



Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Wednesday, 12 March 2025

Report of Councillor Philip Knowles
Cabinet Member for Corporate
Governance and Licensing

Customer Experience Strategy - Review and Consultation

Report Author

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Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to provide the Committee with an update regarding the review of the existing Customer Experience Strategy and launch of public consultation to develop a new Strategy that meets the current needs of the Council's customers.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to:

- 1. Note the report and Members are invited to ask questions relating to the report.**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Connecting communities
Effective council

Which wards are impacted? All Wards

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

1.1 There are no specific financial comments arising from this report.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Deputy Chief Executive and s151 Officer

Legal and Governance

1.2 There are no significant legal and governance implications arising from this report.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Monitoring Officer

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1. The Council has a clear commitment in its Corporate Plan 2024-2027 to Connecting Communities and being an Effective Council. This report, and the service provided through the Council's Customer Service Team and high contact service areas strives to deliver these priorities.
- 2.2. Since the approval of the existing Customer Experience Strategy, the Council has undergone a period of transformation as a result of Covid, improvements in technology across various service areas, development of a new website and the relocation of the Grantham Customer Service Centre.
- 2.3. A vital part of the transformation is the development of a modern, and flexible customer experience which offers choice when delivering services. To do this, the Council must maximise the use of all channels available.
- 2.4. In addition, the Council needs to ensure that its services provide value for money and are sustainable. It is vital that it not only delivers 'business as usual' in a more modern environment but continues to enhance services in line with the customer expectations, evolving technologies and opportunities for customers, putting their needs at the heart of the organisation.

- 2.5. The Council's current Customer Experience Strategy sets out how the authority provide services to its customers. This includes services which provide more choice of access, with consistently good experience wherever and whenever the customer contacts the Council.
- 2.6. Various technologies are used to modernise the Council's telephony offer, improve the website, rationalise the face to face offering, increase self-service provision, improve online payments, as well as the integration of online forms and customer portals to back office systems to improve out hours of 24/7 accessibility.
- 2.7. In addition, the Corporate Plan 2024-2027 provides the framework for the delivery of services to residents and businesses and aims to make South Kesteven the best District to live in, work and visit. One of the ambitions and actions outlined in the Corporate Plan is to adopt a refreshed Customer Experience Strategy.

Consultation

- 2.8. During 2024, the Customer Service Management team undertook a series of workshops with officers from all service areas, to review the existing strategy and discuss what they knew about their customer. The workshops have helped to form the scope of the consultation to refresh the existing strategy for 2025 to 2029.
- 2.9. The public consultation will be undertaken for the period 10 March to 7 April 2025 and will be undertaken with a variety of stakeholders to understand how they interact or would choose to interact with the Council.
- 2.10. The purpose of the consultation will be to:
 - Find out how people contact South Kesteven District Council (SKDC), why they contact the Council and how often
 - Establish what is important to people when contacting the Council
 - Understand what is most in need of improvement
 - Use this information to draw up SKDC's Service Standards, Customer Charter & Commitments and also what the Council expects from customers
 - Measure degree of support for strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes
- 2.11. The scope of the consultation ensures that the view of all users, including those who contact service areas directly (i.e. not solely through the Customer Service Team), are collected, as well as those who do not contact the Council (as they may be a customer in the future). The consultation will also reflect and be mindful of the recent significant investment in the Grantham Customer Service Centre.

2.12. The objectives of the consultation are to:

- Inform the content, approach and direction of the updated Customer Experience Strategy
- Underpin an action plan
- Identify the means of contact
- Find out why people contact the Council and which service area the enquiry relates to
- Understand what is important to people when contacting the Council
- Measure satisfaction with the experience
- Highlight where improvements are needed
- Establish what people like to see i.e. what they would like their customer experience to be
- Use this information to draw up the standards customers can expect from the Council and also to communicate the standards the Council expect from customers
- Measure degree of support for strategy's potential vision, ambitions and outcomes

3. Key Considerations

3.1. Members of Rural and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee are asked to consider the report and are invited to ask questions regarding its content.

4. Other Options Considered

4.1 There are no other options – this report is for information only.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

5.1. The recommendation will ensure businesses and residents of South Kesteven will have access to the support they need.

6. Consultation

6.1. The consultation process is as follows:

- 10 March 2025 to 7 April 2025 – Public Consultation
- 12 March 2025 – Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 7 May 2025 – Presentation of consultation analysis to Corporate Management Team
- 12 May 2025 to 23 May 2025 – Member workshop to present consultation analysis
- 4 June 2025 – Presentation of draft strategy and actions plan to Corporate Management Team

- 9 July 2025 – presentation of draft strategy and action plan to Rural & Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- 9 September 2025 – presentation of strategy and action plan for approval

7. Background papers

7.1. Customer Experience Strategy (2020 to 2024):

https://www.southkesteven.gov.uk/Customer_Experience_Strategy2020_2024