

Equality Impact Assessment

Customer Services Strategy 2019-2024



Section 1: Introduction and background

What is being assessed?	Customer Services Strategy 2019-24
Business unit	Customer Services
Job title of assessor	Customer Care Manager
Strategic Management Lead	Jasvir Chohan
Date of assessment	06.02.2019
Is this a new or existing function or policy?	New Strategy

Description of the function or policy, including:

- **The aims and scope**
- **The main beneficiaries or users**
- **The main equality issues and barriers, and the protected characteristics¹ they relate to (not all assessments will encounter issues relating to every protected characteristic)**

The Mole Valley District Council Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 sets out the guiding principles for customer service delivery together with the three main outcomes deliverable through the implementation of the strategy over the next five years. It supports the guiding principles of the Council Strategy 2019-24 which is also subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

The Customer Services Strategy 2019-2024 is a strategic planning document which provides a framework for the delivery of five guiding principles which are:

- **Customers.** We will place the customer at the heart of what we do.
- **Our Values.** Our customer service delivery will focus around our 5 Values.
- **Digital First.** We will reduce the need to contact us by phone or in person by making our processes more effective and customer focussed.
- **Self-serve.** We will make our website easy to use to encourage access to online services 24/7.
- **Support where needed.** In person and telephone support remain in place during office hours for those who need extra assistance or where self-service is not available.

The Customer Services Strategy will impact on residents, businesses and visitors of Mole Valley. This was taken into consideration during the development of the Strategy. It is intended that the Strategy will have a positive impact and this is reflected in this assessment. No negative impacts have been identified. Three areas of positive impact have been identified and these are:

- Disability
- Carers
- Rural/urban access issues

¹The protected characteristics are age, sex, disability, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, religion and belief, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, and marriage and civil partnership (Source: Equality Act 2010)

Description of how the function or policy fits into the Council's Corporate Priorities or other local, regional or national plans and priorities

The Customer Services Strategy 2019-24 is intended to provide a framework for customer service delivery over the next five years and supports the Council in delivering the Guiding Principles of the Council Strategy with effect from 1 April 2019.

Section 2: Analysis and assessment

Indicate for each protected characteristic whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact – using a tick <input type="checkbox"/> in the appropriate columns				
Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Age			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's age
Sex			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's sex
Disability	•			The guiding principle of Support where needed expresses the Council's commitment to help provide support in person and/or by telephone for those who need extra assistance or where self-serve is not available. The principle of Digital First will positively impact those who find it difficult to attend the Council offices or use the telephone due to a disability.
Pregnancy and maternity			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on people who are pregnant or on maternity leave
Race and ethnicity			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's race or ethnicity
Religion and belief			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's religion or beliefs
Gender reassignment			•	It is not considered that the Council Strategy will have a

Indicate for each protected characteristic whether there may be a positive impact, negative impact, a mixture of both or no impact – using a tick <input type="checkbox"/> in the appropriate columns				
Protected characteristics	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
				significant impact, positive or negative, based on people who have undergone or are undergoing gender reassignment
Sexual orientation			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on a person's sexual orientation
Marriage and civil partnership			•	It is not considered that the Customer Services Strategy will have a significant impact, positive or negative, based on whether a person is married or in a civil partnership
Other aspects to consider	Positive	Negative	No impact	Reason
Carers	•			Potential for a positive impact for carers in relation to Digital First and Selfserve. Carers may be able to make use of online services on behalf of (and with the permission of) the resident concerned so avoiding the need for the resident to visit or telephone the Council.
Rural/urban access issues	•			Potential for a positive impact in relation to the Self-serve and Digital First principles for those residents where there is suitable broadband connectivity in place.
HR issues (how will staff with protected characteristics be affected?)			•	No immediate implications

What can be done to reduce the effects of any negative impacts?

Where negative impact cannot be completely diminished, can this be justified, and is it lawful?

No negative impacts have been identified. MVDC will continue to work with Surrey County Council (SCC) and the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) to ensure good broadband connectivity across the whole of the District.

Where there are positive impacts, what changes have been or will be made?
Who are the beneficiaries? How have they benefited?

The Customer Services Strategy will be delivered over the next five years. It is one of several strategies that supports the Council Strategy.

Delivering the Customer Services Strategy will positively impact on residents, businesses and visitors who wish to contact MVDC by offering improved access to services 24/7 via our website. This will enable contact to be made at a time to suit them and will potentially avoid a visit or call to the Pippbrook offices in many instances.

The desired outcomes of the Strategy make a clear commitment to a better customer experience, offering a digital first approach and improved engagement with our customers to help us deliver better services.

In relation to those who may need extra assistance support, perhaps due to disability or for other reasons, or where self-serve is not available, there is a clear commitment to ensuring that telephone and face to face support remains in place during office hours.

Section 3: Evidence gathering and fact-finding

What evidence is available to support your views above?

Please include:

- A summary of the available evidence
- Identification of where there are gaps in the evidence (this may identify a need for more evidence in the action plan)
- What information is currently captured with respect to usage and take up of services.
- What the current situation is in relation to equality and diversity monitoring (where relevant)

The development of the strategy entailed gathering the views of all stakeholders during the formulation of the draft document and through public consultation of the draft Strategy. Respondents were supportive of a 'Digital First' approach and access to services 24/7 via the website is welcomed, as long as telephone and/or

face to face support is also available for those who need it. The Customer Services Strategy takes into account the following challenge considered through the Council Strategy:

- Cross cutting issues like the reduction in funding to our partners and growing public expectations for access to services at all hours of the day

How have stakeholders been involved in this assessment?

Who are they, and what is their view?

No stakeholders have been directly involved in this assessment. Feedback from stakeholders has been taken into account in the formulation of the Strategy.

Recommendations

Summary of the main recommendations (if any) arising from the assessment

None

Section 4: Action Plan

Actions needed to implement the EqIA recommendations (if any)

Issue	Action	Expected outcome	Who	Deadline for action
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a