CABINET	AGENDA ITEM No. 6
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Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor David Seaton, Cabinet Member for Resources	
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CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

R E C O M M E N D A T I O N S	
FROM: Marion Kelly, Interim Corporate Director: Resources	**Deadline date:** N/A
It is recommended that Cabinet approves the Customer Engagement Strategy to support the council's Front Door Programme.	

1. **ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet via a referral from CMT on 13 September 2017.

2. **PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 The purpose of this report is for Cabinet to approve the Customer Engagement Strategy to support the council's Front Door Programme which will change the way customers access council services in the future through either digital or self-serve methods.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.4, 'To promote the council's corporate and key strategies and Peterborough's Community Strategy and approve strategies and cross-cutting programmes not included within the council's major policy and budget framework'.

3. **TIMESCALES**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	NO	If yes, date for Cabinet meeting	N/A

4. **BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

4.1 The council is delivering an ambitious transformation programme to ensure that customers have greater choice and control of how they interact with a range of different services. We are successfully delivering our vision of needs-led, easy to access customer services which put customers at the heart of what we do. This strategy and transformation programme will help us to deliver our core values to all of our customers whether they are residents, businesses or visitors to our city.

4.2 The council recognises that to encourage customers to access services online could require support and activities through 'assisted digital' provision and the fostering of greater digital

inclusion. Services must work for the whole of society - not just the 77% of people who have basic digital skills, but for those adults who don't. This is particularly important as financial exclusion and digital exclusion often go hand in hand. People who are the least online are often heavier users of public services, highlighting the need to design services to include them.

Vision and Objectives

4.3   As part of the Front Door programme, the council will re-design its digital services to make them so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them prefer to do so. The council will provide digitalised public services that are personalised, flexible, cost-efficient, save customers time, and allow the customer to transact how, when and where they like.

4.4   As part of this vision the council has embarked on its Front Door Programme which will change the way customers access council services through new and improved digital channels to deliver savings, avoid unnecessary costs and manage demand for services.

4.5   This approach will:

- Enable self-serve by customers.

- Increase self-management by customers.

- Divert demand from council services by sign-posting customers to the appropriate service delivery partner.

- Improve the customer experience on digital channels.

4.6   The council will support access of services via digital channels with access via telephone and face-to-face services. Council staff in both of these service areas will work with customers to assist them to self-serve online where possible and appropriate.

Our Strategy

4.7   Customers

4.7.1   The aim of the strategy is to raise awareness and encourage use of the digital services available.

4.7.2   The council is committed to being "digital by default" and to this end has embarked on a programme to make services available online, alongside the development of the Peterborough portal customer account functionality. This will enable customers to securely transact and interact with the council for a variety of services, .

4.8   Older, Vulnerable and Digitally Excluded Customers

4.8.1   The council will continue to engage and support older, vulnerable and digitally excluded customers to ensure that they can access services and are not disadvantaged by any changes proposed when implementing digital services. However the council recognises that not all of its residents will be able to use these new digital methods as easily as others. The strategy recognises that there are a number of reasons why vulnerable people may be digitally excluded and these fall into two themes:

1. Digital excluded - those who have little or no opportunity of accessing the internet.

2. Digital dismissive - those who have (or potentially have) a means of accessing the internet but choose not to use it.

4.8.2   Our strategy is:

- provide face to face and web digital assistance;
- provide digital assistance telephony channels;
- ensure that the council communicate effectively and sympathetically with the vulnerable and the digitally excluded to minimise any challenges they may face coping with these changes;
- continue to provide face to face support for vulnerable customers;
- continue to provide telephony support for vulnerable customers;
- target family, friends and carers to support vulnerable people to use digital tools whilst increasingly positioning assistive technology at the heart of the care and support offer;
- continue targeting vulnerable people through digital inclusion, whilst also training the trainer in the community to also be able to deliver the training;
- ensure any new digital services are tested with vulnerable groups to ensure they are accessible, easy to use and provide a good customer user journey; and
- ensure digital services and facilities are accessible for the disabled.

4.8.3 The council is committed to ensuring residents have the right support to adapt to digital technologies and wants to help residents to access online services, such as, making a payment. The council will continue to hold training, workshops and drop in sessions to help people get the most out of their devices, whether it is a laptop, tablet or smart-phone, and develop their internet skills.

4.9 Rural Communities

4.9.1 Peterborough is a mix of urban and rural areas. Under the Office of National Statistics definition, which defines areas as rural if they are outside of settlements with more than 10,000 resident population, Glinton and Castor, Wittering, Barnack and Eye, Thorney and Newborough wards are considered rural areas.

4.9.2 According to the 2014-Based Population and Dwelling Stock Forecasts report for Peterborough published in April 2016, approximately 11% of the population live in rural wards or approaching 12% of households. Where our customers are older and vulnerable the Customer Engagement Strategy specifically outlines the council's approach as outlined in section 4.4.2 of this report. However, the strategy also recognises that customers may experience digital exclusion.

4.9.3 Peterborough generally has good or superfast broadband connectivity with 97% of the Peterborough area having the ability to connect to superfast broadband and the Connecting Cambridgeshire programme is continuing to reach more rural locations to cover 99% of the Peterborough area over the next few years.

4.9.4 In addition, many parish councils across the country are taking up the challenge of digital transformation and are therefore able to improve their offer to local people. Working with the parish councils, our strategy is to:

- develop digital "pop ups" to assist citizens in rural communities;

- target citizens, and work with parish councils, in rural communities through digital inclusion, whilst also training the trainer in the community to also be able to deliver the training by transferring skills.

5. CONSULTATION

5.1 The council consulted with a wide range of audiences (based upon the type of customers that could be impacted) in order to develop and shape the Customer Engagement Strategy.

5.2 The council would like to thank the following organisations who have reviewed, contributed to or attended focus groups to develop this strategy:

- Age UK
- Autism and LD Partnership Board
- Carers Trust
- City College Peterborough
- Deafblind UK
- DIAL Sport
- Family Voice
- Healthwatch Peterborough
- Mental Health and Governance Board
- Older People Partnership Board
- Peterborough Council for Voluntary Services (PCVS)
- Peterborough Disability
- Peterborough MIND
- Peterborough Patient Forum
- Public Health
- RNIB
- SUN Network
- Various council (including Serco) officers

6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES OR IMPACT

6.1 The outcome of this strategy will help support the re-design of council services to make them so straightforward and convenient that all those who can use them prefer to do so. The council will provide digitalised public services that are personalised, flexible, cost-efficient, save customers time, and allow the customer to transact how, when and where they like.

7. REASON FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

7.1 It is recommended that Cabinet approves this strategy as a key enabler for the successful delivery of the council's Front Door Programme which will change the way customers access council services in the future through either digital or self-serve methods.

8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

8.1 If the council does not implement this strategy it could be detrimental to the delivery of the council's Front Door Programme. As part of the projects currently in progress and drafting of the associated Equality Impact Assessments, it has been identified that there are a number of groups of customers that need to be supported in accessing services digitally or through alternative means. This strategy will therefore help support successful delivery of the Front Door Programme.

8.2 The council could have developed a strategy in isolation without consulting with relevant organisations, however it has been identified through the projects currently in progress and drafting of the associated Equality Impact Assessments, that there are a number of groups of customers that need to be supported in accessing services digitally or through alternative means.

9. IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

9.1 This strategy is an enabler to support the delivery of the council's Front Door Programme, therefore all financial implications are considered within the relevant projects. To support the marketing and communication of digital and automated channels, a budget has been identified of £50,000.

Legal Implications

9.2 None. This strategy is an enabler to support the delivery of the council's Front Door Programme, therefore all legal implications are considered within the relevant projects.

Equalities Implications

9.3 This strategy is an enabler to support the delivery of the council's Front Door Programme, therefore all equality implications are considered within the relevant projects.

Rural Implications

9.4 This strategy is an enabler to support the delivery of the council's Front Door Programme, therefore all rural implications are considered within the relevant projects and earlier in this report.

10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985.

10.1 None.

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 - Customer Engagement Strategy.

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