

EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

TITLE: BFTP – Customer Experience Strategy

VERSION CONTROL

Date	Version	Author	Description of Changes
06.10.2020	V1	Leeanne Forster	

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CHESHIRE EAST COUNCIL - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Stage 1 Description: Fact finding (about your policy / service /

Department	Corporate Services		Lead officer responsible for assessment		Leeanne Forster	
Service	BFTP – Customer Experience Workstream		Other members of team undertaking assessment			
Date	6 th October 2020		Version			
Type of document (mark as appropriate)	Strategy	Plan	Function	Policy	Procedure	Service
Is this a new/ existing/ revision of an existing document (please mark as appropriate)	New		Existing		Revision	
<p>Title and subject of the impact assessment (include a brief description of the aims, outcomes, operational issues as appropriate and how it fits in with the wider aims of the organisation)</p> <p>Please attach a copy of the strategy/ plan/ function/ policy/ procedure/ service</p>	<p>The Customer Experience Project forms a key strand within the Brighter Future Transformation Programme. Its overarching aim is to develop our organisation into one which “puts our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services” and “ensures that every interaction a customer has with us is a consistently positive experience.”</p> <p>The Project was informed by a review of customer service and experience across the Council, conducted by Strasys Consultancy. This review identified issues with existing structures, processes, technology and culture all of which were impacting on our ability to understand customer needs and to appropriately respond to these.</p> <p>The Residents Survey Results in early 2020 provided further evidence of the need for fundamental change with relatively poor satisfaction in some service areas and a perception that the Council does not listen to customers.</p> <p>Customer expectations have also changed over time and many now expect to be able to interact with organisations digitally and at a time which suits them. Comparisons are made with organisations that customers regularly interact with such as on-line banks and on-line retail, Amazon being the often-quoted example. The current technology underpinning our customer contact has not completely kept pace with this expectation and there is a need for this to be reviewed and enhanced.</p> <p>The Customer Experience Project has developed workstreams to address or improve in each of these areas. The</p>					

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following provides a summary of the key issues and areas to be addressed.

- 1. The lack of a clear vision and strategy; a lack of clarity as to how that links with other strategies (financial, transformational, digital) and what excellent customer service means in practice.**

The Customer Experience Project will develop a corporate Strategy for Customer Experience which will establish a clear and consistent expectation of the experience we expect a customer to receive when they interact with the Council. This will be underpinned by guidance which sets out what this means in practice. These will be adopted across the Council and all Departments will be expected to demonstrate compliance.

- 2. The lack of a customer centric culture across the organisation, no overall ownership of the customer experience, a lack of consistency and no overarching centre of excellence for customer service.**

Following the adoption of the Strategy a programme of training and awareness will be rolled out, building on the work underway within the culture workstream of the BFTP.

There is also a need to review structures and working practices related to customer services across the Council, particularly of those with a corporate responsibility. There is a lack of ownership of the customer experience across the Council and a perception that the Director of Finance & Customer Services has an operational rather than strategic responsibility for customers. There is evidence of good practice amongst several Services and many are driving improvements within their own areas of responsibility. This has led however to a lack of a cohesive and consistent offering for customers and the proliferation of “best of breed” solutions with little overarching framework.

- 3. A lack of understanding of who our customers are and the full end to end journey for our customers with handovers between services and partners not always managed; an element of duplication between services and a disjoint between initial contact and fulfilment**

We have developed an approach to service re-design which focusses on the experience the customer has throughout this journey. We will test this out in two areas which had particularly poor responses to the Residents Survey: Planning and Highways. This approach enables us to both map out the steps we require from a customer to access a service and what that process feels like from a customer’s perspective. It will allow us to remove unnecessary steps in a process, understand why customers may drop out of a request

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and understand what, if any other services we should be offering at the same time.

This is an area which is likely to have been significantly influenced throughout the COVID crisis. Services have adapted to respond to the change in working practices and to enable services for the most vulnerable customers to be prioritised. In many Services this has highlighted those processes which do not add value and encouraged these to be removed. It is important as we recover from the crisis that these benefits are captured and retained as the new business as usual.

4. A lack of a single cross organisation view of customers, content or services leading to missed marketing opportunities to manage demand or to influence the take up of services.

Whilst the Council may operate within individual services, customers invariably have needs which cut across a number of those services. Viewing our services from the customer's perspective allows us to respond to these multiple demands. A change of address for example could include Council Tax, Housing and Waste services; a request for an assisted waste collection may indicate a vulnerable customer needing further support and a business may require licensing, business rates and business advice.

By recognising these needs from the customer's perspective, we can be proactive in offering related services or providing relevant advice which then manages future demand.

The COVID crisis has also highlighted a gap in our ability to contact specific or relevant groups of customers directly. The ability to reach customers with information, advice or requests which are specific to them helps to ensure messages are read and any action required is taken. The requirement to reach specific business eligible for the business grants and to request payment details would have been far easier with a method of directly messaging relevant businesses.

5. Lack of technology to support multi-channel contact leading to a poor customer experience, inefficiencies within the contact centre and no central repository of customer data

Customers increasingly use multiple channels to interact with organisations including the website, on line forms, chatbots, webchat, telephone, email and occasionally face to face. Customers also do not tend to stick with one channel, using whichever is most convenient or appropriate for their needs at any given time.

The technology within the Contact Centre is primarily telephony based and does not support the use of multiple channels. Nor is there a single repository for the recording of all contact from customers. From a

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customer's perspective this leads to frustrations in repeating information and as a Council it leads to a lack of information and an inability to learn from this to address needs proactively.

The Contact Centre is also only one area into which customer calls may be channelled. Several smaller contact hubs exist within other service areas with contact recorded within individual back office systems if at all further exacerbating this issue.

The Council's digital offering has primarily been led by ICT and the needs of individual services. Whilst good progress has been made there has been a lack of a corporate strategy and of a focus on the overall experience from the customer's perspective.

Multiple "accounts" for customers have been created each of which may provide a good solution for a specific service but collectively they lead to a mixed and confusing experience for customers.

Our aim will be to review the technologies underpinning all customer contact to provide a single "portal" of information irrelevant of the method by which customers contact us. This should also feed into the digital offering so customers can see progress on reports they have made, information we hold about them e.g. Council Tax records and personalised information which is relevant to them, their interests and their location.



CEC Customer
Experience Strategy FIN

Who are the main stakeholders and have they been engaged with? (e.g. general public, employees, Councillors, partners, specific audiences, residents)

The main stakeholders are the general public, residents, employees and those who interact with Cheshire East Council.

- Staff consultation (including Councillors) will be held 7th to 30th October 2020
- Public consultation will be held 27th November 2020 to 15th January 2021

What consultation method(s) did you use?

- Council staff will be consulted via an online survey.
- Public Consultation – It was intended that the public will have access to the survey digitally and via hard copy. However due to COVID it is unlikely that the option to complete a hard copy will be feasible.

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Stage 2 Initial Screening

Who is affected and what evidence have you considered to arrive at this analysis? (This may or may not include the stakeholders listed above)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The way services are delivered and how customers interact with the Council has a significant impact on our communities and therefore may impact on different groups in the community, but is not intended to discriminate against different groups in the community • Changes in how services are provided, who they are delivered to and who receives the services • When making decisions that may affect people the Council will aim to ensure that their views are sought and considered so that we can understand the impact of decisions, what matters to them, what they consider as priorities, what areas are in need of improvement and how the choices made may impact on their lives
Who is intended to benefit and how?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All stakeholder as referenced above are intended to benefit from a Customer Experience Strategy. Please see points 1 to 5 above. • Issues and concerns identified during this consultation will be used to develop mitigation where possible and will be used to inform further development of the Strategy.
Could there be a different impact or outcome for some groups?	There is likely to be little or no impact upon any specific groups.
Does it include making decisions based on individual characteristics, needs or circumstances?	No.
Are relations between different groups or communities likely to be affected? (eg will it favour one particular group or deny opportunities for others?)	No.
Is there any specific targeted action to promote equality? Is there a history of unequal outcomes (do you have enough evidence to prove otherwise)?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Efforts are made to ensure that all groups have an opportunity to participate in the consultation. • As the consultation is likely to be accessible via digital means only, the following groups have been engaged: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Hidden Carers ➤ Belong

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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Cheshire Equality Leads Forum ➤ South and East Cheshire Chamber of Commerce 							
Is there an actual or potential negative impact on these specific characteristics? (Please tick)									
Age	Y	N	Marriage & civil partnership	Y	N	Religion & belief	Y	N	
Disability	Y	N	Pregnancy & maternity	Y	N	Sex	Y	N	
Gender reassignment	Y	N	Race	Y	N	Sexual orientation	Y	N	
What evidence do you have to support your findings? (quantitative and qualitative) Please provide additional information that you wish to include as appendices to this document, i.e., graphs, tables, charts							Consultation/ involvement carried out		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review of customer service and experience across the Council, conducted by Strasys Consultancy. • Residents Survey feedback 2020 							Yes	No	
Age	There may be an impact at the consultation stage. We are aware that some older residents may be less digitally functional and therefore to overcome this we have engaged with specific groups ahead of consultation.								
Disability	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Gender reassignment	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Marriage & civil partnership	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Pregnancy & maternity	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Race	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Religion & belief	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Sex	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								
Sexual orientation	<i>It is not expected that this consultation will impact people who fall within this category.</i>								

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Proceed to full impact assessment? (Please tick)	Yes	No	Date
Lead officer sign off		Date	
Head of service sign off		Date 11 th February 2021	

If yes, please proceed to Stage 3. If no, please publish the initial screening as part of the suite of documents relating to this issue

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Stage 3 Identifying impacts and evidence

This section identifies if there are impacts on equality, diversity and cohesion, what evidence there is to support the conclusion and what further action is needed

Protected characteristics	<p>Is the policy (function etc....) likely to have an adverse impact on any of the groups?</p> <p>Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations</p> <p>List what negative impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</p>	<p>Are there any positive impacts of the policy (function etc....) on any of the groups?</p> <p>Please include evidence (qualitative & quantitative) and consultations</p> <p>List what positive impacts were recorded in Stage 1 (Initial Assessment).</p>	<p>Please rate the impact taking into account any measures already in place to reduce the impacts identified</p> <p>High: Significant potential impact; history of complaints; no mitigating measures in place; need for consultation Medium: Some potential impact; some mitigating measures in place, lack of evidence to show effectiveness of measures Low: Little/no identified impacts; heavily legislation-led; limited public facing aspect</p>	<p>Further action (only an outline needs to be included here. A full action plan can be included at Section 4)</p> <p>Once you have assessed the impact of a policy/service, it is important to identify options and alternatives to reduce or eliminate any negative impact. Options considered could be adapting the policy or service, changing the way in which it is implemented or introducing balancing measures to reduce any negative impact. When considering each option you should think about how it will reduce any negative impact, how it might impact on other groups and how it might impact on relationships between groups and overall issues around community cohesion. You should clearly demonstrate how you have considered various options and the impact of these. You must have a detailed rationale behind decisions and a justification for those alternatives that have not been accepted.</p>
Age				
Disability				
Gender reassignment				
Marriage & civil partnership				
Pregnancy and				

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maternity				
Race				
Religion & belief				
Sex				
Sexual orientation				
<p>Is this change due to be carried out wholly or partly by other providers? If yes, please indicate how you have ensured that the partner organisation complies with equality legislation (e.g. tendering, awards process, contract, monitoring and performance measures)</p>				

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Stage 4 Review and Conclusion

Summary: provide a brief overview including impact, changes, improvement, any gaps in evidence and additional data that is needed			
Specific actions to be taken to reduce, justify or remove any adverse impacts	How will this be monitored?	Officer responsible	Target date
Please provide details and link to full action plan for actions			
When will this assessment be reviewed?			
Are there any additional assessments that need to be undertaken in relation to this assessment?			
Lead officer sign off		Date	
Head of service sign off		Date	

Please publish this completed EIA form on the relevant section of the Cheshire East website