

Report to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

20 July 2023

Subject:	Strategic Risk 057b- Customer Journey
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1 Recommendations

- 1.1 To note and comment upon the Customer Journey strategic risk.

2 Reasons for Recommendations

- 2.1 One of the roles of the Committee is to assure itself that risks to the delivery of the Council's corporate plan and objectives are being managed.
- 2.2 The Strategic Risk Register was last presented to Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on 16 March 2023. At this meeting members requested details of the strategic risk in respect of the Customer Journey to be presented to a future meeting of the Committee for further detailed review.

3 How does this deliver objectives of the Corporate Plan?


	Best start in life for children and young people People live well and age well
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	Strong resilient communities
	Quality homes in thriving neighbourhoods
	A strong and inclusive economy
	A connected and accessible Sandwell
	
The management of the customer journey risks impacts the successful delivery of all of the council's corporate plan priorities and is the focus of the council's transformation and improvement plan 2023/24.	

4 Context and Mitigating Controls

4.1 This report provides detail on the measures in place to manage strategic risk 057b – Customer Journey. A summary of the risk and the current position is provided below.

Risk title and description	Previous score Mar 2023)	Direction of travel	Current score (Jul 2023)	Target score and date
<p>Customer Journey</p> <p>If the Council does not develop a Customer Experience Strategy and ensure a full review of its Customer Journey and Contact channels (including effectiveness and responsiveness of these services) takes place, then this could result in reputational damage to the Council.</p> <p>Risk area - Corporate Customer</p> <p>Risk owner – Director of Regeneration and Growth</p> <p>Objectives impacted - All</p>	<p>12</p> <p>Red</p>		<p>12</p> <p>Red</p>	<p>8</p> <p>Amber</p> <p>October 2024</p>

4.2 Some of the key current and ongoing controls to manage the risk include:



a) Resident and Perception Survey and Budget Consultation

As part of the improvement plan actions, the council has developed a new corporate approach to consultation and engagement.

In May 2022, the council commissioned a market research agency to conduct a borough wide residents' survey to support evidence based policy, service delivery and performance management. The results and findings were analysed by the Research and Intelligence Team and reported to Cabinet in December 2022.

b) Customer Journey Programme Board

A Customer Journey Programme Board has been established with the Finance Director and Director of Regeneration and Growth as the Senior Responsible Officers. The Board includes representation from services across the council including, the Revenues and Benefits Service; the Transformation Team; Customer Services team and Housing. Meetings take place monthly with more informal meetings also taking place fortnightly to discuss progress on actions.

The customer journey programme in place is lead by officers in the Corporate Customer Team and supported by the Corporate Transformation Team. The programme consists of the following key areas:

- Development of a Customer Experience Strategy
- One Stop Shop/ Community Hubs (with a six month pilot already commenced in March 2023 at both West Bromwich and Blackheath Libraries). A report to Leadership Team is being presented in June to assess the performance to date and future direction.
- Contact Centres and
- Technology (with SOCITM support who will be reviewing the Customer Relationship Management System)

Performance in each of the areas is reported to Cabinet and Leadership Team via a monthly performance report.



c) Elected Member Involvement and Assurance

Focus sessions with Cabinet have taken place and progress reports on the Customer Journey Action Plan and key deliverables are presented to the Leadership Team and Cabinet on a monthly basis.

In 2022, the Budget and Corporate Scrutiny Management Board agreed to investigate the experience of Sandwell residents when accessing or requesting Council services/ the “Customer Journey”, in response to:

- Addressing the objectives of the Council’s Improvement Plan to improve the customer journey experience.
- Concerns raised by residents about response times to queries.
- Members’ experiences when trying to contact services/individual officers.
- Improving communication between residents and the council.

A scope of the review was agreed by the Board in January 2023 and included the setting up of a working group to look at areas including the method of how council services are accessed (physical, digital, telephone); services to those who are digitally excluded or have disabilities and efficiency and response times of the customer portal.

The investigation and review by the working group has been completed and involved:

- The Group holding two half day sessions to obtain information from various departments.
- Detailed analysis of the Resident survey to better understand public perception of customer service
- Performance data review and feedback with contact centre officers
- Site visits to the contact centre and One Stop Shop by elected members.

A report setting out the findings and recommendations of the review has been drafted and is being presented to the Board at its meeting in July.

d) Telephony

A business case for a new telephony system has been developed and was approved in February 2023. The procurement for this is currently



underway with a view to awarding a contract by August 2023, with a six to nine month implementation period thereafter.

4.3 Further actions

The above ongoing measures and actions will continue to assist in the management of the risk until there is assurance that there is consistency of customer experience right across the council and not just in some areas as is presently the case.

5 Alternative Options

5.1 Whilst this report does not require a decision and therefore, alternative options do not need to be considered, when measures are being considered for the mitigation of the strategic risk, alternative options are considered and explored.

6 Implications

Resources:	The identification and management of risks is used to inform the allocation of limited resources (financial and staffing) in order that risk is managed effectively and to an acceptable level.
Legal and Governance:	There are numerous standards applicable to the management of risk within the local authority sector. Included amongst these is guidance from CIPFA/Solace, the British Standards Institute (BSI) and a set of joint standards published by the Institute of Risk Management (IRM), Alarm (The public sector risk management association) and AIRMIC (Association of Risk Managers in Industry and Commerce). Evidence that robust management of the authority's strategic risks is being undertaken demonstrates compliance with these standards.
Risk:	The report itself is an update on how the risk is being managed by the Council.
Equality:	As a decision is not being sought in this report, it is not necessary to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment.
Health and Wellbeing:	As a decision is not being sought in this report, there is no direct impact on health and wellbeing from the



	recommendations being sought. The planned mitigations to manage the risk however will take account of any health and wellbeing implications.
Social Value	The actions and decisions that are being considered for the mitigation of the risk, where appropriate, will take into account the meeting of the Council's social value commitments.
Climate Change	The actions and decisions that are being considered for the mitigation of the risk, where appropriate, will take into account the meeting of the Council's climate change agenda.
Corporate Parenting	There are no corporate parenting implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

6 Appendices

None

7. Background Papers

Strategic Risk Register

