

ARUN DISTRICT COUNCIL

REPORT TO AND DECISION OF CABINET ON 22 March 2021

SUBJECT: Customer Services Strategy

REPORT AUTHOR: Joe Russell-Wells, Group Head of Neighbourhood Services

DATE: 15th February 2021

EXTN: 37914

PORTFOLIO AREA: Neighbourhood Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report sets out the Customer Services Strategy 2021 – 2026 and includes the process for implementation to embed it into the organisation. This follows the report taken to the Housing and Customer Services Group in October 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

To formally adopt the Customer Services Strategy 2021- 2026 and approve the process of implementation to embed it into the organisation.

1. BACKGROUND:

- 1.1. In October 2020 a report was taken to the Housing and Customer Services working group which set out the process of implementation of the Strategy and how this would be embedded into the organisation.
- 1.2. The report presented the revised draft Strategy, together with setting out the next steps prior to recommending the strategy to Cabinet.
- 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 CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

- 2.1. A copy of the Strategy can be found at Appendix 1. It begins with the Council's Vision taken from the Corporate Plan which continues to be relevant in 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 reference to the next steps, a living document, which will be regularly updated to ensure work progresses as organisational changes are needed. Appendix 2 sets out the next steps which will be referenced on the Council website.

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 has been consulted on within the organisation. A presentation on the draft was made at a Senior Management Team meeting and comments have been input into the final draft.

4.3. In order that the strategy be successfully implemented the following is proposed:

- Include a section within the Induction course so that new staff members are made aware and understand the Council's customer service vision.
- On- going training and workshops with the Customer Services Team.
- Regular meetings with managers from all departments to provide feedback from customers and discuss ways of improving the customer experience.
- Develop and implement customer feedback channels to gain customer insight and review all feedback received to improve service delivery.
- Ensuring that key statistical information to improve customer services is recorded.
- Continually look to improve customer services by researching and adopting new technology and new ways of working.
- Inclusion of the new performance management system, Clear review, in which 'improving the customer experience' is one of the objective criteria.

2. PROPOSAL(S):

To formally adopt the Customer Services Strategy 2021- 2026 and approve the process of implementation to embed it into the organisation

3. OPTIONS:

Not to formally adopt the Customer Services Strategy 2021- 2026 and not to approve the process of implementation to embed it into the organisation

4. CONSULTATION:

Members of the Housing and Customer Services Working Group.

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

7. REASON FOR THE DECISION: To implement a new Customer Services Strategy
8. EFFECTIVE DATE OF THE DECISION: 31 March 2021

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