

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF THE HOUSING & CUSTOMER WORKING GROUP ON 22 OCTOBER 2020

PART A: REPORT

SUBJECT: Strategic direction of Customer Services – an update

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DATE: September 2020

EXTN: 37914

PORTFOLIO AREA: Neighbourhood Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report briefly reviews progress on the implementation of the new Customer Services Strategy. This follows a report taken to the working group in September 2019 which set out the process of implementation of the Strategy and how this would be embedded into the organisation.

The report presents the revised draft Strategy together with setting out the next steps prior to recommending the strategy to Cabinet and Full Council.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Members are asked to note the report

1. BACKGROUND:

1.1. In September 2019 a report was taken to the Housing and Customer Services working group which briefly reviewed the Customer Access Strategy 2013-2017 noting the progress made against the Action Plan which formed part of the strategy.

1.2. The report also introduced a draft Customer Services Strategy together with a process of implementation. Emphasis of the importance of embedding the strategy was made in the report and a method of implementation was set out. This included workshops with various teams across the organisation.

1.3. This report reviews progress, in addition it identifies the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. The Customer Services Annual Update – 2019-2020, taken to the July 2020 Housing and Customer Services working group, reviews the work of Customer Services and includes reference to the changes in working as a result of the pandemic.

2. THE DRAFT CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

2.1. Appendix 1 provides the updated draft strategy. This begins with the Council's 2020 Vision which continues to be relevant to providing the best starting point

where good customer services are concerned:

- Offering an improved customer experience
- Building better relationships with other organisations and the community
- Providing more digital opportunities to make dealing with us easier

2.2. The Strategy includes the following Vision which aims to address the Council's wider vision where customers are concerned.

2.3. Customer Services Vision

We aim to be a customer focused organisation – we will work to understand our customers better and put them at the heart of everything we do, and we will support customers to do more for themselves.

2.4. The Strategy is set out by a series of headings

- Aims and objectives
- Priorities, challenges and opportunities
- Community and partnership working
- What we will do, how and when

2.5. The Strategy introduces a Customer Charter which sets out what the customer can expect together with what the Council commits to.

2.6. A reoccurring theme within the Strategy is that ADC will strive to improve opportunity for customer feedback, and that our overall measure of success will be customer satisfaction with our services.

2.7. For the Customer Services Vision to become a reality every service area, and every member of staff in the Council, has a role and responsibility to play in providing the best quality for our customers. The Strategy will need to be further embedded into the culture of the organisation ensure that the vision is owned by all staff.

2.8. The Strategy will include an action plan, a living document, which will be regularly updated to ensure work progresses as organisational changes are needed.

3. DIGITAL SERVICES

3.1. Digital services for ADC customers play an increasingly important part, and this is identified within the Strategy. The Council's 2020 Vision states that this is an important strand of work by 'Providing more digital opportunities to make dealing with us easier'.

3.2. The council's main website www.arun.gov.uk, is under review with the aim to having more transactional services which are easier and quicker to access. The content is also planned to be refreshed to make it clearer and simpler to read, at the same time it will be assured the site meets the latest accessibility standards that are now mandated for public sector websites.

3.3. The ongoing pandemic has confirmed the importance of digital services. The face to face inquiries received by the Council are now being dealt with by telephone or via the Council's website. The trend in using digital services has increased over recent years (see the Customer Services Annual Update – 2019-2020 report July

2020), however it will be important to ensure access to services is maintained for those customers that don't have access to digital services.

3.4. The Customer Services Strategy will work alongside the development in digital technology which is a key part of improving the access of services to the public.

4. IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

4.1. A series of workshops were set out as a way of implementing and embedding the strategy. Workshops with the Customer Services teams and for the Senior Management Team were successfully completed. However due to the Covid-19 pandemic the final workshop, planned to be held with staff and Members could not be held and due to the ongoing pandemic, it is unlikely this can be held in the near future. However, an alternative method as to how this could be done by digital means are being investigated.

4.2. The draft strategy is being consulted on within the organisation. A presentation on the draft was made at a Senior Management Team meeting and comments on the draft are being provided. The next step will be to take the Strategy to Cabinet in Spring 2020 with a recommendation for its adoption.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

To note the report

3. OPTIONS:

To note the report

4. CONSULTATION:

AS described in the report workshops with staff have taken place. A further workshop is planned.

Has consultation been undertaken with:	YES	NO
Relevant Town/Parish Council		No
Relevant District Ward Councillors		No
Other groups/persons (please specify)		No
5. ARE THERE ANY IMPLICATIONS IN RELATION TO THE FOLLOWING COUNCIL POLICIES: (Explain in more detail at 6 below)	YES	NO
Financial		No
Legal		No
Human Rights/Equality Impact Assessment		No
Community Safety including Section 17 of Crime & Disorder Act		No
Sustainability		No
Asset Management/Property/Land		No
Technology		No

Other (please explain)		No
6. IMPLICATIONS: Improvement of Customer Access to ADC services		

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION:
To work towards implementing a new Customer Services Strategy

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS:
Strategic direction of Customer Services - HCSWG September 2019
The Customer Services Annual Update – 2019-2020 – HCSWG July 2020