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OXFORD CITY COUNCIL

To:	**Cabinet**
Date:	**12 February 2020**
Report of:	**Head of Business Improvement**
Title of Report:	**Customer Experience Strategy**

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Approval of the Customer Experience Strategy which provides the Council with a clear vision for the future state of customer and digital engagement and the technology required to support achieving the vision.
Key decision:	Yes
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Chapman, Cabinet Member for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services
Corporate Priority:	An efficient and effective Council: our ambition is for a customer–focused organisation delivering efficient, high quality services that meet people's needs
Policy Framework:	None
Recommendations: That Cabinet resolves to:	
1.	**Approve** the Customer Experience Strategy and Action Plan 2019/22 at appendix 1; and
2.	**Note** and **approve** the Public Customer Experience Strategy 2019/22 Summary at appendix 2

Appendices	
Appendix 1	Customer Experience Strategy and Action Plan 2019/22
Appendix 2	Public Customer Experience Strategy 2019/22 Summary
Appendix 3	Risk Register
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

1. Over the past decade, there has been a significant shift in the way people communicate and interact. Technology underpins many of these changes and today it is a fundamental part of the running of the Council. In this 24-hours a day, 7 days a week connected world, being responsive to customers is a necessity for any organisation that provides services. Residents and businesses expect the same levels of access and personalisation that they see online from many private and public sector organisations.

2. The strategy responds to rising demands for public services and expectations from an increasingly digital society, helping those that can to help themselves, whilst at the same time recognising some customers will still need to use telephone and have access to face to face meetings to interact with the Council, especially in more complex matters. It also acknowledges the need to protect the data held from cyber-crime, in line with the Data Protection Act 2018.

3. The Council's corporate plan 2020 – 2024 forms the foundation for the Customer Experience Strategy, providing the Council with clarity on the future state of customer and digital engagement and the technology that supports achieving the vision ***"to place customers at the heart of everything the Council does, providing good, accessible services and being great where it matters"***.

4. The strategy details how the Council culture needs to develop to be more open, responsive and collaborative whilst tangibly embracing the new possibilities offered by the latest and emerging technologies, improving accessibility through initiatives which promote equalities, and positioning digital as the channel of choice for the majority of customers. It also reflects the reality that some customers will not be able to access our services digitally either by choice, or lack of funds, and that for them the quality of services and opportunity for access must not be diminished.

Consultation

5. The strategy has been developed in response to extensive consultation, incorporating government and industry best practice. Groups consulted include:

- Portfolio Holder for Safer Communities and Customer Focused Services
- Executive Director for Customers and Communities
- Heads of Service and their teams
- Online Consultation, with 800+ responses
- Internal staff survey
- Three Youth Ambition groups from across Oxford
- Rosehill recruitment roadshow attendees
- Tenancy involvement group (including over 60s)
- Agents and landlords for HMO and Planning

6. Customer feedback states that:

- There are high levels of customer satisfaction in the contact centre and customer service centre, but a variable customer experience across the rest of the Council.
- There is a lack of customer insight gathered organisation-wide and where it exists, it is not always applied to improve the service.
- Customers are rarely involved in designing services.

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- Staff need to be up-skilled to become more customer-centric.
- There are only reasonable levels of customer satisfaction with the website, and the quality of the design and content is poor in places.
- Teams frequently take a silo approach to case resolution when more than one service is involved
- The laptops, desktop computers, and smart phones used are dated and do not work well with modern software and applications. This limits the ability of staff to carry out their jobs effectively. The same can be said of the Wi-Fi service.
- Some of the key business applications are outdated, with overlapping capabilities and duplicate data. They are not designed to work effectively in the modern, cloud-enabled world.
- The Council's ability to capture, analyse, report and make informed decisions on the vast quantity of data it collects is fragmented and inefficient.

Strategy overview

7. The main principles of the strategy are:

- Providing a great, holistic responsive customer experience from every part of the Council.
- Developing the necessary skills, capabilities and behaviours throughout the workforce.
- Better equipping colleagues with tools to respond to customer needs, flexibly and securely.
- Modernising business systems and operating processes, making them easier to use and automated where appropriate.
- Enabling efficiencies through rationalisation of systems, streamlining of processes, and tools for flexible working and collaboration.

8. It will meet the needs of customers by:

- Increasing customer satisfaction by extending the range of services provided digitally, creating capacity to deal with more complex need through other channels; with clear targets to measure this.
- Creating a council-wide culture of "Customer First".
- Providing modern, responsive services.
- Working more efficiently and delivering value-for-money.
- Providing colleagues with the right tools for the job.

The Customer Experience Strategy, including the Action Plan, Risk Register and Equality Impact Assessment, can be found in the appendices.

A detailed analysis of the consultation feedback can be found using the following link: https://oxfordcitycouncil.sharepoint.com/:b:/s/IntranetDocumentStore/EWu70qeqMChF hVRlt2HRq3oBjgjCyTdO2HsA4pfeMIK4tg?e=q0B7Bz

A summary of the plans for delivery

9. The strategy identifies numerous projects and initiatives that, over the period 2019 to 2022, will deliver its stated objectives. A detailed action plan, covering the period 2019 - 2021 can be found within the strategy, and is summarised in paragraphs 10 to 19 below. Detailed actions for 2022 are currently not listed within the strategy as these will be dependent on the outcome of discovery and feasibility studies to be carried out in the coming 12 months. All future proposals will be framed against the need to ensure the Council delivers value for money propositions.

10. When the technology and digital service was brought back in house from the County Council in 2016/17 the initial focus was on providing robust and reliable technology foundations for the Council. The Customer Experience Strategy builds on those foundations with a range of products that support collaboration, provide greater flexibility as to where people can work from, reducing the amount of travel time and improving productivity.

11. Over the past eighteen months, Wi-Fi services have been upgraded, and remote-working tools modernised, allowing colleagues to securely access Council services from any device and location. All the technology solutions are designed with security at the forefront to ensure they the meet stringent compliance standards defined by central government (PSN standard). These are independently assessed and certified every year.

12. Laptops, desktop computers and smartphones which no longer work with current software are being replaced. At the same time, new collaboration products and services are being introduced, including personal and group chat, audio and video products, real-time information sharing, and live video streaming for public events.

13. Over the past two years the Council has updated and continues to upgrade and consolidate key business systems, including:

- Waste Management System
- Legal Case Management System
- BACS Payment System
- Housing Management System– Repairs, rent accounting, choice based lettings, property job costing.
- Customer Services Case Management System

14. In line with commercial contract end dates, other key services and software will be upgraded or replaced in the coming 18 months, including:

- Revenues and Benefits software
- Income Management System
- Data Centre service contract
- Fixed line telephony and mobile phone service contracts
- Broadband and network service contracts

15. A review of all asset, document and case management systems will be commissioned to identify opportunities to reduce cost and improve data quality. This means identifying how the information held within these systems can be

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recorded, held, and used more effectively. More accurate data will help inform decision-making to offer better quality, value for money services to customers.

16. Following on from the review of asset management systems and data, it is anticipated that a number of the existing legacy systems will be replaced with fewer, more modern systems, providing opportunities for improved management of all Council assets.

17. Raising customer awareness of the website, mobile applications, and social media, will continue, developing their confidence to use those services. At the same time, priority will be given to enhancing the customer experience, the design and ease of use of the website. Council processes will be streamlined, making them simpler to use. By increasing the quality and quantity of online services, the aim is to increase the take-up of digital, with a commensurate reduction in the demand for non-digital channels such as phone, email, and face to face, whilst continuing to offer a choice to customers in the way they access services. Work will continue to develop the web chat service, to support customers become confident regular users of the website.

18. Having laid the foundations of more secure, reliable, flexible and collaborative tools and services over the past two years, the project planned for the coming 18 months are focused on major improvements in customer digital services, including:

- Revamping the Council website, microsites, apps, and online presence, in terms of design, content, and the number and ease of use of online forms. Together with active promotion of the digital services available, these changes will help promote digital as the channel of choice for those people who are able and prefer to help themselves.
- Delivering online accessibility changes required by legislation, and enhancing existing online services to provide full support for the Council equalities strategy.

19. The Council will improve its reputation by providing customers with a choice in the way they access services, in particular with more online offerings and greater use of social media. Investment will be focused on developments to increase use of digital channels and to enable staff to become more customer focused and flexible in their approach to providing services. Whilst the main objective of the strategy is to improve customer interaction with the Council, financial efficiencies are achievable as a result of teams leveraging new tools, services and skills.

20. Staff across the Council will be given the digital and customer service skills needed to deliver consistently great service. This will be underpinned by a new People Strategy, which will focus on delivering outcomes for communities and customers by developing a workforce that is high performing and flexible, and committed to improvement through a culture of collaboration and engagement.

21. The improvements in systems, through consolidation and replacement of legacy systems, together with new, innovative approaches to data analysis will provide the Council with a wide range of insights which, in conjunction with new skills for staff and a greater engagement with customer groups, will help shape future service delivery, improving the quality and responsiveness of the Council to customer needs, whilst informing the Council on how to deliver better, value for money services in coming years.

Financial implications

22. Funding totalling £2.5m has been secured for the projects planned and underway in 2019-20. The projects proposed for the financial year 2020/21 are currently going through the annual capital bid process.

23. Efficiencies of £465k have been identified over the four years of the medium term financial plan, delivered through cross-council initiatives identified in this strategy. Other efficiencies may be possible using the enabling tools, skills and services described in this strategy, including:

- A reduction in the number of software applications by consolidation of existing systems where duplication of processes and data are identified.
- Releasing office space through the adoption of collaboration tools and flexible working practices.
- Reduction in handling of customer and administrative workload through process streamlining, automation where needed, and improved quality and range of online services.

Legal issues

24. There are no legal implications.

Level of risk

25. The Risk Register is included in Appendix 3.

Equalities impact

26. The Equalities Impact Assessment is included in Appendix 4.

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Background Papers:
1   Consultation Report

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