

<b>CABINET</b>	<b>AGENDA ITEM No. 5</b>
<b>15 JUNE 2015</b>	<b>PUBLIC REPORT</b>

Cabinet Member(s) responsible:	Councillor John Holdich, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Education, Skills and University	
Contact Officer(s):	Adrian Chapman, Service Director, Adult Services and Communities	Tel. 863887

**CUSTOMER STRATEGY**

<b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b>	
<b>FROM :</b> Service Director, Adult Services and Communities	<b>Deadline date :</b> N/A
That the Cabinet approves the proposed Customer Strategy (attached as Appendix A).	

**1. ORIGIN OF REPORT**

1.1 This report is submitted to Cabinet following the development of the Strategy as a result of the Customer Experience Programme being agreed within the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

**2. PURPOSE AND REASON FOR REPORT**

2.1 The purpose of the Peterborough City Council Customer Strategy is to ensure all Council services are developed and delivered with the customer at the centre. Cabinet is asked to approve the Strategy in order that we have an agreed framework against which we can deliver and be measured.

2.2 This report is for Cabinet to consider under its Terms of Reference No. 3.2.1 'to take collective responsibility for the delivery of all strategic Executive functions within the Council's Major Policy and Budget Framework and lead the Council's overall improvement programmes to deliver excellent service'.

**3. TIMESCALE**

Is this a Major Policy Item/Statutory Plan?	<b>NO</b>
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**4. CUSTOMER STRATEGY**

4.1 Peterborough City Council has always taken pride in delivering quality services and putting customers at the heart of all we do. We know that our customers have high expectations of the services that they want to receive from the Council. However, to ensure we meet these expectations we need an agreed framework and set of principles against which we can deliver and be measured.

4.2 The Council is already making progress on reviewing and redesigning services around the customer through our Customer Experience programme, which sits as part of the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy. The development of this Strategy enables an agreed framework to be established against which the Customer Experience programme can be fully delivered, as well as the Council's other services and programmes.

- 4.3 There are a number of additional drivers for developing a Customer Strategy including the increasing expectations of our customers around accessibility, availability, choice and quality which means that a 'one size fits all' solution is no longer appropriate. Additionally, the traditional ways of delivering services may no longer be sustainable in every case. Reviewing these approaches against the Customer Strategy will ensure that the needs of customers are placed at the very heart of the review process ensuring those most in need of service and support receive it in the most appropriate ways.
- 4.4 The Customer Strategy sets the vision for improving our customers' experience and making Peterborough City Council a customer focussed organisation. This Strategy together with our 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.
- 4.5 A copy of the proposed Customer Strategy is attached at Appendix A.

## **5. CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 A project team was set up to develop this Strategy, which has contributed to its content and format; this included identifying service improvements in relation to access to services and using data around customer contact.
- 5.2 Research data from surveys showing customer preferences in relation to access channels and demographics, in terms of the make-up of our communities, has also been used to ensure the Strategy is focussed around customer needs.

## **6. ANTICIPATED OUTCOMES**

- 6.1 Once agreed, the Customer Strategy will provide the basis for transformation across our services and will help shape the way the Council engages and supports its customers and delivers its services. The Strategy and the Customer Experience programme will lead to a better understanding of our customers' needs and then our ability to tailor our services in response to that.

## **7. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The Strategy provides a framework for ensuring our services are customer focused.

## **8. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 The first option considered was to do nothing, however this may lead to the development of services and delivery of the Customer Experience programme without an agreed strategic approach, and may not enable the most effective and beneficial process for customer service improvements to be achieved.
- 8.2 The second option considered was to delay developing the Strategy until the Customer Experience programme has been completed. This was rejected because the development of the strategy and the Customer Experience programme should not be mutually exclusive.

## **9. IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Adoption of the Strategy will result in its use across all Council services and during relevant transformation and other programme work.

## **10. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

- Used to prepare this report, in accordance with the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)
- 10.1 None

## Peterborough City Council's Customer Service Strategy - Putting you at the heart of what we do

### Introduction

Peterborough is one of the fastest growing cities in the country bringing new housing, jobs and opportunities for the people who live here and attracting new residents from across the UK and beyond. As our city grows and the needs and demands of our customers change and grow, we will adapt and respond to these by providing high quality and cost effective services.

We know that our customers have high expectations of the service(s) that they want to receive from the council. However, we recognise that currently the way the council delivers its services, does not always fully meet these expectations.

We understand that it has not always been easy to find the information you want quickly or that you sometimes have to speak to us on more than one occasion to get things done. Customers have also told us that they can get passed around to different people.

We also know that:

- The way the council engages with its customers can vary across different parts of the council
- There is no single customer database that enables staff to access what the council knows about a customer and therefore better assist with an enquiry
- It has been difficult for customers to carry out some routine transactions online due to the limited functions of the council's website
- We need to work more with our partners to jointly deliver services that matter most to our customers.

### Transforming our customer services

Peterborough City Council has embarked on an ambitious transformation programme that will ensure that customers have greater choice and control of how they engage with council services. We will redesign the way we deliver our services to the people we serve to always put them first in everything we do.

Our vision is to deliver needs led, easy to access customer services however you choose to contact us. We will put you at the heart of what we do, to ensure that we continue to deliver the right services, by the right people, at the right time, in the right place and at the right cost.

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:

- **Expertise:** We recognise and value the differences, skills, knowledge and experience of all our colleagues
- **Trust:** We are honest and open in all our dealings and deliver on our promises
- **Initiative:** We are proactive and use our creativity to identify and resolve problems
- **Customer Focused:** We understand and aim to meet our customers diverse needs, treating them fairly and with respect
- **Work together/One team:** We work with colleagues and partners to deliver the best seamless services possible.

Our transformation programme is based upon the following aims:

➤ **Our information will be provided in an easy to find, clear and understandable way**

We have already begun to radically overhaul our website to make it easier for you to find information you want quickly. Over the coming months, we will offer more services online and make it easier for you to contact us via email, social media or via the My Peterborough App.

➤ **The Services you need are always delivered...**

**...by the right people** – We are working with our staff to build a culture where excellent customer services is a key part of everybody's job. We will achieve a right-first-time approach wherever possible so that you can complete the transaction you want without the need to be passed on to other members of staff in the council.

**...at the right time** – We will ensure that you can contact us at a time and by a method that is convenient to you. We know that more people than ever go online to find information and carry out routine transactions such as shopping or banking. We already provide a range of online services and we will be extending and improving these over the next year.

**... in the right way** - We will use customer feedback, council and partner data and intelligence to better understand the needs, experiences and expectations of our customers. We will design intelligent and responsive services that can respond quickly to changing or emerging needs.

➤ **We will deliver value for money on all of our services**

We remain within an extremely challenging financial climate meaning that it is more important than ever to deliver the right service for the right price. We will ensure that we deliver all of our services in the most efficient way possible to minimise cost.

➤ **Delivering excellent customer service skills**

The way the council interacts with its customers is crucial to delivering needs led services. Our customers should always expect to interact with well trained staff who have excellent communication skills are polite, friendly and always treat you with respect.

## **The Right Services in the Right Way**

Ensuring that the Council provides the right services for the people, business and communities in our city underpins our Customer Strategy. We will use our understanding of our customer and business needs to shape the way we deliver our services.

### **Case Study – service redesign**

We know that the residents, communities and businesses in our city already contribute to the way Council services are designed and delivered, but we want to do more. We want to bring the power of residents and communities into the delivery of services we provide. For example in Adult Social Care, we have worked with Service Users and their parents and carers to redesign day services for people under 65. The Council worked with a group of users and their parent/ carers as equal partners and co-creators to help design how the service should operate. This approach not only gave service users a strong voice in saying how the service should be run, but provided reassurance regarding the availability and quality of the service for the future.

We are a Commissioning led Council, this means that we will deliver better outcomes for our customers through identifying the most efficient, effective and economic models of service delivery. This may mean the council continuing to deliver services on its own, or directly through other agencies and organisations or as a partnership between the council and other organisations. This will provide us with a range of different abilities, skills and knowledge to enable targeted services to be delivered in the right place at the right time. A commissioning approach offers significant benefits to local residents and businesses alike. Services will be delivered in more efficient ways, stimulating local enterprise by creating new markets in the provision of local services, and an increased emphasis on the scrutiny of those services.

## The Right People

### ***Our Staff***

We know that our customers expect a consistent and seamless service from the Council, whichever department they come into contact with. Currently, the way the council manages customer information and records is ineffective with many different systems that aren't able to share information across departments. Over the next year, we will replace all of our existing databases with a single customer management system. This will allow staff to quickly access all the information we hold on a customer and better assist with enquiries.

Many of our staff are also our customers. Nearly three quarters of the people working here also live in the city. Both they and their families make use of the services we provide such as schools, housing or leisure facilities. Our staff provide us with vital local knowledge of their experience of living in Peterborough shaping the way we deliver services and helping to make the city a healthy, safe and vibrant place to live and work.

We are committed to providing the highest standard of services to our customers whilst achieving value for money in everything we do. We remain within an extremely challenging financial climate which has seen funding to the council cut by £44m in the five years leading up to 2015/16. To continue to meet our high standards we need to think differently about the way we provide services, this includes promoting the use of technology, encouraging self-service and collaborative working with our partners and the community to save money and develop joint solutions to multi-agency problems.

This will mean that we work outside traditional organisational boundaries and find collaborative and innovative ways to meet the needs of our customers, an example of this in practice is outlined in the case study below.

### ***Case Study - The 'MASH' Hub***

The Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) involves staff from a range of agencies such as the Police, Probation, Women's Aid, Health and Mental Health working alongside Children's and Adult Social Care, education and others. When a professional, family member or member of the public is concerned about the safety of an adult or a child, the MASH brings agencies together to provide a collaborative, multi-agency response to ensure that children, young people or vulnerable adults are safe. Through the MASH Hub staff from across these agencies will be able to share data in a secure environment so that our collective support for the most vulnerable children and adults living in Peterborough is more effective. For more information about the Mash Hub click [here](#).

## The Right Time

### ***Getting in Touch With Us in Ways and Times Convenient to You***

You can contact us in a variety of ways to find the information you need and to ask for help and support. We recognise that your expectations are changing and you will compare your experience with Peterborough City Council to your digital interactions with other organisations for example when online shopping or banking. We live in a digital age: people are already well used to online shopping from their smartphones, tablets or PCs and whilst we already have a range of online services, we will be extending and improving these over the next year.

While council customers cannot choose where to get their council services from, they nevertheless rightly expect high standards of effectiveness, efficiency and value for money. This means that if we are to keep pace with changing expectations, we must plan and deliver our services in ways that make sense to customers, in ways that are convenient to them.

We are improving the ways customers can access our services; you will have a choice about how to get in contact with us quickly and easily. What's more you will be able to do it at times that suit you and receive an answer to your query in a timely manner and in a way that you prefer. We will use new digital technology including mobile apps and social media to make contacting us easier than ever before.

**Case Study - My Peterborough App**

My Peterborough enables you to report issues such as fly-tipping, graffiti or abandoned vehicles direct to the council. Attach a photo or let you phone record the exact location to help us pinpoint the problem. The information will be sent straight to the right department. Once we've resolved the issue we'll also be able to let you know. The app can be downloaded from the App Store or Google Play for free.

We understand that not everyone will be able to access services digitally and so we will continue to provide alternative methods for those who need it. You can still contact us in person at Bayard Place, by telephone (01733 747474) or in writing. We will work with partners across the City to make sure everyone is able to access our self-service facilities. Whilst self-service works well for many of the services the Council offers, it cannot completely replace face to face contact to resolve complex problems. We will ensure that our Customer Service staff are always able to provide the information and help you are looking for.

**Working with and in our Communities**

We are committed to championing and developing projects that build skills, knowledge and support within communities, so that people can work together to solve their problems.

Spotting when things are starting to go wrong and getting support quickly can help to stop problems from getting worse or a crisis developing. At different times in our lives, we all need help from our friends, families or professionals to manage our problems such as our health, housing, our children's education or dealing with money problems. We know how difficult this can be and our services will work with you to help provide the right solutions for you and your family.

**Case study - Community Connectors**

Successful customer service and engagement is dependent on using the right communication methods. Peterborough is a highly diverse city, home to many people from across the UK and the world. With such a range of different backgrounds, cultures and needs we know that we cannot simply use a "one size fits all" approach to providing services. Our Community Connectors are council staff who understand the differing needs that communities have and know how to use the right approach to support these needs. They know this because the staff come from a range of different communities themselves and can not only speak a number of languages fluently, but also have a deep understanding of cultural and faith issues and how these can be handled sensitively. Through our Community Connectors we can engage more communities more effectively and ensure that the services we provide are having a positive effect for the people we serve.

We will work with our communities to strengthen and build community capacity wherever we can. We believe that in almost all circumstances, families, friends and neighbours are more than able to support their communities, especially when they have access to the right support.

### **Case Study - Getting Help**

You can find help and information on the council's website ([www.peterborough.gov.uk](http://www.peterborough.gov.uk)) on a whole range of services. For example the Family Information Service pages on our website provide information on a range of community services available to support children, young people and their families in Peterborough. On our website you can also find information and support for children and young people who have special educational needs or disabilities by searching for the Local Offer. In this one place, you can find information about providers of the following services:

Special educational provision.

Health services.

Social care services.

Other educational provision.

Training.

Travel arrangements for children and young people to schools, colleges and early year's education settings.

Preparing for adulthood, including housing and employment.

Leisure and social opportunities.

There is a great deal of expertise and knowledge within our communities that can help people when they are in need. We will support our communities to have the right skills, knowledge and confidence to help people when they need it.

### **Putting You at the Heart of What We Do**

We want customers to feel that they are being listened to and their queries are being dealt with quickly. In future when you contact us you will experience a seamless, consistent and easy to access service whenever you need it.

You will receive the support you need at the right time and in the right place from professional, friendly, helpful staff. Getting your query resolved to your satisfaction first time will reduce the need for repeat calls to the council saving you time and us money.

We are committed to high standards of customer service however, we know that sometimes things might go wrong, if they do we will make common sense decisions to rectify them as soon as possible. Our Customer Charter, available on our [website](#) makes our commitment clear as to the service you should expect.

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