

MEETING:	CABINET
DATE:	26 NOVEMBER 2009
TITLE OF REPORT:	CUSTOMER STRATEGY
PORTFOLIO AREA:	CORPORATE AND CUSTOMER SERVICES AND HUMAN RESOURCES

CLASSIFICATION: Open

Wards Affected

County-wide

Purpose

To inform Cabinet of the rationale behind and the contents of the joint Herefordshire Council & NHS Herefordshire Customer Strategy, so that regard can be had to it in future planning and commissioning of services and budget decisions.

Key Decision

This is not a Key Decision.

Recommendation(s)

THAT Cabinet

- (a) Notes the attached strategy and supports its implementation and next steps**
- (b) Agrees that regard should be had to the strategy in future plans, commissioning of services and budget decisions.**

Key Points Summary

1. The partnership between Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire provides a unique opportunity to develop an integrated, streamlined approach to improve customer service.
2. New policy drivers (including World Class Commissioning, Comprehensive Area Assessment, and Duty to Involve) and legislative changes require a re-examination of current practice.
3. There is a need to share insight information across the public sector, so that service improvements can be achieved and efficiencies can be exploited as effectively as possible.
4. In particular, the Total Place agenda is requiring public sector services to work together more closely than ever before. This will require services to share information and intelligence, so that

Further information on the subject of this report is available from
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co-ordinated service delivery across the public sector can be possible. Thereby, the financial efficiencies, which we will be required to achieve, will be attained without detriment to the quality and scope of those services.

5. The strategy aims to:

PUT THE CUSTOMER AT THE CENTRE OF ALL WE DO:

- Set the direction for future development of customer access channels, regardless of directorate or service.
- Enable the collection of strategic customer intelligence.
- Provide a framework for improvement in customer facing services
- Therefore, improve outcomes for customers

THE CUSTOMER STRATEGY THEREFORE HAS FOUR KEY AIMS:

- Use INTELLIGENCE to inform the design and delivery of services
- To improve ACCESS to services
- To LISTEN and learn from customer feedback
- To be viewed as fair and inclusive in our interactions with customers – to be TRUSTED.

Alternative Options

6. There are no alternative options

Reasons for Recommendations

7. The Customer Strategy is a reflection of the current agenda in relation to the design and delivery of Local Authority and NHS services. It has therefore been constructed to inform the provision and re-organisation of customer-facing (and support) services across the Council and NHS Herefordshire.

Introduction and Background

8. As this strategy has been designed to reflect the emerging agendas across Local Government and Health services, it is therefore applicable to all areas within the partnership.
9. “Total Place” is an emerging initiative nationally, whereby public service delivery is expected to be more co-ordinated and effective across the whole public sector, within localities. The strategy also reflects this approach.

Key Considerations

10. For both health and local authority services, there has been an emerging agenda that demands improved patient and customer experience. This is partly driven by national policy and partly by enhanced expectations from service users.

11. Public services are expected to be more responsive, offer choice and personalisation, be more joined up and reduce the need for unnecessary contact by the customer and facilitate the use of ICT for effective service delivery.
- a) The policy framework requires that public sector bodies take necessary steps to consult, communicate widely, empower service users and involve citizens in the design and delivery of services
 - b) The NHS Act 2006 requires health bodies to make arrangements for health service users to be involved, consulted and provided with relevant information.
 - c) The Local Government and Health Act (2007) sets out amongst other things the requirements for local authorities and Primary Care Trusts (PCT's) to co-operate in identifying and assessing the needs of local citizens. The Act also placed a new duty on local authorities to actively involve representatives of local people in providing services.
 - d) There are a range of NHS performance standards, which set out the requirement for PCT's to focus on improving the quality of patient experience and to actively engage with the patient.
 - e) World Class Commissioning requires PCT's to improve engagement with patients and stakeholders.
 - f) From the 1st April 2009, "The Duty to Involve" required local authorities to involve 'representatives of local people' in the design and delivery of services.
 - g) The anticipated, future reduction in public sector finance will necessitate a relentless focus on value for money and a strong understanding of customer needs.
 - h) Total Place is likely to require public bodies to work together to provide more joined up services; explore ways of sharing information, co-location of front offices and new ways of delivering services (virtual as well as face to face) in ways that are convenient, cost effective and professional.
 - i) HPS currently has a variety of customer service activities, a range of ICT systems and differing levels of satisfaction with service provision.
 - j) This strategy will be developed further during the next twelve months as the partnership between the Council and NHS Herefordshire enters its new phase of shared service activity.

Community Impact

- 12 Successful implementation of this strategy will have a profound impact on the communities within Herefordshire, as citizens will find it easier to access services and to communicate with Herefordshire Council and NHS Herefordshire.

Financial Implications

- 13 The full financial implications of this strategy are dependent on the adoption of its principles throughout the partnership and, as such, the associated financial model is currently being developed in liaison with the Resources Directorates.

Legal Implications

14 The statutory obligation for Local Authorities and their partners to consult and engage with their citizens are set out in the body of this report.

Risk Management

15 The major risk in a failure to adopt the principles of this strategy in the design (or re-design) of customer-facing services will increase the risk that financial efficiencies will not be achieved in relevant areas. This risk will be mitigated through the comprehensive involvement of Customer Service managers within activities planned, or already underway, to change services.

Consultees

16 This strategy has drawn on information, guidance and legislation from across the public sector. Officers from across both the Council and NHS Herefordshire have been involved in the construction of the document.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Customer Strategy

Background Papers

None