

Place and Resources Overview Committee

30 January 2025

Draft Customer Strategy

For Recommendation to the Portfolio Holder

Cabinet Member and Portfolio:

Cllr R Hope, Customer, Culture and Community Engagement

Local Councillor(s):

All Councillors

Executive Director:

A Dunn, Executive Director, Corporate Development

Report Author: Anthony Palumbo

Job Title: Head of Customer

Tel: 01305 228700

Email: anthony.palumbo@dorsetcouncil.co.uk

Report Status: Public (the exemption paragraph is N/A)

Brief Summary:

Dorset Council is committed to ensuring that customers, whatever their needs, have a good consistent experience whenever they interact with us. Our new draft Customer Strategy reflects the voice of our customers in setting the expectations for easy, accessible, and inclusive services that are convenient to use through information, advice, processes, people and technology opportunities. The strategy will evolve as customer needs change, ensuring that we remain responsive and connected to our customers. Our customer strategy is a key enabling strategy in support of Our Future Council transformation and plans.

Recommendation:

1. Members of the Place and Resources Overview Committee consider and comment to enhance and shape the strategy as appropriate.
2. Accompanied by the comments of the Committee, to enable Cabinet Portfolio Holder, Councillor Ryan Hope to formally approve the draft Customer Strategy under delegated executive powers.

Reason for Recommendation:

The draft Customer Strategy is an adaptive document that will evolve with our customer needs in response to the way people choose to access information, advice and guidance or services in the future. This strategy provides the viewpoint of customers based on feedback, insight and data that reflects the current customer experience. The strategy is closely aligned to the Council Plan priority of 'Communities for all', in meeting customer needs and expectations.

The draft Customer Strategy provides the baseline for our future customer aspirations. The extent and range of the goals and objectives in achieving and delivering improved customer experience will be determined by the ambitions established, agreed, and enabled within the Our Future Council Outline Business Case and draft Transformation Plan. Recommendations in the draft Transformation Plan were endorsed by Cabinet on the 19 November 2024 and due to go to full Council for ratification in January 2025.

1. Background

- 1.1 The need for a Customer Strategy stem from Dorset Council's commitment to being a customer-focused organisation. The strategy is designed to ensure that customers can access support and interact easily and efficiently, resolving enquiries effectively, whilst using insight and data to improve the experience.
- 1.2 The strategy addresses the current variability across services by establishing a shared understanding of what constitutes good customer experience and highlights opportunities that the council can work towards to achieve consistency for our customers.
- 1.3 The strategic intent of the Customer Strategy aligns with the Dorset Council Plan 2024 to 2029, particularly focusing on the strategic priority of 'Communities for all.' in creating thriving communities by ensuring information, advice and guidance is readily available and services accessible. It also champions the council's broader goals of working together with community partners, designing modern services, becoming more responsive, and leveraging data and technology to enhance service delivery.

2. Customer insights

- 2.1 Customers have expressed a strong requirement for convenience and personalised, digital, responsiveness in access services, mirroring their interactions with other services in their daily lives.
- 2.2 They seek continued and extended availability of information, advice, and guidance in trusted places like libraries, community hubs, and partner organisations, ensuring they can connect locally and be supported within their communities.
- 2.3 Customers expect their enquiries to be handled quickly and efficiently, with regular updates on progress and without being passed around multiple departments. They appreciate being informed and updated if their issues cannot be resolved immediately, although repeating the same information is frustrating.
- 2.4 Customers want services to be simple, easy to use, inclusive, and accessible with a consistent and cohesive, 'joined up' customer experience. They value clear communications and expect the council to understand and anticipate their needs, providing timely and effective solutions.

3. Strategic objectives and goals

- 3.1 The strategy aims to guide our plans to enhance the customer experience by making services joined up, simple, accessible, and inclusive. It focuses on resolving enquiries quickly and effectively, reducing the need for multiple contacts, and providing consistency across all channels. The strategy emphasises understanding and anticipating customer needs, offering timely solutions, and keeping customers updated and informed to minimise unnecessary contact.
- 3.2 The strategy also addresses key challenges such as rising customer expectations, digital exclusion, and making information available locally, allowing people to help themselves. The strategy seeks to guide our plans to streamline processes, linking systems and data, and use technology to improve service delivery.
- 3.3 The strategy focuses on what is needed to deliver a more responsive, customer-focused council by actively listening to our customers and community partners, evolving with changing customer needs and technological advancements to ensure continuous improvement.

4. Customer implications

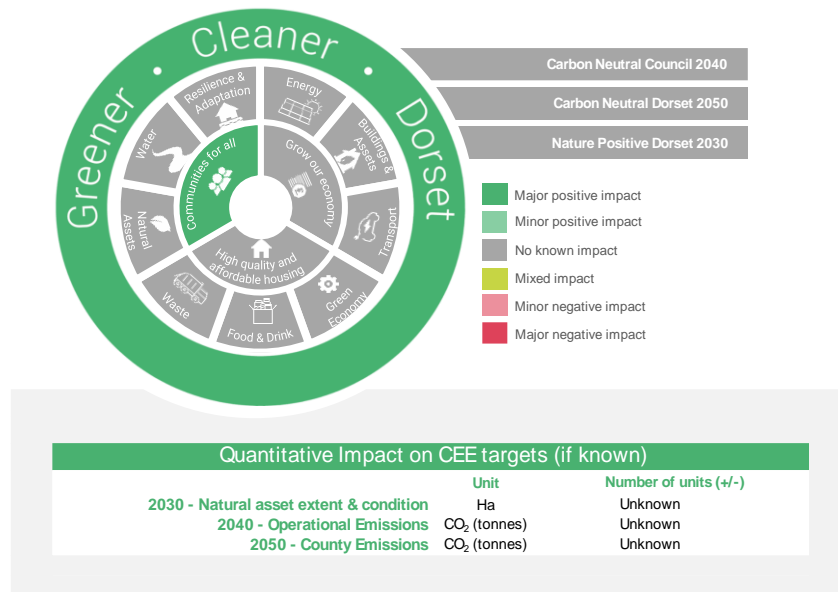
4.1 The strategy focuses on creating a customer-centric approach that enhances the overall experience with the council, enabled through opportunities to actively enhance the support available to customers and communities, leveraging technology and improving service delivery methods. This approach aims to ensure that customers feel valued and well served.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 With more people needing services and the cost to deliver them getting more expensive, there is a continued requirement to develop cost-effective opportunities to maintain good customer experience.

5.2 The draft strategy does not explicitly detail financial implications as changes in customer experience will be enabled via the Draft Transformation plan set out in the Our Future Council Business Case.

6. Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Implications



ACCESSIBLE TABLE SHOWING IMPACTS

Natural Environment, Climate & Ecology Strategy Commitments	Impact
Energy	No known impact
Buildings & Assets	No known impact
Transport	No known impact
Green Economy	No known impact
Food & Drink	No known impact
Waste	No known impact

Natural Assets & Ecology	No known impact
Water	No known impact
Resilience and Adaptation	No known impact

New Council Plan	Impact
High quality and affordable housing	No known impact
Grow our economy	No known impact
Communities for all	Major positive impact

7. **Well-being and Health Implications**

- 7.1 The strategy ensures inclusivity by providing necessary support to everyone, regardless of their background or circumstances. By being able to access information, advice and guidance through trusted community places, it makes help more accessible and focuses on reaching underserved and vulnerable groups. This approach emphasises prevention and early intervention, helping individuals feel more in control and encouraging them to take charge of their situations, leading to better outcomes.

8. **Other Implications**

- 8.1 The Customer Strategy is a key strategic document of, and is enabled by, Our Future Council Transformation plans. Therefore, the range and extent of the delivery of customer experience, and the milestones in achieving the desired outcomes, is determined by the full 'invest to save' business case due in early 2025.

9. **Risk Assessment**

- 9.1 **HAVING CONSIDERED:** the risks associated with this decision; the level of risk has been identified as:

Current Risk: Low
Residual Risk: Low

10. **Equalities Impact Assessment**

- 10.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been developed for the strategy and shared for comments and review with the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Reference Group. The strategy and associated Equality Impact Assessment are living documents so will reflect on-going changes as part of the delivery of opportunities identified in the draft Strategy Delivery

Plan. At this stage, the potential equality impacts are either positive or neutral.

11. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 - Draft Customer Strategy and Delivery Plan

Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment

12. **Background Papers**

Our Future Council Transformation Plan

13. **Report Sign Off**

- 13.1 This report has been through the internal report clearance process and has been signed off by the Director for Legal and Democratic (Monitoring Officer), the Executive Director for Corporate Development (Section 151 Officer) and the appropriate Portfolio Holder(s).