

**Supporting Good Decisions**

**Promoting Equality & Human Rights, Reducing Inequality and Protecting the Environment**

**Integrated Impact Assessment Form**

**Integrated Impact Assessment Form**

**Promoting Equality, Human Rights and Sustainability**

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| **Title of Policy/ Proposal** | Customer Strategy 2023 - 2028 |
| **Timescale for Implementation** | 2023 - 2028 |
| **IIA Completion Date** | 07 November 2023 |
| **Completed by** | Caroline Rodgers |
| **Lead officer** | Sharon Saunders |

**Section 1: Screening**

**1.1 Briefly describe the policy/proposal/activity you are assessing.**

The Customer Strategy sets out the Council’s commitments to deliver the best services it can to all of its customers, and to ensure customers have a good experience when they contact the Council. It includes a number of principles for how the Council intends to deliver a good customer experience which will be delivered over the duration of the strategy.

* 1. **What will change as a result of this policy?**

The experience customers have when they contact the Council will improve. It will become more consistent, there will be more services available to access digitally, and there will continue to be phone and face-to-face services available for those who need them. Customers will be kept informed more if services can’t be delivered immediately. We will make it easier to contact us, for example by providing clearer information online and by having more services available in one location. We will use feedback and data to continually improve our services for customers.

* 1. **Deciding if a full Impact Assessment is needed.**

Please answer the following questions:

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|  | **Yes** | **No** |
| 1. The policy/ proposal has consequences for or affects people e.g. how they can access a service? | X |  |
| 1. The policy/proposal has potential to make a significant impact on equality? | X |  |
| 1. The policy/proposal is likely to have a significant environmental impact? |  | X |
| 1. The policy/ proposal has implications for the storage/ collection of personal data? |  | X |

* If you have answered yes to questions 1 and 2 above, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. If you have answered No then an IIA does not need to be completed. Please keep a copy of the screening paperwork.
* If you have identified that your project will have a significant environmental impact, please proceed to complete the Integrated Impact Assessment. You will also need to consider whether you need to complete a Strategic Environmental Assessment. Please contact
* If you have answered yes to question 4, please seek further advice from the Data Protection Officer.

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**Section 2: Integrated Impact Assessment**

* 1. **Have those who are affected by the policy had the opportunity to comment on new proposals?**

A customer survey was open from 20 March to 23 April 2023. This was available online and in paper form in libraries, area offices, community centres and leisure centres. The survey was also advertised on social media, the Council website and local radio. Service Managers, Elected Members, Area Partnerships and other Council staff who work with specific customer groups were asked to share the survey with their stakeholders. There were 362 responses to the survey, and the results have been analysed and the findings incorporated into the strategy.

The draft strategy was made available for consultation before submitting for approval. This was available online, in libraries and area offices and contact was made with a number of groups who were less likely to go online or visit a building to complete the survey in person. Overall the results of the consultation showed between 70% and 80% agreement with the vision and commitments in the strategy.

* 1. **What information/data have you used to inform the development of the policy to date?**
* The findings of the customer survey
* Information on customer numbers by phone, face to face and online
* Review of local policies and strategies
* Review of national policies and strategies
* Research on other public and private sector customer strategies
* The findings of the consultation
* Input from the Trauma Informed Project Officer
  1. **What does the evidence/ research suggest about the policy’s actual or likely impact on equality groups and those vulnerable/ or experiencing socio-economic disadvantage?**

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| --- | --- |
| **Evidence** | **Comment** |
| Which groups are in in particular need of this service? | All customers need to access Council services in some way. This may be for universal services such as council tax, waste services, libraries, museums and education or for more targeted services such as social care, advice services and repair services. It is recognised that some people the Council works with do not choose to do so and therefore may not consider themselves customers, and the strategy has been amended to reflect this.  It is important that customers can access services in a range of ways. Online access is becoming more and more popular and the Council must continue to develop this channel of communication, while recognising that some customers can’t go online and prefer to make contact by phone or face to face. This is particularly true for some protected and vulnerable groups. By encouraging those who can access services online to do so, resources can be freed up to support those who can’t. Regardless of how a customer contacts the Council we will ensure our services are accessible, including for those whose first language is not English, who have a disability and/or additional support needs.  The customer survey was open to all customers and advertised and promoted as widely as possible to encourage feedback from all groups including protected groups. The draft strategy was made available for consultation before submitting for approval. The strategy includes a commitment to involve customers at an early stage when designing or redesigning services to ensure the services are designed around their needs. |
| What level of service uptake/ access is there from protected and vulnerable groups? |
| Can you identify positive outcomes for service users |
| What is the service user experience of those from protected or vulnerable groups? |
| What opportunity have those from protected groups had to co-produce or comment on the service/ plans? |

* 1. **How does the policy meet the different needs of groups in the community?**

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| **Equality Groups**   * Older people, people in the middle years      * Children and young people children * Women, men and transgender people (includes issues relating to pregnancy and maternity) * Disabled people (includes physical disability, learning disability, sensory impairment, long-term medical conditions, mental health problems) * Minority ethnic people (includes Gypsy/Travellers, migrant workers) * Refugees and asylum seekers * People with different religions or beliefs (includes people with no religion or belief) * Lesbian, gay, bisexual and heterosexual people * People who are unmarried, married or in a civil partnership | The strategy is designed to meet the needs of all customers who contact the Council. It recognises the limited resources available to the Council and is focussed on making service delivery as efficient and effective as possible in order to free up capacity to support those customers who have the greatest need.  The strategy includes a commitment to ensure services are accessible to all who need them, regardless of how they choose to contact the Council, and are designed in such a way as to tackle inequalities, adversity and trauma in all of their forms. This includes ensuring the website is accessible and translation and interpretation services are available, including BSL, and ensuring staff who speak to customers either face to face or by phone are aware of the support available for those with specific accessibility requirements.  The approach meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It is person-centred, trauma informed and is designed to meet the needs of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Promise. |
| **Those vulnerable to falling into poverty**   * Unemployed * People on benefits * Lone Parents * Care experienced children and young people * Carers (including young carers) * Homeless people * Those involved in the community justice system * People with low literacy/numeracy * Families with 3 or more children * Those with a child/ children under 1 | See above under Equality Groups.  The strategy includes a commitment to offer support for customers to enable them to access services digitally.  The strategy confirms that shifting more services online will enable the Council to free up staff time to support customers who can’t access digital services or who have more complex needs. |
| **Geographical communities**   * Rural/ semi rural communities * Urban Communities * Coastal communities * Those living in the most deprived communities (bottom 20% SIMD areas) | See above under Equality Groups. |
| **Communication Needs:**   * Gaelic Language Speakers * BSL users * English as a Second Language * Other e.g. DeafBlind, Plain English, Large Print | See above under Equality Groups. |

* 1. **Are there any other factors which will affect the way this policy impacts on the community or staff groups?**

The strategy includes a commitment to continue to invest in staff to enable them to support all customers and deliver high quality services. This includes an action to review the Council’s training programme for Customer Services and all other relevant staff.

* 1. **Is any part of this policy/ service to be carried out wholly or partly by contractors?**

If yes, how have you included equality and human rights considerations into the contract?

No.

* 1. **Have you considered how you will communicate information about this policy or policy change to those affected e.g. to those with hearing loss, speech impairment or English as a second language?**

The strategy will be available on the website and therefore will be able to be translated and spoken using the functionality on the site.

* 1. **Please consider how your policy will impact on each of the following?**

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| **Equality and Human rights**   * Promotes / advances equality of opportunity e.g. improves access to and quality of services * Promotes good relations within and between people with protected characteristics and tackles harassment * Promotes participation, is inclusive and gives people control over decisions which affect them * Preserves dignity and self-respect of individuals (does not lead to degrading treatment or stigma) * Builds support networks, resilience, community capacity |
| Comments:  The strategy includes a commitment to ensure services are accessible to all who need them, regardless of how they choose to contact the Council, and are designed in such a way as to tackle inequalities, adversity and trauma in all of their forms.  The approach meets the requirements of the Equality Act 2010. It is person-centred, trauma informed and is designed to meet the needs of children as set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and The Promise.  The strategy includes a commitment to involve customers at an early stage when designing or redesigning services to ensure the services are designed around their needs. |
| **Reduces Poverty**   * Maximises income and/or reduces income inequality * Helps young people into positive destinations * Aids those returning to and those progressing within the labour market * Improves employability skills, including literacy and numeracy * Reduces the costs of taking part in activities and opportunities * Reduces the cost of living |
| Comments :  The strategy does not impact on these outcomes directly, but through improving the customer experience when they contact the Council customers may be more likely to access services for support to tackle poverty. |
| **Protecting the Environment and Improving Sustainability**:   * Reduces the need to travel or increases access to sustainable forms of transport * Minimises waste / encourages resource efficiency / contributes to the circular economy * Ensures goods / services are from ethical, responsible and sustainable sources * Improves energy efficiency / uses low carbon energy sources * Protects and/or enhances natural environments / habitats / biodiversity * Promotes the transition to a low carbon economy * Prepares and/or adapts communities for climate change impacts |
| Comments:  By making more services available digitally and by providing more services from one location the Council will reduce the need for customers and staff to travel to Council offices, and will reduce the number of buildings it requires to provide services from thereby reducing energy usage. |

**Section 3.Action Plan**

What, if any changes will be made to the proposal/ policy as a result of the assessment?

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| **Changes to be made** | **Expected outcome of the change** | **Resources Required** | **Timeline** | **Responsible person** |
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**For consideration of the Head of Service**

Can you identify any cumulative impacts on equality groups or vulnerable people arising from this policy, when considered alongside other changes across other services?

*All appropriately considered in development of the new strategy.*

**Sign off by Head of Service**

Name Sharon M Saunders, head of Communities

Date 07 11 2023