

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

TO: Council	REPORT NUMBER: BC/18/20
FROM: Cabinet	DATE OF MEETING: 25 September 2018
OFFICER: Sophie Moy Corporate Business Co-ordinator	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB35

COUNCIL ARE ASKED TO NOTE THE RESOLUTION FROM THE CABINET MEETING HELD ON 12 JULY 2018.

1.1 On 20 February 2018 Councillor Luke Cresswell outlined a Motion to Council as follows:

“That:

- 1) A Babergh District Council access point be set up in Hadleigh to support residents and be a point of contact for the community in central and East Babergh; and*
- 2) This access point to have similar capabilities to the access point in Sudbury and provide support, advice and a facility to scan information to Babergh District Council and or Suffolk County Council; and*
- 3) This access point to be set up and operational without delay.”*

1.2 This was discussed at the Cabinet meeting on 12 April 2018, Report BCa/17/62 refers. It was agreed that opportunities to work in partnership with existing organisations in Hadleigh, to provide self service facilities be explored.

1.3 Subsequently a paper on a refreshed Customer Service Strategy was taken to 12 July 2018 Cabinet. This was agreed. Paper BCa/18/10 is attached for reference.

REASON FOR DECISION

To provide an updated and refreshed Customer Strategy that states our organisational aim to put the customer at the heart of the organisation, and by doing so, improves our ability to better deliver our customer need.

APPENDICES

Title	Location
(a) Report on the Motion to Council – BCa/17/62	Attached
(b) Minute from the 12 April 2018 Cabinet meeting	Attached
(c) Refreshed Customer Strategy – BCa/18/10	Attached
(d) Minute from the 12 July 2018 Cabinet meeting	Attached

APPENDIX A

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery	Report Number: BCa/17/62
To: Cabinet	Date of meeting: 12 April 2018

MOTION

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 To consider the proposal of Councillor Luke Cresswell as outlined in a Motion to Council on 20th February as follows:

That:

- 1) A Babergh District Council access point be set up in Hadleigh to support residents and be a point of contact for the community in central and East Babergh; and
- 2) This access point to have similar capabilities to the access point in Sudbury and provide support, advice and a facility to scan information to Babergh District Council and or Suffolk County Council; and
- 3) This access point to be set up and operational without delay.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Council does not pursue the option of a Hadleigh customer access point with similar capabilities to Sudbury.
- 2.2 Instead the Council identifies opportunities to work in partnership with existing organisations in Hadleigh, to provide self-service facilities, including the provision of scanning information. That consideration be given to the extension of this model should further self-service needs across the district be identified.

Reason for Decision: That an appropriate self-service provision could better meet the aims of the Joint Strategic Plan in a more cost effective manner.

3. Financial Implications

3.1 There would be an increased cost to the Council to provide a provision similar to that in Sudbury; as a minimum this would need to include staff costs, and based on location, there may be building and maintenance costs. There would likely be set-up costs in terms of IT, and refurbishment costs dependent on the building's suitability to receive customers. The current annual cost for maintaining the Sudbury customer access point is £74k per annum, which is exclusive of the initial costs associated with building works to the Sudbury office.

3.2 If we were to operate a model whereby the focus was on working with partners who already had established facilities, accessible by customers, a self-serve provision would be more cost effective. It is not possible at this current time to state exactly what these costs are, as scoping work is continuing, to understand these. However, we know that technology to deliver a simplified self-serve facility which allowed customers to scan documentation (which accounts for a significant proportion of in-person visits) could cost in the region of £5k for initial set-up.

4. Legal Implications

4.1 None identified

5. Risk Management

5.1 This report is linked with the following Council risk, reviewed as part of the significant risk register.

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If we do not have more efficient and effective public access and agile working arrangements then we will not be able to tailor the services our customers need and target those in need.	2 Unlikely	2 Noticeable/ Minor	New public access points are up and running in both Stowmarket and Sudbury. Services can be accessed through both; with a range of assisted/self-serve/telephony support available. Further development and review is on-going. We are also developing regular liaison and feedback mechanisms to develop customer satisfaction measures. We have undertaken a staff survey which will inform an action plan in the future, tackling areas of concern.

6. Consultations

6.1 None

7. Equality Analysis

7.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the Future Model for Public Access in September 2016. It is envisaged that any additional provision agreed would be an enhancement to our current service and would have a positive effect. A further assessment would be carried out.

8. Shared Service / Partnership Implications

There are no shared service implications. However, if we were to develop a model in partnership with other public, charitable, voluntary or community interest groups and organisations this would be in line with the Joint Strategic Plan ambitions of building our communities capacity.

9. Links to Joint Strategic Plan

9.1 As 8.1

10. Key Information

10.1 At the Council meeting on 20th February 2018 a Motion was put to Council by Councillor Luke Cresswell as per paragraph 1.1.

At the Council meeting it was resolved to refer the matter to Cabinet for discussion.

This report is providing the necessary information for Cabinet to consider the matter.

10.2 In September 2016, the Council resolved to vacate the Hadleigh headquarters, and to operate one customer access point in the district. The Babergh customer access point is located in Sudbury, at the Town Hall, and offers in-person as well as self-service facilities for customers to access both County, District and Town Council services.

10.3 Following the closure of the Hadleigh Headquarters we have been monitoring any potential impact on our customers. We are pleased to report increases in the use of our website, as well as high levels of online completion of electronic forms; for example over 80% of Housing Benefit application forms are completed electronically.

10.4 Further development to support customer access to our services has been under review and is illustrated in a refreshed Customer Service strategy which Cabinet will be asked to approve in July 18. The strategy is a 'living' document that needs to meet ours and our customer expectations, and keep abreast of issues that may arise. With this in mind, work had already commenced to understand how to continue to support customers in Hadleigh.

10.5 The Assistant Director for Customer Services has been in contact with the Hadleigh Town Clerk, to seek feedback on the impact of the closure of the HQ, and whether they had seen an increase in the number of customers trying to access services at Hadleigh Town Council. The Town Clerk advised that they had not seen an increase in customer contact, but on the odd occasion when required they had been able to direct customers to our telephony or web services. The premises occupied by the Town Council at the Guild Hall are not particularly accessible for customers and significant works would be required to provide similar facilities as per the Sudbury customer access point.

10.6 Preliminary discussions have been held with South Suffolk Leisure as an existing partner of Babergh Mid Suffolk Councils, to understand any opportunities available to utilise their current accommodation to provide some self-service facilities. South Suffolk Leisure are supportive of the approach and already provide some services to local community groups.

10.7 There are of course other organisations situated in Hadleigh, whom it would also be worth approaching, to understand their level of interest in working with us. Examples could include Suffolk Libraries, and the Co-operative.

10.8 Furthermore detailed scoping work would be required to make further recommendations on the level of service that we would provide (for example only self-service or assisted self-service) and therefore an appropriate partner to support this provision.

10.9 This approach is becoming more widespread across local authorities, with self-service provisions operating from diverse organisations such as village halls and community centres, Community-owned shops and pubs, as well as mobile based services.

11. Options Considered

11.1 The two options that have been considered are:

- a) To provide an additional customer access point in Hadleigh modelled as per the Sudbury customer access point;
- b) To explore and develop an operating model which focuses on self-service, utilising existing organisations to support our customers and developing communities' capabilities to help themselves.

12. Background Documents

12.1 None

APPENDIX B

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BABERGH CABINET HELD IN BRITTEN ROOM - ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH ON THURSDAY, 12 APRIL 2018 AT 5:30PM

121 BCA/17/62 - MATTER REFERRED BY COUNCIL - 20 FEBRUARY 2018

Cabinet Members had concerns over the lack of information and whether Option 1 had been fully explored. It was felt this would be a matter of cost against a demonstrable need.

- 121.1 Cabinet wished to see additional data in terms of the visitor numbers to Sudbury, how many members of the public came into Endeavour House and the level of service provided. The information should be both robust and historic, as well as up to date data being included.
- 121.2 It was recognised that the Customer Strategy review was being brought into Cabinet in July 2018 and as such this work could be included within that.
- 121.3 It was proposed by Councillor Davis and seconded by Councillor Osborne, by a unanimous vote:

It was RESOLVED:-

- (1) That given the nature of data currently available the Council does not pursue the option of a Hadleigh customer access point with similar capabilities to Sudbury.
- (2) Instead the Council identifies opportunities to work in partnership with existing organisations in Hadleigh, to provide self-service facilities, including the provision of scanning information.
- (3) That further information and more detailed data be included as part of the Customer Strategy Review which will be brought to Cabinet in July 2018.
- (4) That the Customer Strategy Review also gives consideration to the extension of the partnership model for customer services elsewhere in the district should a need be identified.

Reason for Decisions: That an appropriate self-service provision could better meet the aims of the Joint Strategic Plan in a more cost effective manner.

APPENDIX C

BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

COMMITTEE: Cabinet	REPORT NUMBER: BCa/18/10
FROM: Cabinet Member for Organisational Delivery, Councillor Derek Davis	DATE OF MEETING: 12 July 2018
OFFICER: Sara Wilcock, Assistant Director for Customer Services	KEY DECISION REF NO. CAB35

REFRESHED CUSTOMER STRATEGY

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 The report introduces and provides supplementary information to consider, alongside the refreshed Customer Strategy at Appendix 1.

2. OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 2.1 The options that have been considered are:
- c) Continue to work to the emerging Public Access Strategy as set out in the Council papers of September 16 titled "Future Model for Public Access including Accommodation".
 - d) Develop an alternative Public Access Strategy that does not focus on our customers.
 - e) To update and refresh the strategy in line with the progress that has already been made but taking into consideration, how we embed a customer centric culture.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The refreshed Customer Strategy is agreed.
- 3.2 In consultation with the Cabinet Member and Lead Member, minor amendments to the strategy be delegated to the Assistant Director for Customer Services to ensure the strategy is kept up to date, and reflective of emerging strategies which overlap.
- 3.3 That an action and communication plan is developed, which will ensure the Customer Strategy is widely shared across the organisation and provides for an opportunity to engage with our staff, embedding a customer focused organisational culture.

REASON FOR DECISION:

To provide an updated and refreshed Customer Strategy that states our organisational aim to put the customer at the heart of the organisation, and by doing so, improves our ability to better deliver our customer need.

4. KEY INFORMATION

- 4.1 In 2016 we set out in a Council report titled “Future Model for public access including accommodation”, a public access strategy. The public access strategy focused on five key access channels, face to face, telephony, email, online digital services, web chat/SMS and stated the intent to work collaboratively in place based teams to support our most vulnerable customers.
- 4.2 During the past 2/3 years progress has been made with notable achievements including the opening of two new public access points in Stowmarket and Sudbury where customers can access our services in person. We have also implemented a new call centre telephony system as well as consolidated two websites into one.
- 4.3 Progress against our priorities has been as a result of the decision made in 2016 regarding public access and accommodation, and so now seems an opportune moment to refocus and update the public access strategy
- 4.4 The refreshed Customer Strategy outlines 9 key principles across 4 themes which will enable us to have a customer centric approach, so that we place the customer at the heart of our organisation.
- 4.5 The strategy is deliberately titled, more simply, the Customer Strategy. This is in an attempt to focus on wider aspects of how we deliver a customer centric approach across the organisation, rather than associating ‘public access’ just with locations and specific channels. The refreshed Customer Strategy places a greater emphasis on how organisationally we will create a culture that considers and put the customer first.
- 4.6 There has often been debate around the use of the term ‘customer’ as opposed to various alternatives such as citizen or resident. Local Authorities provide a range of diverse services; some of which are statutory services, some of which are focused on particular groups e.g. Housing tenants, others where individuals can express a choice of whom to contract a service from e.g. Building Control. An important element of the strategy is continuing to confirm our priority, of understanding the needs of a wide range of groups and individuals, and appreciating that they will be different, depending on a range of factors including the types of services they need or would like to access.
- 4.7 In this sense our use of the term ‘customer’ helps us maintain a level of consistency and common understanding; in that irrespective of the services provided, our ethos is to provide positive experiences and relationships with high levels of satisfaction.
- 4.8 Following our commitment to keep under review a customer service provision in Hadleigh, a Cabinet report in April 2018 recommended that the refreshed Customer Strategy give consideration to an approach whereby the Council works in partnership with existing organisations in Hadleigh to provide self-service facilities.
- 4.9 The strategy states that we will continue this approach and it will be updated to reflect the outcome of a pilot we are developing with Suffolk Libraries. Suffolk Libraries provide a range of opportunities for us to tailor our provision, considering the use of static locations as well as pop-up libraries. Further detail on this pilot will be provided during the summer

5. LINKS TO JOINT STRATEGIC PLAN

- 5.1 The refreshed Customer Strategy particularly aligns with two of the key strategic themes or outcomes; Community Capacity Building and Engagement as at 6.0, and an Enabled and Efficient Organisation. The Customer Strategy directly links to taking advantage of modern technology, so that residents can access our services at times and in ways to suit themselves, which will ensure that our reducing resources can be aimed at assisting those most in need.

6. SHARED SERVICE / PARTNERSHIP IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no shared service implications. However one of the strategies guiding principles is that we will support all of our customers to become self-serving where ever possible and work in partnership with other like-minded organisations to deliver this. It is important to recognise that we cannot deliver more strategic objectives like digital inclusion alone and that there are wider benefits to be realised from having a partnering approach, both for our customers and us. Working in partnership in this way would also be in line with the Joint Strategic Plan ambitions of building our communities capacity

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The Customer Strategy suggests a number of initiatives and activities that as implemented will change the culture of the organisation as well as deliver improved customer services. Some of these activities are considered as business as usual and within our current gift to deliver within our existing budgets. However the development of business cases and more detailed project plans will be required setting out key financial considerations for some of the initiatives, for example the implementation of a Customer Record Management system. Substantial organisational projects like this will be subject to a comprehensive business case, and will follow the Councils normal governance processes, to gain sign off prior to implementation.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 None identified

9. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 9.1 This report is most closely linked with the Council's Significant Risk Register No 5f, as set out below:

Risk Description	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation Measures
If we do not have more efficient and effective public access and agile working arrangements then we will not be able to tailor the services our customers need and target those in need	2 Unlikely	2 Noticeable/ Minor	New public access points are up and running in both Stowmarket and Sudbury. Services can be accessed through both; with a range of assisted/self-serve/telephony support available. Further development and review is on-going. We are also developing regular feedback mechanisms to develop customer satisfaction measures.

			We have undertaken a staff survey which will inform an action plan in the future, tackling areas of concern
--	--	--	---

10. CONSULTATIONS

10.1 As part of wider public engagement activities on the proposal to create a single council to replace Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils, a market research company carried out an independent telephone survey of 4000 residents. The survey showed high support from electors for a number of key objectives, one of which was “delivering services that are better tailored to the needs of local residents”. This directly links to the Customer Strategy aims, of understanding the needs of our customers and focussing on their priorities.

11. EQUALITY ANALYSIS

11.1 An initial Equality Impact Assessment was carried out as part of the Future Model for Public Access in September 2016. It is envisaged that the refreshed strategy and ensuing initiatives would be an enhancement to our current service, and would have a positive effect. A further assessment will be carried out to understand if the refreshed strategy will have any increased impact

12. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

12.1 Increases in online contact should impact positively; reducing print and paper costs across the organisation, and reducing the Councils carbon footprint

13. APPENDICES

Title	Location
(e) Customer Strategy	Attached

14. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

14.1 None

APPENDIX D

EXTRACT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE BABERGH CABINET HELD
IN KING EDMUND CHAMBER - ENDEAVOUR HOUSE, 8 RUSSELL ROAD, IPSWICH ON
THURSDAY, 12 JULY 2018 AT 9:30AM

21 BCA/18/10 - REFRESHED CUSTOMER STRATEGY

21.1 Councillor Davis, the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Organisational Delivery, introduced report BCa/18/10 and the Assistant Director for Customer Service gave an overview of the document. Councillor Davis thanked the Assistant Director for Customer Service for an excellent document and moved the recommendation which was seconded by Councillor Patrick.

21.2 Members were keen that the strategy would link in with the new tenant engagement model. It was also questioned, in terms of the action plan, as to how this would be monitored and reported back to members. The Assistant Director for Customer Services explained all staff would have input into developing the distinct activities which would take place. It would form part of a customer programme of work which would be reported through the Senior Leadership Team. Cabinet Members would be kept informed through regular means and performance measures. A range of organisations and stakeholders would also be consulted, and this would include liaison with the tenant's board.

21.3 There was concern over the access point in Hadleigh which had not yet been confirmed. It was explained libraries were likely to be used but unfortunately, at present, this had not been established.

21.4 Cabinet felt it was important to recognise not everyone used digital means to access services and as such it was important telephone lines were still kept in place to respond to queries. Customer services staff were improving their skills in order for them to direct people more quickly.

21.5 If problems were being encountered, such as members of the public not having phonecalls returned etc. then the relevant Member should be informed, and it should be dealt with through the individual departments. Response times should be measured which ensured procedures could be improved upon to embed a culture based around service level agreements. This should then be followed up with teams, as well as, individually.

21.6 It was questioned as to how the "pop up" library service would be run. It was explained that there had been a cultural change and this service had shown that the lending rate had increased. Wherever possible the council would work in tandem with the libraries.

Cabinet were confident the new strategy would work.

21.7

By a unanimous vote:

It was RESOLVED:-

(1) That the Refreshed Customer Strategy be agreed.

- (2) That in consultation with the Cabinet Members, minor amendments to the Strategy be delegated to the Assistant Director for Customer Services to ensure the Strategy is kept up to date, and reflective of emerging Strategies which overlap.
- (3) That an action and communication plan be developed, which would ensure the Customer Strategy was widely shared across the organisation and provided for an opportunity to engage with staff, embedding a customer focussed organisational culture.

Reason for Decision: To provide an updated and refreshed Customer Strategy that states our organisational aim to put the customer at the heart of the organisation, and by doing so, improves our ability to better deliver our customer need.