

28 SEPTEMBER 2021

## Walsall Customer Experience Strategy 2021 to 2026

Ward(s): All

Portfolios: Councillor Andrew – Deputy Leader, Regeneration

### 1. Aim

The aim of the draft Customer Experience Strategy (**Appendix A – to follow**) is to provide a vision for how we will achieve excellent customer experience in the future, in a way that aligns to our new ways of working, the Walsall Proud promises, and the Corporate Plan outcomes. It aims to support the Council to deliver the aspiration of improving services, by facilitating evidence-based, customer centric, decision making, and achieving more consistent, accessible, and easy to use services. The strategy also seeks to embrace, and contribute to, the Resilient Communities model, by supporting residents to become more self-sufficient by allowing them to access services via new 24/7 digital self-serve pathways, whilst also recognising the need to support our most vulnerable residents, through a trusted network of community and voluntary sector partners.

### 2. Recommendations

That Committee provide feedback on an early draft of the Customer Experience Strategy as part of the consultation process.

### 3. Report detail – know

- 3.1 A draft Customer Experience Strategy (“the Strategy”) is attached at **Appendix A (to follow)**. This contains customer and stakeholder feedback, and the Council’s response.
- 3.2 The Council has started to deliver improvements to customer experience but there is still a lot of work to be done. We have already:
  - successfully increased the number of services accessible to customers 24 hours a day via our on-line customer platform.
  - developed a new Digital Design for our website; and
  - procured a contractor to advance the development of a new Customer Relationship Management system to help facilitate a ‘whole council’ approach to customer engagement;
  - piloted face to face support for vulnerable customers in partnership with existing Community and Voluntary Sector partners.
- 3.3 The way many council services are delivered has changed in response to Covid-19. The most notable changes have been in relation to customer contact services,

with most staff now operating from home and having to establish new ways of working to meet our customers' needs. We have developed and enhanced a number of digital platforms to help us respond, which also contribute to our longer term aims of more modern and accessible services for customers. As part of our Strategy we will continue to encourage our customers to move across from face to face and telephone to digital self service capabilities, as this is key to the Council's Proud Ways of Working and is a positive contributor to help deliver financial benefits. We have also seen the local voluntary and community partners step up to the challenge of Covid-19 and support our most vulnerable residents with exceptional kindness, and compassion, delivering exceptional outcomes for many.

- 3.4 The Proud Customer Access Management work stream has delivered a new Customer Experience Centre capability, supported by a new telephone system, with future capability of integration with other digital customer platforms, providing self-serve opportunities for residents and customers to apply, report, book and pay for council services online, at a time, and place, convenient for themselves.
- 3.5 The Council has appointed a strategic partner to support the development of a new customer relationship management system which will eventually provide a single front door for customer contact. This new technology will be integral in delivering the aims of the Strategy and meeting the feedback from customers on their key priorities. It will enable us to provide better insights about our customers, building up a history and profile to help inform service design and delivery for the future. Aligned to this is a refreshed council web site with improved information content, contact details, signposting and integrated e-forms.
- 3.6 An on-line customer survey earlier in 2021 suggests that there may have been a small improvement to the satisfaction rates of our customers with rates reported as increasing from 67% in 2019 to 73% in 2021. To test this further, and to ensure targeted input into the development of this Strategy, the Customer Engagement Team has undertaken further public consultation. The results from the consultation which explored customer priorities, and needs, in a post Covid-19 world, indicate that the biggest priority for customers (at 81% of respondents) is that information provided by the council is accurate and up to date. This is followed by 'the need for the council to be clear about what it can and cannot deliver' (at 71%) and that 'the council is easy to contact' (at 68%). It is essential that any benefits gained as a result of new ways of working developed during Covid-19 are not lost as Covid-19 restrictions are lifted.
- 3.7 Feedback from disability groups suggests there is still demand for face-to-face support from our most vulnerable customers; there is also demand for more local access points. The Council therefore needs to change its pre Covid-19 operating model which saw large numbers of customer's accessing the First Stop Shop daily. As mentioned previously, during the pandemic, voluntary sector partners in Walsall took a lead role in supporting vulnerable and elderly residents who were shielding. We want to further enhance the new customer pathways and relationships developed in this period, coordinating it through the Customer Experience Strategy and associated delivery group.

#### **4. *Financial information***

There are no specific financial implications directly associated with the Strategy. The priorities contained within the Strategy will require funding that will be through existing identified budgets. However, if there are any actions that have significant financial implications for the Council, these will be the subject to separate reports to Cabinet.

## **5. *Reducing Inequalities***

An Equality impact Assessment (EQIA) is attached at **Appendix B** and shows a need to continue the consultation and communication processes to ensure the needs of diverse communities are met. The EQIA showed a need to communicate more effectively with all groups, make reasonable adjustments where required and keeping an ongoing dialogue with communities to ensure changes in need and aspirations are met.

## **6. *Decide***

The Committee is asked to decide whether to provide any feedback as part of the consultation process on development of the new Customer Experience Strategy.

## **7. *Respond***

The committee could respond by asking for their feedback to be incorporated into the final strategy, prior to it being considered by Cabinet. Any scrutiny feedback would be reported back to Cabinet when seeking approval of the final Customer Experience Strategy.

## **8. *Review***

A delivery Steering Group for the Customer Experience Strategy will be formed which will report back in line with Walsall Proud governance procedures.

## **Background papers**

### **Author**

Elise Hopkins  
Director of Customer Engagement  
☎ 07967639334  
✉ [elise.hopkins@walsall.gov.uk](mailto:elise.hopkins@walsall.gov.uk)