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ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL

D&I DMT

CUSTOMER SUPPORT SERVICES

14th July 2025

Customer Service Strategy Action Plan – Progress Report

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In June 2024 the Council approved the new Customer Service Strategy and Charter. That Strategy had an accompanying Action Plan with forty approved actions and another five were added to it relating to the Audit Scotland Digital Inclusion Report released in July 2024. This paper provides an update on the progress in implementing those forty five actions. [The Customer Service Strategy Action Plan Progress Report](#) shows that at the end of July 2025, 31 of the 45 agreed improvement actions have been completed.

1.2 In summary:

- 31 Actions have been completed (See Appendix 1 for detail)
- 12 Actions are in progress (See Appendix 2 for detail)
- 2 Actions are yet to start. (See Appendix 2 for detail)

The plan is fully on schedule for completion by the end of 2025/26.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 We recommend DMT notes the substantial progress in the first year since the Strategy and Action Plan were approved and that the Action Plan is on track for completion in 2025/26.

3. DETAIL

3.1 The new Customer Service Strategy and Charter approved in June 2024 had a raft of improvement actions detailed in the Strategy Action Plan. These were linked to the six Charter pledges so that it was clear how completion of each set of actions would help improve delivery of each pledge.

3.2 Completion against each Charter Pledge action set so far is:

| Pledge | Number of Actions | Number Completed to date |
|---|-------------------|------------------------------|
| We will provide a responsive service to requests and enquiries. | 7 | All completed |
| Mutual respect and fair treatment will be the basis of council and customer engagement. | 6 | 4 Completed 2 In Progress |

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| We commit to giving customers a wide and inclusive range of ways to contact and engage with us. | 7 | 3 Completed 3 In Progress 1 Unstarted |
| We will deliver information and services in an open and transparent way. | 7 | 3 Completed 4 In Progress |
| Safeguarding customers' privacy and keeping their personal data secure is a key priority for us. | 6 | 4 Completed 1 In Progress 1 Unstarted |
| We will continually strive to improve our service based on feedback from customer | 7 | All completed |
| Additional Digital Inclusion Actions added from Audit Scotland Report | 5 | 3 Completed 2 In Progress |

See Appendix 1 for completed tasks and Appendix 2 for those in progress or unstarted.

3.3 Some key achievements include:

- Development of a new in-house customer service professional training course accredited by SQA.
- Completion of Community Service Point Pilot and development of a roll out pack for future community groups
- Launch of a new Intranet Hub site based on Drupal 10 platform
- Development of a new BI Reporting dashboard for Customer Services by Performance Improvement Project
- Migration of the Corporate website to a cloud based resilient platform
- Seamless migration of Contact Centre platform to Teams Telephony from Skype Telephony
- Move of registration service to paperless, remote working practices as lead cohort of national NRS "Calling the Pages" project.
- Full review of corporate complaints system and upgrade to take account of UNCRC rights of the child requirements set by SPSO
- Development of new resources for countering digital exclusion including Your Guide to Getting Online and broadband social tariffs
- Development of a new Customer Service Toolkit onto MyCouncilWorks.
- Creation of a "We don't do this" website resource to signpost customers to the right organisation when they contact the council about a service we do not provide.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 Considerable progress has been made on implementing the actions from the Customer Service Strategy Action Plan with 69% completed and the remainder on course for completion in this business year. Completion of these tasks is a key enabler for Council Service to deliver the Customer Service Strategy and Charter pledges.

5. IMPLICATIONS

| No. | Type | Implication |
|------|--|--|
| 5.1 | Policy | The Customer Service Strategy is in the Council's Constitution |
| 5.2 | Financial | Relevant initiatives are met from existing budgets |
| 5.3 | Legal | None |
| 5.4 | HR | None |
| 5.5 | Customer Service | The Customer Service Strategy, Charter and Action Plan are integral to continuing to deliver high standards of customer service. |
| 5.6 | Risk | Reputational risk and costly rework related inefficiency is minimised by having high standards of customer service. |
| 5.7 | Climate Change | The enhancement of our digital services reduces our carbon footprint |
| 5.8 | Fairer Scotland Duty | None |
| 5.9 | Equalities – protected characteristics | Is a fundamental aspect of our Customer Service Strategy, Charter and many Action Plan Actions |
| 5.10 | Consumer Duty | Will have associated DPIA completed |
| 5.11 | Island Communities | Actions on equitable access to services were included in the Action Plan. |
| 5.12 | Children's Rights and Wellbeing | Action on UNCRC elements was included in the Action Plan |

Kirsty Flanagan, Executive Director with responsibility for Customer Support Services

June 2025

For further information contact:

Jane Fowler, Head of Customer Support Services, jane.fowler@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Bob Miller, Customer Engagement Manager, robert.miller@argyll-bute.gov.uk

- Appendix 1: Detail of Completed Action Plan Actions
- Appendix 2: Detail of In-Progress and Unstarted Actions

Appendix 1: Detail of Completed Action Plan Actions

| CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TEAM - Customer Service Strategy Action Plan Tracker. | | | |
|---|----------|------------------|--|
| Update June 2025 | | | |
| Task | Status | CS Strategy | Notes |
| Review the findings of Audit Scotland Report on Digital Exclusion and implement relevant Customer Service related findings. | COMPLETE | Action 1.1 | Audit Scotland Report received Mid September 2024 and evaluated and additional tasks added to Strategy Action Plan. Council and SMT also had presentations from Audit Scotland. |
| Review current portfolio of Customer service diversity and cultural sensitivity training for CSC/CSP agents and implement enhancements where required. | COMPLETE | Action 1.2 | Full portfolio of training for CSC/CSP agents was reviewed in Autumn 2024 and a new SVQ professional Customer Service course developed with the Highland Learning Academy - the course covers equality in Module2. We have also added Deaf and Signloss awareness online learning course to the CSC/CSP Agent training portfolio to supplement the existing Corporate Equality and Diversity course as mandatory training. We also have Opening Doors: Trauma informed practice in the workforce now on LEON and Dementia Awareness Training. |
| Roll out appropriate mental health/neurodivergent awareness training to all CSC/CSP agents, including dementia and trauma awareness | COMPLETE | Action 1.3 | All agents were trained in dementia and trauma awareness in 2022 so this applies to those joining after that date. All agents will do the Dementia training again in May 2025 as part of Dementia Awareness Week. We have added Opening Doors: Trauma Informed Practice in the workforce to the CSC and CSP agent training plans and newstarts will complete this by end of August 2025. |
| We will review and improve our online and mediated multi language support, including British Sign Language, benchmarking with other organisations to maximise ease of access to services. | COMPLETE | Action 1.4 | Corporate BSL Action Plan 2024-30 Report finalised and added to website in 2024. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=otuOGB_m7Pg Web Team has added a dedicated Gaelic Translation Service to the Website on the new 'Recite Me' corporate accessibility toolbar. |
| Implement accessibility standards on the website to achieve 98% standard of WAGG2.2 Guidelines as assessed by Siklide. | COMPLETE | Action 1.5 | At end of 2024/25 Argyll and Bute's website was independently scored at 99% by the independent siklide index and so we ranked second highest in Scotland and 22nd highest in UK out of 400+ councils. New accessibility training has been developed in house and is now available on the LEON platform and promoted in Cascade and a Pippa's Podcast. |
| Pilot the deployment of Community Hub based Service Point resources starting with the Kilecraggan Community Hub to ensure effective wider delivery of community hubs | COMPLETE | Action 1.6 | Following a period of implementation the Community Hub Pilot at Cove and Kilecraggan Community Hub was launched 01 October 2024. It has now completed its 6 month monitoring period and an Evaluation Report is being drafted. It has been a successful pilot and has allowed a model to be developed that can now be re-used for rollout to other Hubs. |
| Set up Child Complaints UNCRC functions on Corporate Complaints system. | COMPLETE | Action 1.7 | The corporate complaints system was fully updated in time to meet the SP50 deadline in July 2024. The Customer Engagement Team adapted the existing Oracle set up and issued guidance issued to Complaints Controllers. |
| Survey our customers on their post pandemic contact preferences and insights to inform the responsive evolution of our customer engagement | COMPLETE | | Survey conducted at end of 2024 and had 580 responses with 38 from non digital customers and 81% of respondents had contacted the council in the past year. Findings were presented to Community Engagement Strategy Group and have been fed into other actions onto this plan and the Customer Engagement Team's Annual Development Plan and performance scorecard. |
| We will review corporate customer satisfaction and other feedback mechanisms, question sets and reporting of results using customer input and make any required improvements to our approach. | COMPLETE | Action 2.4 | Questions on preferred customer service performance measures were included in the January 2025 Customer Contact Preference Survey (Action 2.1 above). Account has been taken of this in the design of the new Customer Engagement Team Dashboard being developed by the HROD Performance Excellence Project using BI Reporting software and which will be published on the Council Website. |
| We will establish an annual corporate customer satisfaction survey of all key council services and analyse responses to identify areas for improvement. This will also augment and validate the independent Local Government Benchmarking Framework survey. | COMPLETE | Action 2.5 | Performance Excellence Project has agreed alternative reporting of Corporate Outcomes with Members and will not be progressing a universal satisfaction survey as envisaged in this action as the outcomes of such a broad brush approach did not justify the investment. Instead Individual Services will still undertake service specific surveys and report these to their relevant governance leads. The Customer Engagement Team will report and publish theirs on the Customer Charter element of the website. https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-council/plans-and-policy/customer-service-charter-and-strategy |
| We will collaborate with other councils through the Local Authority Customer Service Improvement Group to share best practice and resources for the benefit of our citizens. | COMPLETE | Action 2.6 | The Customer Engagement Manager and Deputy are members of the SLACS group and attend both the regular Learning Events webinars, the annual SLACS Conference in Glasgow in May and ad hoc topic specific meetings. They regularly contribute to the Scotland wide SLACS teams site to assist other councils and to ask benchmarking related queries. They also hold 1-1 meetings with other councils arising from this collaboration, most recently with Moray Council on a show and tell of our Contact Centre platforms and Learning Event presentation on our AI chatbots. |
| Work with Data Advisory Group (DAG) to create a prioritised list of open datasets to be published on the council website, with a view to reducing avoidable contact for Freedom of Information requests for this data. | COMPLETE | Action 3.1 | The new Open Data Portal has been established https://data-argyll-bute.opendata.arcgis.com/ using the ArcGIS platform and linked to from the website. The Web team has also put a link to the internal Data Hub that is managed through the DAG: https://intranet.argyll-bute.gov.uk/legal-and-regulatory-support/access-information/data-hub |
| Upgrade Hub CMS to Drupal 10 and migrate as much content as possible to MCW so that only essential "Behind the firewall" services are on a redesigned Hub. | COMPLETE | Action 3.5 | The new Intranet Hub went live in March 2025 using Drupal 10 and an accessibility template similar to the Corporate Website. Most HR content is now on MyCouncilWorks and this has seen an exponential rise in usage, having over 500,000 page views in 2024/25. MCW is available to all networked employees on their home devices and so there is equality of access to council employee information for all. Only the minimum of restricted information is being retained behind the firewall on the Hub. |
| We will produce a new Annual Customer Service Performance Report detailing both qualitative and quantitative customer service performance for the previous business year | COMPLETE | Action 3.6 | An Infographic format report called Customer Service Performance Infographic 2024-25 was created as this format is most accessible to customers and it has been published on the Customer Service Charter web page https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-council/plans-and-policy/customer-service-charter-and-strategy . |
| Review Search Engine Provision, preferably to make use of latest GenAI tech. | COMPLETE | Action 4.1 | The Web Team completed a two month free trial of the latest CLUDO GenAI powered natural language website search facility in 2024, however they found that the technology was not yet mature and successful enough to warrant the significant extra cost, particularly as a re-indexing of the new website has boosted search success to over 70%. This is one area of AI application that we will be closely monitoring as hopefully AI search success rates improve and prices decrease over time. |
| Move website to resilient managed cloud service - joint project with ICT. | COMPLETE | Action 4.2 | Following market research and a competitive tender, the council agreed a contract with Big Blue Door to move the corporate website to their secure cloud hosted domain. They also took over responsibility for critical upgrades and patching to our Drupal 10 content as part of Cybersec resilience plans. The Web team has monthly monitoring and development meetings with BBD and they are proving to be good partners. |
| Migrate Contact Centre to MS Teams Telephony from Skype. | COMPLETE | Action 4.5 | Following an ICT led pilot with no technological showstoppers, the council's Netcall contact Centre solution was successfully integrated to MS365 Teams Telephony solution in February 2025. Skype was then disconnected and all 50 CSC/CSP agents were also migrated to Teams Telephony for all inbound and outbound calls. |
| Investigate how robotic process automation can make FOI and SAR Process more efficient to speed up response times | COMPLETE | Action 5.2 | Customer Engagement Team has developed a Netcall RPA bot to automate datafile conversion to PDF for SARs. We will use new IP technology for FOIs. |
| Review the Induction, Agent and Management level training delivered to the Customer Engagement Team, ensuring employees have received new or refresher trainer privacy and data protection on a regular cycle. | COMPLETE | Action 5.4 | CSC Supervisor made a masterlist of current training delivered to CSC and CSP agents and reviewed this in November 2024 to cover this and Mgt element. They added Deaf and Sight Loss Awareness for CSP staff and developed new professional qualification to SVQ5 level for Agents through Highland Learning Academy. Web Team has also created a new online training course for Accessibility to do with creating accessible content online for customers who struggle with digital due to disability - newstarts to Digital team will do this training. |
| Implement the National Records of Scotland's new Digital Registration records management protocols (known as "Calling in the Pages") in 2024, across all of our Registration Districts and train Registrars accordingly. | COMPLETE | Action 5.5 | Argyll and Bute Council Registrars were a Pilot site for Calling in the Pages and went live in Feb 2024. Following a period of post implementation monitoring the Area Team Meeting in May 2024 agreed this modus operandi is now BAU. |
| Web Team to collaborate with the Local Government Drupal web content project to share best practice and gain knowledge, particularly around data security and privacy of online services. | COMPLETE | Action 5.6 | The Web Team has joined both the National Drupal Local Gov Project and the Netcall Create Drupal Project and attend online meetings and learning events to ensure we are at the forefront to developments of our web content management software. It has also proved particularly valuable when troubleshooting issues. |
| We will complete an end-to-end review of our internal Customer Service Toolkit of assistive resources and standards, to ensure it reflects both technology and Customer Service Strategy driven changes | COMPLETE | Action 6.1 | Toolkit fully reviewed and updated. New content on MCW as of 03/06 with multiple ties see https://mycouncilworks.co.uk/customer-service-toolkit |
| We will review and update our approach to the measurement of "Avoidable Contact" and "Failure Demand" and the use of intelligence gained to drive continual improvement across all Services. | COMPLETE | Action 6.2 | Was an Internal Audit Action. We received feedback on this from the public consultation and this was not a measure of interest to customers. We will not be including it in the PEP Dashboard, but will still record failure demand through the customer service centre. |
| We will ensure that the corporate Performance Framework measures the success of the Strategy and Charter. | COMPLETE | Action 6.3 | Consultation at Action 2.1 informed key measures which are being included in new PEP Project Dashboard, Annual Customer Service Report and new Digital Inclusion measures. See tasks 3.4 and 3.6 above. |
| Investigate the advantages of rebuilding our Corporate Complaints Management System on a new 'low code' platform to provide a more efficient and automated system for administering and reporting on complaints. | COMPLETE | Action 6.4 | Audit and Scrutiny commissioned a full review of the Complaints System including the efficacy of the underpinning system. The report was approved at the meeting of 12/06 and found that the current system and processes worked well. Only one system related change was identified and that related to |
| We will expand the use of the Customer Service Excellence standard across more teams and services to help drive up Customer Service standards in a measurable and systematic way. | COMPLETE | Action 6.5 | Added to Corporate Performance Improvement Plan. |
| We will review and improve our signposting to partner and other commonly requested non-council services and improve the analytics around such requests for continual improvement. | COMPLETE | Action 6.6 | The "we don't do this" webpage and comms campaign page is now fully live https://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-council/who-does-what-services-our-council-doesnt-cover CSC monitor volumes of contacts about non council services to inform page content. |
| We will fully review and update our corporate customer training for employees including the Positive Customer Care and Argyll and Bute Manager Customer Care training, to ensure we train employees to deliver high standards. | COMPLETE | Action 6.7 | Customer Engagement Team has reviewed Positive Customer Care and added subtitles etc. Also referred to in new Principles and Practices of Customer Service Professional qualification. Web Team has also created a new online training course for Accessibility to do with creating accessible content online for customers who struggle with digital due to disability. |
| Create a Getting Online Directory for people needing help to get online. | COMPLETE | from 1.1 outcome | New Your Guide to Getting Online developed along model quoted by Audit Scotland See https://www.w.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-council/app-support/your-guide-getting-online Also easy link on council website homepage to National help too. |
| Review our online signposting of broadband social tariffs | COMPLETE | from 1.1 outcome | Specific tab added to new Digital Inclusion Page see https://www.w.argyll-bute.gov.uk/my-council/app-support/your-guide-getting-online/guide-broadband-social-tariffs Will add this information to accessibility factsheets also being developed. |
| Review how we measure success in combatting Digital Exclusion. | COMPLETE | from 1.1 outcome | Web Team Manager has developed a set of internal measures, which we will set a baseline for and measure quarterly from FQ1 2025/26. |

Appendix 2: Detail of In-Progress and Unstarted Actions

In Progress tasks:

| CUSTOMER ENGAGEMENT TEAM - Customer Service Strategy Action Plan Tracker. | | | |
|---|-------------|---------------------------|---|
| Update June 2025 | | | |
| Task | Status | CS Strategy | Notes |
| We will ensure that all of our system designers and developers complete a foundation course on the Scottish Approach to Service Design and follow its principles and techniques | In Progress | Action 2.2 | TNA completed for CET Digital Team. Two have done the course and the remaining have it on their 2025-26 Personal Development Plans. |
| Improve Keep In The Loop functionality by adding ability for customers to add their addresses on registration to permit greater geolocation | In Progress | Action 2.3 | Phase 1 complete that allows customer email address on current registration to be matched to their CRM record and thus home address Unique Property Reference Number. Phase 2 is in development for a new registration form with an option for customers to provide their address (and validate existing subscriber addresses). Phase 2 will be complete by end July 2025. |
| Implement agreed MyAccount review actions and addition of added value services | In Progress | Action 3.2 | MyAccount access and sign up was moved to the upgraded website in August 2024 and the Web team has worked with our website hosting providers BigBlueDoor to build a development environment that will allow future development and improved functionality on MyAccount to be built in house. The first priority is adding the integration between MyAccount and the CRM so customers can track their enquiries. This will be in place by October 2025. |
| Investigate Generative AI Web and Voice Digital Assistants (Chatbots) covering all services. | In Progress | Action 3.3 | Following market research SMT agreed a one year pilot of new Conversational AI technology (Web and Voice bots providing information and the ability to log requests to back office via our corporate CRM) and freed funds up from the Innovation Fund. The pilot started in October 2024 and was first deployed to help the Visitor Levy consultation and also deployed on MCW to support iTrrent roll out. A full evaluation and report on future application/investment will be completed in FQ3 2025/6. |
| We will review Performance Reporting for customer service as part of the Performance Review Project taking account of customer feedback and set up a dashboard of reported measures linked to the CS Charter Pledges | In Progress | Action 3.4 | Questions on customer's preferred measures were informed by outcome of survey at action 2.1 and focus on timeliness and quality of delivery. CET has worked with Performance Excellence Project to build a new dashboard of measures that will be publicly available when finalised after FQ1 2025/26 data is available. |
| Display Screen Network Provision Review | In Progress | Action 4.3 | The Web Team Manager has completed an audit of current Display screen provision, hardware and support. The network is very aged and most kit is out of contract. Web Team and ICT are working up a costed recommendations paper to be available for consideration in August 2025. |
| Support R&L plans for route optimisation (may require rebuild of WDM-Oracle Integrations). | In Progress | Action 4.4 | The Route Optimisation Project is for the amenities element of Roads and Infrastructure Services. New In Cab technology has been installed and staff trained. as at May 2025 the Lochgilphead pilot is soon to start and the approach is to understand the current routes based on driver inputs and GPS data as it is collected, and once those have been understood the team will work on the optimising the routes using the technology to provide a more efficient waste collection service and better information to customers. |
| We will make significantly greater use of informational and instructional videos and animations to assist and inform customers and promote these through all our digital media. | In Progress | Action 4.6 | Various new videos have been launched including a new MyAccount joining video done, Member Zone Training videos and ones for training back office staff on Oracle 2nd Bin collection, Events application management and Digital Accessibility. Further opportunities are being explored, informed by a review of our most heavily submitted online request forms. |
| We will audit all website forms to ensure they have an integrated eform equivalent that requires no rekeying (emails) See also task 54. | In Progress | Action 4.7 | The Web Team are reviewing all downloadable online forms, interactive eforms and integrated smart eforms currently on the website with a view to improving their uptake and back office integration. New technology called Intelligent Document Processing will also allow more of these to be actioned by automation and therefore fulfilled at first point of contact. A next steps report is due August 2025. |
| Evaluate the potential for using the Scottish Government's new Identity Management Service as the basis for authenticating to council service's where required. If this change is to be made, a Migration Plan from MyAccount will be developed | In Progress | Action 5.1 | We have been tracking the development of the national Scot Account and pushing via COSLA for its integration with MyAccount. Our customer survey said 60+% of customers would consider using it but we currently have no pathway for LAs to do that. See latest article https://www.ukauthority.com/articles/scotland-s-vouchsafe-for-digital-identities-goes-to-beta/?utm_medium=email&_hsenc=p2ANqtz-9L_mL2N8Zujc-LYuC_9s8mNOKyKGOGOXAmAeFkZEPWZ51zouFN3bm23OLsmWQwcJUD8Az0v4BPGVhaK0aoxwA-THYsc3Y1uWflvWYDBSNEs7X4&_hsmi=306489339&utm_content=306489339&utm_source=hs_email |
| Join COSLA/Scotgov Community of Learning on increasing digital inclusion to coordinate activity across sectors and share resources, tools and good practice. | In Progress | 1.1a New from 1.1 outcome | Await this being set up at a national level, but it may be superseded in forthcoming new Scotgov Digital Strategy. Also monitoring planned launch of Scotgov Digital Inclusion Alliance. We have joined Netcall Accessibility Working Gp for Create platform. |
| Develop local digital inclusion and accessibility factsheets. | In Progress | 1.1c New from 1.1 outcome | Customer Engagement Team Summer Student helping to develop these and they will be widely distributed from September 2025. |

Unstarted Tasks:

| Task | Status | CS Strategy | Notes |
|--|-----------|-------------|--|
| We will improve signposting to non-digital access channels for digital strugglers as part of our inclusive approach. | Unstarted | Action 3.7 | Customer Engagement Team CET will work with Rona Gold's Community Development Team and Comms to develop a multimedia publicity campaign and ensure resources are up to date. |
| Review every Privacy Statement and Data Protection Impact Assessment for all of the Customer Engagement Team's services and systems to ensure that they are current and comprehensive. | Unstarted | Action 5.3 | Review scheduled for FQ2 2025/26 |