

## Appendix 3: Argyll and Bute Council: Equality and Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

### Section 1: About the proposal

<b>Title of Proposal</b>
Customer Service Strategy, Charter and Action Plan 2024-27

<b>Intended outcome of proposal</b>
To establish a current Customer Service Strategy for the Council as required by the Council Constitution

<b>Description of proposal</b>
Embedding good customer service standards in an organisation takes constant effort and investment. For this reason, the council's constitution requires the regular production of an up to date <b>Customer Service Strategy</b> that shows the principles and priorities that will guide service delivery, along with an <b>Action Plan</b> of activities that will help ensure the Strategy is delivered. There is also a <b>Customer Service Charter</b> that sets out the mutual council and customer expectations and responsibilities if good customer service is to be achieved.

<b>Business Outcome(s) / Corporate Outcome(s) to which the proposal contributes</b>
The Strategy underpins all service delivery across the council and reflects the Connect for Success Improvement principles of One People, One Place; "Connecting people through technology, using customer insight to do more of what works and changing what does not".

<b>Lead officer details:</b>	
Name of lead officer	<b>Bob Miller</b>
Job title	<b>Customer Engagement Manager</b>
Department	<b>Customer Support Services</b>
<b>Appropriate officer details:</b>	
Name of appropriate officer	<b>Jane Fowler</b>
Job title	<b>Head of Service</b>
Department	<b>Customer Support Services</b>
Sign off of EqSEIA	Jane Fowler
Date of sign off	05/03.24

<b>Who will deliver the proposal?</b>
Bob Miller

### Section 2: Evidence used in the course of carrying out EqSEIA

<b>Consultation / engagement</b>
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- Internal consultation with stakeholders and subject matter experts to establish the framework of the new strategy.
- Benchmark exercise of the LA Strategies and other relevant Scotgov strategies.
- Internal D&I Consultation on draft Strategy before wider customer consultation.
- Full customer consultation, staff, and Member Consultation December 2023 – January 2024, including reply paid envelope mailshot to 300 “Hard to Reach” customers to ensure the voice of digital strugglers was heard (276 respondents in total).

#### Data

Survey summary outcomes of draft survey:

Question	YES	NO
Do you think the six Principles and associated priorities in the Strategy cover the main elements of good customer service?	236 (85%)	40 (15%)
Is the Customer Service Strategy for 2024-2027 clear and easy to understand?	223 (82%)	50 (18%)
Do you believe the six commitments in the Customer Service Charter are fair and reasonable?	246 (90%)	27 (10%)
Each of the Strategy Priorities has a distinct set of actions in the Strategy Action Plan. Do you think the listed actions will help the council tackle its priorities and improve customer service delivery in the future?	195 (76%)	62 (24%)
Do you think the new Customer Service Strategy and Action Plan will help the council to meet the needs of our less digitally able customers?	146 (59%)	102 (41%)
Based on your understanding of the proposed Customer Service Strategy, Charter and Plan, how likely do you think it is that the Council will be better placed to deliver high standards of customer care in the future? Score 1-5 with 5 = Very Likely	62 scored 1 or 2 (23%) 93 scored 3 (34%) 121 scored 4 or 5 (44%)	

#### Other information

The six principles within this Strategy align with a number of other key Council and Scottish Government policies and strategies, including:

- The Council Corporate Plan
- The Council ICT & Digital Strategy
- The Council Data Strategy
- The Council Communication Strategy
- The Council People Strategy
- The Scottish Government Digital Strategy

#### Gaps in evidence

None. The 996 Comments made by consultees were analysed and changes made to the final strategy to reflect concerns regarding:

- Too much emphasis on digital activity and the continuing need to help digital strugglers through effective person to person availability
- Concerns around how we will measure good customer service and the success of the strategy
- Taking account of the Islands more in customer service delivery
- Too much jargon and “Council speak” in the Strategy
- The need to reduce bureaucracy and needless barriers to good service
- Ensuring adequate accountability
- Referencing the need to deliver service in a green, climate friendly way.

### Section 3: Impact of proposal

#### Impact on service users:

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
<b>Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age			X	
Disability			X	
Ethnicity			X	
Sex			X	
Gender reassignment			X	
Marriage and Civil Partnership		X		
Pregnancy and Maternity		X		
Religion			X	
Sexual Orientation			X	
<b>Fairer Scotland Duty:</b>				
Mainland rural population			X	
Island populations			X	
Low income			X	
Low wealth			X	
Material deprivation		X		
Area deprivation		X		
Socio-economic background			X	
Communities of place		X		
Communities of interest		X		

#### **If you have identified any impacts on service users, explain what these will be.**

The strategy has at its heart 6 Principles, the first of these is to be Fair, and Inclusive, however that thread of equality runs through all the Principles and Priorities, from accessible technology to safeguarding privacy. The Customer Charter also establishes mutuality of respect and fair treatment, inclusive channels of contact and designing service to meet all our customer's needs.

The detailed Action Plan has many positive actions that will benefit both Protected characteristic groups and those that come under the Fairer Duty Scotland umbrella. These include training for customer agents on mental health awareness, establishing local Community Hub based Service Point Resources and reviewing our multi-language and BSL supported services. Person to person services are safeguarded in line with Scottish Government's "No-one left behind" policy and there is a pledge to follow up on the

outcomes of the Audit Scotland review into Digital Exclusion.

**If any 'don't knows have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?**

N/A

**Impact on service deliverers (including employees, volunteers etc.):**

	Negative	No impact	Positive	Don't know
<b>Protected characteristics:</b>				
Age		x		
Disability		x		
Ethnicity		x		
Sex		x		
Gender reassignment		x		
Marriage and Civil Partnership		x		
Pregnancy and Maternity		x		
Religion		x		
Sexual Orientation		x		
<b>Fairer Scotland Duty:</b>				
Mainland rural population		x		
Island populations		x		
Low income		x		
Low wealth		x		
Material deprivation		x		
Area deprivation		x		
Socio-economic background		x		
Communities of place		x		
Communities of interest		x		

**If you have identified any impacts on service deliverers, explain what these will be.**

None

**If any 'don't knows have been identified, at what point will impacts on these groups become identifiable?**

N/A

**How has 'due regard' been given to any negative impacts that have been identified?**

N/A

#### Section 4: Interdependencies

**Is this proposal likely to have any knock-on effects for any other activities carried out by or on behalf of the council?**

YES

**Details of knock-on effects identified**

There will be calls on other council Services to assist with the implementation of the Strategy, both to ensure its adoption by all employees through awareness and Performance and Career Conversations. There are also a number of Council Services (ICT, HROD etc.), that will be required to help implement the actions agreed in the Strategy Action Plan. These Services are detailed in that plan.

**Section 5: Monitoring and review****How will you monitor and evaluate the equality impacts of your proposal?**

The council undertakes a number of satisfaction surveys across a range of channels and all of these have questions relating to fairness. The outcomes of the surveys are carefully analysed to take of feedback.

We will monitor the Strategy Action Plan for completion and the impact of each completed action will be evaluated. As many relate to equality and accessibility improvements, they will give a broader picture of the equality impacts.