



**Cabinet**  
17 October 2022

**Report from the Corporate Director of Resident Services**

**Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026: Contact Brent**

<b>Wards Affected:</b>	All
<b>Key or Non-Key Decision:</b>	Key
<b>Open or Part/Fully Exempt:</b> <small>(If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)</small>	Open
<b>No. of Appendices:</b>	One Appendix 1: Customer Access Strategy
<b>Background Papers:</b>	None
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**1.0 Purpose of the Report**

1.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026.

**2.0 Recommendations for Cabinet**

2.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Customer Access Strategy 2022-2026 attached to this report as Appendix A

2.2 Cabinet is asked to note that progress and key performance indicators will be reported to CMT on a quarterly basis.

**3.0 Detail**

- 3.1 The Customer Access Strategy, called 'Contact Brent', sets out the Council's commitment to enhancing the services we provide for our residents and customers. The Strategy provides clarity on the measures the Council is taking to ensure these improvements. It also outlines what we expect from our staff and what can be expected from customers and residents.
- 3.2 We aim to achieve a step change in the Council's attitude towards the customer experience, embodying a 'whole organisation' approach. The customer experience is everybody's business. It is only by breaking down barriers and working together that we can meet the needs of every single customer and resident. Although it is called the Customer Access Strategy, customers access the council in a variety of ways, not solely through *Customer Services*. This Strategy seeks to embed a more consistent customer experience across the whole Council.
- 3.3 The Customer Access Strategy will run alongside the Council's Digital Strategy from 2022-2026. We believe that the goals of the Digital Strategy are salient to the Customer Access Strategy, making it natural for the two strategies to run side by side. Furthermore, due to the recent senior management restructure that the Council has undertaken, we believe it to be a perfect time to implement the attitudinal changes desired. As teams begin to settle into their new 'positions' within the Council, it is a suitable time for all to incorporate the values of the Customer Access Strategy into their everyday work. Finally, launching the Customer Access Strategy in conjunction with the newly released Brent Promise which commits to:
- resolving your enquiries quickly and keeping you informed if we can't solve it straight away;
  - listening to you, making you feel valued and understanding your needs;
  - making our services accessible and easy to use;
  - being helpful and honest with you;
- is a great way to enhance awareness of the Promise amongst staff and reinforce that we must always put customers and residents first, all the time, every time.
- 3.4 The Strategy's aim of ensuring every customer is satisfied is backed up by our commitment to make services:
- ✓ Easy to use
  - ✓ Flexible and digitally accessible
  - ✓ Of the highest standard
- 3.5 In addition to ensuring our services adhere to the above, as a Council we want to improve digital inclusion, sustain face-face services for those with more complex needs, frequently review our services based on customer feedback and ensure all services are accessible, accommodating and welcoming, both physically and mentally.

- 3.6 The Strategy also outlines the Key Performance Indicators (KPI's) that we will monitor to determine the success of the strategy. These will be reported to the Council Management Team (CMT) on a quarterly basis.
- 3.7 In an effort to meet the outlined KPI's and improve the customer experience across the Council, we propose tailored training for new and existing staff. The training will include neuroinclusion training, awareness of confrontational triggers and a reminder of what is expected from staff as well as what we expect from customers and residents.

#### **4.0 Financial Implications**

- 4.1 The financial implications of the Customer Access Strategy will mainly stem from delivering the training required for all staff, some of which will be provided by subject matter experts.
- 4.2 While indicative costs have not been explored, if the strategy were to be approved, these would be looked at and fed back to CMT for further approval.

#### **5.0 Legal Implications**

- 5.1 Pursuant to s1 of the Localism Act 2011, the Council has the power to do anything which an individual can do unless it is expressly prohibited (the power of general competence); and in accordance with s111 of the local Government Act 1972 has powers to do anything which is calculated to facilitate the discharge of their functions.

#### **6.0 Equality Implications**

- 6.1 Under Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010, the Council has a duty when exercising their functions to have 'due regard' to the need:
- a) to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Act;
  - b) advance equality of opportunity; and
  - c) foster good relations between those who share a "protected characteristic" and those who do not.

This is the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). The 'protected characteristics' are: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

- 6.2 The purpose of the duty is to enquire into whether a proposed decision disproportionately affects people with a protected characteristic. In other words, the indirect discriminatory effects of a proposed decision, policy or strategy. Due regard is the regard that is appropriate in all the circumstances.
- 6.3 The commitment to ensuring accessibility, sustaining face-to-face services, becoming a neuroinclusive Council and combatting digital exclusion all strive for greater equality, positively affecting Council services.

## **7.0 Human Resources and Property Implications**

7.1 The on boarding process, corporate induction and training portfolios will be reviewed to implement the tailored training referred to in paragraph 3.7 above.

## **8.0 Consultation**

8.1 Consultation with customers, residents, staff and stakeholders took place throughout the creation of the new Customer Promise and Civic Centre Redesign project – two key catalysts of the Customer Access Strategy.

8.2 Staff were consulted through Forward Together, visioning workshops and online surveys. Customers and residents were consulted through online surveys, face-face discussions, feedback forms and focus groups.

**Report sign off:**

***Peter Gadsdon***

Corporate Director Resident Services