

# Cabinet

Tuesday 8 December 2020

11.00 am

Online/Virtual: This meeting will be livestreamed on Southwark Council's YouTube channel here: <https://www.youtube.com/user/southwarkcouncil>

## Supplemental Agenda No. 1

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21.	<b>Corporate Customer Access Strategy 2020-24</b> To note and endorse the corporate customer access strategy.	1 - 36

#### Contact

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Date: 30 November 2020

<b>Item No.</b> 21.	<b>Classification:</b> Open	<b>Date:</b> 8 December 2020	<b>Meeting Name:</b> Cabinet
<b>Report title:</b>		Corporate Customer Access Strategy 2020 to 2024	
<b>Ward(s) or groups affected:</b>		All	
<b>Cabinet Member:</b>		Councilor Alice Macdonald, Equalities and Communities	

### **FOREWORD - COUNCILLOR ALICE MACDONALD, CABINET MEMBER FOR EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITIES**

2020 has been an extraordinary year that none of us could have predicted. Coronavirus has impacted on all of us. As a council, our priorities have been to keep our residents safe and to support them through one of the most difficult times any of us have ever known. A key part of our response has been ensuring that Southwark residents were able to receive the information and support they needed through our customer services functions.

This included setting up a special telephone hotline and email box for residents to use with any questions and service requests relating to COVID-19. Liaising with the Community Hub and the voluntary sector, we supported vulnerable residents and provided advice and support on a range of issues. During COVID19 we have responded to 10,684 telephone enquiries and 9,841 emails from residents (@ 20/11/20), and helped with 713 enquiries from businesses. These enquiries covered everything from assistance with shopping and picking up prescriptions to welfare support and loneliness. Businesses were also able to receive advice on how to claim government funding and local funding during the lockdowns.

The crisis has taught us many things about how we can better provide and support residents across Southwark and informs this Customer Access Strategy which is published as we begin to look to the recovery. The strategy has been developed to simplify the way we provide services to the people of Southwark. It explains what we want to do to enable people to get the best out of the council and will help us ensure that everyone working for the council:

- Understands their role and purpose and knows what is expected of them
- Has the right tools for the job (increasingly this is digital and tech)
- Helps to create the right customer service culture, where if there were a choice, people would choose Southwark.

Underpinning the strategy are three core principles

- Channel shift: our aim is to be digital first; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings
- Listening and responding to customers so we deliver excellent services
- No one left behind: ensuring everyone can access the services and information they need recognising that not everyone will be able to access digital services.

We have strong foundations to build on. Since the first customer access strategy was published in 2012, the number of registered My Southwark personalised account holders continues to grow and has now passed the 100,000 mark, new technologies, such as smart phones and tablets, have enabled customers to access information and carry out transactions at a time and place that is convenient to them and we have saved millions by bringing services back in house.

The strategy contains a number of clear commitments to our customers:

- Setting out maximum response times and service standards, they can expect when contacting the council.
- Training for all customer facing staff to ensure all residents receive a consistent and good customer experience.
- Up to date and easy to use on-line services so that residents can request a service at a time convenient to them and be able to track their request.
- Opportunities for customers to provide feedback. We need to know when we've done something wrong so we can rectify it. Customers can also tell us when we've done a good job too.
- Commit to maintaining traditional service access (telephone and face to face) for those in our community unable to access digital services."

This strategy aims to deliver the following four outcomes:

**Deliver a great customer experience:**

- Provide clear communication and information, helping people make informed decisions.
- Improve the quality, search capability and accessibility of the Council website and ensure two-way dialogue with customers, being more consistent and responsive.
- Keep customers up-to-date on progress, setting and managing their expectations be open and transparent about what the Council does and its service standards.
- Measure the customer experience in a meaningful way to continuously improve services involving customers in the definition and improvement of new and existing services.

- Provide customers with choices on how they access services, whilst promoting digital up-take gathering appropriate customer insight and then use it to inform service improvements.
- Redesign the most popular processes end-to-end to encourage customers to self-serve ensures customer-facing staff are kept informed of major Council initiatives.

**Build the skills and capabilities in the workforce:**

- Lead by example, walking the walk, talking the talk, and being consistent in what is said and done promoting the values and culture we expect from each other.
- Role model great customer service behaviors providing staff with the digital and customer service skills needed to deliver great service.
- Involve staff in decision-making, in the design and improvement of services by promoting culture of collaboration, measured risk taking, and no blame.
- Redevelop relevant policies helping staff to take decisions and work confidently to improve the quality, search capability and accessibility of the Council's intranet

**Provide technology that enables collaboration:**

- Improve and extend existing Wi-Fi, internet bandwidth and remote access services.
- Make audio-conferencing an effective option with additional tools and services.
- Provide video-conference solutions in offices and for remote access on computers.
- Introduce cloud-based (SaaS) software solutions for cost-effective collaboration

**Implement modern systems for data-driven decision making:**

- Reduce the number of outdated systems to simplify access to information.
- Invest in the skills and capacity needed to integrate and perform analysis on data promoting the use of meaningful measures as part of the decision-making process.

- Enable data sharing through information sharing protocols with other organisations and publishing open data through a new website to better support communities and businesses.
- A holistic view of the customer, through the consolidation of systems and data

Our ambition is to be a digital first council providing excellent services to residents in a cost effective way.

“I am therefore asking the cabinet, after consideration of the officers’ report set out from paragraph 1 onwards to approve the recommendations below.”

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That the cabinet note and endorse the corporate customer access strategy contained within Appendix 1 of the report.
2. That cabinet notes the equality and health analysis as per Appendix 2.
3. That the cabinet notes that progress and delivery of the corporate customer access strategy will be reported through action plan based on the commitments set out in the strategy and at regular annual reporting on the council plan itself.

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

4. Southwark Council published its first Customer Access Strategy in November 2012. That strategy set out to transform how our customer services operated and took significant steps towards modernising how customers access services in Southwark.
5. Notably, customer services functions, including the telephone contact centre were brought back in house in 2013 following termination of the outsourced contract, delivering £4.5m in savings to date. In addition, customer satisfaction with customer services has increased year on year.
6. The number of registered My Southwark personalised account holders continues to grow and has now passed the 100,000 mark. This established the beginning of an online hub for customer services, where customers can, for example, find information about their local libraries or view their rent or service charge account if they are a council tenant or homeowner.
7. In the years since the 2017 strategy was published, new technologies, such as smart phones and tablets, have enabled customers to access information and carry out transactions at a time and place that is convenient to them.

8. The strategy explains what we want to do to enable people to get the best out of the council and will help us ensure that everyone working for the council:
  - Understands their role and purpose and knows what is expected of them
  - Has the right tools for the job (increasingly this is digital and tech)
  - Helps to create the right customer service culture, where if there were a choice, people would choose Southwark.
  
9. The strategy can be summarised as:
  - Channel shift
  - Listening and responding to customers
  - No one left behind.
  
10. The refreshed corporate strategy will seek to strengthen customer relationships, enhance experience and increase satisfaction influencing positive behaviour changes by encouraging engagement, involvement and increasing digital inclusion.
  
11. The refreshed strategy will also provide a framework cutting costs across all areas of business, creating an organisation-wide set of standards and key principles to help introduce change ensuring services and workforce are supported and that customers continue to experience consistency and high standards from every council interaction.<sup>1</sup>
  
12. The refreshed corporate customer access strategy 2020/2024 will be aligned to the Council Plan and the Council's Digital Strategy offering greater digital focus to reflect the Council's vision.
  
13. The aims and objectives of the refreshed Customer Access Strategy will form the basis for the Council's transformation programmes which will drive the:
  - Implementation of essential underlying technology
  - Redesign of business processes
  - Challenge to the way the Council delivers its services
  - Delivery of excellent customer care
  - Deliver projects using Agile methodologies
  - Becoming a digital Council and developing a digital borough
  - Channel shift high volume services
  - Gaps in future service change

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<sup>1</sup> Channel Shift: Realizing the Benefits, GovDelivery

Research suggests that face to face interaction with a customer can cost a local authority £10.53, managing a basic phone query can cost £3.00 and a customer interacting online or carrying out a transaction £0.08

- Build on developing staff offering training and development opportunities inline with Investors in People accreditation.
16. The new strategy also continues to meet the requirements of Equality Duty 2010, which requires public bodies to publish relevant, proportionate information annually demonstrating their compliance with the Equality Duty.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION**

17. The Customer Access Strategy Action Plan will be the corporate mechanism for coordinating and monitoring projects resulting from this strategy across the council as delivered by service areas.
18. Monitoring and evaluation metrics to measure the impact of the Customer Access Strategy on internal and external customers will be identified and implemented.
19. The Customer Experience division will provide support and expertise to enable services to design and implement service improvements. These improvements will enable service areas to realise efficiencies and financial savings and improve customer experiences.

## **Policy implications**

22. The customer access strategy supports our overall priority to be a council that is fit for the future, as set out in the refreshed council plan. The progress and delivery of the strategy will be reported through an action plan based on the commitments set out in the strategy and at regular annual reporting on the council plan itself.

## **Community impact statement**

23. The Equality Act 2010 requires public authorities to have due regard to a number of equality considerations when exercising their function. This process may be informed by an equality analysis
24. Pursuant to section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 Southwark Council has a duty to have due regard in its decision making processes to the need to:
- (a) Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation or other prohibited conduct.
  - (b) Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.
  - (c) Foster good relations between those who share a relevant characteristic and those that do not share it.
25. The relevant protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual

orientation. The Public Sector Equality Duty also applies to marriage and civil partnership but only in relation to (a) above.

26. As the Strategy is far reaching across the entire organisation, for all major existing and future customer access projects, service areas will be required to carry out an impact assessment to fully understand how various parts of our communities will be affected by the introduction of redesigned services. Greater emphasis will be placed on those projects looking to phase out and close traditional engagement methods, the implications of such changes and the measures to be put in place to support the vulnerable in our communities to continue to access services.

### **Resource implications**

27. There are no specific implications arising from this report. Existing resources are already in place to meet the strategic aims. Any actions arising which have resource effects will be subject to separate decision-making process and reallocation within existing budget.

## **SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS**

### **Director of Law and Democracy**

28. The Localism Act 2011 gives councils a general power of competence by which they have power to do anything that individuals generally may do. The ongoing provision of a Customer Access Strategy as described in this report is an exercise of those powers.
29. Paragraphs 23-25 of the report set out the Public Sector Equality Duty which the Cabinet must comply with when considering this report. Appendix 2 to the report is an Equality and Health Analysis that will assist the Cabinet in meeting this duty, particularly its reference to mitigating actions that will be taken where there are potentially adverse impacts on those with identified protected characteristics.
30. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a continuing one; the report details in paragraph 26 how ongoing analysis will be carried out within specific service areas in relation to all future customer access projects, to monitor and assess any changes or impacts to protected characteristic groups over time.
31. Approval of the continuing Customer Access Strategy is an executive function that can be determined by the Cabinet in accordance with Part 3 of the council's constitution.

### **Strategic Director of Finance and Governance (FC20/022)**

32. The Strategic Director of Finance and Governance notes the recommendations of this report and that there are no specific additional resource requirements at this juncture. This will be kept under review and

reported as the programme progresses.

## BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
None.		

## APPENDICES

No.	Title
Appendix 1	Customer Access Strategy 2017-2020
Appendix 2	Customer Access Strategy Refresh 2017: Equality and Health Analysis

## AUDIT TRAIL

<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Councillor Alice Macdonald, Housing and Modernisation	
<b>Lead Officer</b>	Richard Selley, Director of Customer Experience Housing & Modernisation	
<b>Report Author</b>	Savina Vagarwal, Project Manager	
<b>Version</b>	Final	
<b>Dated</b>	30 November 2020	
<b>Key Decision?</b>	No	
<b>CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER</b>		
<b>Officer Title</b>	<b>Comments Sought</b>	<b>Comments Included</b>
Director of Law and Democracy	Yes	Yes
Strategic Director of Finance and Governance	Yes	Yes
List other officers here		
<b>Cabinet Member</b>	Yes	Yes
<b>Date final report sent to Constitutional Team</b>	30 November 2020	



# Corporate Customer Access Strategy

2020 to 2024

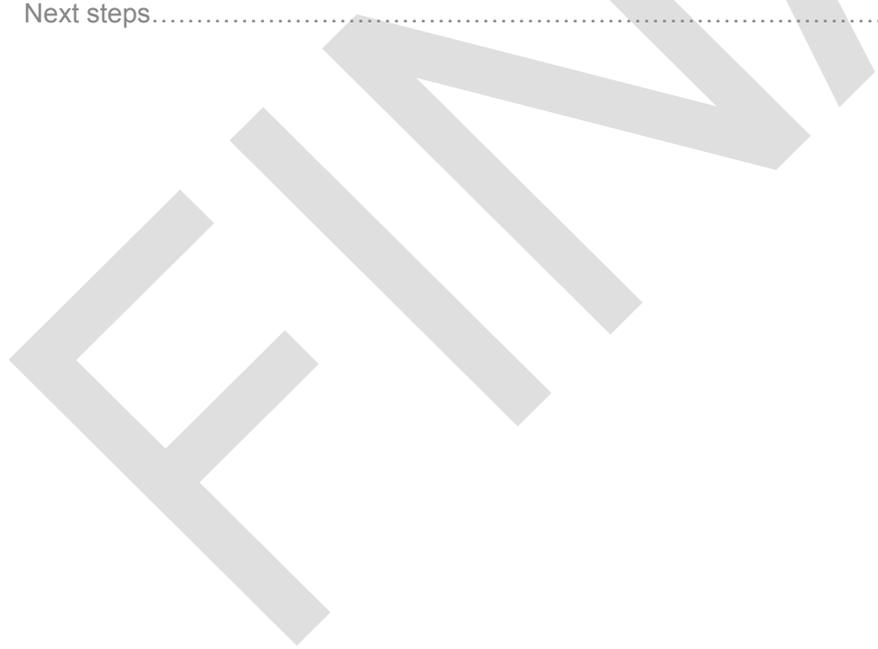


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The way our customers interact with us is changing

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# FOREWORD

2020 has been an extraordinary year that none of us could have predicted. Coronavirus has impacted on all of us. As a council, our priorities have been to keep our residents safe and to support them through one of the most difficult times any of us have ever known. A key part of our response has been ensuring that Southwark residents were able to support the information and support they needed through our customer services functions.

This included setting up a special telephone hotline and email box for residents to use with any questions and service requests relating to COVID-19. Liaising with the Community Hub and the voluntary sector, we supported vulnerable residents and provided advice and support on a range of issues. During COVID-19 we have responded to 10,684 telephone enquiries and 9,841 emails from residents (@ 20/11/20), and helped with 713 enquiries from businesses. These enquiries covered everything from assistance with shopping and picking up prescriptions to welfare support and loneliness. Businesses were also able to receive advice on how to claim government funding and local funding during the lockdowns.

The crisis has taught us many things about how we can better provide and support residents across Southwark and informs this Customer Access Strategy which is published as we begin to look to the recovery. The strategy has been developed to simplify the way we provide services to the people of Southwark. It explains what we want to do to enable people to get the best out of the council and will help us ensure that everyone working for the council:

- Understands their role and purpose and knows what is expected of them
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recognising that not everyone will be able to access digital services.

We have strong foundations to build on. Since the first customer access strategy was published in 2012, the number of registered MySouthwark personalised account holders continues to grow and has now passed the 100,000 mark, new technologies, such as smartphones and tablets, have enabled customers to access information and carry out transactions at a time and place that is convenient to them and we have saved millions by bringing services back in house.

The strategy contains a number of clear commitments to customers setting out maximum response times, our ambition is to be a digital first council providing excellent services to residents in a cost effective way.

"This strategy is intended to cover all council services. It is however important to recognise that some complex and/or sensitive services (e.g. adult social care, children's services, planning) may not be able to strictly adhere to a common set of service standards. Neither does this strategy supersede any legislative response timescales."

The strategy contains a number of clear commitments to our customers:

- Setting out maximum response times and service standards, they can expect when contacting the council.
- Training for all customer facing staff to ensure all residents receive a consistent and good customer experience.
- Up to date and easy to use on-line services so that residents can request a service at a time convenient to them and be able to track their request.
- Opportunities for customers to provide feedback. We need to know when we've done something wrong so we can rectify it. Customers can also tell us when we've done a good job too.
- Commit to maintaining traditional service access (telephone and face to face) for those in our community unable to access digital services.
- Our ambition is to be a digital first council providing excellent services to residents in a cost effective way.

Councillor Alice Macdonald, Cabinet Member,  
Equalities and Communities

# Executive summary

“The quality of service, behaviour, attitude, courtesy and more, by any Southwark employee or contractor is how our residents, clients and customers judge the whole council. We aim to get it 100% right, 100% of the time, but we’re only human and we all make mistakes. So, when we do, we have to ‘own up’ immediately, say sorry straight away and put it right as soon as possible.

The Customer Access Strategy, along with the complementary Digital and Modernisation strategies, with strategic objectives will set out our approach to these challenges over the next four years across all council services.

This strategy is the latest of a number of new and refreshed strategies which together, aim to deliver improved IT and digital services and an improved customer experience for all.

This strategy aims to deliver the following four outcomes:

## **Deliver a great customer experience:**

- By providing clear communication and information, helping people make informed decisions.
- By providing and improving the quality, search capability and accessibility of the Council website and ensure two-way dialogue with customers, being more consistent and responsive.
- Keeping customers up-to-date on progress, setting and managing their expectations be open and transparent about what the Council does and its service standards.
- Measuring the customer experience in a meaningful way to continuously improve services involving customers in the definition and improvement of new and existing services.
- Providing customers with choices on how they access services, whilst promoting digital up-take gathering appropriate customer insight and then using it to inform service improvements.
- Redesigning the most popular processes end-to-end to encourage customers to self-serve ensures customer-facing staff are kept informed of major Council initiatives.

## **Build the skills and capabilities in the workforce.**

- Lead by example, walking the walk, talking the talk, and being consistent in what is said and done promoting the values and culture we expect from each other.
- Role model great customer service behaviours providing staff with the digital and customer service skills needed to deliver great service.
- Involve staff in decision-making, in the design and improvement of services by promoting culture of collaboration, measured risk taking, and no blame.
- Redevelop relevant policies helping staff to take decisions and work confidently to improve the quality, search capability and accessibility of the Council’s intranet.

## **Provide technology that enables collaboration.**

- Improve and extend existing Wi-Fi, internet bandwidth and remote access services.
- Make audio-conferencing an effective option with additional tools and services.
- Provide video-conference solutions in offices and for remote access on computers.
- Introduce cloud-based (SaaS) software solutions for cost-effective collaboration.

## **Implement modern systems for data-driven decision making:**

- Reduce the number of outdated systems to simplify access to information.
- Invest in the skills and capacity needed to integrate and perform analysis on data promoting the use of meaningful measures as part of the decision-making process.
- Enable data sharing through information sharing protocols with other organisations and publishing open data through a new website to better support communities and businesses.
- A holistic view of the customer, through the consolidation of systems and data.

## SOUTHWARK COUNCIL

### Part 1: Introduction

Our Customer Access Strategy has been developed to simplify the way we provide services to the people of Southwark. The Strategy is about responding to our customers' current and future needs; tailoring services to meet local needs; improving access to services by engaging with the community and empowering them to be fully involved in providing solutions.

Our services need to be valued by those that use them and also be responsive to the changing needs of our customers and to emerging technologies that enable services to be delivered in new ways that are:

- Easily accessible
- Simple to use
- Streamlined
- Convenient
- Cost effective
- Reliable

If we are to ensure future service delivery meets the customers' demands a corporate approach to customer services is required to collectively revise the structures and approaches to deliver services.

#### The Customer Vision

Our Customer Vision is to make it easy for everyone living, visiting, working or studying in Southwark to access services where and when they need them. We will deliver a quality experience for all our customers, regardless of when or how they make contact and we will offer appropriate and relevant services that are joined with other agencies.

Our approach will be to influence the way our customers interact with us and help them to move to more efficient means of accessing services. We will focus on developing high quality digital services from beginning to end which will be easy to use and delivered in a timely manner. Self-service will enable access to an increasing range of information and services available 24/7.

We do recognise that some of our customers who have varying needs and or more complex needs will continue to require our face to face and phone channels. We will assist these customers in accessing our services and will strive to gradually build their confidence, trust and skills enabling them to ultimately become self-serving.

We are also aware that some customers may reach a stage in their transactions with us where they need to have the reassurance of speaking to a member of staff

and we will ensure that this option is easily available to them.

The successful delivery of this Strategy will result in significant changes to the way in which our customers will access our services. Staff will be focussed on meeting, even exceeding customers' needs. Local knowledge will enable services to be tailored to the communities' requirements. New technologies will be exploited to make access even easier and a wide range of agencies will be working together to integrate service delivery.

We will:

- Treat residents as if they were a valued member of our own family;
- Be open, honest and accountable;
- Spend money as if it were from our own pocket;
- Work for everyone to realise their own potential;
- Make Southwark a place to be proud of.
- Always work to make Southwark more equal and just
- Stand against all forms of discrimination and racism.

#### Delivering our Vision

Delivery of our corporate vision during and post COVID-19 and beyond 2020 within the Customer Access Strategy will require significant work over the next four years across a range of work streams across the Council.

We will define the behaviours for both customers and staff via a review of our staff behaviours and customer charter. We will promote our fairer future promises by supporting managers to endorse and challenge values and to collect and oversee ongoing performance improvements from across the Council.

We also want all those who live and work and use council services in the borough to have the digital tools and skills they need:

- We will continue to work with partners to improve Southwark's digital infrastructure, and we will support residents and community groups to improve their skills so they are able to access everything the digital world has to offer.
- We will develop digital platforms and tools that allow 24/7 access for customers.
- We will use customer surveys to measure each customer access channel to identify areas for improvement.
- We will encourage smarter working practices to avoid duplication of future work and contact to avoid customers visiting unnecessarily.
- We will increase joined-up working with back-office

services and data sharing with partners to improve customer services processes.

In order to achieve the above we cannot escape the impact on council services of significant budget cuts. This means we will have to continue to look at new ways of doing more with less, including charging for some services, working with new and different partners outside the council, and delivering value for money.

### Understanding and Empowering our Customers

Ensuring we understand who our customers are or may be, how they interact with us, what our customers think of the services we offer and how we offer them.

- We will develop reliable customer insight allowing us to understand the characteristics needs and preferences of the groups of current and potential users. Particular efforts will be made to identify hard to reach groups by creating and securely maintaining accurate records of all our customers.
- We will coordinate customer consultations, using a range of methods appropriate to their needs, integral to continually improving our service. Our strategies and opportunities for consulting will be regularly reviewed to ensure that the methods used are effective and provide reliable and representative results.
- We will set challenging and stretching targets for customer satisfaction and judging our performance against them by asking specific questions relating to the key areas identified in this strategy.

## Part 2: Background

Southwark is a diverse borough with people from a wide range of ethnicities and backgrounds. Nearly 50% of the population of Southwark are members of an ethnic minority.

Southwark has a population of over 317,256 people, 9% of Southwark's population is aged 65 or older, compared with 16% in England and we have over 15,000 businesses in Southwark and over 120 languages spoken in Southwark of which 11% of households do not have English as a first language.

Southwark's Council Plan describes our vision for the borough. It sets out our priorities for the next four years, and the commitments that we have made to the people of Southwark.<sup>1</sup>

Our Council Plan is more than just a set of promises, it explains the type of borough we want to be and the values that will guide us to get there. It is the action plan for the council and will shape what every team and member of staff does and how we can work together as one council to achieve our shared ambition of a fairer future for all.

In Southwark a fairer future for all is:

- The best start in life: clean air, great schools and opportunities to thrive;
- The quality homes that you and your family need;
- A great place to live with clean, green and safe communities;
- A healthy borough where your background doesn't determine your life chances;
- Full employment, where everyone has the skills to play a full part in our economy.

### Southwark's Context

Southwark is an exciting and vibrant borough in the heart of London. We have a hugely diverse and talented population living, working and enjoying the borough from Rotherhithe and Bermondsey in the north, through Walworth, Camberwell and Peckham to Dulwich in the south. The council is proudly ambitious, wanting the borough to be the best it can be and for the opportunities we enjoy to be available for all.

The world around us helps shape how we can deliver this ambition. The Government, the economy and policies like Brexit all impact on what we do and how we do it. We also recognise that we are in a world where people are increasingly distrustful of government and politics and we have to respond to that by making sure we are open, honest and transparent with everyone we work with.

### Financial challenge

Southwark faces a huge financial challenge. The Government has been cutting spending and the local government has been particularly hard hit, making it more and more difficult for councils to deliver services. There have been reductions in spending across the country, but Southwark has faced some of the severest cuts. Since 2010 we have been forced to find savings of £227million – meaning we have lost nearly half the budget we had only eight years ago.

That is why we have been careful with our budgets and have been treating every penny wisely, as if it is coming from our own pockets. We have listened to what our residents say is important to them and done all we can to protect frontline services, while keeping council tax low.

Our priority has been to protect our most vulnerable residents, which is why we have maintained spending on frontline services like children's care while doing everything we can to make efficiency savings in other areas.

Ongoing budget pressures mean we know we will have to make difficult decisions. We will continue to manage budgets carefully and keep council tax low, only raising it to protect the most vulnerable.

<sup>1</sup> Council Plan 2018/19 – 2021/22

## National challenges

Southwark faces new challenges. National government decisions have a huge impact on our ability to deliver for residents locally. Legislation such as the Housing and Planning Act and the introduction of Universal Credit impact on residents and have put more pressure on the council.

The council will stand up for residents and challenge issues that have a negative impact on our ability to deliver for local people. We also face challenges from the uncertainty of Brexit. Residents in Southwark voted overwhelmingly in favour of remaining in the European Union, but across the country the referendum result means that the UK will be leaving the EU. We do not yet know what this will mean for EU residents in the borough, for businesses that trade with or rely on the EU or the impact that the Government's decisions will have on our economy or on London as a dynamic modern international city.

## Part 3: The Culture of the Organisation

### Defining behaviours

- We will define behaviours for both customers and staff via a review of our staff behaviours and customer charter.
- We will promote our Fairer Future promises by supporting managers to endorse and challenge values and to collect and oversee ongoing performance improvements.
- Staff must be polite, friendly and professional and understand customer needs by using customer insight, including the experience of customer-facing staff, to inform policy and strategy development and service improvement activity that supports the right of all customers to expect excellent levels of service.
- We will use feedback, to ensure all customers and customer groups are treated fairly and by protecting the customers' privacy both in face to face discussions and in the transfer and storage of customer information
- We will provide customer service staff with appropriate training, ensuring they can deliver the quality of service we expect for our customers.

To achieve the above enhancing our current team with the right people will be essential to deliver professional, efficient staffing. We recognise that specific qualities are required for these positions and we will ensure that any additional staff recruited meet the responsibilities and duties required to deliver modern and effective services to our customers.

### Information and Access

- We will be offering better choices to meet customer needs and preferences by working together with our

borough/District/Health/Police partners and other providers to deliver coordinated services with clear lines of accountability, and demonstrating that these arrangements have benefits for our customers.

- We will provide accurate and complete information about the range of services available, including how and when people can contact us, how our services are run and who is in charge.
- We will continue engaging within the wider communities and demonstrating the ways in which we support those communities.

### Southwark Stands Together Pledge

- We pledge to promote an open and transparent culture where employees who experience/see racism or discrimination are able to raise it and expect the issue to be dealt with swiftly and fairly.
- We pledge to listen to and amplify our diverse voices within our organisations on how we create an inclusive, fair and representative workplace at all levels.
- We pledge to work to address and prevent structural racial inequalities and structural racism within our organisation, the organisations we partner with and within the service we deliver.
- We pledge to champion organisations that address racial injustices and organisations that promote equality and diversity.
- We pledge to ensure that people of all backgrounds can rise to the top of the organisation.

## Part 4: The right tools for the job

### Measuring our performance, the right way

Our Customer services Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are reviewed annually and we want our KPIs to measure performance ensuring continuous development in key priority services is managed and can be reported. Below are the KPIs we will report against:

- Percentage increase in the number of online transactions
- Percentage increase in number of visitors to the Council's webpages
- Percentage increase in the number of online payments
- Percentage increase in the use of online forms
- Number of My Southwark touchpoints
- Number of My Southwark sign-ups

#### Indicators for the Customer Contact Centre:

- Percentage of calls dealt with at first point of contact
- Percentage of calls answered 180 seconds

- Percentage of calls successfully meeting the quality standard
- Reduction in calls as digital services are more embedded, over time
- Number of complaints and or compliments:
- Regular Customer Satisfaction reports
- Reputation and publicity
- First point resolution

### Spending wisely

We will ensure we operate high-quality customer services that are focused on making every penny count, which takes advantage of online services and where appropriate, enabling those customers that wish to as well as those that are socially isolated to be seen face to face or through telephone contact.

### Statutory Standards we must achieve:

- Respond to Freedom of Information Requests, (FOI) Environmental Information Regulation (EIR's) within 20 working days
- Respond to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) requests within 30 calendar days

### Getting it right the first time

We will know we get things right the first time. We will provide a consistent and standard approach on performance reporting regardless of contact method used.

### Complaints

- We will acknowledge complaints within three working days
- We will respond to stage one complaints within 15 working days.
- We will respond to stage two complaints within 25 working days

### Freedom of Information Requests (FOI)

We will respond to FOI requests within 20 working days (statutory)

### Member enquiries

We will respond to member enquiries within 10 working days

## Part 5: Smart Working

Smart Working is an approach to working that broadens how, where and when we work, helps us save money and the environment through better use of our work

spaces, digital tools and skills that will make us fit for the future.

We have accelerated much of our work through the Smart working programme in light of COVID-19 supporting staff with working remotely during these challenging times including new tools for keeping in touch with one-another as well as guidance and tips around remote working and virtual meetings.

In the 5-week period from 16th March 2020 we have had a staggering 236,928 Private Chat Messages sent; 4218 Online Meetings held and 11130 Audio Calls all through Microsoft Teams. These figures amongst the case studies we've heard of from teams all over the Council demonstrate how quickly colleagues have adapted to using new technology to support a very different way of working.

### The five principles of Smart Working

**Trust** - Staff will be empowered, where possible, to work at the most effective time and location, ensuring the needs of the service remain a priority.

**Collaboration** - We are using tools that will enable a collaborative working environment and seamless connectivity, regardless of work location.

**Sustainability** - Smart Working will support the Council's sustainability objectives by helping us improve our use of our work spaces to save money, time and reduce unnecessary travel.

**Outcomes** - Performance management will focus on results and agreed outcomes rather than presence.

**Activity based working** - Office workspaces will be designed so that staff can choose the most appropriate space to undertake work activities, recognising differing needs of individuals.

## Part 6: Listening and responding to our customers

We will consult with our customers and use feedback to inform the service improvement process. We will continue to use mystery shopping to give us insight into how our customers access services.

Some of the findings from the feedback received about the services we currently provide are listed here. We use this feedback to develop to help improve services by developing programmes of work to address these.

- Customers like the My Southwark citizen account and are able to access personalised information at a time, convenient to them but would like to see more services added. Customers did however find that searching for information could be confusing and would like better and easier navigation.

- Customers would like their enquiries to be resolved as quickly as possible without being passed around from person to person or department to department.
- Customers would like to process transactions on a variety of devices, for example, smartphones' or tablets.
- Customers are happy to transact online for simple access to services, in particular younger customers who only want to transact online and expect a seamless, interactive experience.
- Customers would like more consistent on-line forms; for example, payment processes.
- Customers would like to be kept up to date with progress of their enquiry.
- Staff would like a better view of the customer journey in order to deliver a good customer experience.
- Get the services they need the first time at their first point of contact from fully trained and knowledgeable staff.
- Are able to use one single point of contact alongside an enhanced My Southwark function to report, request, apply, track and pay for all council services.
- Are offered a culture of respect, accountability, personal ownership and frontline innovation.
- Receiving more compliments, e.g. through the GovMetric system or in surveys.
- Residents who are happy with our costs for the delivery of customer services.

## Part 7: Channel shift

### How we will develop access channels

We will develop access channels using customer feedback to identify customer contact preferences and to recognise that these preferences will change depending on the type of enquiry, interaction or transaction. The council aim is to be digital by default; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings.<sup>2</sup>

### A digital council is a better council

The council aims to be digital first; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings. Many customers are used to accessing goods and services online in their daily lives and many businesses are only available online.

As further services become available online, take-up will increase in line with customer expectations and we have already made great progress building our online, digital, customer access services.

The next step is to expand the number of services online and maintain and enhance the existing functions with channel shift progression with initiatives to increase awareness of digital resources available to our customers.

### Guiding principles<sup>3</sup>

The Society for innovation, technology and modernisation (SOCITM) conducted a study across 120 local councils which estimated that the cost of contact for face to face transactions averages £8.62, for phone £2.83, but for web only 15 pence.

Summary of the most expensive to the cheapest transactions are detailed below with explanation on how the Council will achieve cost savings and promote the channel shift objectives:

<sup>2</sup> Channel shift relates to customers moving from one method of contact, largely traditional, to another digital method and preferring to use it, not reverting back to previous behaviours.

<sup>3</sup> <https://socitm.net/>

### No one is left behind

We are very mindful of the need to ensure all residents have access to council services, no matter their needs and capabilities. It is important that the council maintains access to services via all channels, not just online.

Each time we make a change to our customer service delivery, we carry out an equalities impact assessment.

### How do we know if we've got it right?

Our plans are ambitious. Southwark Council wants to ensure that residents are satisfied with their customer services experience and understand what they can expect from our services.

- We will ensure all customers are clear on what our services offer and the timescales in which we will respond.
- Feel we are easy to contact and that all staff are knowledgeable, friendly and approachable.
- Ensure that where possible enquiries are resolved at first contact.
- Residents know we are listening and responding to their feedback.

### We will know we have been successful when our residents are:

- More satisfied with the customer experience from all council-wide services.
- Happy with our answer rates and waiting times via the telephone.
- We are able to see measurable and accountable standards.
- Are able to access our services 24/7 and able to self-serve via simple to use processes and systems.

## Face to face

Face to face transactions are considered to be the most expensive therefore we will continue to only provide face to face services where there is specific need or a service is not available on-line or via the telephone.

We will support our customers to use self service facilities and will signpost to organisations that can help.

## Letter

- We will develop e-billing across the Council and for this to be adopted by all services.
- We will be reducing print and postage costs in line with ongoing services reviews, for reducing back-office inefficiencies.
- We will be developing and expanding the use of SMS to enable savings in print and postage in all services.
- We will reduce the number of letters sent out as a hardcopy and moving over to electronic solutions and remove the need for hardcopy annual billing processes.

## Telephone

- We will invest in an agile Contact Centre system, this will allow for intuitive responses to high volumes of contact via different streams, using a blended approach.
- We will continue to improve and streamline the use of the telephony Interactive Voice Recognition (IVRs) to route calls appropriately to the right service area or digital, automated information, customer agent.

## Email

Incoming emails will be integrated to online forms and automatically routed directly through to the relevant service area.

## Online web self-serve

- We will review and integrate customer journeys across the Council optimising use of all systems.
- We will develop in-built customer feedback mechanisms and user testing as part of the council's redesign.
- We will implement the use of web chat in the council, using it as a triage for customer contact. Increasing the availability of customers uploading their evidence online, including iPhones.
- We will use internal electronic online forms that route directly to back-office services across the council to

## Tech and Digital

To enable the digital first approach and to act as a digital council we will:<sup>4</sup>

- Establish a standardised approach to digital service redesign and utilise corporately endorsed digital tools: online application forms (e-forms), digital payments, Customer Relationship Management (CRM), IT system and My Southwark citizen account.
- Make best use of IT infrastructure to enable sharing of non-sensitive data across departments and share our experiences by engaging with customers.

## Processes

We will streamline internal, manual processes and scrutinize back office systems offering:

- A personalised 'customer account'
- Introduce artificial intelligence (AI) for customers looking for simple advice or factual information and be signposted to an alternative channel.
- Introduce webchat, diverting demand away from traditional channels.
- Use social media such as Facebook and Twitter
- Where appropriate, we will advise customers they can complete transactions online and advice customers when they are in the queue.
- We will replace our Customer Relationship Management (CRM) with Microsoft Dynamics offering better back office connection of business processes and personal productivity.
- We will be improving Wi-Fi connectivity in all council public spaces
- We will encourage smart working practices to avoid duplication
- We will Improve our on-line access channels for simple transactions
- We will develop digital platforms and tools that allow 24/7 access for customers
- We will use customer feedback to measure each customer access channel to identify areas of improvement
- We will Investigate joint back-office systems and data sharing with partners to make customer journey planning easier and improve processes

<sup>4</sup> Southwark's Digital Strategy Equality Analysis 2016

## Our Journey so far

### Our key achievements delivered since the 2012/2020 strategies;

Since moving our services to a single in-house Contact Centre and switchboard at Queens Road we have achieved £4.5m in savings. Our service points moved to an appointment only system, we reduced the number of service points from three to two; we closed cash offices and moved payment services online.

We redesigned our website through which most services can now be accessed. We promoted and encouraged self service with over 100,000 My Southwark registered accounts and made repairs services available online.

In our Housing Solutions service we introduced DocuSign to prepare and manage tenancies and agreements with customers and landlords. This has been beneficial during the Covid-19 reducing the risk of spreading infection and supports social distancing guidelines and better user experience for our customers.

Housing on-line advice form developed giving our customers 24/7 access to our services and the ability to upload documents securely reducing waiting and travel time to our Bournemouth Road office.

We extended our Telecare Assisted Living (SMART) monitoring and response to Lambeth residents. We are delivering this service on behalf of the Lambeth Council.

We now have 50,000 residents using our online resident's services portal.

Our focus has been on creating online services that are fully end to end and we successfully transitioned all waste services to this model. We transitioned Estate Parking and Pest Control and Registrars went live early 2020.

### Homeowner improvement project

We have also engaged extensively recently with our homeowner population as part of the Homeowner improvement project. A large group of homeowners met to describe in detail their perceptions and examples of poor service delivery. This was welcomed by the group and a commitment was made to provide further opportunities for engagement and listening in the future as part of the homeowner improvement plan.

We delivered a new telephony system (8\*8) providing improved reporting and monitoring, and ability for web-chat.

We upgraded our Housing self-serve portal, accessed via My Southwark accounts offering a fully responsive service on smaller screens, employer online reporting tool, with real-time appointment booking functionality.

### Digital Inclusion

The Technology Transformation Team have set up a cross-council digital inclusion working group and are developing a digital inclusion action plan for 2021/2022.

This includes digital inclusion training for residents and volunteer digital champions. For updates please contact [shade.nathaniel-ayodele@southwark.gov.uk](mailto:shade.nathaniel-ayodele@southwark.gov.uk)

### In response to COVID-19 and impact on services Southwark Contact Centre

Since lockdown in March 2020, our Contact Centre has been running the council's Covid-19 hub enquiry and support. This vital service was set up very quickly by Contact Centre managers who worked closely with our Communities division in Housing and Modernisation who corporately lead the Covid-19 response hub.

### Resident Services

We established on-line forums using Zoom and Microsoft Teams. This has allowed our residents to continue to provide feedback and input into ongoing council plans.

Under our digital infrastructure programme we have over 30,000 council properties that have a full-fibre connection offering gigabit-fast connectivity to residents on our estates.

### Libraries

Southwark has a network of 12 libraries with excellent geographical coverage from Borough High Street in the North to Kingswood House in the South. Since COVID-19 our libraries have been closed. Once restrictions have been lifted our libraries will reopen with four of our libraries opening on Sundays, ensuring seven days a week access to services.

### Community hubs

The vision for prevention in adult social care (ASC) was to develop community hubs across Southwark. These hubs are now available offering resident's new ways to connect with community groups and local organisations. Support for carers is a 'golden' thread' central to the model of ensuring carers can now effectively access a range of interventions.

Our Well-being Hub now acts as the 'front door' to ASC Mental Health services.

### Accreditations

We have been awarded White Ribbon, Customer Service Experience (CSE) and HQN accredit lettings accreditation.

In July 2020, we were awarded the Telecare Standard Accreditation (TSA) for our assisted living service, (SMART), recognising the service excellence for

Southwark Council customers. The service has since been extended to the Lambeth Council adding 2,300 connections to our already 3,200 vulnerable residents.

We have retained our Investors in people 'Gold' status award. Keeping our 'Gold' status is a huge achievement highlighting our success as an organisation and as an employee, whilst also highlighting where we can improve.

We have retained our Customer Service Excellence award for a further three years.

## Our Customer Service Standards

We want to ensure we continue to deliver good customer services, our commitments to you are:

- We will be easy to contact and do business with and want to provide a service which is accessible and available, so you can use our on-line services and view the latest information at a time and place convenient to you.
- We will make sure that alternate access, such as a telephone service, is in place for the people who really need it, such as emergency situations and the most vulnerable customers.
- The staff you deal with will be knowledgeable, polite and respectful and they will give you their name and take responsibility for helping you or will find someone who can.
- Our aim is to say 'yes' but we will be clear and straightforward where we can't help, and where possible we will point you in the right direction of someone who can.
- We will deal with you as efficiently and quickly as we can or we will do our best to develop, online services which can get it right, first time
- We will continually improve, ensuring that our services represent good value for money for residents, keeping resources focused on service delivery and we will keep up with the development of new technology so that you can access services in the modern ways you want.
- We will treat you fairly, with courtesy and respect and communicate with you in a clear and honest way, giving you the right information for you to make choices.
- Where you have a problem, we will listen to you and properly understand the issue and value your feedback and we will use your comments and complaints to improve our services for the future.

## Next Steps

The Customer Access Strategy 2020 to 2024 will be supported by a detailed implementation plan aligned to our Council plan, Digital first and Infrastructure strategies.

We will develop Customer Experience Policy and a Customer Charter focusing on improving Council's responsiveness to customers, improve accountability and embed customer experience principles in our daily culture.

Action plans beyond 2021 will be developed providing a framework for managing and tracking progress where customer experience will be measured and where customers will be able to stay informed of our progress through regular reports and will be able to provide ongoing feedback through future consultations.

## References

Southwark A fairer future

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future>

Southwark Council Plan

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/fairer-future/council-plan>

Southwark Digital Strategy

<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s59719/Appendix%201%20Southwarks%20Digital%20Strategy.pdf>

Southwark Stands Together

<https://www.southwarknews.co.uk/tag/southwark-stands-together/>

Southwark Modernise Strategy

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/business/modernise-strategy>

Southwark Digital Strategy Equality & Health Analysis

<http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/documents/s59721/Appendix%203%20Southwarks%20Digital%20Strategy%20Equality%20and%20Health%20Analysis.pdf>

Libraries

<https://www.southwark.gov.uk/libraries>

FINAL

# Southwark's Customer Access Strategy Refresh 2020: Equality and Health Analysis

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## Section 1: Equality analysis details

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<b>Proposed policy/decision/business plan to which this equality analysis relates</b>		Customer Access Strategy Refresh 2020-2024			
<b>Equality analysis author</b>		Savina Vagarwal, Project Officer			
<b>Strategic Director:</b>		Michael Scorer, Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation			
<b>Department</b>		Housing and Modernisation	<b>Division</b>		Modernise
<b>Period analysis undertaken</b>		January – November 2020			
<b>Date of review (if applicable)</b>					
<b>Sign-off</b>	Richard Selley	<b>Position</b>	Director, Customer Experience	<b>Date</b>	November 2020

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## Section 2: Brief description of policy/decision/business plan

### 1.1 Brief description of policy/decision/business plan

The Customer Access Strategy Refresh 2020 sets out the council's plans for ensuring that the customer access needs of its customers which include, residents, businesses, partners, visitors and education are met. At the same time the service provided must be efficient, modern and inclusive in order to meet expectations.

The strategy recognises that in all sectors, technology is playing an increasingly important role in improving the way customers can access services at times and locations that are suitable to them. Moreover the strategy remains aware that access channels need to be easily accessible for all customers including its most vulnerable households.

This strategy is the latest of a number of new and refreshed strategies which together, aim to deliver improved IT and digital services and an improved customer experience for all. The Customer Access Strategy, along with the complementary Digital and Modernisation strategies, set out our approach to these challenges over the next four years.

It explains what we want to do to enable people to get the best out of the council and will help us ensure that everyone working for the council:

- Understands their role and purpose and knows what is expected of them
- Has the right tools for the job (increasingly this is digital and tech)
- Helps to create the right customer service culture, where if there were a choice, people would choose Southwark."

Underpinning the strategy are three core principles

- Channel shift: our aim is to be digital First; increasing online availability which will reduce service delivery costs through efficiency savings.
- Listening and responding to customers so we deliver excellent services
- No one left behind: ensuring everyone can access the services and information they need

The strategy contains a number of clear commitments to our customers:

- Setting out maximum response times and service standards, they can expect when contacting the council.
- Training for all customer facing staff to ensure all residents receive a consistent and good customer experience.
- Up to date and easy to use on-line services so that residents can request a service at a time convenient to them and be able to track their request.
- Opportunities for customers to provide feedback. We need to know when we've done something wrong so we can rectify it. Customers can also tell us when we've done a good job too.
- Commit to maintaining traditional service access (telephone and face to face) for those in our community unable to access digital services.

Our ambition is to be a digital first council providing excellent services to residents in a cost effective way.

### Section 3: Overview of service users and key stakeholders consulted

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<b>2. Service users and stakeholders</b>	
<b>Key users of the department or service</b>	All internal (officers and councillors) and external customers (residents, communities, businesses, partners and visitors to the borough).
<b>Key stakeholders were/are involved in this policy/decision/business plan</b>	The Leader, The Chief Executive, Strategic Director of Housing and Modernisation, Cabinet Member for Finance, Modernisation and Performance, Chief Officer Team, Directors in all departments, Cabinet, Overview and Scrutiny Committee, Officers from all departments of the council.

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## Section 4: Pre-implementation equality analysis

This section considers the potential impacts (positive and negative) on groups with 'protected characteristics', the equality information on which this analysis is based and any mitigating actions to be taken.

The first column on the left is for societal and economic issues (discrimination, higher poverty levels) and the second column on the right for health issues, physical and mental. As the two aspects are heavily interrelated it may not be practical to fill out both columns on all protected characteristics. The aim is, however, to ensure that health is given special consideration, as it is the council's declared intention to reduce health inequalities in the borough. The Public Health Team can assist with research and data.

<b>Age</b> - Where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 - 30 year olds).	
<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>
<p>There is an emphasis on channel shift to online self serve options in the customer access strategy, therefore access to the internet is a consideration for equalities analysis.</p> <p>32% of Southwark residents over the age of 60 years have no access to the internet at home compared to 0% of 16-24 year olds. Access to the internet is directly linked with the ability to use it. A high number of people aged 60 and above are unable to perform basic tasks online such as completing an application form online (52%), using a search engine (41%) or sending or receiving an email (33%). It is identified that those in the community over the age of 60 are more likely to be digitally excluded than those who are younger.</p> <p>Some of the impacts are expected to be positive. Old age is linked with mobility and improvements to online self-serve will allow customers continual access to services from their home.</p>	No current data available.
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
Southwark residents survey - September 2016	No current data available.
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
The council will ensure traditional customer access services will remain available, so that everyone has access to high quality services. The contact centre will continue to handle emergency requests, such as housing repairs emergencies and pest control	None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.

<p>emergencies, which will support those over the age of 60 with few digital skills to access services.</p> <p>Significant work is being undertaken in the community to minimise digital exclusion which includes Digital Hubs providing one-to-one digital skills and training. An EU funded project will create new community engagement tools for various groups in our communities.</p> <p>Service areas in developing digital projects will be required to identify any potential negative impacts on the community due to an individual's age, and implement measures to minimise this.</p> <p>'Digital literacy' is improving with every generation, so over time, the risk of inequality is reduced.</p> <p>We will monitor customer satisfaction and aim for year on year improvement in satisfaction with fewer formal customer complaints made.</p> <p>We aim for volunteer digital champions to train at least 500 new learners to develop digital skills by 2020.</p> <p>We will conduct surveys and use our volunteers to check on progress of all customers who have received digital skills training to see if it has really helped them to get online to use our services.</p> <p>We will review of customer access services to ensure digital inclusion is fit for purpose following any potential closure of the Service Points.</p> <p>For customers who need help to get on line we will refer them to one of our libraries or Digital Inclusion Hubs for free training.</p>	
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<p><b>Disability</b> - A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.</p>	
<p><b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b></p>	<p><b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b></p>
<p>There is an emphasis on channel shift to online self-serve options in the customer access strategy, therefore access to the internet is a consideration for equalities analysis.</p> <p>83% of Southwark residents with a disability have access to the internet at home. This is compared with 96% of residents who do not have a disability. In relation to digital skills the disabled community have a lower rate of digital capability. 79% of disabled residents have sent or received an email compared to 95% of non-disabled residents. 65% of disabled</p>	<p>No current data available.</p>

<p>residents have completed an online application form compared to 90% for non-disabled residents. This disparity demonstrates that both access and digital capability is an issue in the disabled community.</p> <p>It is anticipated that there will be positive impacts based on disability of the customer access strategy. For customers with mobility restrictions improvements to online self-serve will allow customers continual access to services from their home.</p> <p>The refreshed council website allows for the pages to be read audibly, to assist visually impaired customers, as well as being able to enlarge the font size.</p>	
<p><b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b></p>	<p><b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b></p>
<p>Southwark residents survey – September 2016</p>	<p>No current data available.</p>
<p><b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b></p>	
<p>This strategy is aligned to the Digital Strategy, which has undertaken much work already to mitigate any inequality risks.</p> <p>Significant work is being undertaken in the community to minimise digital exclusion which includes Digital Hubs providing one-to-one digital skills and training. An EU funded project will create new community engagement tools for various groups in our communities. Engagement with deaf forums in Southwark will improve access and information for our deaf community ensuring that needs are met.</p> <p>Service areas in developing digital projects will be required to identify any potential negative impacts on the community due to disability, and implement measures to minimise this.</p> <p>The contact centre will continue to handle emergency requests, such as housing repairs emergencies and pest control emergencies, which will support disabled customer with few digital skills or access to the internet to be able to receive services.</p> <p>‘Digital literacy’ is improving with every generation, so over time, the risk of inequality is reduced.</p> <p>We will monitor customer satisfaction and aim for year on year improvement in satisfaction with fewer formal customer complaints made.</p> <p>We aim for volunteer digital champions to train at least 500 new learners to develop digital skills by 2020.</p> <p>We will conduct surveys and use our volunteers to</p>	<p>None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.</p>

<p>check on progress of all customers who have received digital skills training to see if it has really helped them to get online to use our services.</p> <p>We will review of customer access services to ensure digital inclusion is fit for purpose following any potential closure of the Service Points.</p> <p>For customers who need help to get on line we will refer them to one of our libraries or Digital Inclusion Hubs for free training.</p>	
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**Gender reassignment** - The process of transitioning from one gender to another.

<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>
<p>There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the customer access strategy that specifically target gender reassignment. It is therefore probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative impacts on the transgender community.</p>	<p>It is probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative health impacts on the transgender community.</p>
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based.</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
<p>No current data available.</p>	<p>No current data available.</p>
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
<p>None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.</p>	<p>None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.</p>

**Marriage and civil partnership** – In England and Wales marriage is no longer restricted to a union between a man and a woman but now includes a marriage between a same-sex couple. Same-sex couples can also have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must not be treated less favourably than married couples and must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters. **(Only to be considered in respect to the need to eliminate discrimination.)**

<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>

There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target those that are married, in a civil partnership or neither. It is therefore probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative impacts on anyone who is married, in a civil partnership or not at all.	Please see comments to the left
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
No current data available.	No current data available.
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.	None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.

<b>Pregnancy and maternity</b> - Pregnancy is the condition of being pregnant or expecting a baby. Maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.	
<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>
There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target gender, pregnancy or maternity. It is therefore probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative impacts on pregnant women or those on maternity.	It is probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative health impacts on pregnant women, or those on maternity.
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
No current data available.	No current data available.
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.	None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.

<p><b>Race</b> - Refers to the protected characteristic of Race. It refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour, and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins. N.B. Gypsy, Roma and Traveller are recognised racial groups and their needs should be considered alongside all others</p>	
<p><b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b></p>	<p><b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b></p>
<p>The customer access strategy will focus on equality of access and opportunity for all customers. A positive impact is therefore anticipated.</p> <p>In Southwark the white and BME community both have high access to internet at home (white: 92% and BME: 96%) and a high percentage of people have the ability to perform basic online functions.</p> <p>There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target people based on their race. It can be assumed that digital exclusion as a result of race will be minimal.</p>	<p>It is probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative health impacts on individuals based on their race.</p>
<p><b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b></p>	<p><b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b></p>
<p>Southwark residents survey- September 2016</p>	<p>No current data available.</p>
<p><b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b></p>	
<p>Service areas in developing projects will be required to identify any potential negative impacts on the community due to an individual's race, and implement measures to minimise this.</p>	<p>None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.</p>

<p><b>Religion and belief</b> - Religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live for it to be included in the definition.</p>	
<p><b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b></p>	<p><b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b></p>
<p>There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target individuals based on their religion or beliefs. It is therefore probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative impacts on individuals based on their religion or beliefs.</p>	<p>It is probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative health impacts on individuals based on their religion or beliefs.</p>

<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
No data sets record religion or belief.	No data sets record religion or belief.
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.	None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.

<b>Sex</b> - A man or a woman.	
<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>
<p>Whilst not all of the council's customers are residents of the borough, the majority are. Approximately 49% of Southwark residents are male and 51% are female. 51% of Southwark employees are female and 49% are male.</p> <p>There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target an individual based on gender. It is therefore probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative impacts on anyone based on their gender for both internal and external customers.</p>	It is probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative health impacts on individuals based on their gender.
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
Southwark workforce report Southwark residents survey	No data available currently.
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.	None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.

<b>Sexual orientation</b> - Whether a person's sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.	
<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>

There are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target an individual's sexual orientation. It is therefore probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative impacts on anyone based on their sexual orientation.	It is probable that the Customer Access Strategy will have no particular positive or negative health impacts on individuals based on their sexual orientation.
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
No data sets record sexual orientation.	No data sets record sexual orientation.

<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b> None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.	
<b>Socio-economic disadvantage</b> – although the Equality Act 2010 does not include socio-economic status as one of the protected characteristics, Southwark Council recognises that this continues to be a major cause of inequality in the borough. Socio economic status is the measure of an area's, an individual's or family's economic and social position in relation to others, based on income, education, health, living conditions and occupation.	
<b>Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan</b>	<b>Potential health impacts (positive and negative)</b>
<p>There is an emphasis on channel shift to online self serve options in the customer access strategy, therefore access to the internet is a consideration for equalities analysis.</p> <p>89% of social tenants have home internet access compared to 96% of all homeowners. 13% of those not in work have no internet access at home compared to only 3% of those in work. It is evident that those not in work and those who reside in social housing are more likely to be digitally excluded than otherwise.</p> <p>This disparity is also noted in the ability to perform basic online tasks between the two groups. Only 75% of those not in work have completed an online application before, compared to 93% of those in work.</p> <p>Whilst there are no areas of focus or key work streams within the Customer Access Strategy that specifically target an individual's socio-economic status it is recognised that those in low paid work, the unemployed, or those in social housing will be more likely to be digitally excluded. Engagement activities will focus on trying to mitigate this.</p>	No data available currently.
<b>Equality information on which above analysis is based</b>	<b>Health data on which above analysis is based</b>
Southwark residents survey- September 2016	No data available currently.

<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>	
<p>This strategy is aligned to the Digital Strategy, which has undertaken much work already to mitigate any inequality risks.</p> <p>Significant work is being undertaken in the community to minimise digital exclusion which includes Digital Hubs providing one-to-one digital skills and training. An EU funded project will create new community engagement tools for various groups in our communities.</p> <p>Service areas in developing projects will be required to identify any potential negative impacts on the community due to an individual's socio economic disadvantage, and implement measures to minimise this.</p> <p>We will monitor customer satisfaction and aim for year on year improvement in satisfaction with fewer formal customer complaints made.</p> <p>We aim for volunteer digital champions to train at least 500 new learners to develop digital skills by 2020.</p> <p>We will conduct surveys and use our volunteers to check on progress of all customers who have received digital skills training to see if it has really helped them to get online to use our services.</p> <p>We will review of customer access services to ensure digital inclusion is fit for purpose following any potential closure of the Service Points.</p> <p>For customers who need help to get on line we will refer them to one of our libraries or Digital Inclusion Hubs for free training.</p> <p>Libraries remain a key component of the customer access strategy and provide customers with internet access if they do not have this at home.</p>	<p>None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.</p>

### **Human Rights**

There are 16 rights in the Human Rights Act. Each one is called an Article. They are all taken from the European Convention on Human Rights. The Articles are The right to life, Freedom from torture, inhuman and degrading treatment, Freedom from forced labour, Right to Liberty, Fair trial, Retrospective penalties, Privacy, Freedom of conscience, Freedom of expression, Freedom of assembly, Marriage and family, Freedom from discrimination and the First Protocol.

### **Potential impacts (positive and negative) of proposed policy/decision/business plan**

There are no anticipated negative impacts on Human Rights as a result of the customer access strategy.

<b>Information on which above analysis is based</b>
No current data available.
<b>Mitigating actions to be taken</b>
None at this point. Will be reviewed as appropriate.

## Section 5: Further actions and objectives

<b>5. Further actions</b>			
Based on the initial analysis above, please detail the key mitigating actions or the areas identified as requiring more detailed analysis.			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Description of issue</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Timeframe</b>
1	Lack of complex data referencing protected characteristics	Commence data collation within each project	From January 2020 - onwards
2	Impacts for each protected characteristics	Major projects will need to carry out an impact analysis and take action to mitigate negative impacts	From January 2020 - onwards
3	Over time the capability and access to services may change for different protected characteristic groups. These require monitoring.	Detailed trend analysis with the resident survey and will need to take place on an individual project level also	From January 2020 - onwards

<b>5. Equality objectives (for business plans)</b>				
Based on the initial analysis above, please detail any equality objectives that you will set for your division/department/service. Under the objective and measure column please state whether this objective is an existing objective or a suggested addition to the Council Plan.				
<b>Objective and measure</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Current performance (baseline)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	
			<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>
None at this point	None at this point	None at this point	None at this point	None at this point

<b>5. Health objectives (for business plans)</b>				
Based on the initial analysis above, please detail any health objectives that you will set for your division/department/service. Under the objective and measure column please state whether this objective is an existing objective or a suggested addition to the Council Plan.				
<b>Objective and measure</b>	<b>Lead officer</b>	<b>Current performance (baseline)</b>	<b>Targets</b>	
			<b>Year 1</b>	<b>Year 2</b>
None at this point	None at this point	None at this point	None at this point	None at this point

