

## **The Vale of Glamorgan Council**

### **Cabinet Meeting: 14 November, 2016**

### **Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Safe Communities**

### **Customer Service Strategy (Housing) - Draft for Consideration**

#### **Purpose of the Report**

1. To introduce a Customer Service Strategy for public housing.

#### **Recommendations**

1. That the Cabinet endorse the new Draft Customer Service Strategy (Housing) attached at [Appendix A](#) for consideration.
2. The Draft Customer Service Strategy (Housing) be referred to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee for consideration.
3. That the Draft Customer Service Strategy (Housing) is referred back to Cabinet for final approval upon receiving the views of the Scrutiny Committee.
4. That Scrutiny (Homes and Safe Communities) receive six monthly monitoring reports in relation to the Operational Delivery Plan for the Customer Service Strategy.

#### **Reasons for the Recommendations**

1. To ensure that Draft Customer Service continues to be an important priority for all work carried out by the Housing team.
2. To provide an opportunity for Scrutiny to make any comments.
3. To agree the final Strategy document.
4. To ensure the actions identified are progressed.

#### **Background**

2. There is a strong and well established case for providing high quality customer services. Whilst commercial businesses' survival depends on customer loyalty and repeat business, public sector organisations only continue to expand and improve if they are able to meet the expectations of their customers. Valued, loyal customers are the basis of all strong organisations and the Vale of Glamorgan Council is no exception.

## Relevant Issues and Options

3. In light of the above, a significant restructure of the Housing team has been carried out over the last 12-18 months. A key aim was to create a customer focussed team able to deliver high quality services to tenants and residents. To facilitate this, a new staff team has been recruited, some of whom do not necessarily have a background in social housing. The rationale being that 'mind-set' and 'attitude' were vital ingredients of an effective team.
4. The recruitment of the new team has also been supported by the creation of robust induction, training and support mechanisms to ensure staff continue to develop in their roles and deliver first class customer service.
5. The new staff charter has provided a further opportunity to convey the message and reinforce the importance of positive staff behaviours, through discussions at one to one's and appraisal.
6. An internal staff working group has met to review current provisions for customer service and consider best practise, not just in other housing teams or councils but in the commercial sector. The themes identified by this group have helped identify the priority areas in the proposed strategy.
7. The review undertaken by the staff working group identified six priority themes in need of attention. These include: developing a customer first culture; broadening our knowledge about customers in order to deliver tailored services; broadening ways to access our services; improving the quality of services provided and canvassing opinions and using feedback to shape services.
8. There has also been consultation with tenants via the Tenants Working Group which identified key issues and considerations for inclusion in the Strategy.
9. Six priority themes form the basis of the Customer Service (Housing) Strategy attached at [Appendix A](#) and these give rise to a range of initiatives and actions to improve the quality of services provided. The case studies within the Strategy give some examples of the different initiatives, whilst the Operational Delivery Plan at the rear of the document sets out more specific details regarding each of the actions designed to achieve the strategic aims.
10. Progress with implementing the Strategy will be measured via the completion of individual actions contained within the Operational Delivery Plan towards the back of the document. There will also be periodic reports to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee regarding the range of projects and initiatives taking place.

## Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

11. Customer Service is mainstreamed through the delivery of all Housing services and is a key part of all staff roles, therefore no additional staffing budget is required. The savings to be gained from more efficient service delivery i.e. increased use of the internet to deliver basic information and services, will provide the additional time to increase the housing officers' visible presence on estates.
12. The Customer Portal, which enables tenants to check their rent account, report repairs etc. has been purchased previously and any revenue costs e.g. training will be met from existing budgets.

## **Sustainability and Climate Change Implications**

13. There are no direct sustainability and climate change implications arising from this report.

## **Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)**

14. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

## **Crime and Disorder Implications**

15. There are no direct crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

## **Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)**

16. There are no equal opportunity implications.

## **Corporate/Service Objectives**

17. This Strategy is consistent with the overarching vision within the new Corporate Plan, namely 'Strong Communities with a Bright Future' as well as several of the Well Being Outcomes, including 'An inclusive and Safe Vale', 'An Environmentally Responsible and Prosperous Vale', 'An Active and Healthy Vale'.
18. It is also consistent with many of the core objectives (which support the Well Being outcomes), including: valuing culture and diversity; reducing poverty and social exclusion and raising standards.

## **Policy Framework and Budget**

19. This report is a matter for Executive decision.

## **Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)**

20. This report will affect all council tenants and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.

## **Relevant Scrutiny Committee**

21. Homes and Safe Communities.

## **Background Papers**

None.

## **Contact Officer**

Nick Jones - Housing and Strategy Projects Team Leader

## **Officers Consulted**

Operational Manager - Contact One Vale  
Strategy and Partnership Manager, Performance and Development Services  
Committee Reports  
Housing Accountant

## **Responsible Officer:**

Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing Services