

Governance Committee

18 September 2018

Appendix 1 **Summary of the feedback pilot in 2017/18 (Phase One and key activities for the customer experience project for 2018/19 (Phase Two)**

1. **Summary of the customer feedback pilot 2017/18**

1.1 Through this pilot we enabled customers to rate the quality and relevance of information and services available on and via our website, as well as telling us about the quality of responses to enquiries and requests to which we respond via email.

1.2 The purpose was to create a simple, unified way for customers to give us feedback, without needing to make a complaint or compliment, which we can quantify, analyse and use methodically to improve our services. Managers receive reports on a monthly basis containing data collected, providing valuable insight into our customers' experiences and needs.

1.3 During the Phase One pilot of the feedback, a total of 3,970 individual pieces of feedback were received. The feedback showed that 63% of customers thought the service was either 'excellent' or 'good' and the remaining 37% of customers felt that the service was 'ok' (10%) or 'poor' (27%). These findings covered customer contacts where (i) customers have received a personalised email from an officer in response to a request for a service or information (examples of these are an update from the Admissions and Transport Team regarding a pending application or a request for assistance using the online library facility) or (ii) customers have tried to access information or undertake a transaction on the Council website.

1.4 The feedback received has proven useful for both immediate actionable improvements and identifying larger scale, longer-term needs for improvements. For example, real time feedback from the system has identified immediately resolvable issues, such as broken links or out of date information. This has proven the feedback is very helpful, as when the issues have been resolved (e.g. broken links fixed, incorrect information corrected in an email auto-response) the negative feedback has stopped.

1.5 Another area of insight we have gained from the feedback gathered during Phase One, is that there is a clear gap between satisfaction ratings for email correspondence and interaction with our website: 47% of customers rated the webpages as 'excellent' or 'good' while a significantly higher 81% rated email correspondence the same. From the comments provided by customers, it is evident (and understandable) that customers feel they have received a better customer experience from a member of staff who, in many cases, will be providing a bespoke response to a request or enquiry. The challenge for us is to provide information on the website which meets customers' needs much better, both in terms of the relevance and clarity of the information provided, and the ease of the customer journey in accessing it, so that in the majority of cases this becomes the channel of choice for the customer.

1.6 We can analyse the webpages and responses which get excellent ratings to understand why they give such a good customer experience and apply this learning across other pages and to other services. In some instances, there is also a need for user testing of webpages to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how to improve the services. This work is underway, and the Customer Services Team is currently carrying out further analysis of the feedback and scoping out user testing. A full summary will be provided to CMT in April 2019.

2 **Key developments taking place in 2018/19**

2.1 **Embedding the Customer Promise with commissioned services.** As part of the Customer Promise roll out, we explored how to embed our values and standards into new contracts and commissioned services, so that customers get the same customer experience whoever is providing its services. It has been agreed with Procurement that the Customer Promise is included in the

Strategic Sourcing Plan (SSP) which provides clear guidance to managers procuring contracts above the value of £100,000. Work is underway in Procurement to finalise the documentation needed for it to be included in the SSP. Once this has been finalised, the Customer Services Team will investigate with Sourcing Solutions if it is relevant to insert the Customer Promise into new contracts between the values of £15k and £99k. We will work with Sourcing Solutions to identify where this is appropriate and applicable.

2.2 Customer Champions Network. The formation of the network was agreed in April 2018. The network is designed to act as a council-wide forum for customer facing staff to provide feedback to and engagement with colleagues in similar roles within other departments. Additionally, members of the network will be provided with customer service training materials for sharing with colleagues within their services. There are 16 members of the network from public-facing teams across Council departments, including representation from Highways (both from the contractor's Contact Centre and the Council's contract management group). The inaugural meeting was held on 18 June 2018, and presented an overview of the Customer Experience Improvement Plan and the campaign to improve the awareness of the Customer Promise. It was very well received by the members, who appreciated the opportunity to interact with colleagues working in similar roles with similar challenges (and rewards) when helping and communicating with customers. Initial success has been evident with the take up of the next meetings, suggestions for future topics, and requests for additional members of staff to attend. The group will meet quarterly. The network was based on the successful model of Orbis' Property Customer Champions network.

2.3 Customer feedback systems for our other channels. As part of Phase Two of the plan, we are installing feedback devices at five Council sites (Eastbourne Library, Hastings Library, St Mary's House, Ocean House and County Hall) and will be introducing a telephone feedback survey across a wide range of Council teams across departments. Both of these new elements to the project will indicate how customers rate the customer service they receive in view of the principles and standards set out within the Council's Customer Promise. The feedback devices will display four statements, approved by the Customer Project Board, which we will ask customers to rate from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree) their customer experience. The telephone survey will ask for feedback upon five statements with the same scoring system in place and again this will be to respond about customer experience they have just had. Both sets of feedback will inform us of where improvements may need to be considered in relation to the customer service we are offering as a Council. Monthly reports will be provided to the relevant managers, as with the feedback received from Customer Thermometer. Results will be presented to CMT in April 2019.