



City of Westminster

Cabinet

Meeting or Decision Maker:	Cabinet
Date:	10 th February 2020
Classification:	General Release
Title:	Customer Experience and Digital Strategy
Wards Affected:	All
City for All Summary	<p>This strategy is a key enabler to the City for All agenda:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The strategy will support the Council to ensure it has the digital infrastructure in place to deliver a Smart City• The focus on customer experience and understanding their needs better, will deliver improvements for residents when they contact us• Highlights the importance of digital inclusion, a key way the Council can support our communities to thrive• It's emphasis on data will enable the Council to use data and innovative technology to become cleaner, greener and safer
Key Decision:	<p>Key Decision</p> <p>Entry made in Forward Plan of Key Decisions – submitted on 11th December 2019</p>
Financial Summary:	No direct financial implications.
Report of:	Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director Finance and Resources Contact Details: galmeroth@westminster.gov.uk 020 7641 2904

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report presents the Customer Experience and Digital strategy (Appendix 1) for approval.
- 1.2 The strategy sets the vision and ambition of the Council around the experience our customers have when they contact or transact with us, and how we will use digital tools and technology effectively.
- 1.3 This strategy is a key enabler to support the City for All agenda, and the delivery of the future themes. The areas identified in the strategy will support the Council to deliver this agenda by ensuring we have the digital infrastructure in place to deliver a Smart City, our residents are digitally included to support them to thrive, we are using data and innovative technology to become cleaner, greener and safer – and our residents are benefiting from an improved customer experience.

2. Recommendations

That Cabinet:

- i. Approves the Customer Experience and Digital strategy attached at Appendix 1.
- ii. That it is adopted as a core cross-cutting Council strategy, as a key enabler for the City for All agenda.

3. Reasons for Decision

- 3.1 The Council has recognised that there is a need to improve the experience customers have when they contact us.
- 3.2 There is also a need to better understand how we can use digital tools and technologies, including data, to improve the way we offer services to customers.
- 3.3 We also want to improve how we engage with our customers and understand their needs when developing services – so that we design digital services which are so good people choose to use them.
- 3.4 This strategy is cross-council and will be delivered through the Customer Experience and Digital programme. It is a key enabler for City for All, particularly the Smart City theme but it will also support the ambitions of the Thriving Communities and Cleaner, Greener, Safer themes.

4. Background, including Policy Context

Developing the Strategy

- 4.1 The requirement for a Customer Experience and Digital (CED) Programme and supporting cross-council strategy emerged from discussions in formulating the City for All policy review.
- 4.2 The CED Programme was set up in June 2019, and this strategy is one of the first outputs of the programme.

- 4.3 The strategy has been developed drawing on a range of research from external organisations (both public sector and non-public sector). Existing customer research from sources such as the Councils' City Survey, Housing Listening Survey, Adult Social Care Local Account Group, amongst others was used to inform the development of the strategy prior to any further consultation and engagement. This also informed the specific engagement with internal and external stakeholders and ensured the council leveraged prior engagement activities.

We identified key audiences to engage with and since the end of September have been getting input from various groups of stakeholders across the borough to understand their experience of engaging with the Council and how they use digital technology.

The draft strategy was all shared with all members in January 2020 with an opportunity for feedback. Comment provided have been incorporated into the strategy and accompanying documents.

- 4.4 The CED team have worked with 19 external groups/contacts, 32 internal stakeholders and used 22 existing sources of information to inform and develop the strategy and make sure it meets the needs of our varied customers.

The full list of stakeholders engaged with is included at the end of Appendix 2 'CED strategy engagement summary report.'

Options

- 4.5 The council considered and discounted the do-nothing option. The main reasons for discounting the do nothing option is:
- Doing nothing would not provide the council with a single clear direction for meeting the diverse needs and experiences of our customers.
 - It would risk that the council was 'left behind' in relation to the advantages that the 'digital age' can offer both in terms of increased customer service and council efficiencies.
 - Doing nothing would not provide a clear and documented customer led approach for meeting the customer elements of the councils City for All strategy.

Output from the consultation and engagement activity

- 4.6 Summary of findings
- Most of our customers are happy to engage with us digitally, but need to have a good experience which meets their needs and helps them achieve the outcome they need.
 - We must better understand our customers' needs and the outcomes they're looking to achieve in order to design digital services which are so good they choose to use them.
 - One size does not fit all, we need to retain non-digital options for those customers who will not access our services digitally.

- There is a need to support residents to build their digital skills and confidence, and to support our staff with their development around the use of technology too.
- We need to find additional ways to engage with residents, to ensure they are involved in discussions around how services are designed and how the council works for them.

4.7 Below we have summarised a few key points from just some of the groups we engaged with. More detail on the outputs of the engagement activity can be found in Appendix 2 'CED strategy engagement summary report'.

Westminster Community Network

- Had concerns around the website in terms of accessibility and language.
- Some of the people they support need help with digital basics like setting up email addresses.
- Importance of not losing human interaction.

Youth Council

- We should be using social media more to engage young people.
- Interested in future technology – robots for getting groceries; use of voice assistants; using glasses to surf the internet.
- Concerns around data protection and privacy, linked to the big tech companies but also the council.

Staff

- Want support around how to better understand user needs and build these into the way they design services.
- Want more expert help when selecting new technology/systems.
- Need support to use the technology and systems available to them to maximise their ways of working and make the most of what we have.

Businesses

- Find the pop-up Business School very helpful, particularly around online and social media training.
- Generally satisfied with support from the Council but feel online information could be better
- Interested in the council publishing its data.

Less digitally confident

- Worried that with everything going digital things could go wrong.
- Were interested in building their skills, which takes a lot of time and support.
- Struggled with things like remembering passwords and memorable data.

Non-native English speakers

- Those with a mix of low digital confidence and lack of fluency in English struggled the most with contacting the council, often asking friends and family for help.
- Interested in how information can be translated, or shown in a more image-based/flow-chart way to aid understanding of processes.
- Main issue was around not understanding the process needing to be followed, being overwhelmed by information on the website.

Engagement

- 4.8 The draft strategy was developed in close consultation with the Councils Customer Experience and Digital Programme Board which contains senior representation from across the council's directorates. Iterations were presented on a regular basis to the Board to continue to get a broad base of feedback and views at regular intervals.

The strategy was also shared with the Executive Leadership team via the Councils Change Board.

- 4.9 The draft has been shared a number of times with member forums such as the Customer and Digital Standards Board chaired by Councillor Swaddle. The draft strategy was shared with all members week commencing the 13th January, with a week's period for members to feed back to Councillor Swaddle.

The strategy has been developed using feedback from these consultation routes, and also through the output of the extensive engagement activity which the CED team undertook both externally and internally with key stakeholders as outlined in section 4 of this report.

The strategy contains a range of principles and objectives which external customer groups have supported with little divergence from the key principles outlined. If, however, more detailed planning leads to the need to conduct further consultation, the programme is well positioned and interested in engaging these groups further to represent the interests of the customer.

The Strategy

- 4.10 The strategy can be found in Appendix 1.

It is a cross-cutting corporate strategy, which sets the ambition and direction of the Customer Experience and Digital programme and is a key enabler for all three City for All themes.

4.11 The Vision in the strategy is:

We will transform the way our customers interact with the council making it easy for them to find the information and services they need.

4.12 It sets out the key Principles we will work to, and the benefits of having the strategy in place – for Residents, Businesses, Partners and Staff.

4.13 It then goes into more detail on the key themes – Customer, Council, Place and Technology. We also propose some Measures of Success to ensure we can track progress and know that we are making a difference to our customers.

4.14 There is no suggestion of closing channels and the strategy recognises that different residents have different needs. The strategy does aim to make the digital channel so easy that it becomes the customers preferred manner of contacting the council for the majority of residents.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 There are no financial implications directly arising from the Customer Experience and Digital Strategy. The implementation of the strategy will take place through the Customer Experience and Digital programme, and where expenditure is required to implement changes these will be managed and authorised through the CED Board, which is chaired by the Executive Director for Finance and Resources (CED Programme Sponsor). The Council will invest in digital projects on a case by case basis and would expect this to drive financial efficiencies as well as an improved customer experience.

6. Legal Implications

6.1 The Council has the general power of competence under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do anything an individual generally may do and also has its ancillary powers under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972, to do anything which is conducive to or incidental to its functions. These powers enable the Council to delivery this Digital Strategy.

6.2 The Council also has a duty under the Data Protection Act 2018, as a data controller, to “implement appropriate technical and organisational measures to ensure a level of security appropriate to the risks arising from the processing of personal data.”

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in May 2018, made it a requirement for the Council to undertake a Data Protection Impact Assessment before carrying out certain types of processing of personal data when it is likely to result in a high risk to individuals’ rights and freedoms.

The use and handling of data will be an important part of implementing the strategy. The implementation of the strategy will bring greater focus to understanding data opportunities, ensuring ethical data decisions are taken and we comply with legislation such as GDPR.

Further, the GDPR makes written contracts between the Council, as Controller, and any third party that the Council contract with to process personal data on it’s behalf, a legal requirement, rather than just a way of demonstrating compliance. Any contract in place should provide clarity around obligations, responsibilities and liabilities and also ensures the Council is able to demonstrate compliance with the data protection principles to individuals and to regulators.

- 6.3 The Equality Act 2010 introduced a single public sector equality duty. This duty requires the Council to have due regard in its decision-making processes to the need to:
- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct;
 - Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it, and;
 - Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.

The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation.

The Council is required to act in accordance with the equality duty and have due regard to the duty when carrying out its functions, which includes making new decisions in the current context and in relation to the new Strategy. An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and is further detailed in Section 8 below.

7. Staffing Implications

- 7.1 Staff have been engaged as part of the development of the strategy and are a key group of people for whom the strategy is designed to benefit.

There are no direct staffing implications as a result of delivery of the strategy, although we will be working to upskill staff and develop or attract new skillsets.

As the Council evolves to work in new ways, adopt new technologies and re-design the way we deliver services to customers there may be staffing implications, and these will be considered as part of the council's change management process.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment implications

- 8.1 An equalities impact assessment has been completed and is available as a background paper.
- 8.2 Our data shows that the vast majority of Westminster residents have access to the internet and a similar number use online services daily. This, combined with the fact that other contact channels will be maintained for vulnerable residents and those without digital access, means that the potential risk from the delivery of the strategy is minimal.
- 8.3 For those customers who are less likely to use digital channels, perhaps due to a lack of access, skill or confidence, the following mitigations are in place:
- The delivery of the strategy through the CED Programme will take a user-centered approach, meaning services will be designed to meet customer's needs, and be accessible and intuitive so that as many people as possible will choose to access services digitally
 - Digital inclusion has been integrated into the strategy as a key activity, with building people's confidence and giving them access to digital tools being important. Lots of digital inclusion activity happens through our libraries, and is also provided by community organisations to assist people

- We are maintaining alternative ways of contacting us for vulnerable customers who are not comfortable using digital means
- Work by the Economic Development team to improve full fibre coverage across the borough will also mean our social housing estate internet connectivity improves, with community halls also being connected for free.
- The website is being re-designed using a user-centered approach, making it more intuitive and user friendly to increase people's likelihood of using it, levels of satisfaction and successful outcome from their online interaction

9. Risk Implications

- 9.1 The key risk to the delivery of the strategy would be a lack of ownership and support to implement a wide-ranging programme of work across the Council. This is mitigated against through Councillor Swaddle's role as Cabinet Member for Digital and Customer Services, and the Customer and Digital Standards Board which he chairs which will inform and monitor the delivery of the CED programme. Governance is also in place through the programme sponsor, (Executive Director of Finance and Resources) and the CED Programme Board.
- 9.2 As the strategy was being developed, it was identified as a risk that key groups may not be engaged with. This was mitigated against through determining who the key stakeholders were early on and ensuring there were routes to engaging with these groups as well as many others. The range of groups engaged with has been regularly shared with key officers who have advised where engagement with other groups/stakeholders is necessary and these have been followed up on. This wide engagement should ensure that the strategy meets the need of all customer groups.
- 9.3 The strategy will be delivered through the CED programme, and it will be important to ensure this programme is resourced sufficiently in order to deliver the ambitions in the strategy. The programme will manage risks and issues as part of its programme management activity and escalate key risks and issues through the CED programme board as they arise.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:

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APPENDICES

1. Customer Experience and Digital Strategy
2. CED strategy engagement summary report

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

CED Strategy Equalities Impact Assessment