



Report of the Chair of the Corporate Services & Financial Resilience Service Transformation Committee

Cabinet – 18 January 2024

Customer Charter and Service Standards Framework

Purpose:	To recommend to Cabinet for approval and adoption the Customer Charter and Service Standards Framework (Appendix A).
Policy Framework:	Successful and Sustainable Swansea Digital Strategy 2023-28
Consultation:	Access to Services, Finance and Legal
Recommendation(s):	It is recommended that: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Cabinet approves the Customer Charter and Service Standards Framework (Appendix A), for adoption from the 1st April 2024. 2) Cabinet delegates authority to Directors and the relevant Cabinet Member, to make any minor changes to the Standards as appropriate and always in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services & Performance (Deputy Leader) and the Cabinet Member for Service Transformation (Deputy Leader).
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Corporate Services Service Transformation Committee discussed a draft Customer Charter and Service Standards on the 25th of July 2023, after which public consultation and engagement was undertaken in the form of:
- A survey published online and in paper copies at libraries and the reception in Civic Centre.

- Engagement with the Ageing Well Steering Group. This group is made up of partners and community groups and includes representation from all communities over 50.
 - The Council also asked people for feedback at a large engagement event in December, which had representation from groups who work with the Council on the LGBTQ+ Forum, Disability Liaison Group and Ageing Well.
- 1.2 Overall, 144 people responded and the Customer Charter and Service Standards Framework (Appendix A) has been updated as a result of their feedback, which is highlighted in section 2 of this report.
- 1.3 The Charter and Standards are a dynamic set of guidelines. They will require constant review, and moving forward, will be updated in line with changes to legislation and working practices. Therefore, although it is recommended this version of the Charter and Standards is adopted, it will be subject to change and development moving forward.

2 Survey Consultation and Engagement Feedback

- 2.1 There were 73 responses to the survey of whom 81% were Swansea residents and 16% were Swansea Council staff.
- 2.2 A summary of feedback from residents who completed the survey includes the following:
- 84% of respondents agreed the overall promises laid out in the Charter are needed and 73% felt they will improve customer standards. Responding in a timely manner was raised throughout by several respondents.
 - With regard to accessing services online 76% of respondents felt they were the right promises and 68% felt they would improve customer standards. However, additional comments strongly highlighted the need for telephone and face-to-face channels alongside online services.
 - Regarding contacting Council services by email, 70% of respondents felt they were the right promises and 77% felt they would improve customer standards.
 - Regarding contacting Council services by phone, 77% of respondents felt they were the right promises and 68% felt they would improve customer standards. This is the area where responding in a timely manner was requested by most respondents to the survey.
 - Regarding residents visiting Council offices, 92% of respondents felt they were the right promises and 90% felt they would improve customer standards.
 - Regarding Council staff visiting residents, 96% of respondents felt they were the right promises and 90% felt they would improve customer standards.
- 2.3 With regard to the Service Standards listed for each service area, some comments were received around individual cases and current service requests, these will be passed to the relevant department.

- 2.4 In addition, the Partnership and Involvement Team provided the support for further direct engagement and feedback through both the Ageing Well Steering Group and a large engagement event in December. The event had representation from groups who work with the Council on the LGBTQ+ Forum, Disability Liaison Group and Ageing Well. 71 responses were received with feedback across the following themes:
- The importance of face-to-face access channels
 - Pocket guides were requested for useful information such as the Customer Charter and Service Standards
 - Requests for services to be available in more languages.

3. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 3.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:
- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
 - Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
 - Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
 - Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
 - Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
 - Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- 3.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.
- 3.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.
- 3.2 An IIA Screening Form has been completed (Appendix B) with the agreed outcome that a full IIA report was not required. The IIA has been updated following the survey feedback and will continue to be reviewed. Summary of findings from the IIA screening:
- The Customer Charter and Service Standards will have a medium positive impact across all groups as residents and businesses will know what level of service to expect when they contact the Council.

- The Service Standards are already in place, some of which are statutory, therefore changes will not be possible for some areas.
- The Charter and Standards are dynamic and will be subject to change, for example, as a result of legislative or service changes. Moving forward, services may therefore also undertake their own consultation and engagement where changes are being proposed, this may include co-production where appropriate.
- A broad survey consultation has been undertaken and changes have been made to the Charter and Service Standards as a result, including:
 - A framework to reflect the dynamic nature of services.
 - Providing access to services and information in alternative formats, e.g. large print, braille etc.
 - Strengthening the need for telephone and face-to-face to support online channels.
 - Strengthening the timeliness of responses, especially when responding by phone.
- In addition to the survey, further engagement was undertaken with the Ageing Well Steering Group and through a large engagement event in December, which had representation from groups who work with the Council on the LGBTQ+ Forum, Disability Liaison Group and Ageing Well. Further suggestions are being evaluated, particularly the themes around more languages and handy pocket guides.
- This work delivers on the Transformation and Financial Resilience well-being goal and steps in the Corporate Plan. The aim of the Charter and Standards is to provide clear guidance to residents and businesses when they access Council services.
- Risks are considered to be low as Service Standards are already in place, some of which are statutory.
- The cumulative impact is considered to be positive at this stage in development, providing a firm framework for residents and businesses accessing Council services.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 Providing access to information and services in alternative formats such as large print or braille may incur additional costs for some services. It is expected to be accommodated within existing budgets.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from this report.

Background Papers: None

Appendices:

- Appendix A Customer Charter and Service Standards
 Appendix B IIA Screening