Community Engagement Committee

26 March 2019

Customer Service Improvement Plan and Customer Access Strategy
Director, Communities

Purpose

To provide an update to the Community Engagement Committee on progress with implementing the Customer Access Strategy.

Recommendation that -

work to improve the Council's responsiveness to the community through the implementation of the Customer Access Strategy be endorsed, including:

- improving the Council's website www.kingston.gov.uk through co-design with residents, businesses, partners, Members and colleagues.
- redesigning services end to end to ensure to improve responsiveness through all channels including face to face, phone, website and through social media including Contact Kingston.
- focusing on performance to ensure we deliver a consistent service to the community we serve.

Benefits to the Community:

Improving outcomes for the community through enabling the Council to respond more effectively to increased demand for services with reduced resources.

Key Points

1.   On September 19 2018 the Community Engagement Committee approved a joint Customer Access Strategy between the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames and the London Borough of Sutton and subsequently approved a joint Digital Strategy on 20 November 2018. The strategies set out the opportunities for us to improve our responsiveness to the communities we serve through digital transformation, increasing online self service and redesigning services to ensure we manage expectations upfront and close the loop with a clear outcome. The strategies do not set out a one size fits all approach and emphasise the importance of retaining choice and flexibility in contacting the council and delivering a consistent service through face to face, phone, website and social media channels.

2.   Working with communities to co-design services to meet needs will be essential for us to respond to the challenges of increased demand with reduced resources ensuring we are financially sustainable. Following adoption of the Customer Access Strategy work to bring about this change through a number of key projects and workstreams:

Culture and Behaviours:

3.   Our new Customer Access Strategy and Digital Strategy set out our approach to developing the enabling culture and behaviours to deliver effective digital

transformation. During 2019 work is underway to engage communities, councillors and colleagues in the implementation of the strategies.

4.   Both strategies align with the delivery of the draft corporate plan priorities and our ambition to ensure that we are a sustainable, responsible and engaging council that works in the best interests of Kingston's residents and businesses.

5.   We are developing our approach to learning from complaints and feedback through providing training to colleagues on restorative practice and focusing on early resolution of concerns. New corporate and social care complaints procedures were adopted in December 2018 and the council has received positive feedback from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman regarding the proactive approach taken to responding to concerns raised in the previous year.

Website Redesign:

6.   A project is underway to redesign www.kingston.gov.uk to improve the quality of our online information and make it easy for residents to find what they are looking for. Funding is in place to deliver this project by December 2019 and it will include:
   ● Engagement with communities, councillors and colleagues
   ● Google analytics analysis and search optimisation to promote frequently accessed content
   ● Accessibility enhancements to comply with new directives
   ● Empower colleagues to own shop window and see the benefits of digital self service
   ● Redesign of home page and category pages to improve the customer journey
   ● Build in flexible templates that meet the needs of an evolving LA looking to embrace commercialism
   ● Social media referrals to increase promotion of relevant content

7.   Engagement events are scheduled during Q1 2018/19 to co-design our new website with volunteers. These events will take place across the borough and are open to all. The team are also keen to attend other groups in the community such as residents associations who are happy to work with us on the codesign. Further information can be found on our website (link).

Digital Inclusion:

8.   A digital inclusion project is currently underway, working with our partners including the community sector to map current digital inclusion activity and support across the borough and develop a plan to build relationships and strengthen community engagement, enhance and promote digital inclusion and improve outcomes and access for residents. Partners involved in the project include Superhighways, Cambridge Road Estate Residents Association, One Norbiton and volunteer residents. The project is on track and due to complete in November 2019.

Digital Platform:

9.   Currently we have complex systems in place which are costly to maintain and develop and impact on customer journey and experience.

10. During 2018 following research to identify the gaps in our current provision, the councils carried out an extensive commissioning exercise to select a new digital platform and awarded a contract to Firmstep on 30 January 2019.

11. The objectives of the digital platform project are to:

- Enable customers to report, pay, book and apply online and have a consistent experience across all services.
- Enable us to effectively support customers in person or over the phone.
- Reduce costs and increase efficiency

12. Phase 1 of the digital platform is due to be delivered in Q1 2019/20, which will give us the basic platform infrastructure. Then we will have the ability to be able to report issues and take payments with plans in place to move digital services to the new platform over the next 12-24 months.

Service Redesign:

13. Redesigning services to take a 'digital first' approach and focus on delivering improved outcomes at reduced costs, developing clarity on quality and timescales to manage expectations effectively.

14. Following work to prioritise areas for review services with the greatest financial and service improvement opportunities were identified. Redesign work is currently focused on Adult Social Care and opportunities to support independence. All service areas will be programmed for review over the next 12-24 months.

Councillor Casework:

15. A project is underway to improve our responsiveness to councillor casework through:

- Providing clear guidance to councillors on reporting arrangements and timescales for responses
- Identifying opportunities to proactively provide information to councillors and reduce the volume of enquiries received
- Identifying areas of opportunity to support colleagues with improving speed and quality of response to councillor and reviewing resources in place to respond to enquiries across the organisation
- pilot a casework management system to provide councillors with a digital solution to manage their casework the system is on track to launch in February 2019 and will be evaluated in September 2019.

Background papers:

- Customer Access Strategy
- Digital Strategy

held by author of report - Rebecca Peck, Head of Customer Experience, email rebecca.peck@kingston.gov.uk