

Corporate Policy Committee

Date of Meeting:	06 July 2021
Report Title:	Customer Experience Progress Report
Report of:	Alex Thompson, Director of Finance and Customer Services
Report Reference No:	CP/08/21-22
Ward(s) Affected:	All

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1.** In March 2021, Cabinet approved Cheshire East Council's first "Customer Experience Strategy". The Strategy sets out our vision to put customers at the heart of everything we do and supports the Corporate Plan's vision to be an open, fairer, green Cheshire East.
- 1.2.** An action plan in support of the Strategy has been developed by the officer Brighter Future Transformation Board. Actions are aimed at driving an enhanced customer experience, developing the tools, skills, and knowledge to support our staff in delivering this, and building a customer focused culture across the organisation.
- 1.3.** Delivery against the Customer Experience action plan during 2020 was initially delayed due to the response to the COVID pandemic, but all actions are now progressing to agreed delivery timescales.
- 1.4.** Significant progress has been made to raise awareness of the Customer Experience Strategy, to establish requirements for the revised technology, to commence the service re-design work within the Highways Service and to build the training and awareness suite of products.
- 1.5.** This report provides an update on progress against the agreed delivery plan and sets out the baseline measures identified to assess ongoing improvements.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. That the Committee note the progress made to date on the agreed Customer Experience action plan.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. To continue to raise awareness of the Council's actions to enhance the Customer Experience at Cheshire East Council. Understanding and sharing the information within this report will support the embedding of enhanced customer experience as a goal throughout the authority.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1. No other options were considered to this report as it is provided to enhance understanding and demonstrate activity. This report does not require alternative options to be considered as the Strategy underpinning the action plan has already been agreed.

5. Background

- 5.1. The Customer Experience Strategy sets out how we aim to become an organisation which is fully focused on our customers. Where the needs of our customers are central to the services we deliver and the way in which we deliver them and where every interaction a customer has with us is of a consistently high quality. Specifically, this entails:

- Providing a consistent and high quality of service
- Understanding what our customers need
- Designing and delivering services to meet that need
- Working as one organisation and with our partners to provide a joined-up experience for customers
- Ensuring staff have the knowledge, skills, capability, and tools to deliver a quality experience
- Maximising the use of digital technology
- Providing value for money

- 5.2. The Customer Experience Action Plan sets out our approach to delivering against each of the workstreams within the project and the measures we will use to assess progress. Details of progress against the plan can be seen at **Appendix 1**.

- 5.3. The Customer Experience programme contains six workstreams which collectively aim to address the outcomes outlined at 5.1 (above). The aim of each workstream is set out below:

- 5.4. **Vision and Strategy** – the development of a corporate vision for Customer Experience and an approach to its consistent development. Supported by a Customer Charter setting out standards of quality,

timescales and behaviours which will be consistently applied across the Council and against which we will be assessed.

- 5.5. Customer Insight** – the development of an enhanced approach to consultation and engagement, ensuring we are listening to customers through both formal consultation and informal feedback. Ensuring that customer feedback and data is available and accessible to decision makers, that we use this information, and are seen to be using the information, in all decision-making processes.
- 5.6. Service Re-design** – Adopting an outside in view of customer experiences with the Council (and our delivery partners), looking at the people, processes, policies and technology that underpin services; to understand if they are fundamentally meeting the needs of customers and provide value for money.
- 5.7. Culture** – development and delivery of a programme of training and awareness to provide staff with the skills to deliver excellent customer experience, provide managers with the skills to view services from the customers perspective, to make improvements and to embed a customer focused culture across the Council.
- 5.8. Technology – Contact Centre** – to improve the technology that underpins the corporate contact centre to ensure it provides staff with the tools to support and enable customers and provides the information we need to learn from customer experiences.
- 5.9. Technology – Digital** – to improve the technology that underpins our digital offering making sure it is easy for customers to use, provides the same level of service as other channels and actively encourages customers to use digital where appropriate.

6. Consultation and Engagement

- 6.1.** The Customer Experience programme aims to ensure that the Council designs and delivers services that our customer's need. Consultation and engagement with customers are integral to the programme and will take place throughout the programme's lifecycle.
- 6.2.** Customer feedback has informed the Customer Experience Strategy already, with initial design of the programme reflecting the Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2018. Further consultation supported the final design of the strategy. Staff and elected member consultation was held during October 2020 with public consultation taking place November 2020 – January 2021. The "What matters to customers" survey, which was completed May 2021, the results of which will inform the Corporate Customer Charter. Customers have been asked their opinions on the

Council's website and the feedback received has informed those areas requiring improvement such as the search engine.

- 6.3.** A dedicated workstream within the Programme will review our methods of consultation and engagement to ensure we are listening and responding to customers, that this informs our decision making and that we are transparent and open throughout the process.
- 6.4. Legal** - There is no legal requirement to produce a Customer Experience Strategy. However, it is helpful to have a clear articulation of the priority in the Council's Corporate Plan.
- 6.5. Finance** -The Customer Experience programme is funded through the Brighter Futures Transformation Earmarked Reserve. Details of the funding and expenditure to date are at Table 1 below.

Details	Actual	Committed	Total
Strasys Consultancy Customer Value Proposition work (Mar 19 – Jun 19) Customer Segments (Sept 19 – Dec 19)	£51,840.85	£0.00	£51,840.85
Programme Support			
Strategy Design	£280	£0.00	£280
Communications and Marketing	£0.00	£15,000.00	£15,000.00
Training and Development	£0.00	£5,000.00	£5,000.00
Additional Costs	£0.00	£39,720.00	£39,720.00
Gartner U.K Limited November 2020 – October 2022	£29,900.00	£29,900.00	£59,800.00
Business Analyst Resource February 2021 - Ongoing	£32,271.60	£81,728.00	£113,999.60
Total	£114,292.45	£171,348.00	£285,640.45

- 6.6.** The focus of the programme is on the creation of an enhanced customer experience there is the potential for savings to be delivered. Early estimates of efficiencies of £334k per annum by 2024/25 have been incorporated within the MTFS approved by Council in February 2021. To date £90k of savings have been achieved through a restructure within the Corporate Contact Centre because of falling demand for face to face services.

Proposal	Details	Annual Savings Target
Reduced demand for face to face provision	Adapt the operating model for face to face services to more appropriately match demand. Reduce staffing levels for Advisors from 8.36 to 4	90K
Reduction in staffing levels within the CC due to reduced demand and reduced handling time	Reduce in CC FTE from 43 to 37 FTE	161K
Reduction in print, postage, and stationary budget for Revenues	Increased use of online services and e billing	50K
Reduction in complaints	Bring the volume of Waste complaints in line with other visible services	33K
Re-designing services to enable payment up front at all times	Reduction in debt written off	Included within debt recovery HLBC
Totals		334k

- 6.7.** The service redesign work has the potential to identify further financial benefits. The impact of these will be considered as part of the development of the MTFs as the programme is expanded across the Council.
- 6.8. Policy** - Cabinet approved the revised Customer Experience Strategy in March 2021 following extensive consultation. The service re-design work may recommend changes to policies where it is identified that these are creating a barrier to improved customer experience. These will be reported to Members as appropriate.
- 6.9. Equality** - A full equality impact assessment has been completed for the Customer Experience Strategy. Whilst there were no implications highlighted an equality impact assessment will be developed as the work on the proposed customer charter progresses. Any potential impact on equality will be addressed within each of the workstreams to ensure we provide a consistent and quality customer experience for all customers.
- 6.10. Human Resources** – Implementation of the Strategy will require additional training and support being provided to staff and members. Changes to the structure within the Contact Centre Team have already been implemented and planned changes within the Web Team are being developed.
- 6.11. Risk Management** – a risk register for the programme has been developed and is monitored through the Brighter Future Transformation Governance process. The majority of staff required to fully implement the strategy are currently offering front line services, meaning the most significant risk remains a potential reduction in capacity due to any extended response to the pandemic.

- 6.12. Rural Communities** – there are no specific implications for rural communities
- 6.13. Children and Young People/Cared for Children** - there are no specific implications for children and young people/cared for children
- 6.14. Public Health** - there are no specific implications for public health
- 6.15. Climate Change** – one of the aims of the Customer Experience programme is to enhance the Councils digital offering for customers and to actively encourage customers to use digital where appropriate.

Access to Information	
Contact Officer:	Helen Gerrard – Head of Customer Services Helen.Gerrard@cheshireeast.gov.uk 01270 371464 / 07827 958141
Appendices:	Customer Experience Progress Report – Appendix 1
Background Papers:	Customer Experience Report – Cabinet 09-03-2021 Customer Experience Strategy