



People, Performance and Development Committee  
2 April 2015

**Customer Promise – the Council's commitment to  
delivering excellent service**

**Purpose of the report:** Policy Development and Review

The People, Performance and Development Committee is invited to:

- consider research and feedback from staff, customers and members on the key drivers behind excellent customer experience
- endorse the new Customer Promise and the proposed approach to improving resident experience.

**Recommendations:**

1. It is recommended that the People, Performance and Development Committee endorse the new Customer Promise and the proposed approach to improving resident experience.

**Introduction:**

2. On 10 February 2015, the County Council approved the Corporate Strategy and agreed that focusing on 'Resident Experience' is one of the organisation's three strategic goals.
3. To better define Resident Experience the Council conducted research including speaking to staff, Members and customers about what they thought were the most important principles behind excellent service.
4. The research has been used to create the Council's new Customer Promise which will be used as a framework to drive improved Resident Experience.

## Research:

5. The Council's Customer Services team spoke to people at road shows and in workshops, and conducted an online poll which received 1,136 responses and 240 comments.
6. The following four principles emerged as being most important to people:
  - Treating people in the right way
  - Making it easy
  - Keeping people informed
  - Getting it right
7. These principles have been used to create the new Customer Promise (Annex 1). The Council has confidence that these are the right principles to focus on because they reflect the conclusions of other studies into the key drivers of customer satisfaction in the public sector, such as:
  - 'What do people want, need and expect from public services?' Ipsos MORI (2010).
  - 'The Customer Service Excellence standard' Cabinet Office (2008).

## Embedding the Customer Promise to improve resident experience

8. The following steps will be taken to embed the Customer Promise into the organisation's culture and operating processes:

### Leadership

- 8.1 Strong leadership is critical to creating a customer-focused culture. Leaders in the Council must role model the required behaviour, communicate the importance of the Customer Promise and ensure there are plans in place to deliver improved customer experience.

### Employee Engagement

- 8.2 It is essential for managers at all levels of the organisation to champion the Customer Promise. Managers must articulate how it relates to people's roles and support their teams so that everyone in the Council feels ownership of the Customer Promise.
- 8.3 This will be achieved through such initiatives as the organisation's 'Employee Engagement Campaign' where managers will be asked to actively promote and participate in creating a customer-focused culture.

### Systems and standards

- 8.4 The principles in the Customer Promise must be underpinned by effective systems and clear service standards.

- 8.5 To fulfil the commitment to being responsive the Council will undertake a comprehensive review of its telephone policy, including the use of voicemail, capturing customer and staff feedback about how well teams respond to calls.
- 8.6 A number of services are currently pursuing the Government's 'Customer Service Excellence' standard which is a well established and proven approach designed to deliver customer-focused improvement.
- 8.7 It is important that the Customer Promise extends to those services which are not directly managed by the council. The Council will therefore ensure that the appropriate standards are built into the Council's commissioning processes.

### **Recruitment, induction and training**

- 8.8 The recruitment process will be reviewed to ensure that competency based questions which reflect the commitments in the Customer Promise are included at interview.
- 8.9 The Customer Promise will be built into the induction process and will form the foundation for all customer service training.

### **Reward and recognition**

- 8.10 It is very important that managers value and recognise the right behaviours. To support managers in doing this, customer-focused competencies will be built into the staff appraisal system.

### **Measuring success**

- 8.11 The following methods will help us measure success and drive improvement:
- The Council's quarterly resident survey.
  - Feedback measures at the point of customer interaction.
  - A decrease in complaint escalation and a decrease in avoidable complaints, such as those resulting from staff behaviour.
  - Changes in customer behaviour (e.g. increasing use of self-service).

<b>Conclusion</b>
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9. The Council's new Customer Promise has been based on research and feedback from staff, Members and customers.
10. The Customer Promise sets clear principles for improving Resident Experience which will be embedded into the Council to improve resident experience.

## Financial and value for money implications

11. It is expected that improved customer service will reduce costs as unnecessary customer contact will be avoided, self-service will be made easier, and principles such as getting it right first time will reduce the number of complaints that unnecessarily escalate.

## Equalities and Diversity Implications

12. The adoption of the principles in the Customer Promise will improve access and make it easier for customers to use services.

## Risk Management Implications

13. Failure to improve resident experience may cause the Council reputational damage.

<b>Next steps:</b>
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The Customer Promise will be endorsed by Cabinet on 28 April 2015.

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### Sources/background papers:

- The Government's 'Customer Service Excellence standard (2008).
- What do people want, need and expect from public services? Ipsos MORI (2010).
- Engaging for success: enhancing performance through employee engagement, the MacLeod report (2009).
- 'SCC Employee Engagement Campaign' presented to People, Performance and Development Committee (6 March, 2015).