



Putting Our Customers First

**Our Ethos
Our Strategy
Our Transformational Journey**

Executive Summary

Introduction.

Putting our Customers First.



Putting our Customers First is about offering excellent customer service, by providing a great experience from the first time the Customer interacts with us, then throughout the service delivery process; and the way that we deliver that service; right up to the post-service follow-up to assess our Customer's satisfaction.

Putting our Customers First is everybody's job, whether acting on the frontline, processing a request, physically delivering the service, supporting the delivery or managing operations.

And.... Putting our Customers First is as equally important whether the Customer is internal or external to the organisation.

A Customer wants to be seen as an individual, and wants to find or obtain what they need quickly and easily. Our role in this partnership needs to be to **help Customers do what they need to do, with the least possible friction.**

Achieving that is about creating and living by an organisational culture completely focussed around the Customer. It is a culture which starts with the Customers, **not** the services and focusses on what Customers want to do. By designing the organisation from the Customer's perspective, it will then be focused on the Customer's needs. Thus, the customer-centric organisation creates products, processes, policies and a culture that is designed to support Customers with a great experience as they are working towards their goals.

Our Customers live, work, or conduct business within our District usually for extended periods of time; and therefore we need to build a positive relationship with our Customers for long term success. We recognise that our Customers; and our relationships will change over time; and we need to respond by ensuring our ethos aligns to the ever-evolving needs of our Customers. We will showcase accomplishments that we have achieved for our Customers, and remove the blocks that affect both our Customers and the Councils success.

Whilst this is fundamental to Customer First, it has to be recognised that the Council now, more than ever, operates within a constrained financial envelope; and coupled with an ever increasing demand from our Customers. So whilst delivering excellent customer service, the Council must also ensure that is operating and using its resources in the best possible way to provide a 'right first time', speedy, efficient and effective service; as that in its own right will generate Customer satisfaction and loyalty.

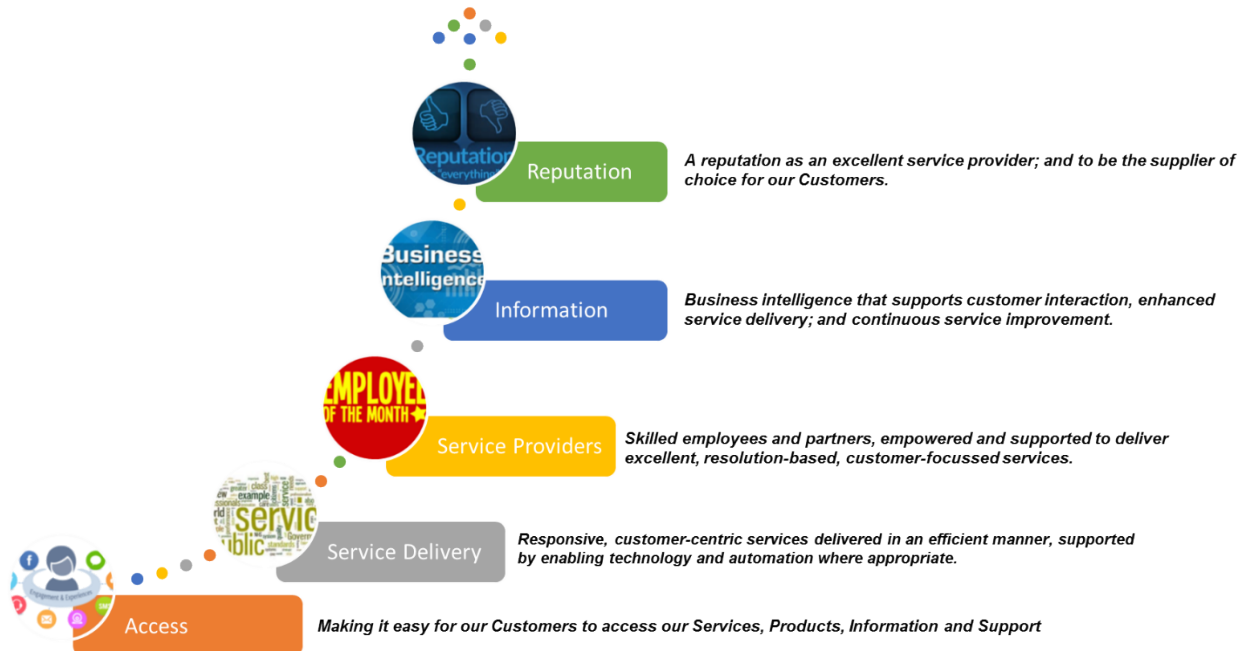
As such, the vision for Customer First is:

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.

Our Objectives and Aims for Customer First.

In meeting the Vision above, the Council has identified a core set of Outcomes for Customer First.



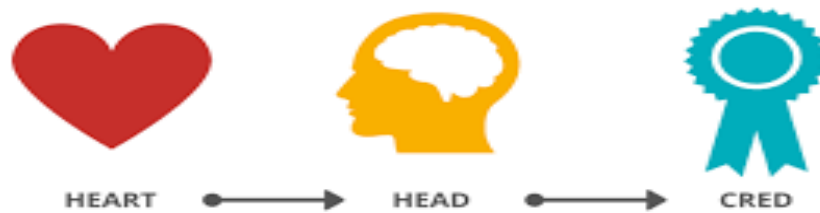
To achieve those outcomes, the Council is embarking on a customer-centric transformation programme; known as Customer First. The aims and objectives of Customer First are to:

- Embed the ethos of 'Customer First' into the culture of the Council.
- Change the way we design our processes and systems to put the Customer's needs and expectations at the heart of how we operate and work.
- Improve our Customer's experience when both dealing with the Council; and receiving services; and as a result, increase satisfaction levels.
- Focus our service delivery on 'getting it right first time' (for the Customer).
- Provide a modern range of access channels through which our Customers can either serve themselves, or gain assisted service by interacting directly with us.
- Join up those channels; by integrating data, interactions and service information; into one holistic data store; which can be accessed by Customers and employees alike.
- Provide open access to personal and service data to our Customers; whilst ensuring that we keep their information and identity safe and protected.
- Significantly improve our first time resolution rates; at the first point of contact, by ensuring comprehensive information is available to resolve the query.

- For simple transactions, digitalise and automate our processes; with a view to providing speedy efficient services to our Customers; and releasing the frontline to support those that need our help and assistance.
- Streamline more complex functions, improving the experience, speed, quality and efficiency of service delivery.
- Distribute the handling of Customer interaction activities in a way that gets the Customer to the best person to deal with that interaction, whilst making best use of the Councils resources, and an individual employees skills, experience and knowledge.
- Ensure that employees have the right skills, attitude, behaviours and support to provide an excellent customer service; and to be digitally savvy in their ways of working.
- Gather customer insight, performance information and other analytics to allow us to regularly check our Customer's needs and expectations; and to support us in continuous improvement and service innovation.
- Review and rationalise our ICT technology and business systems to ensure a modern fit for purpose suite of digitally enabled technology that fully supports our business and customer needs.
- Take advantage of emerging tools and digital technologies to improve service delivery and interact more effectively with our Customers and communities.
- Reduce the cost of service delivery; by more efficient processing and using digitalisation and automation technology.

The remainder of this document outlines the key components of our Customer First ethos, the Strategy that the Council will be adopting and our transformation journey to ensure that as an organisation we are able to deliver our Customer First vision, aims and objectives.

Customer First – Our Ethos



Having a Customer ethos has to become a key part of the culture of the Council for us to achieve our ambition of being a customer-centric organisation and to meet our vision of Customer First.

That ethos is about our attitude and approach to putting our Customers First, at an organisational level and through every individual who works with us. But attitude is only one aspect.

Developing a Customer Ethos requires commitment and investment in a number of key enablers; and the enablers the Council have committed to are as follows:



1. Leadership



2. Employee Engagement



3. Insight



4. Customer Experience Design & Processes



5. Consistency



6. Focus on Problems & Complaints



7. Effective Measurement



8. Innovation & Improvement

The following sets out a high level overview of each of the Our Ethos enablers. For the full detail of how these enablers will be embedded in the Council, please refer to the full Customer First Strategy.



Leadership can be shown at any level of the organisation, and in the case of the Customer First ethos, leadership is about demonstrating a clear commitment to the principles and culture of a customer-centric organisation; and making it a priority in everything that we do. Leadership will be a key part of our culture change programme.



It is important that we inform, engage and invest in our employees, and empower them to be able to embody the Customer First principles in their dealing with our Customers, and each other. However, it is also important that they are part of the decision on how we implement the principles.

As such, the Council will seek to engage our employees in both the transformation programme, and the outcomes from that programme; as well as providing regular feedback of our Customer's views of their experiences; and our service delivery.



To be a customer-centric organisation, you must first understand your Customers, their needs, preferences and expectations. Capturing Customer Insight is key to enabling that understanding. As such the Council will seek to capture information from our Customers, from their interactions and from our data on service delivery to inform that process.



Historically Councils have designed processes around the way they want to work and what is easiest for them. However, this doesn't always make the process easy for the Customer. Instead, the Council will start to design its processes and ways of working around the customers experience, not that of the Council.



One of the key elements of a good customer experience is consistency in the way that you receive that service. The Customer should get the same experience, the same process, and the same outcome irrespective of how they engage with the Council; and who they engage with. The Council will be ensure that this is a key part of any redesign work.



A key component on any customer-centric organisation is a focus on problems and complaints. They will quickly identify what the Customers are experiencing and initiate actions to resolve the problems as far as possible for that particular Customer (and as quickly and easily as possible); and will then go on to make improvement actions to reduce the possibility of that happening in the future.

Complaints, instead of being seen as a 'difficulty', should be regarded as learning opportunities; and a time to provide recompense to that Customer, as well as opportunity to prevent further issues in the same vain. Many a problem is turned around by the experience the Customer has after the initial event



One of the most effective ways to know how well an organisation is doing in its journey to being Customer Centric is to apply effective Measurement.

The Council will introduce more formal customer-centric measurement into its day to day operations. This Measurement will be in two aspects, from a Customer Perspective (the Voice of the Customer) and from a Service Delivery Perspective (the Councils Performance Framework).



Whilst the majority of our Customers are relatively long-term Customers (in relation to commercial companies), the profile of our Customers, their needs and expectations will change over time. At the same time, wider customer expectations and technological developments continue to advance at a significant rate.

As a customer-centric organisation, the Council must develop an innovation and improvement culture to ensure that we can keep up with our Customers' expectations; and provide them with modern methods of accessing and receiving services.

Customer First – Our Strategy



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.

The aim of our Customer First Strategy is to:-

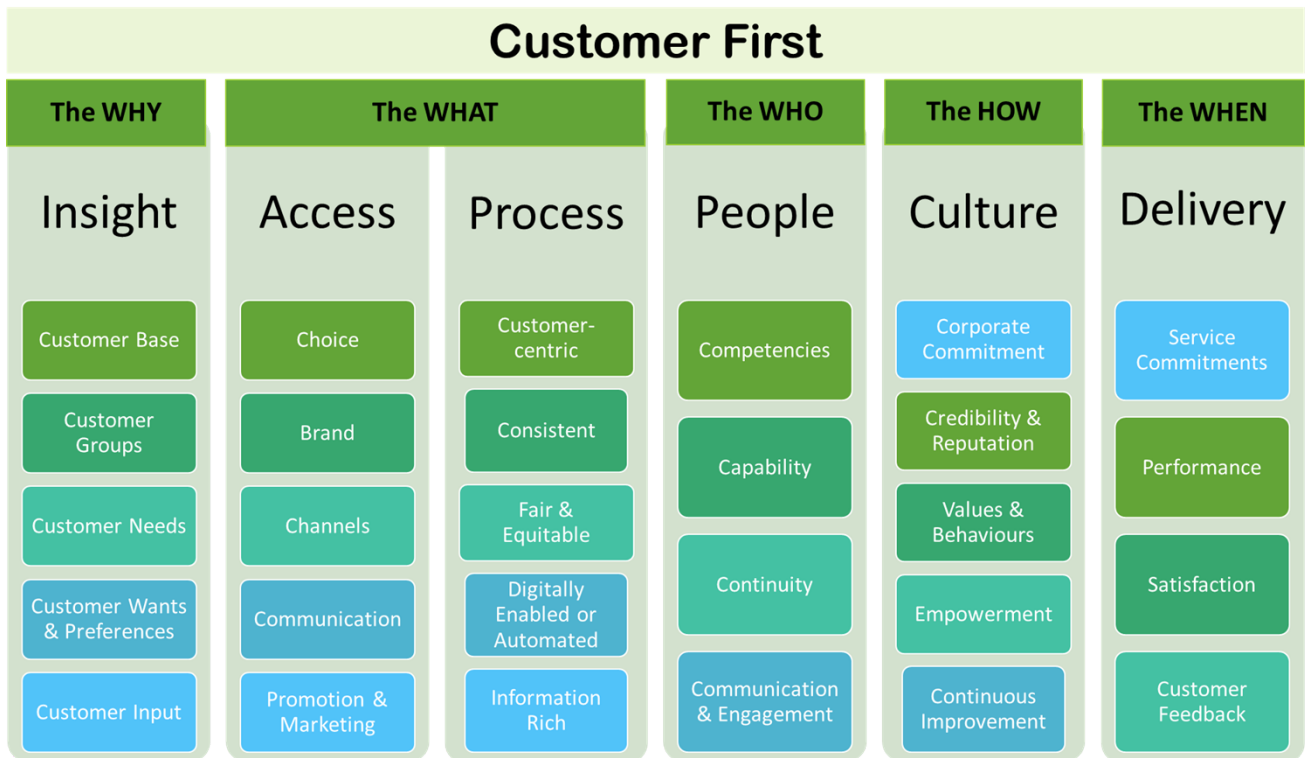
“Create an environment that allows us to deliver positive Customer experiences and efficient cost effective services, through facilitated channels, utilising enhanced skills, knowledge and processes; and digitally enabled technologies where possible”.

The following (Customer First – Our Strategy) section sets out the plans that the Council is adopting to deliver that aim.

It is designed to provide a structure on which the Council can design and plan improvement actions that focus the organisation on becoming a customer-centric organisation.

These plans have been categorised into six groupings, known as the “Six pillars of Customer First”; covering Insight, Access, Process, People, Culture and Delivery.

Each of these pillars sets out some of the key focus areas (shown in the diagram below) which the Council need to address to achieve the vision of Customer First. These pillars are also used in the delivery themes (as described in the next section Customer First - Our Transformational Journey).



Delivering these key areas will require significant development across the entire depth and breadth of the Council; and will need to be implemented as a staged approach, building layers of improvement to move the Council to its ultimate aims.

The six pillars of Customer First and will be used to drive our transformational journey through the Customer First Programme and will be the themes for our transformational focus.

The following provides a summary of the key drivers of those Pillars. The full detail of the strategy for each Pillar can be found in the full Customer First Strategy.



Customer Insight

When an organisation puts the Customer at the centre of their business, they are able to collect a wealth of data which gives a full 360 view of the Customer. This can then be used to really to focus on enhancing the Customer experience.

It is important that any future customer developments are based on a robust understanding of our Customers, due to the diverse nature of the district, its geography and the makeup of its communities, as well as being a place of growing interest for businesses and visitors.

As a Council, we are rich in service data but that data is dispersed across many systems and data stores across the organisation; and has very limited availability or use outside of any particular department.

It is important that the Council starts to collect customer-focused data, collates that information to provide a more rounded view; and analyses that information to deliver quality decision-supporting insight.

Key outcomes of insight are:

- Establishing a good understanding of our diverse Customers.
- A Profile of those Customers to understand common characteristics, behaviours and expectations; which may identify Customer groupings.
- Gather a view from our Customers on their needs, expectations and behaviours.
- Input from our Customers on our development and improvement plans.
- Feedback on their experience and satisfaction with our service delivery.
- Monitor changing trends in needs and behaviours; which will inform amendments to our future service delivery.
- Use of that understanding, insight and feedback to
 - Customise the way we offer our services to ensure they meet the expectations of our Customers.
 - Improve our service delivery processes based on their feedback; and on the characteristics and needs of the user groups of those services.
 - Identify products and services that could be of interest or use to the customer groups; and utilise targeted promotion and marketing.

Gathering this insight will mean we are able to use our resources to best affect, focussing our efforts and money on improvements which meet our Customers satisfaction, whilst at the same time always keeping in mind the key element of *'helping Customers do what they need to do, with the least possible friction'*. This is a key part of the strategy: providing an enhanced customer experience; in an affordable way to both the Council and our Tax Payers.



How easy and simple it is for a Customer to access the Councils services is often the first factor in the Customer deciding whether they have a good experience with the Council.

For the majority of services; it is the only time that they get involved with us; and sets their perception (and ultimately the reputation) of the Council.

Traditionally, the Council has provided face-to-face and telephone access, and latterly developed our digital presence through our website; online transactions; and email.

We have to recognise that our Customer's expectations are influenced by what happens in their day to day lives; and retailers in particular have developed their digital offering to such an extent, that Customers expectations of interacting with us are much greater than that currently offered by the Council. Customers expect to be able to transact in their chosen way, and often in their chosen timeframe, depending on the nature of the business they wish to do on that day.

As such, the Council will need to develop more digital ways of working to meet those expectations. Digital ways of working are not just about putting a digital front end on a traditional service, as generally this does not improve the Customers experience. The Council needs to look at developing digital services which are timely, efficient and right first time; with a high bias towards first time resolution where appropriate to the type of transaction. This means adopting not only digital access channels, but integrating these and our more traditional access channels with digital ways of working; and automation within the service processing and delivery phases. More of this will be discussed within the Process component of this section.

However, the Council also recognises that some of our Customers will want to contact us through our more traditional contact methods, and the Council will continue to develop these.

The key outcomes to be delivered from this theme include:

- Provide comprehensive information to the frontline, to enable them to answer more enquiries at the first point of contact; and that same information through digital portals, to allow customers to self-serve themselves.
- Join up information, data and processing across all our access channels, to provide a seamless experience irrespective of channel used.
- Ensure the Council meets the terms of the new GDPR rules, for Customers to have access to their data.
- Provide more self-service capabilities, to allow those Customers who want to, to serve themselves.
- Enhance or replace our website.
- Develop separate online Customer Portals designed around individual/households and business requirements.
- Enable webchat on our website.
- Enhance our Contact Centre to be able to deal with a range of contact channels through a single contact management systems.
- Implement Customer Management systems to allow us record and manage all contacts and requests from Customers, through any channel of access into one centralised place (developing the concept of a Single View of the Customer).

- Utilise the Customer systems to provide regular updates to Customers on the progress of their requests.
- Utilise digital technology to provide notifications, reminders and other information to our customers.
- Allow uploading of documents and other information through digital means.
- Explore the use of automation, artificial intelligence and virtual assistants for simple queries and transactions which do not require the human touch.
- Refurbish our Customer Service Hub at Gainsborough.
- Introduce Digital Kiosks into our public facing offices.
- Evaluate the use of virtual mail and other digital mail options.

Part of an integrated approach to customer management is developing a recognised brand which Customers can equate to and which demonstrates the joined up and cohesive elements of our strategy of access.

As such, the Council has developed its Customer First branding, and will use that as a key visual element across any channel and communication means.



Process

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

At the moment, the Council is a very silo-service based organisation, with individual services having 'their' way of doing things, their business systems, their data and their standards. Their processes are primarily written to suit their processing needs; and to make it easy for them to 'deliver the service'.

Unfortunately, the customer pays the price of this silo-based approach, having to work around sometimes unfriendly processes, restrictions, hurdles, and having to understand complex 'Council' speak or 'technical terms'. For some customers, it can get much more complicated when their need means that they have to communicate with multiple departments to get what in their view is a simple 'thing'. Moving house is a prime example of this. In these circumstances, the customer has to negotiate their way through multiple ways of doing the same thing, repeatedly providing the same information over and over again, and having to know who to talk to about what. In simple fact, we do not make it easy for our customers.

Going back to one of our customer-centric starting principles - that our role needs to be to **help Customers do what they need to do, with the least possible friction**. We have to start thinking about our service delivery as 'One Council' not separate departments, teams and services. In Our Ethos, we discussed designing our processes around the customer's experience; and this is where we need to start.

The Council will approach this in two ways:-

- to undertake a service redesign on each of the customer-facing services within the Council;
- and to undertake cross-cutting redesign, to deliver (a) amalgamated services which deliver an outcome matched to the request the customer has made and (b) link services to the benefit of the customer.

To ensure the redesign is comprehensive; the redesign process will not only look at process related components, but will also review, assess and implement appropriate components of the strategies described in the Insight, Access, People and Service Delivery sections

The purpose of the reviews will be to:

1. Ensure that the ultimate processes are designed to make the process for the customer as simple and easy as possible ('least friction'); and the experience as good as possible (customer-centric).
2. Ensure that what can be done at first contact is done at that point; and that the right information and tools are available to support that.
3. Digitally enable processes from front to end; minimising any bespoke human effort required.
4. Facilitating a timely, efficient and quality processing and/or delivery service.
5. Ensure that staff are appropriately equipped and skilled to provide that quality experience.

In order to deliver increased 'resolution at the first contact', the review will look to identify all interactions and transactional capabilities that can be delivered in one touch; and transfer these from back office service responsibility to the frontline. The use of systems, rich information and automation, will ensure that the frontline can be effective at dealing with all simple transactions and queries; and that the back office responsibilities are focused on processing, delivery and more complex issues. This will create capacity within the Council to reduce, improve or extend the delivery capabilities as appropriate.

To achieve this, the Council will look to

- Utilise workflow and artificial intelligence to provide automated solutions.
- Integrate our core business applications
- Centralise service evidence, documentation and records into a single data store, integrated with CRM, and other business systems.

- Make more use of spatial mapping systems (GIS) for location based data.
- Utilise unified communications and team collaboration tools to support an agile and flexible workforce; and to improve communication.



Customer-Centric Employees

When our customers interact with our employees, the nature of individuals, their attitudes and behaviors can sometimes lead to a varied experience; and the way that an employee deals with an interaction; and the level of skill and information they have, can be the difference between whether the experience is a good one, or a bad one.

As such, the Council will establish clear protocols on attitudes, behaviors and expectations of its employees and partners acting on our behalf; through our standards of Customer Service. This is a key part of the employment engagement enabler in 'Our Customer First Ethos' section.

Employees will be:

1. Recruited on customer-centric attitudes and behaviors as a primary requirements of the role.
2. Monitored to ensure that their attitudes and behaviors meet the expectations of the Council; and if not, improvement actions will be put in place.
3. Set appraisal targets around the 'Our Customer First Ethos' enablers, to ensure that the culture continues to develop around customer-centricity.
4. Provided with regular formal training on delivering excellent Customer Service.

Customer-Centric Organisation

Part of the delivery of 'as much resolution at the first point of contact as possible', is about having the right people in the right place, with the right skills, attitudes, information and systems at their fingertips.

As such, the Council will be reviewing its organisational structure, with a focus on:

1. Transferring all initial Customer interaction into the frontline, not direct to professional officers; and increasing the range and depth of enquiries and transactions undertaken by the frontline. (The frontline should be regarded as a both human and digitally enabled channels of access and information).
2. Transferring responsibilities (and staff) from the back office service units into the frontline. The final format of the frontline will be defined over the period of the

Customer First Transformation Programme. However, there is an assumption that the majority of staff working in customer facing service units will be affected by the change in some way.

3. Reducing the level of administration and basic enquiries that specialist officers will undertake.
4. Reviewing the difference between case work and specialist expertise; and the way that this is undertaken and managed in the future.

Employee Engagement and Feedback.

The Employee Engagement enabler in the 'Our Ethos' section in this report has already set out the principles of the culture of this Council in relation to employee engagement.

In practical terms, in relation to our transformational journey, the Council will ensure that its employees are constantly engaged in the decisions and changes of the Customer First Programme; and will deliver an engagement strategy to ensure that this is effective.

This will be achieved through the use of digital technology such as employee engagement software and unified communications, the Councils intranet; and regular employee surveys and other feedback mechanisms.



Culture

Within the Our Ethos section of this document, we have already outlined the key principles and enablers of a customer-centric organisation and the way we will build that culture within the Council. This section will outline specific strategic deliverables which will support the embodiment of that culture.

Employee-Focused

In order for Employees to fully understand our expectations, we will create a range of guidance and documentation which sets out the principles, standards, behaviors and actions that we expect of them.

A range of guidance and templates will be produced to inform and govern the nature of communications to our customers, and to ensure that a consistent approach and tone is made by the Council. We will also regularly review specific communications and documentation to ensure that it is customer-friendly; easy to read and understand; and involve our customers in that review where possible.

Compliments, Comments and Complaints will be regularly reviewed; trends identified; and information provided to our employees on the nature of those, to ensure that the Council focusses on resolving problems and issues that our customers experience; and are able to learn corporately from those.

Case Studies; and Customer Feedback (both in summary, and specific feedback) will be made available to employees to show the good and the bad, again to inform learning and encourage customer focused thinking.

Our Customer-centric culture will be a regular feature in our Corporate Briefings; and our Leaders and Managers will continually demonstrate the importance of 'putting our Customers First in everything that we do'.

Customer-Focused

For our Customers, we will create a Customer Charter, which will set out our key principles by which we will serve our Customers.

Our Customer Services Standards will also be published to our Customers, including regular updates on how well we are meeting them.

Our Customer Experience Policy, sets out further details on how a Customer can tell us about their experience, whether good or bad. However, we will also regularly ask for feedback from our customers; and not rely on them having to tell us.



Delivery

The final aspect of a Customers experience is the actual delivery of the service to them; and whether that meets their expectations. Failure to meet their expectation may be a result of a range of criteria, including timeliness, quality, decision made, and impact to themselves.

It is therefore important the Council sets out what a customer can expect in terms of the purpose of the service, potential limitations, service level agreements and clear eligibility criteria, conditions and terms.

It is then critical that the Council actively delivers on those promises; and that we continually review and monitor our delivery; and our performance.

The Council will introduce Service Standards, which clearly set out the key criteria and the service level that a customer can expect to receive when requesting and receiving a service.

We will then monitor our performance against those service standards, by introducing KPIs which demonstrate our commitment to these standards. The performance against these KPIs will be reviewed regularly at all levels of management; and an assessment and improvement actions put in place when performance dips below our target.

A key indicator is Customer Satisfaction and we will regular review our customers satisfaction with service delivery, from the first point of contact through to the completion of all actions related to their service request.

The Council will also develop a wider range of customer measures, known as the Voice of the Customer, as referenced in the insight sections of this document. This will allow us to identify service improvement and changes as our customers view, expectations and behaviors change.

Improvement actions will be captured from all a range of process including service delivery performance, complaints, customer feedback, staff feedback and other such information. These will be stored in a single data store, and can be merged with improvement actions identified from audits and other internal and external quality and performance assessments to provide a comprehensive improvement log. This will allow better management and monitoring of those actions, improvement reporting at all levels, recognition of wider trends, or types of issues that are regularly occurring; and will facilitate the ability for wider learning from issues across the breadth of the Council.

Customer First – Our Transformational Journey



Our transformational journey to achieving the Customer First Vision and Strategy will be undertaken through the Customer First Transformation Programme.

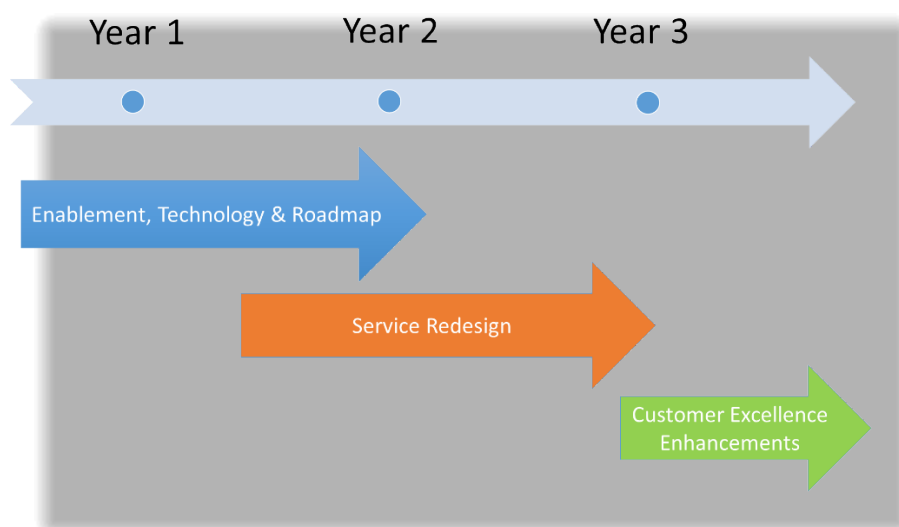
The aim of our Customer First Transformation Programme is to:-

“Identify and Deliver a stream of projects which enables the Council 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”.

The anticipation is that this programme will take around three years; and will deliver a range of projects against each of the six Pillars of Customer First. The programme will be delivered in three phases, focussed on (1) Enablement, Roadmap decisions and Technology, (2) Service Redesign, and (3) Achieving Customer Excellence.

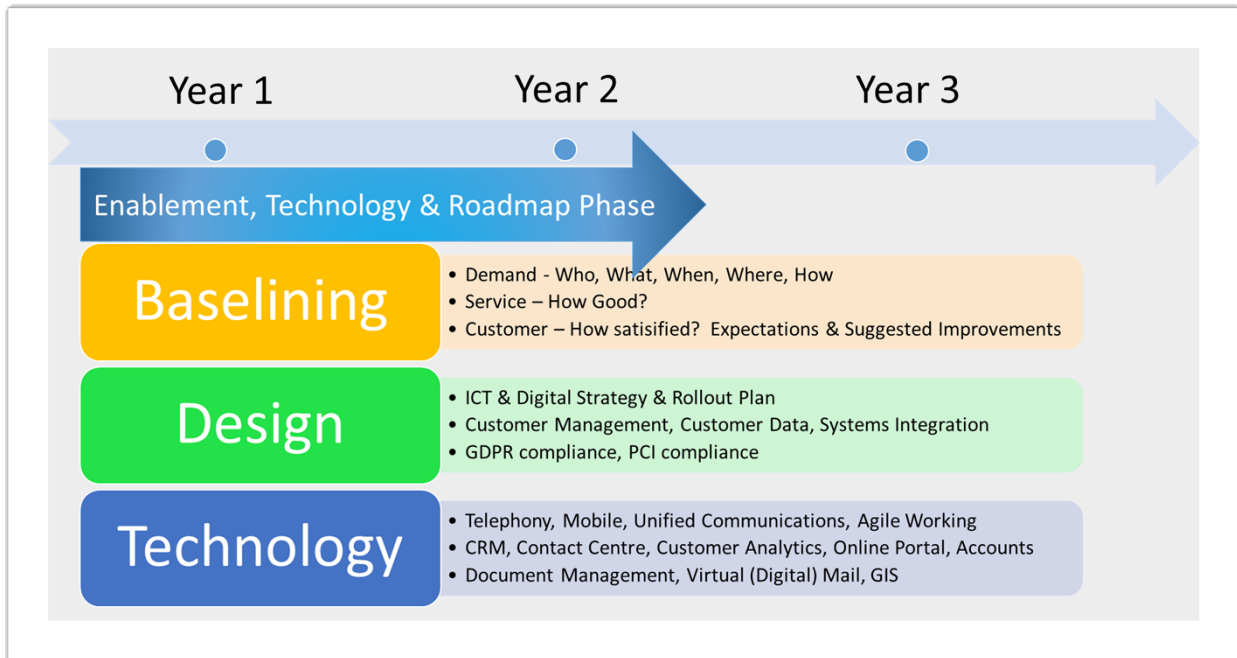
The following diagram shows the anticipated timeline for each of those phases.



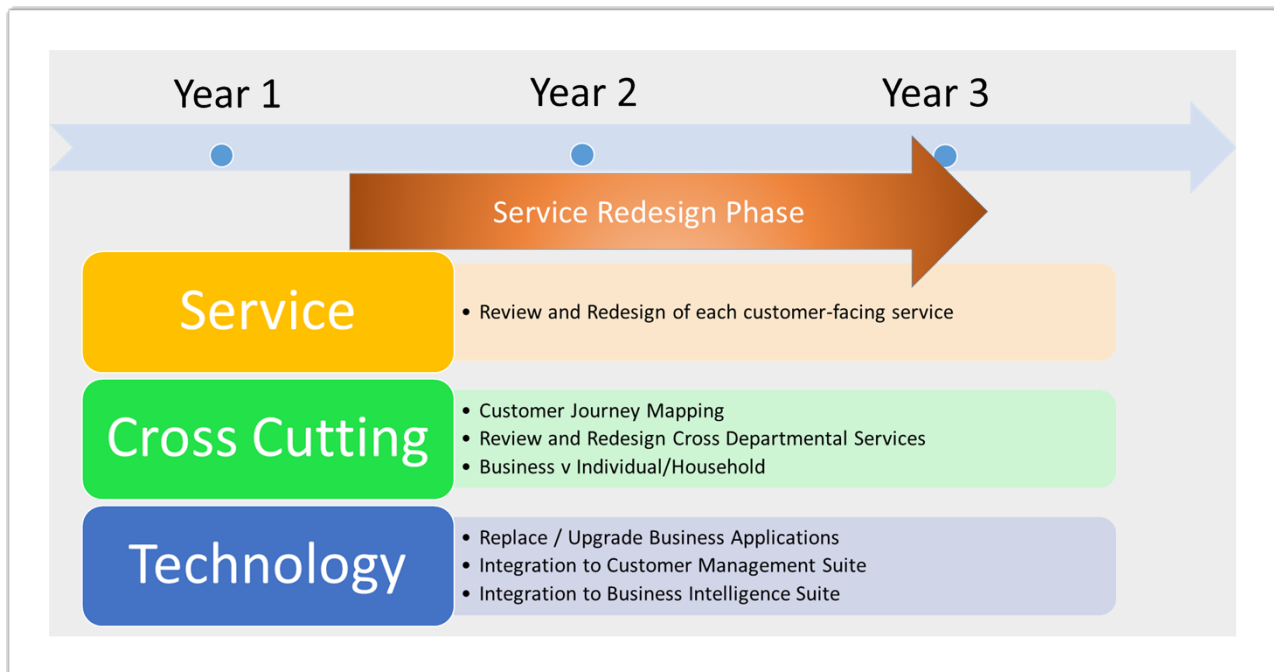
Customer First Transformation Programme Timeline and Phasing Strategy

The following diagrams provide more detail on the anticipated set-up and scope of the first two Phases. The third phase will be scoped closer to the time, as this will be based on enhancements to the outcomes from the first two phases.

Phase 1 Roadmap



Phase 2 Roadmap



The full breakdown of projects within each of the phases can be found within the Customer First Programme Dossier.