Subject: Customer First 6 month update

Report by:	Executive Director of Operations
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Purpose / Summary:	

RECOMMENDATION(S):

Members are asked to comment on the progress made so far; and confirm whether they are satisfied with the direction of travel; and the outcomes achieved.

IMPLICATIONS

Legal:

(N.B.) Where there are legal implications the report MUST be seen by the MO

None

Financial :

No financial implications

(N.B.) All committee reports MUST have a Fin Ref

Staffing :

(N.B.) Where there are staffing implications the report MUST have a HR Ref

No direct Staffing Implications as a result of this report, but resource plans are discussed in the Report

Equality and Diversity including Human Rights :

Customer First Strategy designed to support equality and diversity through a variety of access options, and digital support capabilities

Risk Assessment :

None

Climate Related Risks and Opportunities :

None

Title and Location of any Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:

Customer First Strategy.   Customer First Programme Library

Call in and Urgency:

Is the decision one which Rule 14.7 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply?

i.e. is the report exempt from being called in due to urgency (in consultation with C&I chairman)   **Yes** [ ]   **No** [x]

Key Decision:

A matter which affects two or more wards, or has significant financial implications   **Yes** [ ]   **No** [x]

1. Executive Summary

1.1 In July 2018, the Council approved a three year Customer First Strategy.

1.2 The vision of that strategy is

*Putting the Customer at the centre of everything we do….
through excellent customer service, a great experience, and a value-for-money, effective service delivery which is designed around our Customer's needs.*

1.3 The Strategy document had three main components that defined Our Ethos, Our Strategy and Our Transformational Journey, and which set out the Councils approach to implementing our Vision.

1.4 Our Strategy (The Customer First Strategy) sets out what changes the Council is going to make, and describes the 'world' that we want to create for our customers and ourselves in the future, to enable us to meet our overall Customer First Vision.

1.5 The aim of Our (Customer First) Strategy is to:-

"Create an environment that allows us to deliver positive Customer experiences and efficient cost effective services, through facilitated channels, utilising enhanced skills, knowledge and processes; and digitally enabled technologies where possible".

1.6 As the scope of The Our Strategy section is so far reaching, the changes were categorised into six elements of development, known as the Six Pillars of Customer First. These are:

- Insight
- Access
- Process
- People
- Culture
- Service Delivery

1.7 This strategy also dovetails with the Council's ICT & Digital Strategy; commissioning the delivery of enabling technology that better supports our Customers in receiving excellent customer-centric services.

1.8 The Council is now six months in to its journey of delivering the strategy; and the following sections of this report provide an update on the progress made, against each of the Six Pillars listed above.

1.9 Members are asked to comment on the progress made so far; and confirm whether they are satisfied with the direction of travel; and the outcomes achieved.

2. Insight

2.1 This section of the strategy is focussed on developing Customer Insight, which allows the Council to better understand their Customers, their needs, desires and preferences in relation to interacting and receiving services form the Council.

2.2 This Insight then allows the Council to tailor our services to make it easier and simpler for Customers to get access to, and receive services, as well as to make improvements for areas that may be causing confusion, bottlenecks or not meeting the customers need. Long term, Customer Insight can help the Council predict changes to services required as a result of changes in demand, customers base, or other implications which affect the service for the future.

2.3 The Council has undertaken a project to establish a baseline of data for Customers across the Council, understanding where Customer data is held, in what format, and to what quality. This will help define the a key concept of Customer Insight – the Single View of Customer (SVOC), which is a comprehensive view of that Customer; and an enabler for many of the concepts within the Strategy.

2.4 An outcome from that project is that that Team Managers are now provided monthly with a dashboard of information about their Customers, contact and service demand information, as well as customer feedback on their service (good and bad).   This helps them and their teams better understand what is expected from their Customers; and to plan both their resources and improvements.

2.5 The majority of Insight projects are planned to happen much later in the Programme, as we start gather Customer-focussed quality data within the SVOC. This will then enable us to start to evaluate and profile our customers, and establish trends and improvement opportunities.

3. Access

3.1 This section of the Strategy is focussed on 'making it easy for our Customers to access our Products, Services, Information and Support'.

3.2 How a Customer can access our services is often the first factor in the Customer deciding whether they have a good experience with the Council.

3.3 We also have to recognise that changes are happening rapidly, around new and innovative ways in which the Customers can access and receive services outside of the Council; and their expectation is that the Council will also provide these facilities.

3.4 The following details progress in delivering the Access elements of the Strategy.

CRM (Corporate Enterprise System)

3.5 One of the key enablers for Customer First is the provision of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system; and is discussed in detail in both the Access and the Process part of the Strategy.

3.6 As part of the ICT & Digital Strategy, a proposal was made to assess whether the use of a Corporate Enterprise System, encompassing a CRM system, and an Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) System; would fulfil the needs of the Council in relation to the desired corporate outcomes.

3.7   In June, the Council undertook a soft market test with a number of industry systems suppliers to evaluate what was out in the market; and how those products may help the Council in its endeavours.   The outcome of that soft market test was a decision that Corporate Enterprise Systems do provide the necessary support required; and that a large majority of systems within the Council including the CRM requirements, would have the potential to transfer into such a system.

3.8   However, it was agreed that that a phased approach to implementation over a number of years would be required, given the scale of the change. The CRM element of any Corporate Enterprise System, will be one of the first delivery phases, as this is paramount to delivering Customer First objectives.

3.9   In November, the Council undertake a further Pre-Market Engagement event with a wider range of Suppliers to discuss the aspirations for a Corporate Enterprise Solution; and the route to procurement. This provided good feedback on how to achieve our aspirations but did mean that the Council need to revise some work undertaken in terms of specifications.

3.10   The Council are continuing to develop the final procurement strategy and specification for the wider Corporate Enterprise System and are expected to go out to market in March 2019, with a view of commencing implementation from Sept 2019 onwards.

3.11   The implementation of this system will be co-ordinated with the three year Service Redesign programme (discussed further in the Section 4 Process).

Telephony Contact Centre

3.12   The Council have had its Cisco Telephony solution for a number of years, and have used it to support both the Contact Centre and the Back Office functions.

3.13   In light of our Customer First aspirations, and in particular in how the Council will start to 'join-up' access channels, and extend the type of channels that will be made available to our Customers, the Council decided to review its Telephony solution.

3.14   The outcome of that review was that the Cisco system is a market leader, but that at this time, the Council did not have the latest offerings from the product, and were not using the product as effectively as they could, so was not therefore getting best value from the technology it had in place.

3.15   The decision was made to upgrade and enhance the existing telephony rather than replace it. As part of this scope of this project, it was agreed to implement improvements in Contact Centre functionality. This confirms the Councils commitment to continuing to provide a range of access channels, both traditional and digital.

3.16   The first phase of the project was to upgrade the Contact Centre product, including revising the way that we deal with telephone calls and other contacts.

3.17   This has resulted in a number of benefits for Customers which include

- Improvements and simplification to the menu options that Customers experience when first calling the Council.
- Introducing a call back option, which allows customers to request a call back rather than continuing to wait in the queue.

- Reducing the number of calls to Advisors which are not for the Council, thereby increasing capacity for council business, and reducing call waiting times.

3.18 Benefits to the Council have also been achieved, helping to moving to an Omni-channel approach. This has included:

- Introducing automated facilities and better management of emails coming into the Contact Centre
- Introducing the use of soft-phones, with enhanced functions, above the use of a desktop telephony device, which is part of an evolving journey for Omni-channel management.

3.19 During this phase of the Project, the Council has also taken the opportunity to extend the use of the Contact Centre system to the Revenues and Benefits teams, which has resulted in reduced call abandonment rates and improved resource management processes within those teams.

3.20 The Council is currently working on the 2nd phase of the project to implement call recording for Contact Centre calls. Longer-term there is an aspiration to extend this to back-office calls.

3.21 A further phase of Contact Centre development will take place later over the next year to add additional contact channels, including SMS, Webchat and Social Media into the Contact Centre Solution, delivering that Omni-channel management approach.

Customer Hub Refurbishment

3.22 The Council created its Customer Hub, when first moving to the Marshalls Yard Building.   Since that time, multiple partners including DWP, Citizens Advice, Volunteer Service and LCC have joined the Customer Hub; and the centre has become increasing busy. This increase in partners and Customers has meant that the design and facilities of the Customer Hub is now starting to constrain service delivery for both the Council and its partners.

3.23 In addition, the nature of service delivery is changing, with all partners want to use more digital technology to support face to face access to services; and the ability to deliver more technological advances into that space is extremely restricted.

3.24 As a result of this situation, a project has been initiated to look at refurbishing the Ground Floor Customer Hub. Significant consultation has been undertaken with both Employees of the Council and Partners to identify what requirements need to be incorporated into the future Hub.

3.25 An architect was employed to help design the facility, coming up with a number of outline designs and options to make best use of the space available. This has concluded in the selection of a final outline design.

3.26 The Council are now in the process of costing out the design and identifying different cost profiles on the basis of a Gold, Silver and Bronze refurbishment standards. Once the costing profile has been approved, the Council will then seek to tender for a build contract.

Digital Kiosks

3.27 In conjunction with the Customer Hub Refurbishment, the Council are looking at the use of Digital Kiosks to provide digitally enabled support for accessing services in our Customer Hub.

3.28 A project has been initiated to review what types of digital kiosks exist; and what their capabilities may be, with the view of creating a Digital Area in the Customer Hub. This digital area will be available to both Council and our Partners Customers.

3.29 This Digital Area will be supported by Meet and Greet staff who will either assist the Customer in using the digital technology, or undertake the required activity on behalf of the Customer.

Realigning Opening Hours

3.30 For some time, the Council has had a disparate arrangement for opening hours, with the Face-to-Face Customer Hub and Telephone Contact Centre opening and closing at different times.

3.31 This caused confusion for our Customers, difficultly in staff management in various teams across the Council; difficulty in greeting office visitors or accepting deliveries to the Council; and bottlenecks and excess demand periods, particularly on a Wednesday due to the late opening arrangements.

3.32 A change was made to align the opening hours to a consistent 9-5 across all channels Monday to Friday.

3.33 The benefit of this change have been better utilisation of staff resources; reduction in over demand on a Wednesday - meaning quicker response times and reduced waiting times for Face-to-Face customers; and a more consistent experience for the Customer.

Trinity Arts Centre

3.34 The Trinity Arts Centre is open for restricted hours in the week; and for some Customers this may reduce their ability to engage with the Centre to enquire about or book events.

3.35 A decision was made to pilot Enquiry and Event Booking through the Councils Customer Contact Centre for both Face-to-Face and Telephone contacts in relation to the Arts Centre. This meant the Customer would be able to access the services from 9-5 Monday to Friday during the pilot period. Customer Service Advisors were trained on the processes, and given access to the Trinity Arts Business System to book and issue tickets.

3.36 The pilot was very successful and the decision was made to continue with this on a permanent basis. During the time of the pilot, and beyond, there was an increase in the number of bookings taken, supporting the financial viability of the Arts Centre, and increasing access to the service for our Customers.

Website

3.37 The current website is due for replacement by March 2020, when the existing contract expires.

3.38 The Council are keen to redesign any future website with the Customer Journey in mind, and have initiated a project to look for a future website partner now; in order to give plenty of time to design and create a fit for purpose modern website which meets our Customer First aspirations.

3.39 The Council already has a responsive website, for use on tablets and mobiles. As this is becoming increasingly popular (55% of Customers now access our website through mobile or tablet devices), the Council will ensure a mobile first design is incorporated into the replacement.

3.40 A Requirements Specification is being produced, and it is anticipated that Procurement will complete in the first quarter of 2019/20.

3.41 Online transactions is a key part of the website capabilities, and the Council has continued to develop online forms with a total of 78 forms available for customers to self-serve.

Online Customer Portal

3.42 One of the areas of development under the Access Pillar is the production of an Online Customer Portal, which enables the Customer to manage their 'Account' with the Council online. This will mean that they are able to request transactions in one place; gain access to progress information of services requested; amend and maintain their personal information; and provide documentation as required.

3.43 With the introduction of Green Garden Waste, the Council took the opportunity to develop the first phase of this strategy, by introducing registration to the portal for online garden waste subscriptions. 60% of Customers subscribed online in the first year, demonstrating that there is a demand for this type of solution.

3.44 By registering in this way, the Council have been able to use the portal; email addresses and mobile number to notify customers of the need to renew their subscription for the second year.

3.45 The development of further elements of the Portal will be part of the Wider CRM project. However, in the next few months, the Council will undertake some prototyping work with Customers to identify how to develop the Portal for the future.

Virtual Assistants (AI)

3.46 Discussions have taken place with a number of Artificial Intelligence companies; to evaluate the use of Artificial Intelligence in the form of a Virtual Assistant (or ChatBot), which could be used for both Telephony and Online enquires.

3.47 The purpose of this will be to use AI technology to answer basic simple enquires rather than using human resource which can be better directed towards more complex cases.

3.48 Initial feedback as to options has been presented to both the Customer First Board and the ICT Programme Board.

3.49 The next stage is to proceed to a pilot project to test out the use of AI, initially through the website.

SMS Texting

3.50   In order to improve communications with the Customer (initially) to the mobile phone and access to Services through text in the future, the Council has procured and contracted with an SMS Text Provider.   This contract will allow us to send 'texts' to Customers either manually or automatically from our systems.

3.51   Initially this will be piloted on the Green Garden Waste project (further details in Section 4), but will then be utilised on other Services as the opportunity arises; and will be rolled out fully as part of the Service Redesign initiatives.

Channel Demand Analysis

3.52   The Council have an ambition to provide a range of Access channels to their Customers that support modern-day expectations of both traditional and digital channels. Part of the Customer First and the ICT/Digital Strategy is an aspiration to move access to either digital channels, or to use digital technology in the management of more traditional channels.

3.53   At the start of the Customer First Programme, the Council did not have a clear view of the level of demand across different channels and embarked on a data collection exercise to establish that demand across both the Council and for individual Service Areas.

3.54   Whilst that exercise provided some useful information, it did identify some notable gaps in establishing comprehensive channel data.   These gaps will be evaluated (and closed) as part of both the Service Redesign Projects and the CRM Implementation.

4.   Process

4.1   The way we process requests from our customers, and the way we deal with that customer during that period, can also have a big influence on our customers experience and ultimate satisfaction.

4.2   This section of the Strategy is focussed on improving the experience of service delivery for our Customers. Its emphasis is on how we can design our processes around the Customer, their needs, desires and preferences.

4.3   However, at the same time, the Council also need to achieve efficiency savings, and ensuring that the processes are as efficient and effective as possible for both the Council and the Customer. So the Process work will look at all aspects of service delivery, and the use of digital and automation technology to support improved service delivery. We have called this Service Redesign.

4.4   Also included within this Pillar is the Councils Service Business Systems which support the delivery of Service processes. The Process work will identify any changes, upgrades, developments or replacements to those systems as required.

4.5   The progress to date in this pillar is as follows:

<u>Customer Experience</u>

4.6   The Council has had a Complaints Process for many years. However, the opportunity was taken to review the way the Council deals not only with Complaints but also Comments/Feedback and Compliments from our Customers, which cover the full breadth of a Customer Experience viewpoint.

4.7   A Customer Experience Policy has been approved, which clearly sets out what the Customer needs to do, and what they can expect in relation to their Customer Experience feedback.

4.8   As part of the development of this Experience Policy, the Council changed the way that they dealt with Complaints, introducing an independent reviewer at the Formal stage - the Customer Experience Officer.   This has significantly improved the timeliness and quality of Complaint responses; and has shown an improvement in Customer Satisfaction with the complaints outcome.

4.9   The Council formalised the role of Customer Experience Officer in September 2018, making it a permanent role in the establishment. This demonstrates the importance of the Customers experience; and the success that the role had achieved up-to this point.

4.10   The Council also introduce a new reporting format for Customer Experience Information to both Senior Management and Councillors.   This was known as the Voice of the Customer report (VOC), and the first version was presented at various Committees over the summer.

<u>Green Garden Waste Year 2</u>

4.11   After a successful implementation of the Green Garden Waste Service last year, the Council have been looking at opportunities for further improvement, digitalisation and automation of the processes, to enhance the experience for our Customers.

4.12   The decision to collect customer information through the subscription process in Year 1 has shown significant benefits in the way the Council has been able to design the Year 2 renewal process.

4.13   As part of the renewal process, the Council are now sending out SMS texts and emails to over 80% of customers, to advise them that they need to renew their subscription. Research has shown that Customers are more likely to respond more quickly to these methods of communication, than to letters.   This has been possible as a result of the decision to start to build the 'Single View of the Customer' for all transactions, and means that both the Customer and the Council can benefit for improved digitally-enabled ways of working, simplifying and speeding up the process of renewal.

4.14   In addition to the experience benefits, this also gives us significant cost savings over the first year, where communication to customers was by letter only, and cost in the region of £21,000. A further advantage of these methods are that they can be re-issued a number of times, to target customers who have not yet renewed their subscription, at very little cost to the Council.

4.15   Recognising that in the 2nd year, the Customer is effectively renewing the service, the Council has created a new renewals e-form. This form will display details of the previous subscription information to the Customer, allowing them to re-confirm their

subscription very quickly and easily, rather than having to re-enter the information again. This should improve the customers overall experience, and means that the Council are effectively making use of data they have available for that Customer, supporting the Single View of the Customer concept.

4.16 The Council has utilised a print house to print and dispatch the renewal pack. This will significantly reduce the manual effort of the Council to provide these, which caused bottlenecks in the process last year.

4.17 The Council has also decided to send out the renewal packs close to the start of collection, due to the number of 'mislaid' stickers in the first year. This should reduce the number of replacement stickers required, making savings for the Council and ensuring the Customer is ready for the collection period. This is a perfect example of where customer insight and feedback information can drive beneficial improvements in the process.

4.18 During the first year of service, the Waste department encountered some problems around administrating Assisted Bin Collections for GGW, and dealing with Customers moving house. Revised processes have been developed to deal with these aspects, including the activity around Green Bins being included within a Moving House Process. These have been implemented as part of the new arrangements.

4.19 The Green Garden Waste Renewals opened on the 2nd January 2019.

Corporate Standard Processes

4.20 In order to simply the Customers Experience, the Council are developing a range of the standard processes, which will govern the way that the Council can 'Apply for a service', 'Report a Problem', 'Pay for Goods or Services', Subscribe to a Paid Service etc.

4.21 The wider benefits of the Green Garden Waste Projects for Customer First has been to develop and test a 'Standard' for Subscription and Renewal type processes, and these will be reused in the delivery of further processes as part of the CRM rollout; and service redesign projects.

Service Redesign

4.22 An important part of the Process Pillar within Our Strategy was the 'Service Redesign', which would look at every Customer Facing Service. This is planned to start in Year 2 (19/20). However, in preparation for this, the Council have agreed a three year rollout plan, defining which services will be redesigned in which year.

Markets

4.23 The Markets has historically been run on the basis of a post event invoicing system. This system incurred additional administration for the Council; and unfortunately for some Market Traders, allowed for the situation where the Account went into Debt, when payments were not made against the invoices, or the invoices disputed. At time of inception of the project; a debt of circa £11,000 was owed to the Council by various Market Traders.

4.24 A decision was made to look into an on-the-day payment process to reduce the level of administration and the chance of further debt.

4.25　As part of this decision, the Council undertook to review the whole of the administration process around the Markets; and introduce an internally built system to manage the administration, and the attendance and payment records of Market Traders.

4.26　The revised Markets process, including the ability to take card payments on the day through a card payment machine went live in December 2018. The process has been well received, with most Traders opting to make on-the-day payments; and has even prompted some Traders to pay for a number of events in advance.

4.27　The Markets administrator has reported a reduction in administration time, which has meant they have more capacity for alternative work within their role. The number of Sundry Debtor invoices which have to be raised for Market payments has also been dramatically reduced (to 1), decreasing demand on the Sundry Debtor team.

Income Management and Payments

4.28　The Councils contract for Income and Payment Management services is coming up to renewal at the end of March 2018.

4.29　Given our aspirations for adopting digital technologies; and with the emergence of new digital payments methods in the last two years, the Council has decided to take the opportunity to explore wider technological options for the future.

4.30　The Council has negotiated a new Contract, which will commence in April 2019. As part of the new contract, a number of new payment facilities will be made available to the Customer.

4.31　The first is an e-shop capability which will be part of the online transactions, and the Online Customer Portal.   This will provide a 'Store' and Basket type functionality, similar to the Amazon concept, for the purchase of products, and payment of services.

4.32　The Council will be introducing new card payment machines, which will cater for contactless payments, and be able to handle new payment options such and ApplePay, GooglePay and MobilePay for example.

4.33　Currently, the Council offers Direct Debits for a limited range of Services; and set up and call off of the DD arrangements is a very manual and laborious process. As part of the new payment arrangements, the Council will be introducing self-service DD set-up to Customers both online and over the phone.

4.34　The Council will also be able to offer Recurring Card Payments, which is a similar concept to Direct Debits, utilising repeated payments taken from a Credit or Debit Card, rather than from the Councils Bank Account. Customers often use this type of payment for ongoing Subscription based services.

Home Choices System

4.35　The Council are always looking to improve its offering to its Customers, and providing fit for purpose technology for its employees.

4.36　This is very true in the case of Home Choices, where the system in place was very limited in its use, and unreliable, with impacts to both Customer and Officers.

4.37 The Council procured a new Home Choices system – Home Connections, which provided significant improvements for Customers to be able to self-serve, and keep up-to-date with their progress; as well as improved ways of working for staff, which encompassed the new regulatory requirements in this area.

4.38 Whilst the procurement of this system was commenced prior to the strategy being agreed, the specification of the system was designed to encompass the aspirations of both Customer First and ICT and Digital strategies.

4.39 The system has been well received by Customers, who have reported that they find it easier to apply for properties; and to keep up-to-date on properties available; and progress on any applications.

Events Booking

4.40 The Council when running events such as Employer and Skills Events for example, produced bespoke booking forms for each separate event.

4.41 The impact of this, was that effort was required to develop each form, which then became redundant once the event had been completed, and regular attendees had to provide their personal and contact information over and over again for each event.

4.42 Communication of the event, confirming attendance and managing the attendee list then had to be undertaken manually, resulting in further administrative effort.

4.43 The decision was made to pilot the use of the Eventbrite product, which is an events management system and is free for the Council to use on any 'non-paid -for events' (which is the case with Council run events).

4.44 The Eventbrite product proved to more than fulfil the requirements of the Council; providing a communication method, free booking for both the Council and the Customer, information saved in an Account for the Customer; and automatic attendance list management.

4.45 The pilot was deemed a success; and the product has now been formally adopted as the Event Management capability across the Council for the future.

4.46 This adoption has resulted in a reduction in staff time in building forms and managing events; increased ease of access to events, and improved customer experience in registering for that event.

Digi-Mail Pilot

4.47 The Council currently receive and send letters through the Councils post room. Whilst the Council is increasingly moving to sending communications by email, the volume of letters and paper communications posted each month is still considerable.

4.48 The Council have undertaken a pilot to assess whether the use of an external print house would be a cheaper way of printing, or printing, dispatching and sending letters, paper-based communications and other paper-based publications.

4.49 The pilot tested the ease and security of 'sending' documents to the print-house, the cost of dispatch compared to in-house facilities; and the ability to benefit from 'bulk' discounts.

4.50 It has identified that there will be cost benefits in using a print house, as well as reduction in staff effort in printing letters, stuffing envelopes and manning the post room.

4.51 The decision has been made to initiate a further project to look at implementing a print-house project across the Council, including the development of a business case. This project will commence in March 19.

Service Demand Analysis

4.52 As with the Channel demand, at the start of the Customer First Programme there is no comprehensive understanding on the number of enquiries and service requests that the Council receives; and a project was undertaken to establish that demand level.

4.53 For Service Requests, employees record new requests in their Business Applications, and it was generally possible to obtain information on request from most systems, although there was not true of all systems. However, there is no easy way of establishing demand for enquires, changes and other such interactions, as these are either not recorded, or recorded in way that is not reportable.

4.54 As with the gaps from the Channel Demand, the gaps from the Service Demand will be evaluated (and closed) as part of both the Service Redesign Projects and the CRM Implementation.

5.   People

5.1 The People Pillar is about how the Council delivers the vision for Customer-centric service providers, aka our Employees and our Partners. This vision is 'Skilled Employees and Partners, empowered and supported to deliver excellent, resolution-based, customer focussed services.

5.2 The early delivery in the Customer First programme is more around the technology and enabling aspects, and there is limited development planned around People in the first year. The main activities will be more closely linked to the Service Redesign Phase in Year 2 and 3.

5.3 However, the following documents some initial activities undertaken.

5.4 The Council has a Competency Framework which is used as part of an Employees Appraisal and Performance Assessment. A review of this Framework has been undertaken, which has factored in some of the Principles set out in the Our Ethos section of the Customer First Strategy.

5.5 Work has commenced to define Skills and Knowledge Matrix which will form the basis of skills and capabilities for Frontline Staff. This matrix will be used to define frontline roles; and grading/pay structures in the future.

5.6 In November, the Council commenced the second Institute of Customer Service (ICS) staff survey, which helps to self-assess our current position in relation to the delivery of customer-centric service excellence. The results of that survey has yet to be received from ICS, but will help define further People and Culture improvement activities.

5.7 In order to engage Employees in the Programme, presentations have been made to the Councils Senior Management and Team Managers to advise on the technological advancements planned, as these constitute the main body of work in Year 1 of the programme.

6. Culture

6.1 The Culture Pillar is about how the Council develops a culture of Customer-centricity; and is the delivery mechanism for embedding the Our Ethos part of the Strategy across the Council.

6.2 During the last few months, the Council has undertaken a review of its Vision, Mission and Values; and has taken the opportunity to include the principles of Customer First into that review. A new Council Vision, Mission and Values have been approved by the Council.

7. Service Delivery

7.1 The Service Delivery Pillar looks at how we embed the concepts of a 'responsive customer-centric services' and how we measure the quality and effectiveness of that service delivery.

7.2 The following documents progress made against this pillar.

Customer Feedback Technology

7.3 Over the last year, the Council has piloted the use of email survey technology to assess the satisfaction of Customers with their interactions with the Council and the services they received.

7.4 This pilot has provided a wealth of information for the Council, around the questions to ask, the timing in which feedback is requested, and nature of the feedback received, as well as baselining customer satisfaction levels.

7.5 The Council then agreed to pilot a further customer feedback system, which will trial sending of surveys through a range of other contact channels (Omni-channel surveys). This product is based on conversational chat, rather than specific questions and answers, and therefore is deemed to be more 'engaging' to the Customer. The intention is to use this to trial surveys through the website, e-forms and SMS text messages over the next few months.

7.6 The first use of this product has been as part of the Green Garden Waste Renewals. In the early block of surveys sent out, the Council has received a 37% response rate, which is significantly greater than the industry standard of around 18-20%, and better than the previous email survey product. It has also provided good feedback on the development of conversational surveys, and will be used for further projects in the next few months.

7.7 The final intention is that a customer feedback product will either be incorporated in or integrated with the CRM product within the Corporate Enterprise System. The pilots will allow us to finalise the way in which we want to undertake capturing customer feedback and build this into the new system from the start.

7.8 In order to ensure some consistency in service provision across the breadth of the Council, a range of Customer Service Standards have been developed to focus on responding to interactions in a timely and effective manner.

7.9 The Customer Service Standards have been formalised and communication on the standards has taken place, one standard at a time, to our staff.

7.10 The final Standards Document has been approved by the Customer First Board.

7.11 The next phase of work is to look to develop mechanisms to monitor and assess performance of services against these standards. Some of these will be through manual assessment, mystery shopping and other such evaluations. The second will be to build automatic performance capture mechanisms into the CRM system, as services are transferred.

8. Governance Progress

8.1 This section reports on particular Governance related developments and progress since the agreement of the Strategy.

Customer First Board

8.2 The Council created a Customer First Board to oversee the production of the Strategy; and delivery of the Customer First Programme, which commenced in January 2018.

8.3 It is Sponsored and Chaired by the Executive Director of Operations; and has representatives from the Programme, the two Strategic Leads, HR, IT, Performance/Projects, Communications and Customer Services on the Board.

8.4 This Board is responsible commissioning projects and activities, agreeing change requests, assessing project progress; and delivery against the programme outcomes.

Customer First Programme

8.5 The Programme Lead has defined the Customer First Delivery Programme, identifying a range of projects and work packages, to deliver the Vision and Our Strategy deliverables. These projects and work packages have been grouped into a set of Themes matching the six Pillars.

8.6 The projects have then be incorporated into Delivery Tranches which identify the timeline for delivery of the programme.

- Tranche 1 (first 18 months) is primarily around technological enablement, piloting potential solutions and baselining data.

- Tranche 2 is the delivery of the Service Redesign projects across the Customer Facing Services, and will take place in Year 2 and 3, with some smaller elements potentially taking place in Year 4.

- Tranche 3 is Customer Excellence related, and looks to improve on delivery, bring forward Customer Insight, and deliver any revised organisation structure requirements if required.

8.7 The Programme has recently been audited by our Internal Auditors, to assess how well the Programme is governed. The Programme received a Substantial audit rating.

Risks to the Programme

8.8 The Customer First Board undertook a Risk Assessment Workshop for the Programme, identifying key risks to the delivery of the Programme; or the Outcomes and Benefits expected. The Programme and Theme Leads then defined mitigating actions to minimise the chance of the risks materialising. The risks are reviewed by the Board on a periodic basis.

Resource Planning

8.9 Given the size and complexity of the Programme, a Resourcing Plan has been produced identify the nature of programme specific resources required during the programme, and any back fill requirements for Service staff to be involved in Projects, particularly the Service Redesign projects.

8.10 In order to move the enabling technology projects and service redesign projects forward, the Council employed two (temporary) Enabling Technology Projects Officers in August 2018. One has been focussed on Customer First Projects, with the other taking a lead on Project Management and IT related projects. However, this resource will be redirected to Service Redesign and SVOC related projects in the future.

8.11 There will be further temporary resources required during the life of the project; and these have been included with the Programme Resourcing Budget Plans.

Communications

8.12 The Programme has produced a Communications Strategy which sets outs the stakeholders to be communicated with, and the type, nature and format of Communications for the Programme.

8.13 Supporting this is a Communications Plan, which sets out what Communications will be made, at what time and to whom. This Plan will be reviewed on a regular basis, and added to as the Programme proceeds.

8.14 The success of Communications will be assessed over the life of the Programme.

9. Conclusion

9.1 The Council has adopted an ambitious Customer First strategy; and has been active over the last six months in delivering against the strategy.

9.2 This report demonstrates the progress made; and highlights some of the actions to take place over the next few months.

9.3 Members are asked to comment on the progress made so far; and confirm whether they are satisfied with the direction of travel; and the outcomes achieved.