



**TRAFFORD**  
**COUNCIL**

**Customer Strategy**

**Post Consultation Report**

**August 2013**

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## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Customer Strategy is one of the key documents for the Council and sets out the ways the Council will adapt to the challenges it faces and what customers can expect from a forward thinking and innovative council. The Customer Strategy should not be viewed in isolation, it is closely linked to and has a dependency on other work taking place across the Council, namely the development of the new website, a new Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system and new operating models.
- 1.2 This paper reports on the outcomes of the Customer Strategy public consultation and provides recommendations for the Councils Executive to consider. Consultation with staff and partners was also undertaken and a list can be found in Appendix 1
- 1.3 The draft Customer Strategy, the subject of the consultation, was developed by talking to and taking account of the views of customers, staff and partners to ensure that the Strategy was not developed in a vacuum and that it had a basis in reality
- 1.2 An Equality Impact Assessment was prepared to accompany the Strategy and can be found in Appendix Two

## 2.0 Purpose and scope of the public consultation

- 2.1 The purpose of the consultation was to engage people who live, work or study in Trafford in understanding and providing feedback on the proposed Customer Strategy.
- 2.2 The public consultation took place over 6 weeks (2<sup>nd</sup> July 2013 – 12<sup>th</sup> August 2013) and its purpose was to ascertain public opinion on the Priorities for Change as outlined in the Strategy, namely:

- Putting customers first
- Making every contact count
- Learning and engagement
- Working together
- Customers online

In addition respondents could add comments about the proposed changes to the complaints process and any general comments.

## 3.0 Methodology

- 3.1 A range of approaches were used to capture the response to the Customer Strategy;

- An email outlining the Strategy and a link to the questionnaire was sent to over 800 Trafford residents and businesses
- All consultation documentation including the questionnaire was available on Trafford Councils website <http://www.trafford.gov.uk/consultation>
- An email address was provided for any requests for information.
- Hard copies of all the documentation was available at all Trafford Libraries and other Council buildings

Alternative formats and languages of background documentation were available on request

Meetings were held with internal Council departments and partners

A phone number and text link was also provided to enable people to discuss the proposals should they wish to

Publicity was carried out via social media, posters in libraries and a press release

## 4.0 Consultation Feedback

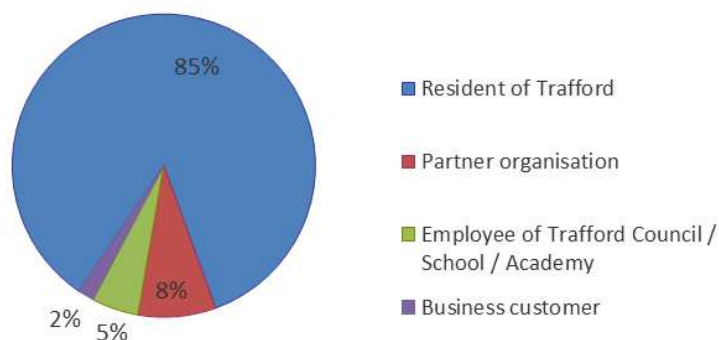
### 4.1 Response Rate

The response rate was as follows;

205 public responses to the consultation via the online survey  
5 calls to the consultation phone number

### 4.2 Overall responses

The majority of responses were from Trafford residents which made up 85% of the total. The chart below provides a breakdown of the response types.



### 4.3 Putting Customers first

*Ensuring that customers are kept up to date on where their query is up to and being honest and open about the way we work.*

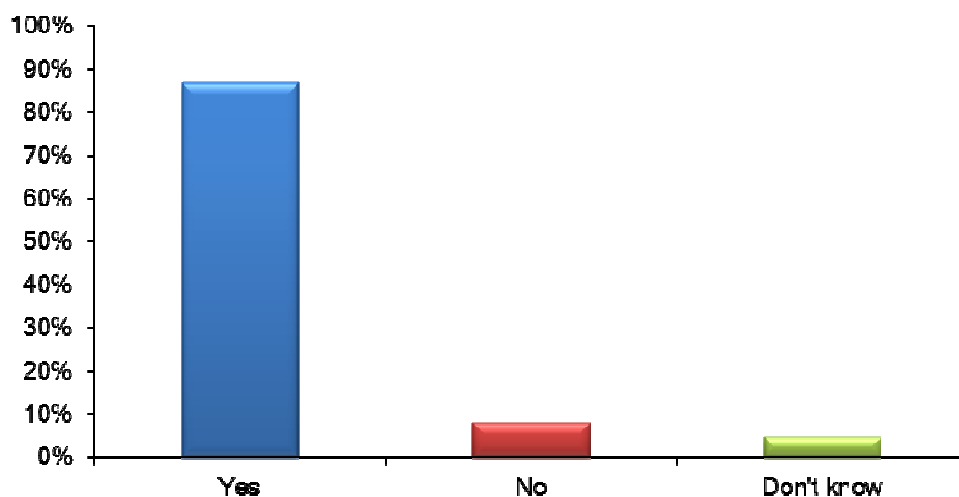
*Improving our methods of communication and ensuring feedback is two-way, makes sense and happens regularly.*

*We will;*

- *Keep the information on our website up to date*
- *Increase the range of services we provide via our website*
- *Improve how we use social media such as Facebook and Twitter*
- *Explore new ways to develop personal budgets for social care support*
- *Improve how we communicate*

We asked "Do you think that our plans to put customers first will improve the customer experience?"

The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 87% answering yes, 8% no and 5% don't know.



Feedback:

There were 53 free text responses received, the top themes for the comments were as follows:

The Council needs to continue providing a variety of ways to contact the Council,  
The Strategy will only work with sufficient resource to implement it

Response:

We will be working to receive and provide feedback through an increased range of methods such as SMS text messaging, emails and social media. From our improved information about customers we will be able to target this in more refined way, for instance customers who have hearing impairment will be able to communicate with us via SMS text messages. The Council is committed to ensuring there is resource to implement improvements and will work with partners to achieve this.

#### 4.5 Making every contact count

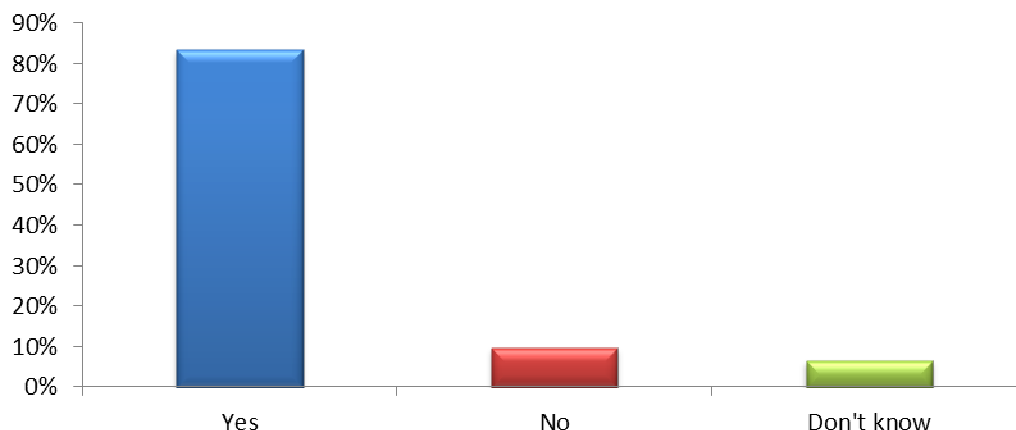
*Working with partners to ensure customers can access the right information in the right place at the right time.*

*We will;*

- *Provide consistent information and advice across our services*
- *Offer more Council and Partner services at Sale Waterside*
- *Have staff available to provide telephone or face to face support for more difficult queries*

We asked “Do you think our plans to make every contact count will improve the customer experience?”

The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 84% answering yes to the question, 10% no and 6% don't know.



#### Feedback:

There were 30 free text responses received, the top themes were as follows:

Provide more locations than Sale Waterside and provide a free telephone number for those who cannot travel

Ensure that a variety of formats are available such as braille and large print for the disabled

#### Response:

As part of the Information and Advice review there will be a central point of access at Sale Waterside but also outreach locations in the other locality board areas. This will ensure that customers can access information and advice at a location more convenient for them.

From our improved information about customers we will be able to contact disabled customers in a more refined way, such as providing information in braille or large print.

## 4.6 Learning & Engagement

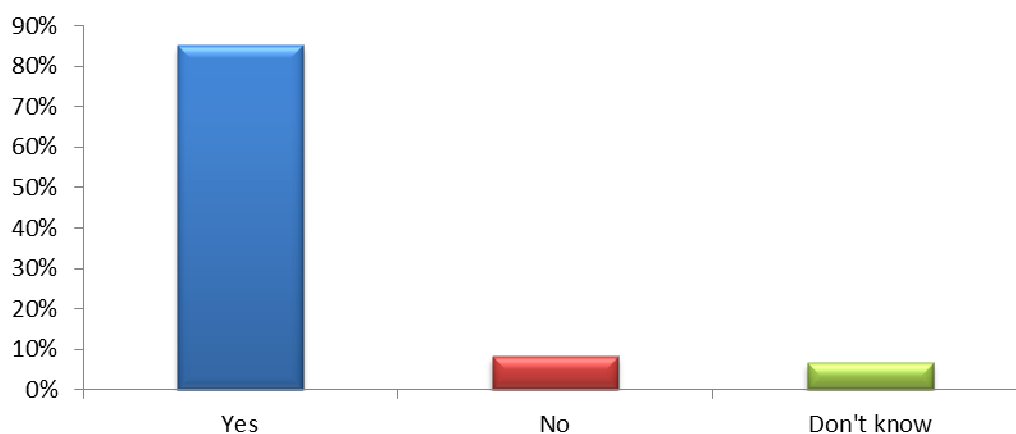
*Building and maintaining a culture of customer service excellence across the Council and with partners.*

*We will;*

- *Train and develop our staff to increase levels of knowledge*
- *Review our telephone policy which sets out how we handle customer enquiries*
- *Aim to achieve the Customer Service Excellence standard*

We asked “Do you think that our plans to learn from and engage with customers will improve the customer experience?”

The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 85% answering yes to the question, 8 % no and 7% don't know.



**Feedback:**

34 free text responses were received; the common themes were as follows:

Improvements are required in this area

Will need to be enough staff/councillors with the right skills and on-going training

This should already be standard practice

**Response:**

Improvements in customer service will be made by focussing on these skills with all staff, both when new start and refresher training for those already in place.

The training will take place on an on-going basis to ensure continuity  
Achieving Customer Service Excellence will show that the Council and partners are providing a nationally recognised standard of service for customers.

#### 4.7 Working Together

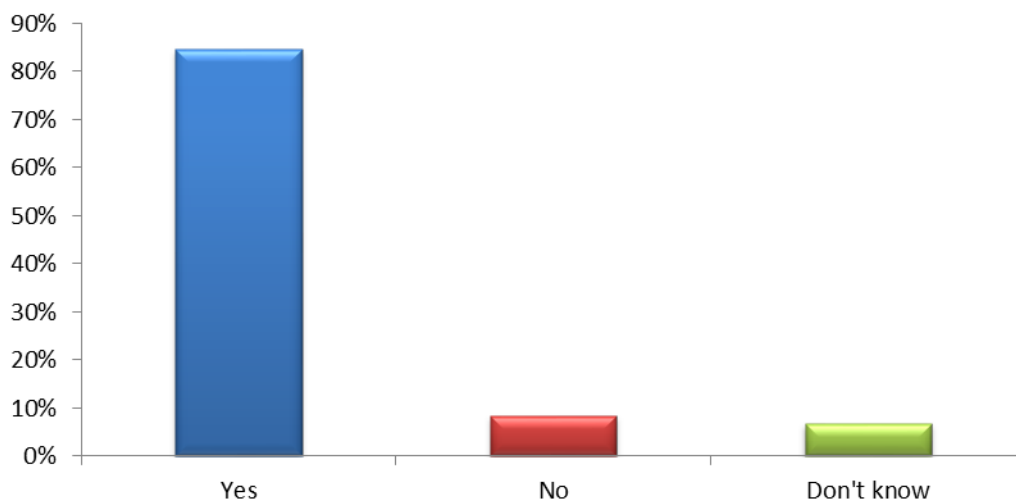
*Getting better at the ways we gather and use customer feedback and learn from customers' experience, to improve services and the impact they have.*

*We will;*

- *Create a customer insight group to discuss proposed changes to Council services*
- *Identify trends and issues highlighted by customers*
- *Work with communities to address local needs*

We asked “Do you think that our plans for working together will improve the customer experience?”

The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 85% answering yes to the question, 8% no and 7% don't know.



Feedback:

22 free text responses received, the common themes are as follows:

Have meetings with customers

Only interested people will join insight group so results will be skewed / outcomes will vary across the borough

Response:

The members of the Customer Insight Group will reflect the wider Trafford communities

There will be a number of ways in which feedback will be gathered and meetings may be one of those. However using a variety of methods including social media will enable the Council to gather information quickly and easily.



#### 4.8 Customers online

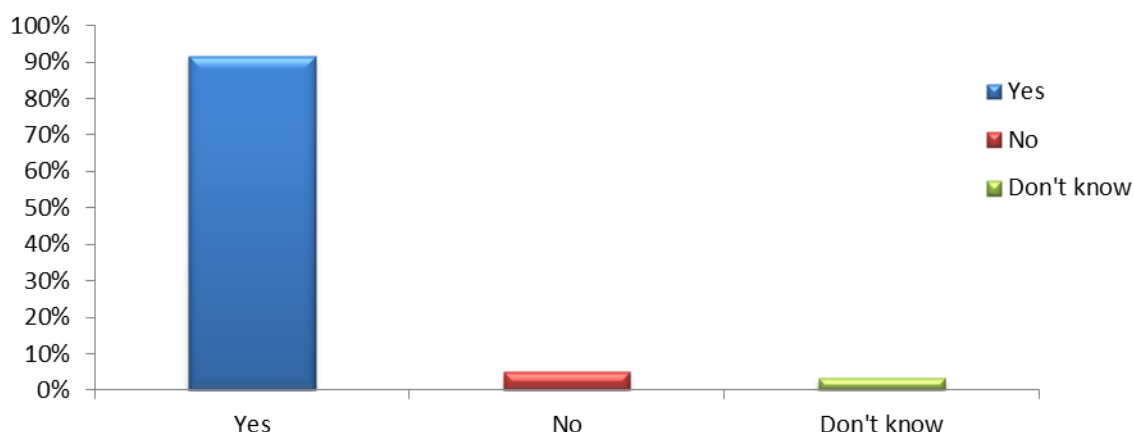
Supporting an increase in online activity, particularly in communities where people are less likely to go online or for customers who have particular access requirements. Increasing the range of online services we offer to increase the level of self-service activity by our customers; whilst avoiding a 'one size fits all' approach by designing the website with customers to meet their needs.

We will;

- Provide training and support via our Go on Gold training programme for elderly and disabled customers
- Increase the number of free Council Wi-Fi venues
- Introduce new options for contacting the Council such as video and audio links
- Work with partners to help more businesses get online

We asked "Do you think our plans to help more people access services online will improve the customer experience?"

The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 92% answering yes to the question 5% no and 3% don't know.



Feedback:

33 free text responses received, the common themes are as follows:

- Many people are not computer literate / may find it difficult to learn / are not going to be persuaded by a training programme
- Have free Wi Fi / online access at libraries
- Proposals / Go on Gold programme will benefit the elderly

Response:

- We will be working with partners and Council services to ensure that people can access any training they require
- Wi-Fi will be available in all libraries by December 2013 and additionally printing from Wi-Fi will be available
- The Go on Gold scheme will also benefit disabled customers.

## 4.9 Complaints

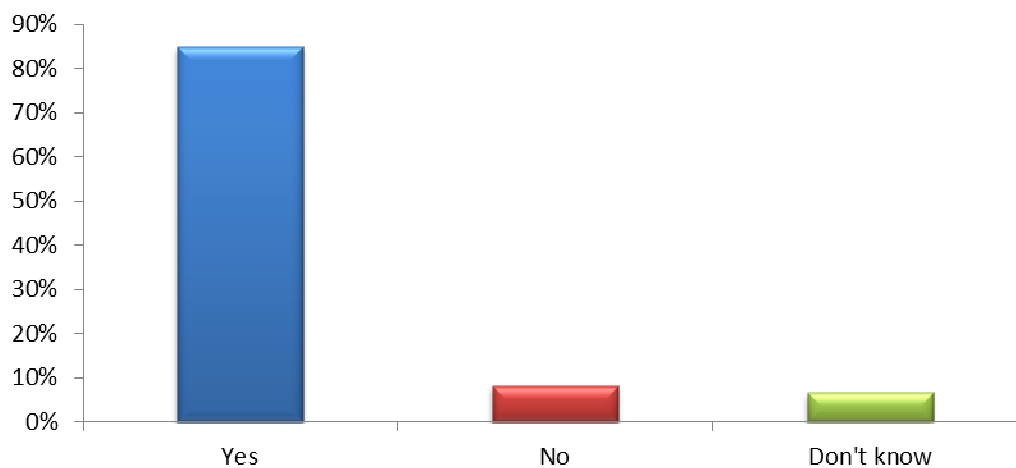
*Following feedback from customers, we plan to improve how we handle complaints.*

*We will:*

- *Improve the website and online forms to make them easier to use*
- *Work with customers to resolve complaints as quickly as possible*
- *Simplify the process of making and tracking complaints*
- *Learn from the complaints we receive*

We asked “Do you think that our new approach to handling complaints will improve the customer experience?”

The majority of respondents were in favour of the proposals with 85% answering yes to the question, 8% no and 7% don't know.



### Feedback:

31 free text responses were received with the top common themes as follows:

To make this work staff must be committed and provided with sufficient knowledge and skills to provide resolve complaints effectively

The Council must learn from complaints, it doesn't seem like the Council has learned from complaints in the past

Face to face meetings may be required to resolve complaints

### Response:

All staff who deal with complaints will be supported with training which will improve the way they

The inclusion of a 'you said, we did' page on the Council website as well as 'we couldn't because' will show what the Council has changed as a result of complaints. It will also be more transparent in what cannot be changed.

A variety of methods will be employed to resolve complaints, including face to face meetings where required.

## **5.0 Feedback from staff and partners**

As part of the consultation process staff and partners were encouraged to give their feedback. A selection of comments is included below;

### **Putting Customers First**

The group suggested that we should also have 'we couldn't because...' information. This would openly and transparently justify decisions made 'You said we did' is a great addition - this is something focussed on in health and I understand consideration is being given to a 'we can't because' which I think is a marvellous idea and shows that the Council is strong enough to stand up and say 'we can't do that and this is why' a brilliant concept.

### **Making Every Contact Count**

A review of who should be a member of the customer delivery group to include partners, such as the Clinical Commissioning Group to be involved as 'Making every contact Count' is heavily partner dependent. This is very much in line with the collaborative principles of the new organisational model.

### **Learning and Engagement**

We would want to work with the Council to ensure we all strive for a common aim of customer service excellence.

### **Working Together**

The Locality Partnerships will be an important aspect way of gathering and disseminating information from and to residents

### **Customers Online**

Once the Wi-Fi hotspots are in place in libraries, can we publish/promote a map of these on the website but also include those provided for free by partners e.g. Trafford Leisure Trust, Housing Trust, GMPTE.

## **6.0 Recommendations**

Based on the results of the public consultation The Executive is asked make the following recommendations;

- 6.1** To note the feedback and responses to the draft Customer Strategy
- 6.2** To adopt the Customer Strategy from October 1<sup>st</sup> 2013

## **7.0 Appendices**

### **Appendix A: Consultation meetings with staff and partners**

Corporate Management Team

Directorate Management Teams;  
Children Families and Wellbeing (CFW)  
Economic Growth and Prosperity (EGP)  
Environment, Transport and Operations (ETO)  
Transformation and Resources (T&R)

CFW Wider Leadership Group  
CFW Business Delivery Programme Board

Transformation Board

Customer Service Group

Town Partnerships/Locality Boards  
Stretford Town Partnership  
Urmston Town Partnership  
Sale West Partnership  
All Locality Boards

Strong Communities Board

Joint Strategic Commissioning Group

Head of Customer Care and Experience, NHS Trafford Clinical Commissioning Group

Trafford Park Shadow Board

Voice of BME

Deaf Partnership

Disability Action Group

Trafford Information Network

School SLA Meeting Group