Overview Select Committee that;***

#### **Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness**

No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness.

45 APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Councillor Mrs Madeley.

Apologies for late arrival had been received from Councillor Oliver-Redgate.

46 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no Declarations of Interest.

47 MINUTES OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING MEETING ON 11 DECEMBER 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 December 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES OF THE HOUSING AND PLANNING WORKING GROUP ON 11 DECEMBER 2012

The Housing Projects Manager referred to Minute 41 confirming that he had attended the Overview Select Committee Meeting on 22 January 2013 with this working group's recommendations concerning the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness. It was reported that these recommendations were accepted by the Overview Select Committee.

The Housing Projects Manager then referred to Minute 42, Cold Weather Shelter. It was confirmed that the Council had bid for additional funding from Homelessness Link to extend the opening of the Cold Weather Shelter. It was explained that the funding would allow Stonepillow to open the cold weather shelter for an additional three nights. The Housing Projects Manager thanked Stonepillow and Housing Staff for helping with this bid, adding that and transport to collect rough sleepers from other parts of the district on nights that the Cold Weather Shelter was open.

48 2013 HOUSING STRATEGY RAISE THE ROOF YEAR TWO UPDATE

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager presented the Raise the Roof Year 2 Progress Report outlining the Council's second year progress with the Raise the Roof Action Plan.

Members were informed that there had been significant achievements during the second year of the strategy including the number of empty homes brought back into use and the quantity and quality of new affordable homes developed for local people. The challenges the Council continued to face in respect of homelessness prevention work was noted.

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager presented photos of Abbotswood, a facility in Rustington, that provides extra care housing for assisted living. It was noted that Abbotswood was the first housing scheme of its type built in Arun at a cost of ten million pounds. Slides were shown of the facilities including 19 electronic buggies, gardening area, restaurant and a bathroom for use by those with disabilities. It was noted that the restaurant and bathroom were also available for use by the local community. The Working Group agreed that Abbotswood was

an excellent facility.

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager pointed out the key issues outlined in the Raise the Roof Action Plan, Housing Strategy for the Arun District 2010 to 2015. With respect to the Council's target to deliver 1000 affordable homes good progress was reported with 621 affordable homes to date. The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager stated that he was optimistic the target would be met by the end of 2015 despite a difficult economic climate. Members acknowledged that primary housing developers would be developing at relatively low levels when compared to the rate of developments prior to the housing recession.

The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager was also pleased with the Council's target to put empty homes back into use and the plan to deliver 50 affordable homes for rural areas.

The Council's work on Homelessness Prevention was highlighted as positive with the acknowledgement that temporary accommodation was, on average, used for 49 weeks. It was explained that a planned reduction in the use of temporary accommodation had been thwarted by the pressures of the present economic climate.

It was concluded that despite tough economic circumstances Arun District Council had been delivering and would continue to deliver progress against the Raise the Roof Housing Strategy.

Having listened to the presentation Members raised the following points:

- It was asked how much genuine enthusiasm the Parishes had shown for Community Land Trusts. In response the Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager confirmed that three parishes had expressed interest with a few including Community Land Trusts in their Neighbourhood Plans. It was also confirmed that the Council would promote policy that would help Community Land Trusts thrive.
- A question was asked with respect to the progress on Arun Foyer. It was noted that there had been a reduction in the Supporting People Budget by West Sussex County Council. The Housing Strategy and Enabling Manager explained that West Sussex County Council had introduced a supported housing service for young people with some 600 being helped to return to the family home, provided with alternate accommodation and given housing advice. This service had reduced the need for Foyer.
- Members congratulated Saxon Weald on the development at Abbotswood and expressed the opinion that the Council should continue to provide sheltered housing.
- Members referred to the Housing strategy objective to reduce the number of dwellings in poor repair noting that only 56 of the targeted 214 were brought up to the Decent Homes Standard. The Head of Housing agreed to investigate and brief Members on what action would be taken.
- It was noted that the Arun District had the highest levels of rough sleepers in West Sussex and the use of temporary accommodation was discussed. It was confirmed that a report would be put to the Cabinet Meeting on March 11<sup>th</sup> as a further £125 thousand would be required, from the budget, to fund Bed and Breakfast use. Members expressed their concern with respect to costs and the length of use at an average of 49 weeks per case.
- It was noted that the Council's Local Plan would address standards issues with respect to building affordable homes developments and this would include direction on renewable energy .

Following the discussion about the Council's Housing Strategy the Working Group agreed that Members should be better informed with respect to homelessness prevention and it was requested that the Options Team provide a report detailing their work. This item would be included in the Housing & Customer Services Working Group Work Programme for 2013/14.

#### 49 CUSTOMER SERVICES ACCESS STRATEGY

The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services updated Members on the progress with the Review of the Customer Access Strategy.

It was reported that, in order to understand how customers want to receive information and contact us a customer survey was undertaken over a week at the end of January 2013. The initial results had been informative but more analysis and possibly more survey work would be required to collect more detailed information on customer requirements.

Members were informed that improvements to Bognor Regis Town Hall reception area were expected by 1st April 2013 with the introduction of a queue management system. This would benefit customers and enable Customer Services to measure waiting times and transaction times to plan for the peaks and troughs of service demand.

The Head of Human Resources and Customer Services was pleased to inform Members that Arun Direct had recently undergone assessment for the Customer Service Excellence Award and had been successful. An award would be given formally at the appropriate time. Members joined the Head of Human Resources and Customer Services in congratulating the Contact Centre Manager and his staff on all their hard work.

Members discussed the progress with the Review of the Customer Access Strategy, particularly referring to the required IT support.

It was agreed that enhancing Arun District Council's website was a significant part of the required improvement work. Members agreed that it was a high priority to decide how the Council would move forward with the Customer Relationship Management System, Lagan, and improved technology integration with back office functions.

It was noted that it was important to maintain all methods of Customer Access to the Council. It was pointed out that the Council should encourage cost effective methods of access and part of that would be to enhance the services available to the customer via the internet. However the Working Group agreed that all channels of communication, including telephone and face to face contact, should be maintained to offer choice and fully serve the residents of Arun.

#### 50 TENANTS SCRUTINY OF HOUSING SERVICES

The Housing Projects Manager presented his information report on Tenants Scrutiny of Housing Services outlining the initial framework with proposals for development and implementation.

It was agreed that a working party should be formed of Councillors, Officers and Tenants so that the framework proposals could be considered in greater detail.

Councillor Clayden and Councillor Mrs Oakley agreed to represent Members.

The initial framework for developing Tenant Scrutiny of Housing Services within the Council and the proposals for its implementation was noted. It was also noted that a further report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013.

## 51 HOUSING COMPLAINTS ARRANGEMENTS

The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on Housing Complaints Arrangements describing the role of the Designated Person who would refer complaints to the Housing Ombudsman and outlined proposals for identifying Members of the Council to act as the Designated Person from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. Proposals to develop a designated Tenants Panel to take over from the Designated Person Role from Members of the Council were also outlined.

The Working Group considered the report and its recommendations. Following discussion Members proposed that the interim arrangement of a Designated Person should be held by the Chairman of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group. This was agreed and the report's recommendations amended as follows:

*The Housing and Customer Services Working Group recommends to Cabinet that;*

1. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013, the Chairman of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group, in consultation with the Assistant Director Customer Services, act as the Designated Person for Housing Complaints. In the event that the Complainant is a Constituent of the Chairman of the Housing & Customer Service Working Group or the Chairman is unavailable, the Vice-Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group will deputise.
2. Arrangements are put in place to recruit Council tenants to form a Designated Tenants Panel to take over the Designated Person role from the Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group at the appropriate time.
3. The Council's Complaints Procedure is amended to identify the Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group as the Designated Person for Housing complaints, with the Vice-Chairman of the Housing & Customer Services Working Group deputising.

## 52 JOINT SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HEALTH INEQUALITIES & HOMELESSNESS

The Housing Projects Manager presented his report on the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness which focussed on Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 in the Joint Scrutiny Review Report and as attached to the Minutes of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group dated 11<sup>th</sup> December 2012.

Members thanked the Housing Projects Manager for his helpful and useful report and agreed the recommendation to the Overview Select Committee as follows:

*The Housing and Customer Services Working Group recommends to the Overview Select Committee that;*



No further work is undertaken in respect of Recommendations 10, 11 and 12 of the Joint Scrutiny Review of Health Inequalities and Homelessness.

53 TENANCY FRAUD PREVENTION – INTRODUCING PHOTOGRAPHIC ID FOR ALL TENANCY HOLDERS

The Head of Housing presented his report on Tenancy Fraud Prevention advising Members of proposals to introduce photographic ID for all Council tenancy holders, initially as a one year pilot with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

Members expressed concern that new Tenant Agreements should be completed accurately and a very clear process followed when introducing photographic ID. Following short discussion the Working Group approved the pilot with the agreement that the Head of Housing would report back to the Working Group after the scheme had operated for one year.

The report's recommendation was agreed as follows:

The Housing and Customer Services Working Group recommend to Cabinet that;

The Council introduces a photographic ID for all named tenancy holders from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013. This would coincide with the implementation of the Allocations Policy and Tenancy/Strategy Policy and the introduction of Flexible Tenancies which became live on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2013. This recommendation should be considered as a way of tackling tenancy fraud. Cabinet Members are asked to approve the proposal to undertake a pilot project for one year, with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2013.

54 WORK PROGRAMME 2012/13

It was agreed that the topics of "cold weather shelter" and "Mears Voids" should be included in the Work Programme 2013/14.

55 The Chairman informed Members that this would be the last Working Group meeting for the Housing Projects Manager before his departure from Arun District Council. Members thanked him for all his hard work and gave their future best wishes.

NEXT MEETING - 16<sup>th</sup> April 2013 at 6pm

The Chairman requested that Members note the change of venue for the next meeting which would be held in the Council Chamber at Bognor Regis Town Hall.

The meeting concluded at 8.13pm

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCILHOUSING & CUSTOMER SERVICES WORKING GROUP23 MAY 2013Decision

Subject : Customer Access Strategy 2013 - 2017

Report by : Jackie Follis

Report date: 7 May 2013

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Arun is working in an increasingly demanding and complex environment in terms of how we deliver our customer services. The complexity comes not only from the range of services and external financial pressures, but from a fast moving environment where we have an increasing number of ways we can choose to interact with a wide range of customers, who in their turn also expect us to be increasingly flexible across a range of channels. In order to balance these demands and protect our most vulnerable customers we need to have a corporate approach to customer services.

This paper describes the background to the Customer Access Strategy, presents the proposed Strategy and sets out a high level list of proposed actions.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are asked to recommend approval of the Customer Access Strategy to Full Council.

1 BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Arun District Council delivers a wide range of services. These range from generic services such as rubbish collection, which impact on everybody to much more specialist services which, although they may effect a smaller number of residents are equally important, often to the more vulnerable members of our community. We provide services for residents, businesses and visitors who make very different demands in different ways, but all require a responsive service that delivers consistently and gets it right first time.

- 1.2 The Council operates in a complex and changing environment and is constantly having to balance statutory and legal requirements with local needs, whilst working with our partners who may have aligned, but not identical aims.
- 1.3 The increasingly difficult financial environment means that we must continue to review how we deliver services most efficiently. We are working in an environment where 'efficiency' increasingly means identify cashable efficiencies as well as doing more for less.
- 1.4 No aspect of customer service exists in isolation. Services are necessarily delivered in different ways, depending on their nature and the needs of customers. We must look at every opportunity to 'join up' these services where this means a more efficient and lower cost service for the customer. To ensure that this happens we must, so far as we are able, link new developments so that they work together. Two of the most significant current projects for Arun are the procurement of a new Housing system and the development of the website. It has already been recognized that these will both be critical to the provision of an integrated Customer Access Strategy in the future.
- 1.5 Over the last few months Officers have consulted with Members, through the Housing and Customer Services Working Group, with staff across all services at their team meetings and with Senior Managers. The intention has been to understand more about the needs of the services and start to develop a 'discussion' across the organization about what approach we want to take and how we can do this in a more integrated way. The attached document is the outcome of this consultation and if agreed by Members will set out our corporate approach to Customer Services. Behind this will be a detailed action plan to be presented to the Housing and Customer Services Working Group at the next meeting in July. Our aim is that in the future, when any changes which will impact on service delivery are being considered, that a service or team goes back to the Customer Access Strategy to ensure that the change is aligned to the principles set out within it.

Staff are committed to delivering the best service they can, whilst recognizing that there are limitations because of resource constraints. They have been eager to engage with discussions and have positive ideas about how to take their services forward. We need to work with individuals and teams to capture and develop these ideas and to reassure staff where change may feel threatening. Continuously improving the way we deliver services is something we already do as a Council, but we need to ensure that we do it in a more coherent way, particularly with regard to more appropriate use of the different channels which we use to interact with our customers.

- 1.6 We know from recent research that customers value choice and need to contact us in a number of different ways, which will depend not only on the service they require, but their circumstances. Members have expressed concern about this in the past. We know that some of our customers will always want or need to deal with us face to face and we will continue to do this and to improve the service. However we also

know that other customers expect to be able to do more, more easily on our website and to make increased use of mobile devices (eg smart phones). We need to understand more about what is possible and which forms of communication are most appropriate in different circumstances. We need to work with staff and customers who regularly use these media to learn more about how the Council can use them.

- 1.7 In the complex and fast moving environment described here, Arun needs to be clear about what our customers want and how we deliver these services in the future. We will never be able to, and would not want to prescribe in detail how each service delivers to customers. We can however agree the principles that we should all be working to and put in place a more integrated approach, particularly where this involves major investment in new technology.

## 2 CUSTOMER ACCESS STRATEGY

- 2.1 The attached Appendix A is the draft Customer Access Strategy. This is based on research and consultation and, if agreed, will set the direction for Customer Services in the future.
- 2.2 All those consulted, including CMT, have recognised that we need to have a dedicated resource to take this forward. Corporately we employ 15.91 FTE in Arun Direct, 17.16 FTE in direct face to face roles (reception corporately and for individual services), but no dedicated resource to support the website. We are now exploring whether this should best be provided via another local authority, an agency or directly employed resource.
- 2.3 We are currently reviewing how other authorities are delivering or planning to deliver customer services in the future, with the intention of exploring opportunities to work together if these are feasible.
- 2.4 Members are asked to consider and discuss whether or not they are happy with the principles and content of the Strategy.
- 2.5 Following discussion with Members, staff and managers a number of key areas for action have been identified. Appendix B describes these and a detailed action plan will be presented to Members at their next meeting. The timetable for the action plan is the same as the Arun Priorities timetable, that is 2013 to 2017. However it is expected that many of the specific actions will be implemented in the next two years. The highest priority is the Lagan Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system which may not be supported after March 2014. We are currently investigating alternatives and expect to have firm proposals by the end of June 2013, to give time to implement alternatives by March 2014. Work such as the review of written communication and mobile working will be somewhat dependent

on service plans and timetables which we need to agree with those services. Other issues we would expect to be subject to continuing review, eg the needs of our customers in a changing environment.

- 2.6 Members should be aware that there will be additional capital and costs associated with making the changes necessary to deliver a modern and improved service in the future. These will be identified within the next two months.
- 2.7 If there are any members of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group who would like to become more involved in particular areas of the action plan we would welcome this.

### 3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 Members are asked to recommend approval of the Customer Access Strategy to Full Council.

Contact: Jackie Follis, Head of Human Resources and Customer Services  
Ext 37580

## Customer Access Strategy 2013 - 2017

### Introduction

Arun District Council's Customer Access Strategy is based on a number of key principles, set out in the next section, which we believe define what our customers want and need from the Council in terms of customer service. The Strategy sets out how we intend to deliver customer services and is supported by a detailed action plan.

We are becoming more informed about our customer's views, but still need to understand more. We also need to know when and how these views change over time. A Customer Access Strategy should never be static.

As a public service provider and an employer, Arun District Council is fully committed to the fair and equal treatment of everybody we deal with. We strive to meet the needs of all our customers irrespective of gender, age, disability, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation, pregnancy and maternity and marriage and civil partnership. This includes working to identify barriers which may prevent potential customers from accessing our services as well as improving services for existing customers.

We need to work closely with all the service areas within the Council. We recognise that all services cannot be delivered in an identical way, but our aim is that these principles become fundamental to the way we work and that any developments or changes to the way we deliver services are based on these principles. We will fully take into account the views of Elected Members, managers and staff at all levels. The best possible customer service can only be achieved with the commitment and ownership of our staff.

We must be prepared to be as radical as we have to be, in order to design the services that our customers want and then follow it through.

## **What we will Deliver:**

We will provide a service that allows our customers to choose the way they contact us, consistently receiving accurate and up-to date information whatever the method. We recognise that different communication channels can and should be used in different ways appropriate to that method of communication.

- We recognise that customers wish to meet face to face, write, call and transact on-line, or through social media, we also understand that self-service channels are less expensive to maintain than others. Making these channels equally user friendly and reliable will help the natural migration towards the digital end of the spectrum.

We will aim to resolve the maximum number of transactions at first point of contact.

- We will continue to speak to our customers, within individual service areas and corporately so that we understand what services they want and how they want them delivered.

Service quality and capacity can be improved by reducing the overall number of transactions. We will strive for efficiency in everything we do - support resolution at first point of contact, reduce handling and double keying – and get it right first time.

A well informed, equipped and targeted workforce is key to providing a robust service and staff should be prepared and accustomed to moving between the back office and customer facing roles. This will ensure that we can cover peaks and troughs in service, but more importantly it will help them to stay in touch with our customers. This should be encouraged at all levels.

We need a tool to manage our customer transactions, whether in our offices, or on the go. This could be Lagan Frontline our current system, but there are alternatives, however they must be supported by a coherent approach to back end system access and integration across the Council.

We must deliver a website that is more up to date in style and easier for customers to read and interact with.

We will investigate setting up self-service accounts, so that customers can log in and see a whole range of information that is specific to them.

Many of our customers now use mobile devices to contact us, so we must make better use of the channels that those customers find it easy and convenient to use.

We will provide a more flexible approach to the places where our customers can talk to us. All mobile staff should act as Arun Ambassadors and be prepared to answer a range of cross-service questions.

### **How we will deliver it**

We believe there are a number of key and interrelated ways that we currently use or will want to use to deliver customer services in the future. These are:

- Our staff
- Systems thinking reviews
- Social media
- Internet Strategy
- Written communication
- Supporting systems/technologies
- CRM and the 'Golden Customer Record'
- Face to face communication/direct contact

### **Our Staff**

- We have a lot of skilled and knowledgeable staff who are very committed to giving the best customer service and we need to build on that. We may need to encourage them to think differently about what the best customer service is.
- Our resourcing strategy must aim to reduce the current, silo-led approach to customer services, between services and most importantly between the staff within services who speak to the customers and back office staff who complete their transactions. Our existing staff and managers are key to developing this flexible approach. Managers must help to encourage staff to work in this way, but this needs to be backed up with training and support where necessary. It should be business as usual for a manager to ask staff members to join the front line for a few hours to cover demand. All employees should aim to spend time in customer facing roles and not be resistant or fearful of it.
- We expect to 'get it right first time' and so remove unnecessary and avoidable contact from our services, which should have the knock on effect of releasing



capacity to help those customers with genuine needs. This is obviously going to be easier if subject experts are put in direct contact with the customers and are encouraged to exploit that direct contact to better understand the customer's needs. A review of our opening hours and the places where we could meet our customers will be another important step.

### Systems Thinking

- The Council has been investing in Lean Management, or Systems Thinking for several years now and a common complaint has been the perceived lack of progress. The good news is that the theory has reached many areas of the organisation and this is also evident in the strategy outlined here, which is based on systems thinking principles, the most important one being to start with the customer.
- Our Lean Core Team already includes representatives from most areas of the business and will be responsible for not just carrying out lean reviews, but also spreading the ideas and helping to train and support all staff with their learning curve. Over the coming months, the Lean Core Team will become involved in the upgrade and redesign of the website, as well as specific reviews to help reduce transaction volumes and work with all customer facing areas and their back office services to create more streamlined processes. We will also be reviewing all outbound communications, from letters to leaflets, to help minimise the need for customers to contact us.

### Social Media

- The popularity of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn continues to grow and recent government studies suggest that all councils will be exploiting these channels within the next 2-3 years. We must investigate social media thoroughly and seek further training and guidance that will help us deliver both inbound and outbound strategies to complement our other channels. Use of these media is at an early stage and we need to help services to understand their potential, but also their limitations.

### Internet Strategy

- We must promote digital working (internet) in everything we do, including bold promotion on all outbound letters. Once the current website upgrade has been completed we must start a new project to update the content from 2000 detail heavy pages, to something more modern and user friendly. The ideal is to find what you need in three clicks. Most customers begin with a Google search or

search within our website, so Search Engine Optimisation is key. This work will be led by our Communications Manager, but will require input from services and the Lean Core Team who will work with departments to produce revised content and to help build new pages. There will need to be training in web design and search engine optimization. The Organisation must give serious consideration to the resource needed to develop and maintain a modern and effective website.

### Written Communications

- All areas should be able to produce easily understood letters that reduce the need for further customer contact. We will agree the standard we are aiming for, but recognise that this may be different depending on the channel and the message.
- The Lean Core Team will be able to assist with reviewing written communications – outbound letters and leaflets. In future, bulk customer mailings should be co-ordinated between Services, the Communications Team and Customer Services.

### Supporting Systems

- There are many different types of technologies that can support the customer contact process across the differing access channels. Within Arun District Council these can be broadly grouped into five areas: Customer Relationship Management (CRM); Telephony; Internet; eForms and Back-Office. We believe that each type of technology remains fundamental to delivering excellent customer services; however it is the application and level of functionality needed that defines how these should be applied and ultimately what products we need.
- The lack of widespread integration between systems still remains a barrier to improved customer service and realising process efficiencies; therefore we will be looking at the most cost effective way of achieving this.
- As part of the action plan we will be reviewing our delivery blue-print and use of technologies to inform us of the ideal delivery model. We plan to learn from other councils who have already made these decisions to see what has worked well and what has not.

### CRM and the 'Golden Customer Record'

- Work with different services strongly suggests that there is no appetite for combined customer data, one record holding all the information about an individual customer, (golden record). It is clear that creating and maintaining

such a database will be time consuming and expensive. There may however be an intermediate stage where services that work closely together could consider this if the benefits sufficiently outweigh the costs and effort. We must identify how much of a priority this might be for our customers, in particular linked to self-service. There will always be a group of our transient population for whom this will be unachievable.

### Face to Face/Direct Contact

- Customers have made it clear that they value face to face contact, particularly where services are dealing with vulnerable clients. We will continue with this and improve the service.
- We will be introducing the Lonsto queue management system in Bognor Regis Town Hall (BRTTH) and with the information provided by Lonsto from BRTTH and the Civic Centre will review all customer facing staff in reception areas. We need to be able to draw on a more flexible central pool of staff who can perform in the front or back offices and maybe even across multiple services. More widespread use of a CRM system, or its alternatives, by all staff, coupled with access to our phone technology will support this. This will help us to deal better with peaks and troughs in demand, as well as the obvious additional benefits of enhanced customer understanding and dissemination of specialist knowledge.

## Agenda Item 8 - APPENDIX B

**Developing the Action Plan**

During the consultation with Members of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group and service areas there have been a number of areas raised as important to the overall delivery of Customer Services. These are set out below and will be included in the action plan. This is not an exclusive list and a full version of the action plan will go to the Housing and Customer Services Working Group on 16<sup>th</sup> July 2013.

- Understand exactly where we are with existing systems and how these support customer services. From this we will develop a blue-print to define what corporate systems/technology and associated resources are needed to deliver customer services in the future.
- Review and update our Customer Care Charter (In Our Customers Shoes) to ensure that it continues to align with our evolving aspirations.
- Undertake further investigations and measurements of how customers are contacting us, what happens with those contacts within both the front and back office, and then look at ways to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of dealing with these, possibly using automated technologies.
- Review of location of Arun Direct – it has been demonstrated in neighbouring authorities that co-location of contact centre staff and face to face staff increases the flexibility and willingness of the wider team to work together.
- Explore the benefits of more outreach where we believe that we may not be reaching some of the more vulnerable members of the community.
- Review and update written material of all kinds, supported by the Lean Core Team. Agree the appropriate level of language for each channel and train staff accordingly. It will not always be appropriate to attempt to give the same content and message in different media, for example Twitter and written correspondence.
- Review and update written customer contact information for those without internet access.
- Improve the Arun website including content, style, usability and search engine optimisation. Ensure on-going support is put in place to maintain this and that there is a corporate commitment to do so.
- Review the type and style of service mobile device (e.g. smartphones) users want and look at ways this could be delivered.

- Work with services to define 'first point of contact' so that we can accurately measure what proportion of queries are being dealt with at first point of contact.
- Implement the Lonsto queue management system at Bognor Regis Town Hall
- Review of contacts with different groups in the community, taking account of the different barriers which may exist, e.g. language, dyslexia etc. and how we can improve this.
- Undertake individual Lean reviews as appropriate

**Housing & Customer Services Working Group - 2013/14** (please note all dates for agenda items subject to review)

Meeting Date		23-May-13	16-Jul-13	10-Sep-13	07-Nov-13	09-Jan-14	19-Mar-14	
<b>Agenda Prep Timetable</b>		* B/H on Monday		* B/H on Monday				
Draft Reports to Erica by 11am Thurs		25-Apr-13	20-Jun-13	15-Aug-13	10-Oct-13	05-Dec-13	20-Feb-14	
<b>Agenda Prep Date 3pm</b>		<b>30-Apr-13</b>	<b>24-Jun-13</b>	<b>16-Aug-13</b>	<b>14-Oct-13</b>	<b>10-Dec-13</b>	<b>25-Feb-14</b>	
Final Reports to Erica by 11am Mon		* 7-May-13	01-Jul-13	* 27-Aug-13	21-Oct-14	16-Dec-13	03-Mar-14	
Despatch Agendas by 2pm Thurs		09-May-13	04-Jul-13	29-Aug-13	24-Oct-13	19-Dec-13	06-Mar-14	
<b>Date of Meeting 6pm</b>		<b>23-May-13</b>	<b>16-Jul-13</b>	<b>10-Sep-13</b>	<b>07-Nov-13</b>	<b>09-Jan-14</b>	<b>19-Mar-14</b>	
<b>OSC Meeting Dates</b>		<b>04-Jun-13</b>	<b>30-Jul-13</b>	<b>17-Sep-13</b>	<b>12-Nov-13</b>	<b>21-Jan-14</b>	<b>TBC</b>	
<b>Cabinet Meeting Dates</b>		<b>24-Jun-13</b>	<b>22Jul/27Aug?</b>	<b>16-Sep-13</b>	<b>18-Nov-13</b>	<b>10-Feb-14</b>	<b>14-Apr-14</b>	
<b>Full Council Meeting Dates</b>		<b>10-Jul-13</b>	<b>04-Sep-13</b>	<b>23-Oct-13</b>	<b>08-Jan-14</b>	<b>05-Mar-14</b>	<b>14-May-14</b>	
Item	Lead	Origin						COMMENTS
Election of Chairman & Vice-Chairman		ToR	*					
Terms of Reference		ToR	*					
Work programme - set and review		ToR	*	*	*	*	*	
Review of Housing Contractors Mears	BP		*					
Customer Access Strategy	JF		*					
<b>Suggested Items 2013/14</b>								
Review of Rough Sleepers & Cold Weather Shelter Provision	BP			*				Invite Stone Pillow Chief Exec?
Impact of Welfare Reform Act (including Bedroom Tax, Housing Rent Arrears and Housing Allocations)	BP			*				
Update on Housing Development Progress	BP							Schedule Date
Tenant Under Occupation Scheme	BP							Schedule Date
Complaints Process Review	BP						*	
Secure Tenants Agreements Annual Review	BP						*	
Housing Business Plan Annual Review	BP					*		
Gas Servicing Contract	BP			*	*	*	*	*
New Housing IT System Update	BP							Schedule Date

Meeting Date			23-May-13	16-Jul-13	10-Sep-13	07-Nov-13	09-Jan-14	19-Mar-14	
<b>Agenda Prep Timetable</b>			* B/H on Monday		* B/H on Monday				
Draft Reports to Erica by 11am Thurs			25-Apr-13	20-Jun-13	15-Aug-13	10-Oct-13	05-Dec-13	20-Feb-14	
<b>Agenda Prep Date 3pm</b>			<b>30-Apr-13</b>	<b>24-Jun-13</b>	<b>16-Aug-13</b>	<b>14-Oct-13</b>	<b>10-Dec-13</b>	<b>25-Feb-14</b>	
Final Reports to Erica by 11am Mon			* 7-May-13	01-Jul-13	* 27-Aug-13	21-Oct-14	16-Dec-13	03-Mar-14	
Despatch Agendas by 2pm Thurs			09-May-13	04-Jul-13	29-Aug-13	24-Oct-13	19-Dec-13	06-Mar-14	
<b>Date of Meeting 6pm</b>			<b>23-May-13</b>	<b>16-Jul-13</b>	<b>10-Sep-13</b>	<b>07-Nov-13</b>	<b>09-Jan-14</b>	<b>19-Mar-14</b>	
<b>OSC Meeting Dates</b>			<b>04-Jun-13</b>	<b>30-Jul-13</b>	<b>17-Sep-13</b>	<b>12-Nov-13</b>	<b>21-Jan-14</b>	<b>TBC</b>	
<b>Cabinet Meeting Dates</b>			<b>24-Jun-13</b>	<b>22Jul/27Aug?</b>	<b>16-Sep-13</b>	<b>18-Nov-13</b>	<b>10-Feb-14</b>	<b>14-Apr-14</b>	
<b>Full Council Meeting Dates</b>			<b>10-Jul-13</b>	<b>04-Sep-13</b>	<b>23-Oct-13</b>	<b>08-Jan-14</b>	<b>05-Mar-14</b>	<b>14-May-14</b>	
Item	Lead	Origin							COMMENTS
Tenancy Fraud - Report Back on Photo ID Pilot	BP							*	
Development of Tenants Panel	BP				*				
Landlord Accreditation Scheme	BP								Schedule Date
Energy Efficiency & Fuel Poverty Strategy	BP			*					
Disabled Facility Grants	BP								Schedule Date
<b>Deleted Items</b>									
<b>Suggested items for 2014/15</b>									
<b>Suggested items for 2015/16</b>									