

Equality and Safety Impact Assessment

The **Public Sector Equality Duty** (Section 149 of the Equality Act) requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity, and foster good relations between different people carrying out their activities.

The Equality Duty supports good decision making – it encourages public bodies to be more efficient and effective by understanding how different people will be affected by their activities, so that their policies and services are appropriate and accessible to all and meet different people’s needs. The Council’s Equality and Safety Impact Assessment (ESIA) includes an assessment of the community safety impact assessment to comply with Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act and will enable the Council to better understand the potential impact of proposals and consider mitigating action.

<p>Name or Brief Description of Proposal</p>	<p>The Customer Access Strategy 2022-26 aims to drive improvements for customers across all council services to achieve the overall aim of putting all of our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide appropriate support to those who need it ensuring that customer experiences are easy, effective and convenient.</p>
<p>Brief Service Profile (including number of customers)</p>	
<p>The customer strategy relates to all interactions between the council and customers, we deal with a wide range of people across Southampton, and our customers include everyone living, working, volunteering, investing, studying, running a business in or visiting Southampton.</p> <p>Our customers contact us for many different reasons, including to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get information from us, or give us information • Apply for, book or arrange services • Report issues • Make payments • Buy our services • Access specific help and support. <p>Southampton has 260,111 residents. Over the last year the council dealt with the following contacts through the following channels:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website with 8.5 million pageviews and 3.4 million total sessions, an average of 280k sessions per month in 2020 • SOBOT (Chatbot) which averages about 1,400 enquiries per month • Web forms which had 245k form completions in 2020 • Webchat has generated 1,200 chats per month during 2020 • Social media which has generated on average over 3,400 enquiries per month in 2020 • There are nine public emails accounts managed in the contact centre which received 	

a total of 76,000 emails in 2020

- Centrally advertised telephone numbers into the contact centre, which received 273,308 calls in 2020
- Gateway which had a total of 59,164 visits in 2019 (using this year as was closed in lockdown)
- There are also a range of other access points which sit outside the Customer and Communications team and don't report on/ measure volumes

Summary of Impact and Issues

The overall strategy focuses on listening to customers and making changes to services and processes to make it easier to deal with the council. A major part of this work will be built around making improvements to online services and increasing their use, this may have an impact initially on elderly and vulnerable customers who do not or cannot access services online. To mitigate against this, alongside the work to increase digital take up, there will be a programme of digital inclusion activity. This will include courses and promotion of free access IT equipment to help improve digital access and skills. Non-online contact channels will also be maintained.

Potential Positive Impacts

The positive impacts will be improved customer experiences and an increase in the number of services available online. This should lead to customers being able to report, pay for, apply and get information from their own device or from home. This should lead to more customers being able to report, pay for, apply and get information about more services from their own device or from home. As the programme of work to deliver the strategy develops automatic updates will form a part of normal interactions with the council so that customers are kept up to date. Part of the improvement process will also focus on reviewing website content and the information we provide to customers, ensuring it is easy to understand and customers are clear about what to expect from the council. The activity outlined within the strategy will be led by customer views and changes will be tested by customers to ensure that services and processes are designed to work for customers first.

Responsible Service Manager	Dan Tong Improvement Manager: Customer Experience
Date	18/11/2021
Approved by Senior Manager	James Marshall Head of Customer and Communications
Date	18/11/2021

Potential Impact

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Age	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics. The strategy	Alongside the work to increase digital take up there will be a programme of digital inclusion activity. This will include courses and promotion of free

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
	does outline a plan to shift more contact online which may exclude some older people from the benefits.	access IT equipment to help improve digital access and skills. Non online contact channels will also be maintained.
Disability	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics. The strategy does outline a plan to shift more contact online which may exclude some people from the benefits who struggle to use online services.	As a part of the digital inclusion work and ongoing improvements to the website accessibility considerations will be built into improvement plans. Non-online contact channels will also be maintained.
Gender Reassignment	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Marriage and Civil Partnership	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Pregnancy and Maternity	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Race	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Religion or Belief	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Sex	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Sexual	Implementing the proposed changes is	N/A

Impact Assessment	Details of Impact	Possible Solutions & Mitigating Actions
Orientation	expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	
Community Safety	N/A	N/A
Poverty	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics. The strategy does outline a plan to shift more contact online which may exclude some people from the benefits who cannot afford IT equipment or an internet connection.	As a part of the digital inclusion work and ongoing improvements to the website accessibility considerations will be built into improvement plans. Non-online contact channels will also be maintained.
Health & Wellbeing	Implementing the proposed changes is expected to have positive impacts on council customers whatever their background or personal characteristics.	N/A
Other Significant Impacts	None	N/A