



Oversight and Governance

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CABINET

Tuesday 13 August 2019
2pm
Council House, Plymouth

Members:

Councillor Evans OBE, Chair

Councillor P Smith, Vice Chair

Councillors Haydon, Coker, Dann, Lowry, Penberthy, Jon Taylor, Laing and Kate Taylor.

Members are invited to attend the above meeting to consider the items of business overleaf.

This meeting will be webcast and available on-line after the meeting. By entering the Warspite Room, councillors are consenting to being filmed during the meeting and to the use of the recording for the webcast.

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Tracey Lee

Chief Executive

Cabinet

12. Customer Experience Progress Report

(Pages 1 - 46)

CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE PROGRESS REPORT

CABINET



Date of meeting: 13 August 2019

Title of Report: **Customer Experience Progress Report**

Lead Member: Councillor Jon Taylor (Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and Transformation)

Lead Strategic Director: Andy Ralphs (Strategic Director of Customer and Corporate Services)

Author: Peter Honeywell

Contact Email: Peter.honeywell@plymouth.gov.uk

Your Reference:

Key Decision: No

Confidentiality: Part I - Official

Purpose of Report

The Local Government Association (LGA) pioneered a new approach to its Peer Challenge approach in Plymouth in July 2018. At the request of the Council, the independent review was conducted from the point of view of our customers. The review made nine recommendations and a number of suggestions for 'quick wins'; these were endorsed by the Cabinet in November 2018. This report sets out the progress made since then, and introduces the next phase of the Council's approach to improving customer experience through 'the way we work' programme.

Recommendations and Reasons

1. To note positive progress made against the LGA Peer Challenge recommendations since the peer review report to Cabinet in November 2018
2. To note the work across the Council to improve customer experience as set out in Appendix I
3. To note the Cabinet working group key outputs document attached
4. To agree that the Customer Experience Programme will be renamed "The Way we Work" and to support the further development and delivery of enabling projects as described in the report

Alternative options considered and rejected

As it has been a year since the Peer Challenge took place it is appropriate to review progress against recommendations, set out the progress made, celebrate the contributions to customer experience across the Council and describe the wider Way we Work Programme.

Relevance to the Corporate Plan and/or the Plymouth Plan

The Corporate Plan, adopted by the new administration in June 2018 clearly puts the customer at the heart of everything we do, and the Council's mission, to be a fairer city where everyone does their bit. This will underpin the work we do to improve how we deliver services, as well as support communities to do their bit. Delivering a more digitally connected Plymouth will ensure as many people can benefit from new technologies such as 5G and Full Fibre and at the same time support those who are digitally excluded, this will ensure we maximise our limited resources for those most in need. The work will also focus on the way we work internally, promoting new ways of working and personal wellbeing, improving the organisation's health and safety culture, and provide the tools our people need to work smarter and more efficiently.

Implications for the Medium Term Financial Plan and Resource Implications:

The management of changes required to improve the customer experience and to have a financially sustainable Council are all being overseen by the Way We Work Programme. Any resourcing/financial implications to deliver our ambitions over the next three years will be included in the MTFP 2019-2023, and where required will require a separate business case.

Carbon Footprint (Environmental) Implications:

There are no implications arising directly from the report but will where required support the administration's commitment to carbon neutrality.

Other Implications: e.g. Health and Safety, Risk Management, Child Poverty:

** When considering these proposals members have a responsibility to ensure they give due regard to the Council's duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination and promote good relations between people who share protected characteristics under the Equalities Act and those who do not.*

No specific policy recommendations are made in this report that require an equality impact assessment, though it is likely that decisions made in the future relating to work undertaken in delivering the Way we Work programme will require analysis under equalities legislation, which will be reported and published.

Appendices

**Add rows as required to box below*

Ref.	Title of Appendix	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
		<i>If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.</i>						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
A	Appendix I – Customer Experience							
B	Cabinet Working Group agreed outputs							
C	Customer Service Strategy 2015-18							

Background papers:

*Add rows as required to box below

Please list all unpublished, background papers relevant to the decision in the table below. Background papers are unpublished works, relied on to a material extent in preparing the report, which disclose facts or matters on which the report or an important part of the work is based.

Title of any background paper(s)	Exemption Paragraph Number (if applicable)						
	If some/all of the information is confidential, you must indicate why it is not for publication by virtue of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 by ticking the relevant box.						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Sign off:

Fin	akh. 19. 20. 76	Leg	It / 3308 0 / 0708	Mon Off	Click here to enter text.	HR	Click here to enter text.	Asset s	Click here to enter text.	Strat Proc	Click here to enter text.
Originating Senior Leadership Team member: Andy Ralphs											
Please confirm the Strategic Director(s) has agreed the report? Yes Date agreed: 08/08/2019											
Cabinet Member approval: Approved by Jon Taylor by phone Date approved: 08/08/2019											

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

In July 2018 the Local Government Association (LGA) conducted a Customer Experience Peer Challenge for the Council looking at all aspects of the services we deliver and how they are received by customers. The 'quick wins' and practical actions arising from the review were agreed by Cabinet in November 2018, and since then the Corporate Management Team, Cabinet Working Group and the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee have provided support to develop the Customer Experience Programme "The Way we Work"

This report sets out the progress made since November 2018 and sets out each project that will deliver the Way we Work Programme. This will deliver a set of improvements to meet the recommendations from the Peer Challenge and at the same time deliver a financially sustainable Council. Delivering the required changes through a single programme will reduce the cost to deliver services, will set out the "ask and offer" with our customers and staff, promote digital as our channel of choice and ensure we have a consistent approach to customer service across the Council.

PEER CHALLENGE RECOMMENDATIONS & PROGRESS

Since the peer challenge report was presented to Cabinet in November 2018, steady progress has been made in addressing the recommendations. Below is a summary of progress made, and in some cases have resulted in a number of actions being taken, and/or are being considered as part of the Way We Work Programme.

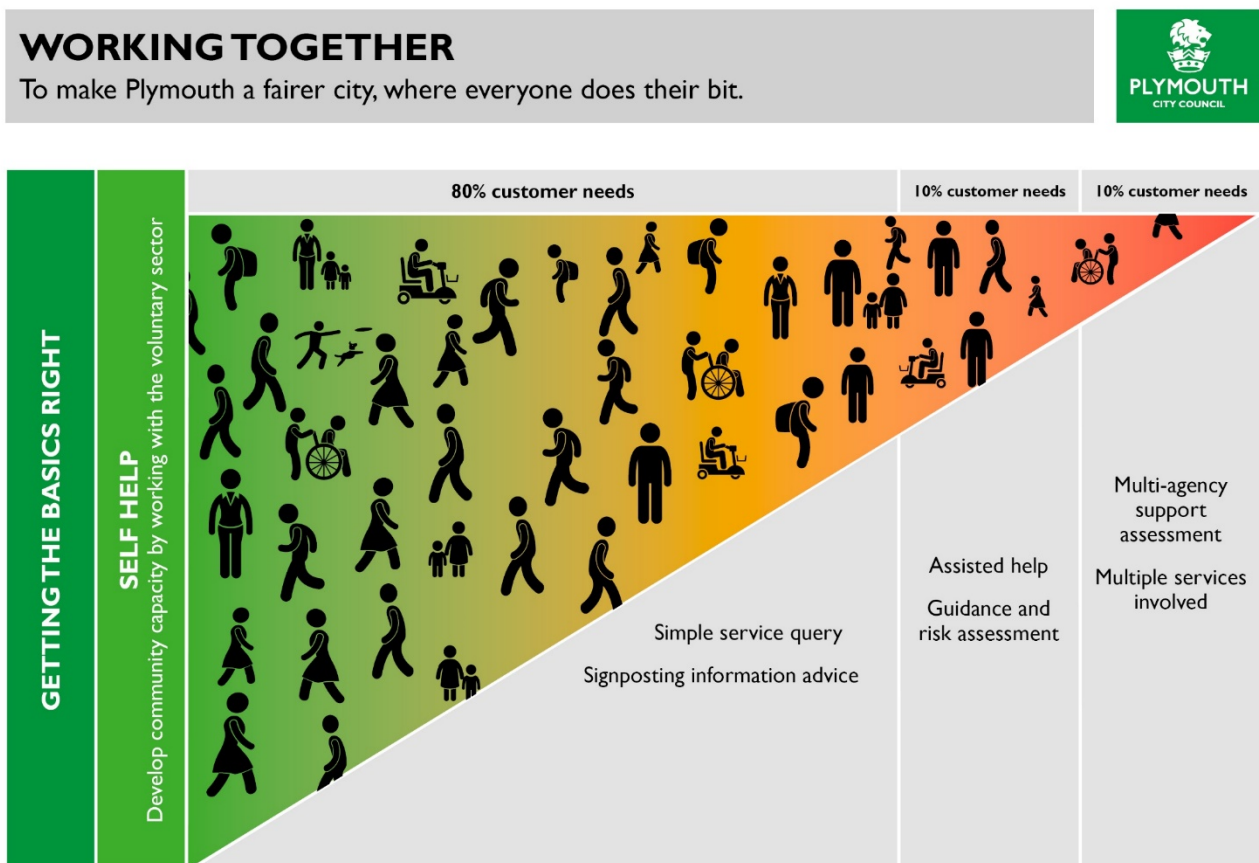
Peer Challenge recommendation	Latest status
<p>Undertake a workforce capacity and capability review based upon customer experience and as part of this:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appoint the new Strategic Director and focus on strategic leadership capacity – completed • Ensure that departments and service areas refocus on placing customers at the heart of a linear, consistent and coherent cross council approach. • Harness the Council's workforce to act as volunteers, ambassadors and advocates for both the council and customers • Capture staff ideas and potentially disruptive innovative solutions for improved customer experience 	<p>Andy Ralphs was appointed as Strategic Director in November 2018</p> <p>The 'End to End' reviews will change the way we work and have started with the Street Scene and Waste service areas</p> <p>The Workforce Modernisation element of the "Way we work" programme will deliver on this recommendation. Staff suggestions were captured earlier this year and have been acted on. The 'End to End' reviews will also further engage staff in the delivery of changes.</p>
<p>Introduce a Plymouth City Council Definition of 'customer' and commence a consistent narrative around customer experience</p>	<p>Customers have been defined as people who live, work in or visit the city and a narrative for the Way We Work programme is now underway.</p>
<p>Establish organisation-wide customer profiles, based on the wealth of data already held, and use these profiles to inform service re-design from the customer perspective</p>	<p>The single view of customer project is currently working to connect customer data between our Council Tax system and the local land and property gazetteer, building on the work done previously with elections data. Over time this work will consolidate many of the customer databases currently held separately to allow us to create customer insight.</p>

Implement a Council and city-wide digital strategy with high level strategic sponsorship	The digital programme is developing a 'digital roadmap' and priorities for the City and Council covering: digital inclusion, digital services, digital infrastructure and using smart devices to help monitor assets and people across the city, allowing better targeting of services and investment. £3m has been already awarded by the government for the roll out of full fibre to over 200 public sector assets across the city and delivery of this will begin in 2020. Plymouth has also been announced as an early adopter for 5G and we will be meeting and working with network providers to ensure we maximise the benefits it provides to our customers.
Consider the value, timing and effectiveness of undertaking a 'health check' for the Council's communications function and overall approach to ensure that it enables the effective delivery of the council's overall strategic intentions in respect of customers	The Council is currently working with colleagues from Westminster City Council to review our communications and stakeholder management, resourcing and approach.
Review both the structural and functional alignment of core services, for example housing delivery, homelessness and demand, and integrate key services to move the 'first stop shop' towards a true 'one stop shop'	The 'End to End' reviews will map customer experiences and recommend alignment of organisations, assets and processes where necessary. We will also consider how best to deliver services provided by the first stop shop in the review of our 'front doors', as well as updating our plan for Libraries in early 2020.
Develop a corporate consultation and engagement strategy which is appropriately resourced	This work will be developed by the Community Empowerment Programme as described in the "Way we Work Programme" and resources will be allocated as and when required.
Undertake a comprehensive brand audit and review your brand hierarchy	This work is currently underway as part of the 'health check described above.
Define and communicate the psychological contract between the Council and its customers, businesses and residents – what are the exact asks and offers?	In March 2019 Directors and members of the Cabinet visited Wigan, where the Council has developed a programme which clearly articulates what the Council expects customers and staff to do, and in return what the Council will do, it is known as the "Wigan Deal". This work will be picked up in the Community Empowerment & Workforce Modernisation Programme.

The Way We Work Programme

Given the importance and complexity of change we have spent time developing The Way We Work Programme with Directors, managers, a Programme Board, a Cabinet Working Group and have taken feedback from the Performance, Finance and Customer Focus Overview and Scrutiny Committee. We have engaged a number of staff reference groups and departmental management teams, to get their views on how we may approach change moving forwards. This is not a ‘reset’ but a continuation of the journey the Council has been on over a number of years. The Peer Challenge is just one of many drivers that require us to look at our services. Customers and members provide regular insight into the challenges customers and communities face and we recognise we still have room for improvement. We also have to consider that the Council’s budget has reduced by over £110m over 9 years, will a further £20m to be found by 2023, so delivering the most optimum model will be crucial, but at the same time recognising we can’t do everything we would like to.

Despite the challenges we should recognise that the Council has made significant progress on the more complex work we undertake, including the integration of Health and Social Care with the Clinical Commissioning Group and other partners, which has delivered significant financial and improvements to the customer experience. However this only represents a smaller proportion of overall contacts with the Council. Our focus will now include the more routine transactions illustrated in the diagram below. 80% of customer need being the more routine transactions compared with 20% where requirements are more complex.



To be able to achieve change we will have to undertake a series of End to End service reviews. These will identify where improvements for customers can be made and where the service could be better aligned with other services across the Council to create economies of scale and/or more consistent customer experience using our customer service and operating model principles. The review process

will break into two phases, with the first focused on identifying opportunities for improvement, and secondly a set of recommendations for change and where required a business case to proceed to implementation. Our first review is taking place in the Street Scene and Waste services.

There are also a number of enabling projects that support The Way we Work and these are described below.

Workforce Modernisation

We are already in the process of replacing our Human Resources and Health and Safety systems, to make it simpler and easier for our staff to self-service, access e-learning and manage our workforce. Our new Human Resources Director Kim Brown joined us earlier in the month and will now lead this important programme of work. This work will drive improvements across Health, Safety and Wellbeing, define the culture and ways of working as well as support the wider organisational change that will be required.

Digital

As a Council we have already made significant progress in this area: more than 13,000 customers access our online services per month. One area we will strengthen is our work around Digital Inclusion, ensuring those who can't access online services can do through other means, including our community and voluntary sectors. In March 2019 we were awarded £3m from the Department of Digital, Culture, Media & Sport to support the roll out of Full Fibre infrastructure in the City. We are currently procuring a partner to work with us and we expect roll out to over 200 public sector buildings including GP Surgeries and Primary Schools in early 2020. We also have plans to extend this to Industrial Parks and Social Housing. This will give the market further opportunity to invest in Plymouth and stimulate competition amongst suppliers. This month we launched the new Plymouth Online Directory, which builds on the previous version of this site to provide access to public and voluntary information and services across the city, helping people to help themselves.

Procurement and Commissioning

An important part of our operating model is to make sure we procure and commission services in the right way and getting the best value for our customers is key. We have started to review all our principle contracts and will act where possible to reduce cost and improve outcomes for all. Since January 2019 the work has focused on the following:

- Engagement on key procurements, including The Box Catering (£4.5m); Local Full Fibre Network (£3m); Food Provision (£4m); Agency Workers (£5m p.a.)
- Improved focus of resources to specific category areas of spend
- Active discussions on embedding the Construction Charter
- Provision of interim management support to the Service
- Adoption of a Modern Slavery Statement
- Improved visibility around contract procurement and management
- Review of fitness of the Council's supply chain in the event of a "no deal" Brexit

Accommodation

This programme will cover the further consolidation opportunities that arise following the completion of technology allowing staff to work away from their office space. 'Smart working' will reduce the need for office space by increasing the 'people to desk' ratio. The accommodation programme will also look at the provision of facilities that customers can access our services through. This work will allow us to rationalise sites and provide services in communities targeted to the needs of the geography they serve.

Community Empowerment

Communities are an extremely important asset. Earlier in the year we visited Wigan Council, to look at the Wigan Deal. This has been a huge success in Wigan with staff and customers and aligns well with our Corporate Plan “A City where everyone does their bit”. Whilst this work is still being finalised we have defined three outcomes to target:

- Identify things that people can do for themselves, which will give them tangible benefits to their lives / their environment / their experience, as well as support Council budget challenges
- Develop an understanding of how we best engage with, and support, people to do this. This will require us to consider different communities (which might be communities of interest, of practice or of geography), and the different assets that they have. Engaging with the wider voluntary and community sector, and building on much good practice already underway in Plymouth, will be key.
- Build and operationalise the tools to support this happening, and to measure the impact, and to feed into the next cycle

Appendix I – Customer Experience Improvements

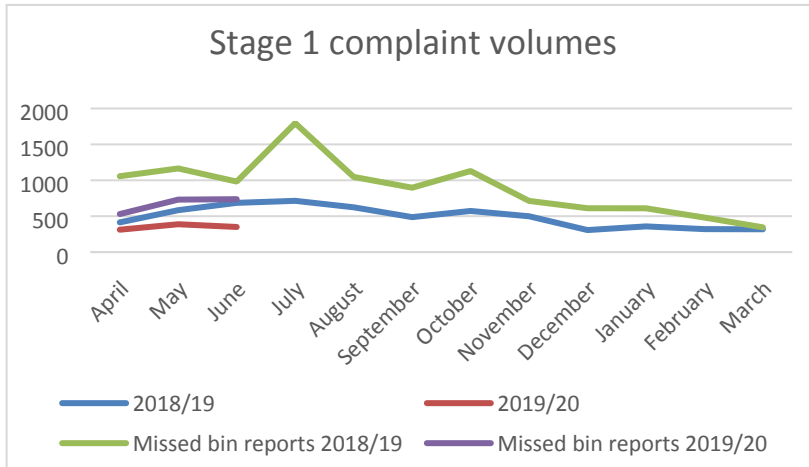
Although it takes time and thought to deliver sustainable change significant improvements are already underway. Below are some highlights and evidence across the organisation that have contributed to improvements in delivering the best customer experience we can.

People Directorate

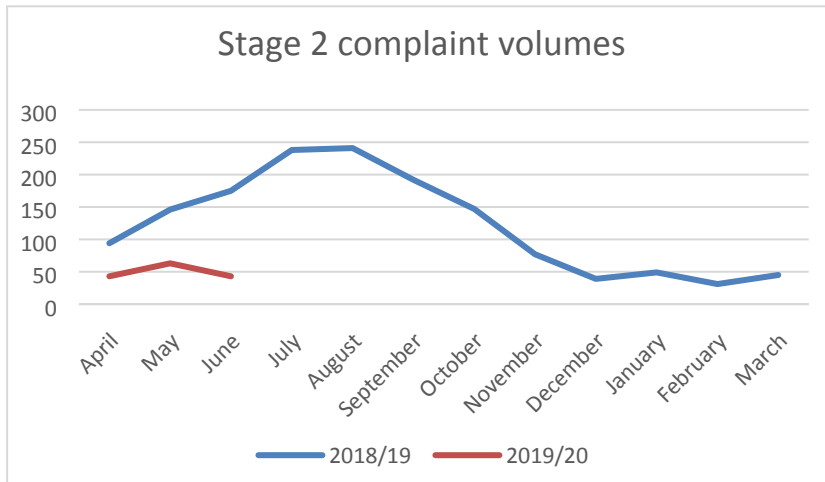
- We now have four Wellbeing Hubs up and running and have also just launched the Manadon Sports and Community Hub. The Wellbeing hubs, jointly developed with the Office of the Director of Public Health, provide a range of commissioned and statutory services as well as community led activity, locally on people's door steps. For example, in Four Greens Hub in Whitley there are podiatry and counselling services, a Children's Centre, time banking, a pop up library, befriending groups and more. The hubs expertise in knowing what is happening in each community and can link people together in a way which reduces social isolation and promotes self-help. We are working with the Wellbeing Hubs to build stronger and more resilient communities as well as offering a range of help to people in a timely way.
- The Promoting Independence Programme was developed by Strategic Cooperative Commissioning (SCC) and aims to support carers from across the domiciliary care sector in Plymouth to work with their service users to identify their aspirations and goals and what they can do to maintain their independence. This is truly embedding a person-centred care approach and improves the quality of life and also supports people to be engaged within their community, thereby helping to reduce the risk of loneliness and isolation.
- SCC have also ensured that monthly feedback is sought from members of the public who have accessed the Community Equipment Service. Feedback includes comments for service improvement. Some clients identified an issue with paying for calls to the service provider and as a direct consequence the provider, supported by Commissioners, changed to a free phone number.
Between December 2018 and March 2019 the Dementia Friendly Communities initiative has trained another 75 staff in dementia awareness to ensure that customers with dementia feel included and are able to get the help they need. We are also rolling out Motor Neurone Disease Awareness for staff in Community Connections, Customer Services and adult social care.
- Community Health, Wellbeing and SEND support services have been working on new services including the Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service and health visiting. These were designed involving children, young people and parents. Children, young people and parents were then involved throughout the procurement process and will remain involved in feeding back on how the new services feel in practice. Improvements have included the removal of the use of the word "referral", replaced by "request for involvement", to move away from the culture of moving children and young people around the system, from provider to provider. This builds on the partnership working between the Council, University Hospitals Plymouth and Livewell Southwest to design and implement Access, a single point of contact for parents of children with additional needs.

Place Directorate

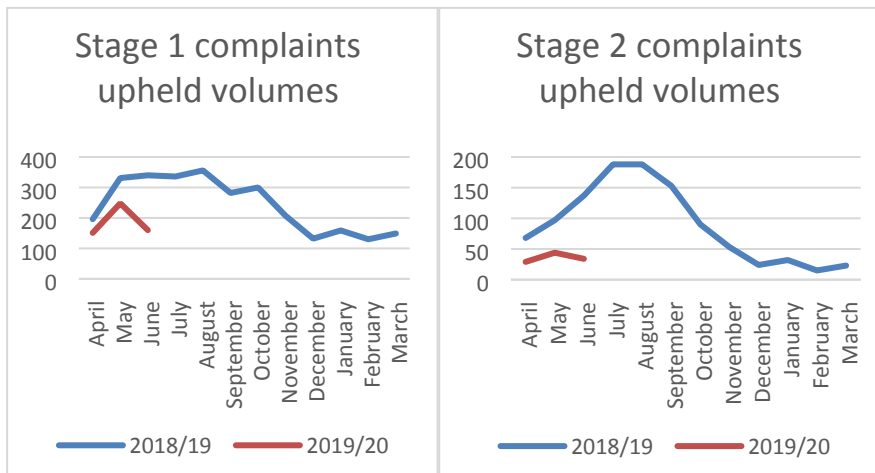
- In Strategic Planning and Infrastructure (SP&I), the City Change Fund project has pioneered a genuinely citizen led decision making approach for how funds for community infrastructure are distributed. By embracing crowdfunding technology, the Council pledges the 'neighbourhood portion' of the Community Infrastructure Levy towards projects that are led and supported by the citizens of Plymouth. Using crowdfunding ensures maximum impact by generating significant match funding, stimulating the local community and voluntary sectors, and minimising the administrative costs for the Council. The use of a digital platform has increased the visibility and success of projects that receive funding and has engaged thousands of residents in local projects.
- SP&I have also introduced a new Public Access system for planning application searches, this new system is now a lot faster and with improvements making it very customer friendly. You can now search any applications in any area of the city from the last 7 days back to 1974. The new search functions offer the customer more freedom on what they want to be informed about. In addition there is an online weekly list and notifications on applications both sent by emails to those who want to know about applications around the city or just in their street.
- The volume of complaints received about Street Services saw a decreasing trend across 2018/19 as did the volume of missed bins being reported. The first few months of 2019/20 have seen lower volumes than last year across complaints and missed bins but have seen an in-year increase. A trend can be seen in both years in the volumes for both processes increasing in May, this is primarily due to the start of garden waste collection. The peak of missed bin reports in 2018/19 relates to the spate of vehicle fires at that time.



The same trends have occurred in relation to complaints escalated to stage 2 (for review by a senior manager). The decrease has been significant due to the work that has been undertaken in increasing the understanding of the stage 2 process with investigating officers as well as improving the validation of complaints being escalated before investigations are carried out.



Trends also decreased in the volumes of complaints upheld. The introduction of new technology has supported the investigation process, particularly in relation to complaints about missed bins.



- In the latest audit round (February and March), 94.2% of audits relating to litter and detritus were graded as in an acceptable condition. This is higher than the national average of 89.6% and is an improvement on the previous audit round (90.9%). Work to enable the service to respond to unacceptable gradings more efficiently though the online portal (Firmstep) has now been established. Trials to understand the best method to tackle weeds were completed in January 2019 and we have been undertaking a focused work programme to tackle weeds in the city since mid-February 2019. A consistent weeding schedule is now in place.
- The Street Services information management project is changing customer experience for the better. By centralising and automating the way the services are planned, provided and monitored, real information is now available encompassing crews, staff and residents pertaining to
 - Its collection of waste
 - Its maintenance of streets, parks and associated assets such as green spaces or play equipment.

Waste information provided by the crews is now published to the website, for example why bins haven't been collected (eg Street Blocked) or when the next collection is due. The service is about to start a pilot to manage side waste and fly-tipping, starting with education of householders and supported by the recycling and enforcement teams.

Resident reporting of street cleansing activities eg Graffiti, is automatically directed to the team responsible for the activity as an electronic job, complete with photos. Shortly all jobs will be

handled this way, (dog fouling, public bins etc) allowing the teams to be better utilised and providing real feedback to the resident or planned and completed services.

Customer and Corporate Services Directorate

- As part of our customer approach we ask customers to provide feedback on services that we provide in the Contact Centre, Face to Face and Online. Over 80 Local Authorities take part using the GovMetric satisfaction index. We were ranked in the Top 10 seven times in the last twelve months, peaking at fourth in April 2019 for our Contact Centre. We were also in the Top 10 four times in the last twelve months for our online services, peaking at seventh in September 2018, and more recently ranked ninth in April 2019.
- We continue to deliver better than the national average performance for Housing Benefit assessment times, for both New Claims and Change of Circumstances.
- The national Registrations Services Annual report rated Plymouth 'GOOD' which acknowledged we have been one of the most improved Local Authorities in the region, with a continued trend of improvement.
- Over 200 services are now available on-line and we have seen over 70% uptake with our customers.
- Library membership continues to rise bucking the national trend. Lunch at the library "Feeding tummies and minds" will now be held at all libraries across the city every Wednesday throughout the summer holidays, and our central library will open once again on Xmas Day.
- The Service Centre continue to focus performance across 11 teams on a weekly basis. We have been working closely with Adult Social Care to develop strategies to tackle Social Care debt. This has involved an initiative to temporary expand the Deputyship team so we can allocate more cases with those customers who lack mental capacity. This ensures customers receive the right support; secures ongoing service charges; repays existing debt; prevents further debt accruing and minimises any risk of financial abuse.

Chief Executive's Office

- Electoral Services, in the Chief Executive's Office, have simplified the process by which residents can register to vote. Customer responses via the internet now account for 93% of our applications to register as a result of the easy and convenient process as well as the reminders going out via text and email rather than just relying on post as has been the case in the past. At the same time as achieving this level of digital adoption the service is also using Customer Services to allow customers who can't or won't go online to register over the phone.
- A good casework process/experience has a direct positive impact for our residents/councillors serving our residents. With this in mind the Chief Exec support team continue to work closely with colleagues across the council to improve upon the quality and timely manner in which councillor enquiries and casework are responded to. The Councillor enquiry form has been improved meaning that enquiries can be logged easily and swiftly. For some service areas we are logging on service specific request forms, this ensures that the enquiry is directed straight to the service area avoiding the need for any duplication of effort. We listened to our members, and we are now responding to them on the same email thread so that councillors can easily track responses and updates against a particular case. Where required the team are providing councillors with a letter containing the response to their enquiry so that they can easily

respond directly to their residents with a swift informative response. The cross departmental working group meet regularly. DELT and the Firmstep team are working collaboratively to produce a more streamlined reporting process which will include the ability to produce 'hotspotting' maps and bespoke reports on demand. We are also working towards an improved dashboard so that councillors can view progress against all open cases.

Office of the Director of Public Health

- In response to concerns about 'rogue traders' and in order to provide support for consumers and Plymouth businesses, Trading Standards run the Buy with Confidence (BWC) Trader Approval Scheme www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk/. The scheme provides consumers with a list of local businesses which have given their commitment to trading fairly. Good businesses benefit from being able to state 'Trading Standards Approved'. Every business listed has undergone a series of detailed checks by Trading Standards professionals before being approved as a member of the scheme. We currently have over 135 members in a whole variety of trades. Our Customer Services and Trading Standards teams are now able to recommend reliable businesses to our customers and it is featured on the Plymouth Online Directory. Recent developments of the scheme include systems around preventing modern slavery. The intention is to promote BWC as an ethical business approval scheme where customers can be reassured that businesses are not engaging in modern slavery. It's also designed to increase reporting of Modern Slavery by educating our members on how to spot the signs and what to do if they're suspicious. This project has received support from the Devon and Cornwall Police and Crime Commissioner.

- To support the Public Health drive to encourage customers to switch from smoking tobacco to e-cigarettes, our Trading Standards team undertook a project with three priorities:
 - to raise awareness of the new laws that were introduced to regulate the products
 - ensure only compliant products were sold
 - give confidence to the public regarding e-cigarettes

It achieved this in several ways: by training an officer as a specialist in this area of the law; educating both the public and business by contacting the local press and posting on social media; visiting retailers and online sellers of e-liquids to inform them of the changes to the law; and, once the law had taken effect, inspecting premises and seizing non-compliant goods. Its work has been featured in a national showcase of best practice examples of Trading Standards. A key element has been to ensure that customers have outlets in Plymouth where they know they can purchase safe, legal products from a reliable supplier. The team therefore recently signed up Flavour Vapour, a Plymouth-based business, to its Buy with Confidence Trader Approval Scheme. <http://plymouthnewsroom.co.uk/businesses-plymouth-accredited-top-quality-service> Smoking cessation services can now signpost customers to an approved, local supplier.

- Plymouth is one of the 140 Trading Standards Authorities signed up to a partnership agreement with the National Trading Standards Scams Team. Our commitment, as part of the partnership agreement, is that we contact all the Plymouth residents who are known to have been victims of scams in an attempt to stop them becoming repeat victims and to offer them any help and support they may need. Since the project started a few years ago the team has contacted over 500 Plymouth victims and discovered a detriment of more than £750,000. The average age of the victims in Plymouth is 74.

We also undertake targeted awareness-raising events in order to prevent residents from becoming victim to scams. Last year the team carried out over 45 such events and spoke to hundreds of people.

In order to improve the support we offer to victims we have made numerous links with other voluntary and statutory agencies who we can refer customers to for help. This includes recent

joint work undertaken with financial institutions in the City. There is now a holistic approach to helping people so visits include an assessment of the victim's overall financial situation and whether they are entitled to Government support that they are not aware of. Closer links have been established with the Police to share intelligence and we now follow up on Action Fraud reports concerning Plymouth residents.

- We provide business advice for our licensed premises. Our service is very cost effective for the business compared to other companies and the applicants are happy in the knowledge that they are being given the correct advice and their application is completed accurately and not delayed.
- As much as possible, there are electronic methods of applying for and renewing licences via our webpage, and also our taxi drivers are now able to change their address, change operator, also report any convictions and accidents they may have had.
We have produced driver handbooks for the taxi drivers so that the main information that they require when they become a new driver is in a handy sized booklet that they can keep in their car or with their records. The booklet is also available on our webpages and contains a frequently asked questions section so they easily find answers to commonly asked questions. We have also produced taxi licensing business size cards to promote our online services and some drivers also use these to encourage their customers to report any poor customer service that are reported to them such as drivers that are refusing wheelchair passengers without reasonable excuse.
- The Evening and Night Time Economy Group (ENTE) which is part of the Safer Plymouth (Community Safety Partnership) were presented with the Purple Flag award in June 2019. The ENTE group is a multi-agency group including the Licensing and Public Health Team and all agencies contributed to the application. The Purple flag award is awarded to areas that are recognised as providing a vibrant and diverse mixture of entertainment and culture, whilst promoting the safety and wellbeing of visitors and residents.
The assessors were very impressed that all taxi drivers operating in the city had undergone safeguarding training and as a result of this and a number of other criteria such as the taxi marshals and the Safe Bus, Plymouth were also presented with the Wellbeing Award. This award is presented to Cities which are safe and welcoming, with all sectors playing their part in delivering high standards of customer care.
We were also runners up for two other awards and we were the first new area to be put forward by the panel as a finalist in the new Jim Ratchford award in outstanding contribution to safety and diversity within the Night time Economy.
We are hopeful that this will encourage visitors and students to the area as it will give confidence that it is a safe place to live, work and enjoy their leisure time. It also supports businesses and we are working on producing promotional material to help them promote the award across the city.
- Within the Bereavement Service, we have developed a wider range of memorialisation products; our customers can see these products at the Crematoria, and also online, following the launch of our new memorialisation website. We have also changed the timings of ceremonies, making longer slots to build in spare time in response to concerns from funeral directors and noticed by our staff that the time after the service occasionally felt rushed.

CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2015 - 2018



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I. FOREWORD

I am very pleased to publish Plymouth City Council's Customer Service Strategy 2015 – 2018 which sets out how the Council is going to improve services for all of its customers. The improvements outlined to customer service in Plymouth, and tailored to the needs of Plymouth's customers, are vital in ensuring Plymouth City Council achieves its aspiration to be the 'Brilliant Co-operative Council' and also the City's vision to be 'one of Europe's most vibrant waterfront cities where an outstanding quality of life is enjoyed by everyone'.

The new location and improvements delivered in the new 1st Stop Shop demonstrate Plymouth City Council's commitment to improving access and delivery of customer service to all of its customers. The 1st Stop Shop will enable customers to become more aware, knowledgeable and confident in accessing services in more modern and digital ways, whilst also continuing to provide comfortable and appropriate interactions to customers who need a more personal and confidential service.

The modern way of delivering customer service is changing across all sectors and Plymouth City Council is becoming more innovative in its service delivery, as customers seek online and accessible 24/7 services. This strategy acts as a key document in enabling Plymouth City Council to better understand its customers' needs and expectations, and enables the Council to meet the challenges of delivering services in a more digital age.

Accompanying the strategy is a Blueprint and roadmap for change and an implementation plan of how Plymouth City Council will deliver the strategy's goals and objectives. I look forward to seeing this strategy being implemented over the next three years and welcome the positive outcomes that Plymouth's customers will receive through improved customer service.

Councillor Peter Smith
Deputy Leader of Plymouth City Council

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plymouth City Council as the local authority for the City of Plymouth provides services and information to many of the areas 250,000 residents as well as businesses in the city and visitors.

Plymouth City Council is currently undergoing a significant change to the way it provides those services both in response to both ongoing budgetary pressures to its Corporate Plan 2013/14 – 2016/17, which outlines an aspiration to be a ‘Brilliant Co-operative Council’.



Figure 1: Our Plan: The Brilliant Co-operative Council

An area that has been identified as needing significant change to help realise these goals is the way that the Council interacts with customers. To address this change requirement the Customer Service Strategy has been developed with a vision that ‘the services delivered by the council across all contact channels will be efficient / cost effective in meeting customer demands whilst seeking opportunities to exceed customer expectations’.

The Customer Service Strategy sets out the direction and actions to achieve the goal of improving:

- The way the Council serves its customers
- The way customers can interact with the Council
- The customer experience for those interacting with the Council
- Job satisfaction for staff enabling and empowering them to provide excellent customer service

- Service efficiencies

The Strategy presents the reasons why change is necessary, which can be summarised as:

- Inconsistent customer service standards across departments.
- A failure to adapt to changes in technology (e.g. the growth in mobile computing)
- The failure to capitalise on the national trend of customers to self-serve, meaning people are still mainly using more costly channels like face to face and telephone to interact with the authority.
- A failure to use existing self-service channels to their full potential e.g. not integrating these systems with back office systems.
- A failure to promote self-service options effectively to its customers.
- A tendency for services to exist in silos and not share information about customers with each other. This can result in customers needing to contact different services within the authority separately to relate the same information (e.g. a change in address).

The Strategy's three aims are outlined as:

1. To improve understanding of the Council's customers
2. To improve the way the Council serves their customers
3. To improve the way that the Council listens and responds to customers.

The Strategy uses a categorisation of interactions as either:

- Simple - a straight forward easy transaction
- Assisted - where the customer wants some guidance or to be shown how to navigate the transaction but will in time learn to do it themselves
- Complex - where the transaction is complicated, has many parts or is an emotionally charged transaction that needs additional face to face support.

This categorisation of interactions will assist the council in achieving channel shift. To achieve this channel shift will require that the Council's staff are trained in dealing with customers in a new way and they will need to be enabled to do this through the use of technology. The Council will also have to educate and support its customers to use these new channels through marketing with targeted campaigns, and provide support through the change.

3. INTRODUCTION

The Customer Service Strategy aims to assist in the delivery of improved customer access and service delivery against the aspiration to be the 'Brilliant Co-operative Council' through delivering improvements to service bundling, digital channel innovations and consistent service delivery against the values as follows:

- Bring **Pioneering** changes to customer service through reviews of services, engaging with customers, partners, staff and members to ensure that the designs emerging are innovative and fit for purpose in meeting the demands of self-service and customer needs;
- Support the **Growth** of Plymouth through delivering improved automation in the provision of services to customers, this will allow the Council to support increased customer demands for services without significant budget increases being required;
- Ensure that customer needs are understood and incorporated into the way in which services are provided in future. The programme will support the **Caring** outcome through the use of surveys and customer panels ensuring that customers are at the heart of decision making and working closely with our partners in health, housing and the voluntary sector to provide consistent information, advice and guidance.
- Increase the **Confidence** of staff working with customers by empowering them to design and deliver services that meet customer needs. The satisfaction with the service provided to customers by the Council will become a vital measurement of success for the Customer Transformation Programme and the Council.

3.1 A Local Context

The citizens of Plymouth have specific needs as to how they prefer to contact the Council and this Customer Service Strategy seeks to ensure that no individual, group or community is disadvantaged through a lack of access to Council services.

The key drivers for the Customer Service Strategy come from the Corporate Plan, the objectives of pioneering, growing, caring and confident emphasise the approach that the Council needs to take in order to meet the needs of its customers. Each of the four objectives provides motivation and inspiration for the three aims outlined in the strategy and will help drive its success.

Plymouth's wide and varied demographic will not accommodate a one size fits all approach and so it is important to be both inclusive and co-operative to achieve successful change. This will be achieved through employing tools such as customer insight and undertaking segmentation modelling, as well as checking and validating designs and proposals with representative groups of customers. The aim is to develop an in-depth and thorough understanding of the customers' needs and expectations. This greater understanding will allow improved delivery of services and increased and varied contact channels to the Council's customers, and will provide the basis upon which we deliver a 'digital by preference' rather than 'digital by default' principle in the promotion of digital self-service.

Consistent with the rest of the country Plymouth is experiencing a growth in elderly and vulnerable customers presenting with needs that are time consuming for the Council and require relationships to be built with the customer and professional assessments made to ensure services meet the customer needs. Growth in demands from these customers is putting pressure on services provided face to face and over the phone. The Council also services nearly 120,000 employed customers, (16-64) workers, within Plymouth 51.3% who are qualified to a minimum of NVQ3 and above and 26.7% are qualified to NVQ4 and above. Demographic profiling of these customers as well as experience of

other Councils and service providers shows that they are likely to want to interact with the Council at a time and location convenient to them rather than have to visit a Council facility or call during opening hours to the Council contact centre. Currently they are severely limited by the number and ease of use of the self-service functions the Council is able to offer. The issues with the Council's current self service capability are forcing a number of customers into 1st Stop and the contact centre, these inappropriate and time consuming channels for these customers and expensive to support for the Council. By enabling and encouraging this population to 'self-serve' it will give Plymouth City Council time to spend with the more vulnerable customers within the community.

The successful delivery and promotion of online transactions promotes three of the Corporate Plans objectives;

- **Pioneering:** by designing and delivering better services that are more accountable, flexible and efficient in spite of reducing resources
- **Caring:** by promoting a fairer, more equal city by investing in communities, putting citizens at the heart of decision-making, promoting independence and reducing health and social inequality
- **Confident:** working towards creating a more confident city, being proud of what we can offer and growing our reputation nationally and internationally.

3.2 The Strategy's Supporting Themes

The Customer Service Strategy is supported by 5 themes shown in Table I.

Accessibility:	Locations and times which meet our customers' needs
Relevant:	Services that are fit for purpose, joined up and minimise potential barriers
Inclusive:	All customers are treated equally and fairly and customer feedback is acted upon
Quality and Efficiency:	Reliable, flexible and responsive services which are continuously improved and delivered cost effectively
Empowered and Effective Staff:	Ensuring our workforce that has the appropriate skills, tools, and authority to effectively deliver quality services.

Table I: Supporting Themes

Through these 5 themes we will demonstrate our commitment to the values of Plymouth City Council.

All service areas will need to apply the principles for Customer Service to their design during Transformation. This ensure that we implement the 5 themes above that will give us excellent Customer Service and our customers an excellent Customer Experience.

3.3 Principles

The Customer Service Strategy's aims and objectives have been established using the core customer service principles, outlined in table 1.

1	We will have a view of our customers across all services of our Council.
2	We will manage our customer experience across all services provided by our Council.
3	We will own the relationship with our customer.
4	Customer experience will be defined by the Council even where the service is delivered by a supplier or partner.
5	We will provide easy and convenient assistance in helping customers' access / get to the services that they need.
6	We will have a single view of customers and interactions.
7	There will be transparency for the supplier and the Council in transactions and interactions (where this legal and desirable).
8	As customer needs change we will be flexible enough to change to meet them.
9	We will minimise the number of interactions with our customer without compromising the service or the 'brilliant' experience.
10	All non-specialist customer service will be brought together in a single logical organisation.
11	We are committed to demonstrating the benefits of self service options for customers so that they choose to use them – digital by preference.
12	We will provide the appropriate tools, training and support to enable staff to deliver a "brilliant" customer service.

Table 2: Core Customer Service Principles

3.4 Why We Need a Strategy Now

This Customer Services Strategy will be used to explain how the Council plans on interacting with its customers. It details how customers want to make contact with Plymouth City Council and how that has changed in recent years through the rise in digital channels.

The Strategy will explain how the Council wants to improve on its current service delivery processes and discuss how opening up digital service delivery may be expected by customers and also be financially beneficial for Plymouth City Council.

Over the past few years the council has delivered services in a manner where customer satisfaction hasn't been improved, whilst also delivering an inconsistent service to customers across the multiple channels available. Additionally, budget reductions, and increasing service delivery costs have impacted the service efficiency. Moving forward, Plymouth City Council needs to deliver services that meet the customer needs and to deliver savings to reduce the deficit as well as to comply with government policy.

A Customer Service Strategy is required to outline the way Plymouth City Council will:

- Transform the way it interacts with customers
- Sets the standards that customers can expect when interacting with the Council
- Deliver services efficiently and cost effectively to all service consumers
- Align and coordinate the necessary changes across the council
- Respond quickly to changing environmental pressure, political pressure and social pressure

Without a strategy now the Council is only going to be able to make incremental changes with limited service improvement benefits and limited savings contribution.

3.5 Rationale for Change

3.5.1 Increasing the public value of services

In the traditional way of delivering services the Council uses contact channels such as Face-to-face, telephone, email and web but as technology advances there is more benefit and more people interacting with services through channels such as mobile apps and Social Media etc. This means that service users should be provided with increased opportunities to interact with council services online or through modern digital channels such as social media, as appropriate and in accordance with data protection legislation.

The approach in this strategy is to build the capability that meets the city's needs and improve the customer experience and it aims to achieve this by providing services through contact channels that are designed on the basis of customer feedback to best meet customers' needs. Working closely with customers to develop a real understanding of how customers want to interact with Plymouth City Council will create the opportunity to provide services through channels that best meet their needs and reduces the operational cost of service delivery.

Understanding customers, their needs and behaviour patterns in interacting with the council will ensure that funds are spent effectively in areas of value, and that services are relevant and easy to use.

3.5.2 Getting it right first time

Getting it right first time prevents avoidable / duplicate contact, which is an added cost to both the customer and the Council. Through delivering more streamlined and standardised processes the Council plans to reduce customer complaints and dissatisfaction. To achieve this, education and assistance will be provided to customers via both telephony and face to face contact channels in a bid to improve confidence to use digital services such as the web site as well as knowledge and understanding of the advantages it offers. An example of this approach can be seen in the new 1st Stop where the "self-service hub" will provide customers with an opportunity to use the web site to serve themselves in a location where trained staff are on hand to answer questions and support them through the process. Getting it right first time will allow the Council to record more accurate levels of demand, this will allow for more accurate scheduling of staff numbers and skills so that services are delivered consistently and with improved the customer experience.

Plymouth City Council will work co-operatively with internal services and customers to design processes that reduce the need for customers to make contact multiple times to complete a single transaction. Getting it right first time is what our customers want us to do, for example:

- notifying a change of address once, rather than contacting multiple agencies
- where customers are able to pay for school meals by multiple channels e.g. direct debit, web-pay etc. instead of by cheque each term
- chasing up progress on a reported incident or fault

3.5.3 Promoting Channel Shift

In encouraging customers to change their contact channel behaviours Plymouth City Council will adopt an approach that looks at encouraging channel shift using the five checks and balances below:

- **Volume:** Given the high fixed costs of creating self-service channels, moving significant volumes of customer transactions away from traditional expensive channels to self-service is important to repay the investment required
- **Standardisation of process:** to standardise and design processes and products that are fit for purpose and that can be used together to deliver improved customer service delivery.
- **Complexity of information:** Personal contact is generally more appropriate when dealing with more complex information as outlined in the Interaction Delivery Framework, Figure 4.
- **Need for the “human touch”:** Services requiring sensitivity or human judgement are more appropriately delivered in person.
- **The willingness and ability of customers to self-serve:** Customers have different capabilities and access to self-service channels.

These checks and balances will be used in line with the Interaction Delivery Framework, Figure 4, to ensure that all improvements made met customers’ needs and transactions are available to be completed using the appropriate contact methods for each transaction type.

4. HOW WE WILL EFFECT CHANGE

This section sets out what Plymouth City Council can do to achieve the goals and examines the propensity of Plymouth’s citizens to use services and channels differently. It also sets out how Plymouth City Council will develop the change, improving Customer Service and become more efficient and effective.

The Strategy sets out an indicative timeline for when services of certain interaction types could likely be moved to new channels and what the effect might be on existing channels at the same time. This indicative timeline is produced as Appendix C for Simple, Assisted and Complex interactions. At the moment Plymouth City Council handles most of its interactions with customers by telephone, face to face or by post with some enquiries and transactions handled via other channels such as the Web. The Council doesn’t have systems in place to accurately or easily measure how many transactions take place by what type or by which channel.

However, the Council does know that unlike in banking or retail it is not looking to increase its share-of-market or share-of wallet, it only has to provide services that its customers need or want. Plymouth City Council has to serve the vulnerable and needy as well as the affluent parts of society. It also has to be fiscally prudent with tax-payers money and ensure that it provides value for that money in the services it provides. So the Council needs to ensure that the services provided are as efficient and effective as possible, using the most cost effective channels dependant on its customer’s needs.

In the past Plymouth City Council has treated each service provision in a vertical silo that has required customers to have multiple interactions with the council in order to get the whole bundle of

services needed. By analysing the persona types who need bundles of services it will be possible for Plymouth City Council to provide a holistic approach to service provision. For example the individual who presents themselves with a housing issue is found to have just lost their job, needing housing/housing benefit, council tax benefit, enrolment at the Job Centre, free school meals for their children and so on. Rather than send them away to conduct multiple transactions, the Council will ensure that staff are able to identify all the needs of the customer as quickly as possible. Plymouth City Council's staff will be able to quickly assess eligibility and action the case quickly often at that first meeting to send the customer on their way relieved to have a resolution to the problem so quickly.

To achieve this approach the Council's staff will be trained in Customer Excellence, they will understand the customer and actively look for the optimum resolution to ensure a good Customer Experience. They will have access to technology that enables them to focus on the customer and quickly and seamlessly access eligibility checkers and information that the council already knows about the customer so as to minimise the number of times the customer has to tell us the same information.

To get this right Plymouth City Council has developed a Customer Service Framework.

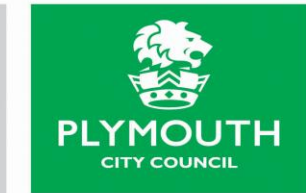


Figure 2: Our Customer Service Framework

Using this framework to improve access and delivery of services to customers based on their needs the Council has developed three aims that the strategy is focussed on delivering. The three aims are:

1. Improve our understanding of our customers
2. Improve the way we serve our customers
3. Improve the way we listen to our customers

These three aims are outlined in the Customer Service Strategy 2015 – 2018 on page, and also explained further throughout the rest of this document.



CUSTOMER SERVICES STRATEGY

2015 to 2018

A key success measure for Customer Services is to deliver services which meet the needs of the people of Plymouth.

We aim to do this by establishing the foundation of understanding our customers better; and designing improved service deliver to better meet customers' needs

	AIM ONE Improve our understanding of our customers	AIM TWO Improve the way we serve our customers	AIM THREE Improve the way we listen and respond to our customers
WHAT WE WANT TO DO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Better understand our customers' needs and preferences ■ Involve customers in the development of services, based on their needs, wants and preferences ■ Collect and hold securely, accurate and consistent information about our customers, where appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Customer access to council services at times that suit their needs ■ Develop user-friendly, efficient digital access to the council 24/7 (e.g. via website / mobile apps) ■ Aim to address customers' needs at the first point of contact ■ Ensure a consistent customer experience is delivered ■ Explore the use of other locations around the City to deliver services in communities ■ Train staff to deliver a higher quality customer service 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure customer satisfaction is at the heart of everything we do by delivering customer-focused services ■ Increase customer satisfaction levels ■ Increase staff awareness of customers' needs ■ Reduce customer complaints and dissatisfaction ■ Consolidate and own complaints corporately ■ Learn from customer's complaints ■ Hold areas to account for complaints in their area
HOW WE WANT TO DO IT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Implement a clear and consistent approach to gathering information about our customers ■ Redesign our services to give people more choices to contact PCC in a way that suits them ■ Generate and maintain a single record of the truth about our customers across the Council; a 'Tell us Once' approach ■ Involve customers in the design of services ■ Review services from a customer viewpoint 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ensure customer service / management training is available to staff ■ Provide support to staff to develop a customer-focused culture ■ Maximise the use of existing council assets – the Contact Centre, First Stop, Libraries – to meet customer and community needs ■ Provide information in accessible formats ■ Trial Customer Services extended opening hours ■ Develop and improve more self-service options on our website ■ Increase the contact centre capacity, making use of automation and self-service ■ Increase the number of automated services for customer access to standard services 24/7 ■ Review services to simplify the customer experience and address their needs at the first point of contact (a 'Tell us Once' approach) ■ Simplify processes to make it easier for customers to serve their own needs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Improve customer service performance monitoring ■ Ensure we provide the best possible experience to our customers ■ Improve the way we monitor and measure customer outcomes across all contact channels ■ Develop measurable corporate customer standards based on customer feedback ■ Publish annual corporate customer service standards ■ Incorporate customer feedback into service improvement and contact channels ■ Train staff to better deal with customers' needs

Figure 3: Our Customer Service Strategy on a Page

5. THE CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY AIMS

5.1 AIM 1: IMPROVE OUR UNDERSTANDING OF OUR CUSTOMERS

5.1.1 Who are our customers?

Plymouth City Council deals with a wide range of people across the city. The council is a highly complex organisation which facilitates the well-being of those that live, work or play in Plymouth – be it physical, mental or economic well-being. As such, its customers include:

- Council tax payers
- People with disabilities
- Builders and property developers
- Victims of domestic violence
- Private landlords
- Religious groups
- Unemployed residents
- Schools
- Homeless people
- Road users
- Older people
- Single parents
- Looked after children
- Business owners
- Charities and voluntary organisations
- Asylum seekers
- Various ethnic groups
- Council departments (internal customers)

Whilst the list above is not exhaustive nor is it mutually exclusive it serves to demonstrate the sheer range of customers who access the services that Plymouth City Council offers. In order to ensure the Council is delivering the right services in the right way, it needs to ensure it understands as much as is possible about the varied customer groups. The Council needs to develop its understanding about the people who use its services and those customers who do not use its services, as well as recognising and working with the interdependencies that may exist between customer groups. For example, older people and younger people in relation to housing needs. Finally, the Council will need to think ahead in order to plan for future customer needs and changing expectations.

5.1.2 Better Customer Engagement

A Brilliant Co-operative Council will recognise and respond to the diversity of the community it serves, creating tailored responses to suit wide-ranging needs. Plymouth City Council exists to serve the needs of its communities and these communities increasingly expect to be able to influence service design and delivery. Improving services means engaging with customers at all levels to find out what they want, ensuring effective delivery and being accountable for that delivery.

To achieve this Plymouth City Council plans to involve customers in its decision-making processes and consultations in a more proactive way by using the agreed [framework for working with our citizens and communities](#).

Customer engagement and feedback helps deliver a culture where resources are given to where they are most needed. The Council currently uses tools such as Govmetric and both ad hoc and regular customer surveys. It will commit to develop further tools to advance the richness of this data and improve its use across the Council.

5.1.3 Customer Insight

The process of developing and implementing the Customer Service Strategy needs to be guided by insight, and insight specifically relating to:

- The customer;
- The services the council is providing;
- The current usage of contact channels as well as the propensity for customers to use channels that may be available to be used in future

It is with improvement and development of customer understanding that Plymouth City Council can better design and deliver access to and delivery of services to its customers. For example, developing and using customer personas can provide a deeper understanding of customer experience, customer journeys and customer requirements enabling Plymouth City Council to provide services as a bundled package to customers who need multiple services.

5.1.4 Meeting the expectations of Plymouth's customers

In order to exceed customer expectations as outlined as an outcome in [the Brilliant Co-operative Council's Corporate Plan 2013 – 2016](#), Plymouth City Council must provide services that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Streamlined
- Convenient/accessible
- Efficient
- Cost effective
- Robust/secure

These characteristics for services apply across channels. It should also be noted that customers have expectations of the choice of channels too now. Many customers will expect to be able to transact easily with the Council via the internet and the fastest growing group of customers¹ are those with an expectation to be able to interact via a mobile device.

The proliferation of choice of method and type of connectivity is fundamentally changing the way that Plymouth citizens expect to be able to do business with the Council. At the same time, demographic and workforce changes are requiring Plymouth City Council to do more with less.

5.1.5 Aim 1 - Key Actions:

- Implement a clear and consistent approach to gathering information about our customers
- Continue to subscribe to the MOSAIC public sector profiler provide by Experian

¹ Based on national trends

- Explore the development customer insight and promotion of customer personas to aid decision-making and service delivery across the Council – in the short term specifically which services should be bundled together and which interactions should be provided face to face in different community settings such as libraries.
- Develop and deploy Innovative Technology solutions to support and enhance customer insight activities
- Generate and maintain a single record of the truth about our customers across the Council; a 'Tell us Once' approach
- Review services from a customer viewpoint and redesign services that increase opportunities and provide more choices for customers to contact Plymouth City Council in a way that suits them
- Improve our engagement with and involvement of customers in the design of services
- Develop performance management measures for all parts of the service delivery across all Council services including channel usage, customer satisfaction and service delivery

5.2 AIM 2: IMPROVE THE WAY WE SERVE OUR CUSTOMERS

Today customers contact us using traditional channels such as Face-to-Face, telephone, whilst web contact is very limited. In the current financial climate and budget cuts being imposed by the central government, the council is forced look at alternate ways by which customers can interact via their preferred channels. As part of this aim of the strategy future customer contact access will be outlined.

5.2.1 Customer Access and Channel Management

Channel management – the management of the selection, rationalisation and integration of service delivery channels, including not only the face-to-face, telephone, mail, fax, Internet and e-mail channels as well as virtual contact centres at different locations but also channels, currently very underused by the Council such as text messaging, social networking and mobile applications will be at the fore-front of customer services.

To respond to customer needs quickly and efficiently, the traditional contact channels will need to be improved and new automated contact channels must be developed and deployed so that customers are able to interact with the Council 24/7, which will encourage channel shift to occur as well as channel optimisation.

Plymouth City Council recognise that not all services can be delivered via digital channels, however, there are services that are commonly used by all the citizens in Plymouth, which often have very simple transactions that can easily be delivered effectively and efficiently through automated channels. In order to guide the Council through its channel migration and putting types of transactions onto digital delivery channels an Interaction Delivery Framework has been developed.

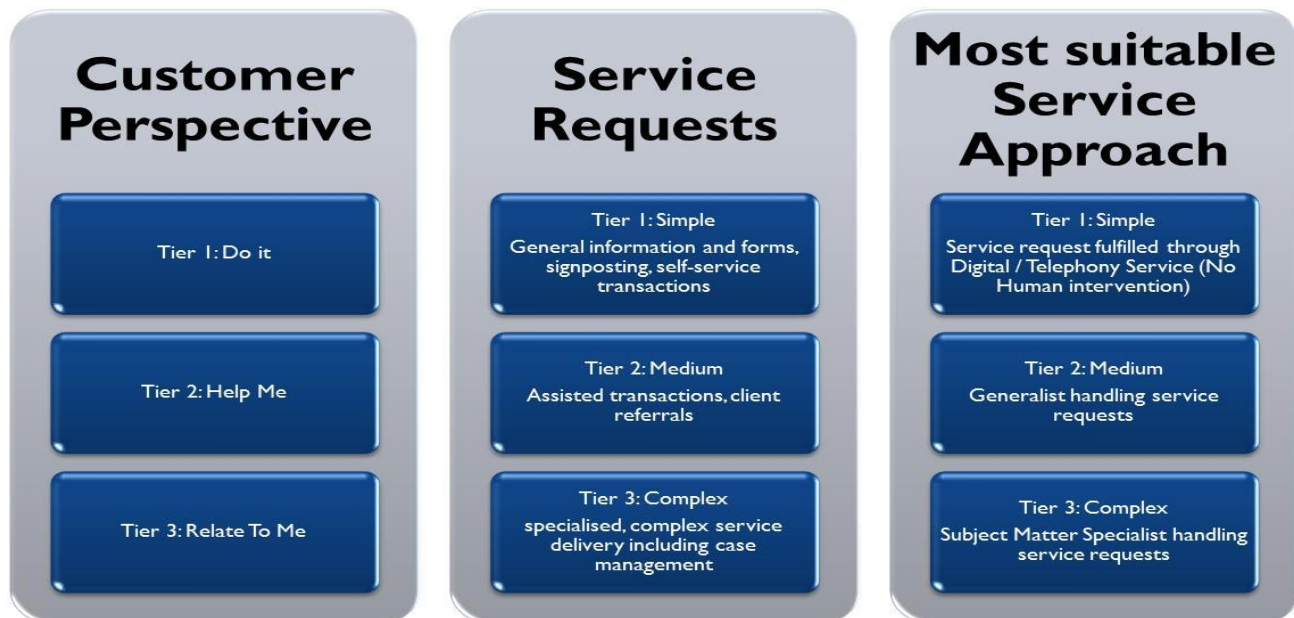


Figure 4: Interaction Delivery Framework

Within the Interaction Delivery Framework the interaction categories are:

Tier 1 interactions or “simple” interactions includes responding to general enquiries, providing forms and other standard repeatable transactions that do not inherently require face-to-face delivery. These interactions frequently don’t require the customer to even identify themselves and also offer

very limited opportunity to exceed expectations – though failing to deliver against a tier 1 request will cause significant customer frustration. For these reasons automated solutions are the suggested best fit for tier 1 interactions. It is intended that, to the extent possible, these “simple” services will be migrated to digital channels, offering self-service functionality in order to meet customers’ expectations for reliable and convenient access to services. However, Tier 1 interactions will also continue to be available through traditional channels so that customers who cannot self-serve are supported. Staff will be trained and encouraged to assist customers in using digital channels so that they can gain the knowledge and confidence to begin to self-serve. The Council will also look at options to design and integrate virtual agent contacts e.g. web chat on a digital channels to further support customer migration cost effectively.

Tier 2 interactions or “medium” interactions involve assessment and/or expert judgement that do not lend them to full self service delivery even for the most technical customer groups. Tier 2 interactions are relatively high volume and do not require a long term relationship with the customer in order to meet the customers need. Customers may want to process their request at a convenient location to them. To meet the customer needs and demand, the Council will explore opportunities to make relevant Tier 2 type interactions accessible in multiple public locations such as libraries etc. By extending the locations, the 1st Stop Shop service delivery can focus more on complex service needs, and the staff at the extended locations will be able to deliver interactions efficiently within a given Service Level Agreement.

Some of the Tier 2 interactions will be supported via digital channels. For these customers virtual contact agents will be available to assist via web-chat during office hours and extended hours. This will enable customers to interact with us more frequently and conveniently and we will be able to get a better understanding of their needs.

Tier 3 interactions or “complex” interactions which require subject matter expert interactions in support of meeting the customer needs and their demand will fall in to this category.

Complex or Tier 3 interactions will be handled by the customer service agents from inception of the request to provide a resolution that meets customer expectation. Even after implementing the services the maintenance of those services will be monitored and governed by the subject matter experts.

The council will work collaboratively with the service partners and customers in maintaining the service delivery aspects to the highest standard. Regular service reviews will be undertaken to measure its performance and identify areas of improvements in service delivery through understanding the complexity of transactions and the availability and ease of use of contact channels.

5.2.2 Introducing digital channels

We will identify those services that will be more cost effective if offered through digital channels and what the likely take up of those channels will be. It can be quite complex process but with the right support and guidance online this can lead to many successes.

Channels have a number of important characteristics which influence the way the services and transactions are delivered to customers. All channels can provide an efficient service but cost per channel and the availability of the services will differ across the channels. Table .., below outlines Plymouth City Council's current channel characteristics in relation to customer service delivery:

Channels							
Characteristic	Back-Office	Call Centre	Front Office	Self Service (Web)	Self Service (phone)	Extended Location	Other Digital Channels (Mobile, Email, etc.)
Service Time	Contractually bound to operate in-line with front office timings	* 08.30 – 17.30	* 08:30– 17:00	24/7	24/7	N/A	Email – 24/7
Ease of Access	Low - Moderate	Low - Moderate	Good	Low	Very Low	N/A	Email - Moderate
Capacity	Low - Moderate	Low	Moderate	Very Low	Very Low	N/A	N/A
Cost per transaction	Medium - High	High	High	Moderate	Moderate	N/A	N/A

**subject to change on 10 November 2014 to include late nights and Saturday opening.*

Table 3: Current Channel Characteristics

1st Stop Shop: The design for the new 1st Stop shop will provide customer service agents and self-service terminals. When customers walk through the shop entrance the meet and greet service staff will liaise with customers and understand their needs and will be able to guide them to use the service on premises that fits their needs (note this may require a handoff between staff which will work in the same way as described below in the contact centre). In this way the customer requirements can be dealt with accurately and efficiently.

Customer Contact Centre: Today when customers call the contact centre the calls are put on queues to be answered. This will be transformed to:

- Customer requests for information will be handled through automated messages. At all times customers will have the option to speak with an agent. Where the information provided via the automated service does not resolve the requirement of the customer they will be connected with an agent.
- When calls are redirected to agents, the agent will try and respond to customer requests efficiently within a given Service Level Agreement. If the customer request is complex then the agent will create a case by gathering customer information and this will be passed onto a subject matter expert. When the call is passed onto another agent, all the details captured by the first agent will be available to the subject matter expert at the time of call transfer. This will prevent customers repeating their requests and will create a seamless customer journey.
- For customers who want to inform us of changes to their circumstances and update their personal information relating to services, a telephony capability will be developed and implemented to handle the request and this service will be available 24/7.

Web Services: The current web service is limited to relaying general information to the customers as well as some silo based services providing transaction support. In some cases the transactions have been designed poorly and are hard to use and in other cases they are not integrated with other systems and require manual rekeying of customer requests. As part of the strategic intent to deliver channel shift, the new web platform will be developed and implemented to handle:

- Request for information: In addition to the information published on the web, if customers require further specific information then a capability will be available to request additional information through a web form request. The requests will be monitored and responded by the back-office team within a set Service Level Agreement.
- Capabilities will be developed and implemented for customers to contact us via a customised portal. The personalised service will provide an enriched information access. This capability will also allow customers to exchange electronic forms and other documents supporting their needs.
- Integrated processing capabilities for application processing and transactional payment will be developed and implemented, cutting out the requirement for manual rekeying of data.

Email Services: The current email capabilities will be transformed and integrated with a system for routing requests and the new case management system.

Mobile: This will extend the development of the existing mobile app and implemented as part of the Customer and Service Transformation Programme to enable customers to have more options in using digital contact channels. This will be aligned to the development of the website e.g. responsive design to Smartphones and tablet devices.

Extended Locations: The council is determined to improve customer service capabilities in order to meet customer needs and wants at their convenience. In meeting this request, some of the Tier 1 and Tier 2 capabilities will be available at these extended centres. The extended centre locations will be identified and published after consultation with the customers, service providers and partners.

Social Media: Today social media is regularly used by many of the Council's customers. It is the Council's aim that use of social media will be increased throughout the council to provide increased opportunities for customers to provide feedback and register simple tier 1 service requests e.g. report a pothole.

Plymouth City Council will identify the interaction types and categorise them. An example is shown in Table 4.

Service Example	Simple	Mediated / Assisted	Complex / Comfort
Pay Council Tax	X		
Parking Permit	X	X	
Adult/Children's Social Care Service Provision			X

Table 4: Service by Interaction Type

Following this the Council will identify the most effective channel for each service/interaction type. An example is shown in Table 5.

Category / Channel	F2F	Tel	IVR	Web	SMS	Social Media	Other
Simple	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mediated / Assisted	X	X		X			X
Complex / Comfort	X	X					

Table 5: Interaction Type by Channel

To get the customers of council services to migrate to new channels will require a number of campaigns:

- Meet and Greet staff at the Shop in 71 New George Street who can direct customers to the right advisors, and provide assisted self-service to educate customers to use the online systems in the future
- Marketing campaigns to get customers familiar with the easier and more convenient options of self-service.
- Use of social media to update and inform customers of changes to the way they can access services at different times.
- Use of SMS messaging to update customers on progress of transactions.

Plymouth City Council's staff will be trained to provide excellent customer service and to recognise the needs and wants of customers and actively find resolutions for customers as quickly as possible. If a customer comes into the shop or call our contact centre, they will expect and get the same customer experience regardless of the channel. If a customer starts a transaction on the web, and then feel they need assistance by phone, the Contact Centre agents will see the same screens as the customers do so they can guide the customer through the process. Wherever possible once a customer has logged in to the website their details will be automatically populated so they don't have to re-key them again and again.

5.2.3 When can we introduce new channels?

This is a journey and we have already started.

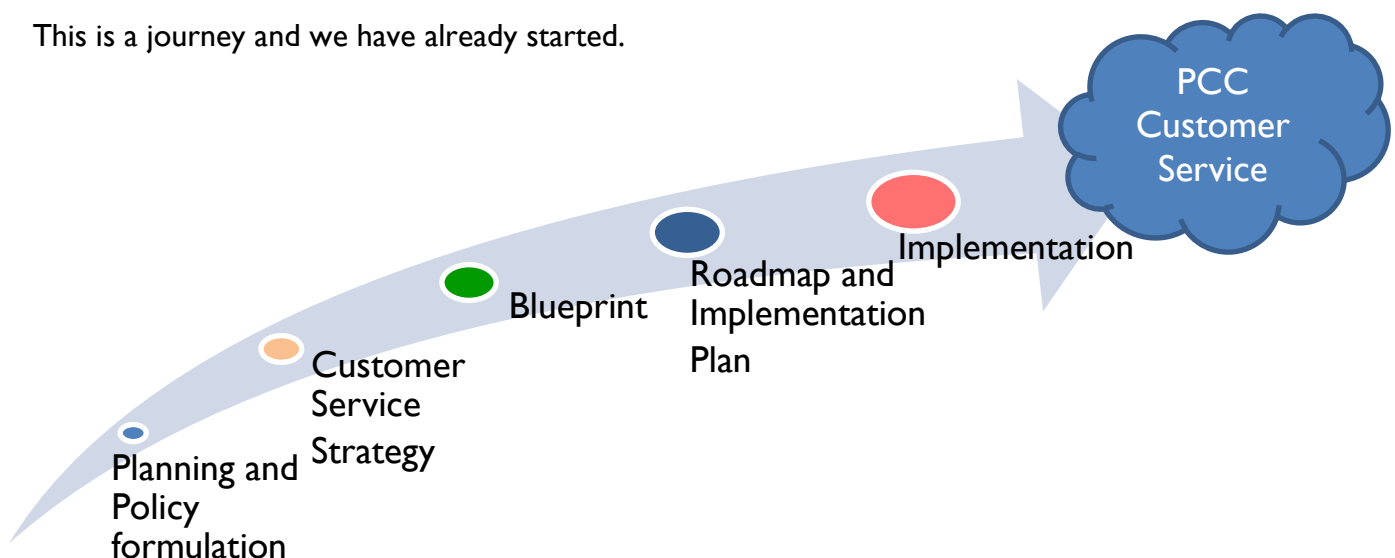


Figure 5: The Journey to the Plymouth City Council Vision for Customer Service

The Blueprint for Customer Service is already underway and this Strategy is needed to inform the direction of that Blueprint. The Roadmap for the implementation has started with the design and assurance of the Shop and with the Strategy and Blueprint we will be on the way to designing the implementation plan. That Implementation plan will contain all the elements of change including:

- People
- Process
- Technology
- Accommodation

We can already envisage the likely channels that will be in use and brought into use over the next three years as the required technology is deployed.

We recognise that for this strategy to be successful will require that the Council has managed to move customer interactions in two ways. The first way is in driving for simplification in the interactions and shifting them down the tiers from complex (tier 3) to assisted (tier 2) and from assisted (tier 2) to simple (tier 1) – tier shift. This work will be undertaken through process re-engineering and has already been proven to work as demonstrated by the simplified processes operated in the shop in areas around Housing Benefits and Council Tax to increase the amount of work done whilst the customer is with the advisor, so that when the customer leaves they know that their request has been actioned and fewer items are required to be processed in the back office.

The second way we will be moving customer interactions across channels – channel shift. The strategy aims to migrate customer interactions to the most cost effective channels to meet the customer needs. For customers who are able and willing to interact over digital channels the Council will make these channels beneficial to these customers through regular updates and proactive communications. This will allow the Council to focus delivery from the traditional channels, face to face and telephone, on the most vulnerable customers and more complex interactions.

The transition over time in the volume of contacts by channel and tier of interaction type is illustrated in appendix C the channel and tier shift model. This shows that over time the volume of face to face and telephone contacts for all tiers of interaction is anticipated to fall, whilst there is a growth in the volume of simple interactions handled on cost effective channels such as the internet, IVR and other electronic channels such as mobile apps.

5.2.4 Improving Customer Case Management

Plymouth City Council will explore case management tools to enable improved integration between customer service requests across all contact channels and back office systems so that customer requests can be recorded more accurately and the Council is better able to monitor and respond to queries effectively.

This case management capability will improve the council's delivery of service and the customer experience. The importance and value of case management is illustrated in the following scenario :

A customer registers a service request which is then recorded on the case management tool, this will lead to a case reference number being generated and provided to the customer. Once the case reference number is generated customers can track the progress of their case via any channel using the case reference identifier. When the case is registered within the case management system it will

be routed to the relevant back-office team via a work flow engine. Based on the context of the case, the relevant back-office team will own the case and liaise with other departments to make sure that relevant resolution is provided to customer requests within a given time scale. All updates will be communicated to the customer and will be available for tracking via integrated channels.

5.2.5 Aim 2 - Key Actions:

- Ensure customer service / management training is available to staff
- Provide increased support to staff to develop a customer focused culture
- Maximise the use of existing council assets to deliver services to customers at locations convenient to them
- Provide information in clear and accessible formats across all channels
- Trial customer services extended opening hours
- Develop new contact channel capabilities e.g. a transactional website and mobile capabilities, and implement them to improve customer access
- Simplify processes and increase the number of automated services and standard services offered 24/7
- Develop and implement service designs based on the agreed service delivery framework
- Develop an integrated case management capability which can deliver the service across multiple channels

5.3 AIM 3: IMPROVE THE WAY WE LISTEN AND RESPOND TO OUR CUSTOMERS

Aims 1 and 2 outline how the Council will understand its customers and the options it will provide for its customers to interact with services. This section of the strategy outlines how the Council will adopt an continuous improvement approach, efficiently and effectively responding to changing customer needs.

5.3.1 Performance Management

Developing better performance management across the whole council, in relation to customer services, is essential to the improvement of the council's ability to deliver services in ways that are effective, meet the needs of the customer and continually improve. Performance management in relation to customer services needs to be developed so that it:

- Focuses on improving genuine customer priorities
- Has sufficient internal and external challenge
- Has a limited number of key indicators to track performance
- Produces self-sustaining continuous improvement
- Celebrates achievement as well as identifying poor performance
- Triggers action in response to missing targets, indicators and standards

We need to measure the Council's commitment to and delivery of the right outcomes for customers.

For example:

Understanding of the customer's need for services – outcomes:

- The accuracy of volume forecasts for existing services.
- The availability and currency of accurate citizen intelligence that tracks:
 - Current need
 - Desired services
 - Complaints
 - Behaviour tracking and trending.

Ability to deliver services – outcomes:

- The ability to introduce new services without disrupting the organisation.
- The ability to meet demand.
- Ability to invest in support activities such as training, knowledge management and documentation without disrupting services.

Simplification of the procedures to deliver and receive those services – outcomes:

- Percentage of services delivered through integrated channels.
- Percentage of shared services.
- Maximum use of 'internal best practice' for common processes, technologies, and practices.
- Outcome based measures of success for users.

Plymouth City Council will do this through the use of a Balanced Scorecard approach where the measures and criteria for success are embedded in the performance objectives of every staff member. Individually and collectively everyone in the Council is responsible for providing excellent customer

service. This excellence does not just come from the frontline staff dealing with the public but the back-office staff, the managers and leaders as well.

5.3.2 Customer Feedback

Listening and responding to its customers is heavily reliant on the council developing and implementing a customer feedback mechanism that enables staff to record, monitor, review and respond to feedback in a simple process. This will enable customers to have a better understanding of the journey of their feedback, the outcome of their feedback and ultimately the most important aspect for all parties what lessons have been learned and changes made for improvements going forward.

To effectively deliver this the council will need to focus on improving the processes and systems required for a consistent customer feedback process and developing a corporate approach to customer feedback training which will be given to all customers in customer service and customer feedback roles as well as all new starters.

5.3.3 Organisational Culture

Customers are at the centre of all services delivered by Plymouth City Council. The council's employees and its partner service employees should be empowered to deliver quality and efficient service to customers. Considering the importance of staff training aspects, the council will be working with its Organisational Development and Human Resource department and the service departments to identify training requirements to improve staff skills to become the excellent providers of customer service. Plymouth City Council will ensure that staff are adequately supported and engaged throughout all customer service improvement projects to ensure that they have the knowledge, skills and training to provide effective and brilliant customer service.

It is believed that in order to improve value for money services and improve service delivery to customers some of the customer services currently provided by Plymouth City Council could ultimately be provided through third parties. As part of any agreements to this end, Plymouth City Council will agree the terms and conditions in which the services will be delivered, and the service delivery targets for each of the third parties will be developed and measured to ensure our service standards are achieved regardless of whether PCC deliver the service or commission others to provide it on their behalf.

When services are delivered by external providers, all information relating to customer services (customer information, their behavioural aspects, services consumed, etc.) will become the intellectual property of Plymouth City Council. This will enable the council to undertake intelligent analytics to ensure that a continuous improvement process is always at the forefront of Plymouth City Council's customer service delivery.

5.3.4 Staff as Ambassadors of the Community

Council interactions with customers will be designed based on customer needs. Many of the council's employees are also citizens of Plymouth, and hence they are also customers. We will engage with our staff to the extent they would want to be involved in the community to work as ambassadors of PCC where they could relay the information to the community and relay back their feedback to the council. This integrated approach will help to:

- Identify the service delivery priorities and shape them based on the needs and customer insight information
- Seek opportunities to deliver services through partnership arrangements
- Seek opportunities to collaboratively work with other local partners in delivering shared services
- Consolidate service delivery into one approach
- Enhance knowledge based through lessons learnt and be able to apply it across the council for better delivery models

5.3.5 Aim 3 - Key Actions:

- Develop in a co-designed approach with customers and partners and implement Customer Service standards across the council and publish performance against these on an annual basis
- Develop a performance management framework to improve customer satisfaction monitoring
- Improve the way we monitor customer outcomes across all contact channels
- Incorporate customer feedback mechanisms into all service improvement projects and across all contact channels
- Understand current and future customer needs to define and develop service designs which meet council's priorities.
- Train staff to be better able to deal with all customer needs
- Review through a process of service reviews back-office and front-office processes to establish which services could be improved for customer service delivery and which could potentially be delivered through external providers.

6. GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Customer Insight	The collection, analysis and use of information which allows an organisation to further understand its customers in order to better meet the needs of those customers.
Customer Feedback	Current practices in all Council departments in relation to all aspects of customer feedback of all types including MP enquiries, councillor casework, corporate complaints, comments and compliments.
Customer Satisfaction	A measure presented as a numerical value which shows the perceived satisfaction of the customer.
Channel Shift	Encouraging customers to use the contact channels most appropriate for them. Often this means ensuring customers use the most cost effective channel and can 'self-serve' and perform transactions/ search for information without the assistance of Plymouth City Council staff
Co-operative Commissioning	Co-operative commissioning is an approach that puts citizens and outcomes at the centre of commissioning and creates stronger relationships between key stakeholders. It looks beyond cost and „value for money“ to put greater emphasis on the social costs and benefits of different ways to run services.
Community Engagement	A form of contact where an organisation engages with its different customers to find out their needs. Methods of customer engagement include surveys, focus groups, user-testing events etc.
Contact Channels	The mechanism or device which customers will use to access Council services, examples include Phone, email etc, online, social media, mobile phone, face to face, post/ letter.
Customer	This refers to any user of Plymouth City Council services, whether voluntary or involuntary. This includes residents and visitors to Plymouth, service users and their representative and some commercial organisations.
Customer Journey	The process the customer goes through in order to obtain information, advice or to complete a transaction – this can range from finding out what time a recycling centre opens, to completing an application for a blue badge. Defining a customer journey involves identifying all the stages a customer goes through during the interaction with the Council
Customer Segmentation	A sub-set of customers made up of people sharing one or more characteristics that cause them to demand similar services.
Digital Self Service	The use of digital channels e.g. online, web portal, mobile devices, kiosks etc. to enable customers and staff to complete all processes involved in accessing services on their own.
Ist Stop	The New George Street Shop.
First Point of Contact	The first correspondence initiated by the customer regarding a new query or request.
Mosaic	A database owned by Experian that covers the whole of the United Kingdom. It classifies customers into 61 types, split into 11 groups. Takes into account life-styles, culture and behaviour amongst other things.
Performance Management	Activities that ensure goals and objectives are met in an effective and efficient manner. Performance appraisal for staff is one method of performance management.

7. APPENDICES

Appendix A: Customer and Service Blueprint and Roadmap

Appendix B: Implementation Plan

Appendix C: Tier and Channel shift model

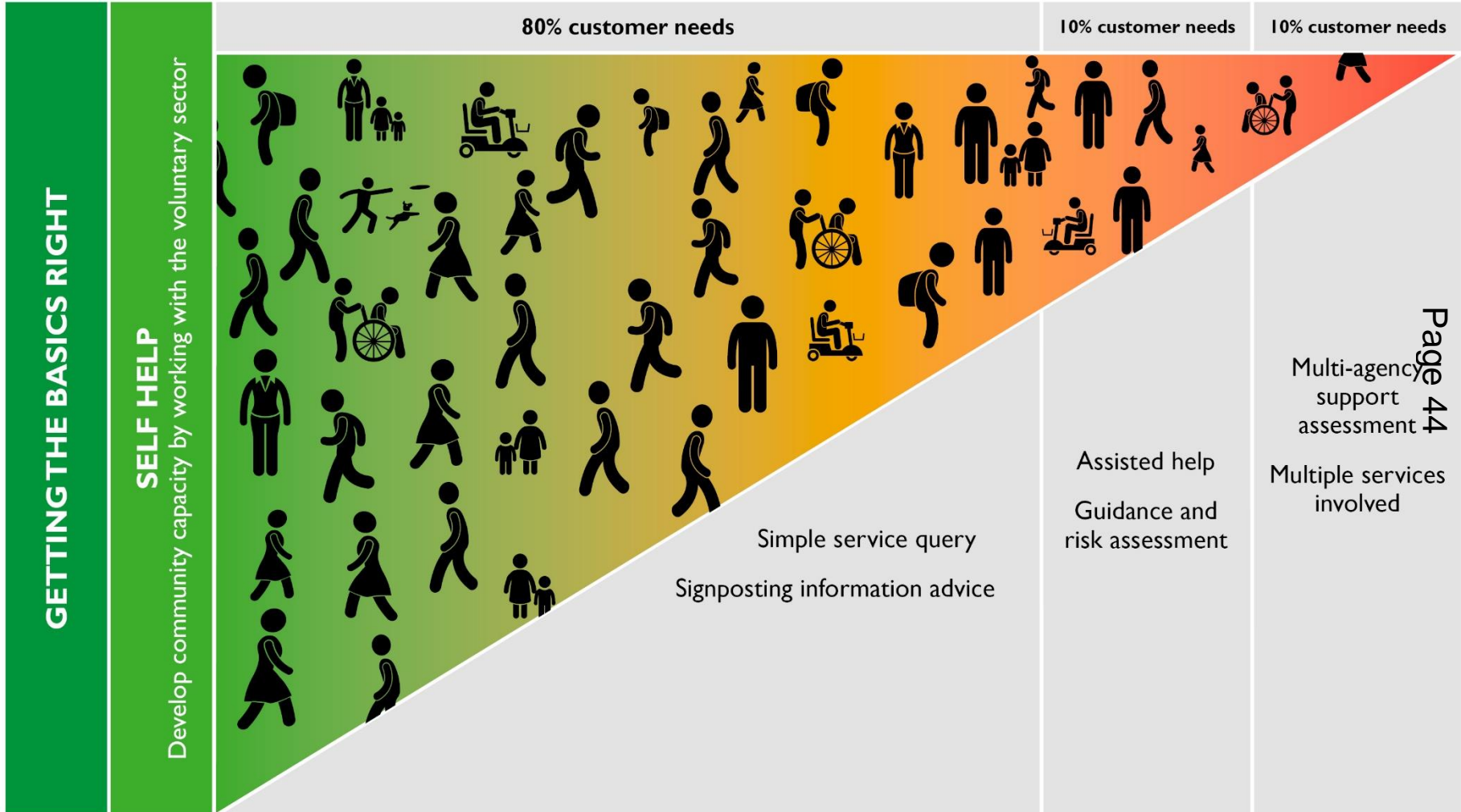
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Customer Experience Cabinet Working Group: Agreed Outputs



WORKING TOGETHER

To make Plymouth a fairer city, where everyone does their bit.



GETTING THE BASICS RIGHT

SELF HELP

Develop community capacity by working with the voluntary sector

Our Drivers – updated



Driver	Responses
Customer expectations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Understanding what our customers want and need• Managing expectations so customers know what we can deliver and when• Adapting to 24/7 access expectations and using different technologies to access and deliver services
Supporting and empowering communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Encouraging customers, partners, staff and councillors to feel involved in how services are delivered in Plymouth• Helping individuals and communities to take responsibility for themselves• Changing the relationship between the Council and residents• Working with partners to help communities and councillors engage, find information and access the best resources to meet their needs
Financial sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensuring money is spent wisely and seeking to maximise commercial income generation
Reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Saying what we will do, and doing what we say• Being trusted for seamless delivery across the Council and with partners• Keeping customers informed through regular updates

Programme on a Page



Purpose	Putting customers at the heart of everything we do
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Aspirations	Get it right for people first time	Refuse to accept inequalities in accessing and delivering our services ●	Improve the customer experience to achieve quality outcomes for people who live, work or visit the city	Help people to find new ways to solve issues in their lives and communities ●
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Current Strategic Focus	Get the basics right	Adhere to agreed service standards	Provide information and advice to help customers help themselves	Have simple systems to access services	Develop community support to help customers meet their own needs and be more self sufficient ●	Develop resources to work with people in communities to address complex issues ●
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System Design Criteria	Treat service users as citizens not just customers	Use our financial and operational data to provide better outcomes in more efficient ways	Balance opportunities with risks	Focus on outcomes (rather than services)	Achieve consistency (not uniformity)
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