

STROUD DISTRICT COUNCIL

COUNCIL

THURSDAY, 21 JULY 2022

Report Title	OUR SERVICE STANDARDS			
Purpose of Report	To consider Our Service Standards for approval and adoption.			
Decision(s)	Council RESOLVES to endorse the decision made by the Community Services and Licensing Committee to: a) Adopt ‘Our Service Standards b) Report performance data annually to Audit and Standards Committee and Community Services and Licensing Committee; and c) Approve any future amendments to the standards at Community Services and Licensing Committee and amend the terms of reference of the Community Services and Licensing committee in Article 8 of the Constitution accordingly.			
Consultation and Feedback	Consultation has been outlined in Section 2 of this report.			
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Options				
Background Papers	N/A			
Appendices	Appendix 1 – Our Service Standards			
Implications (further details at the end of the report)	Financial	Legal	Equality	Environmental
	No	No	No	No

1 INTRODUCTION

On the 23rd June 2022, Community Services and Licensing Committee approved the Corporate Care Standards to be recommended for adoption at Council. The decision was passed unanimously with an amendment that performance data is reported annually to both Audit and Standards Committee and Community Services and Licensing Committee. The proposal to rename the standards to Our Service Standards was accepted and will be referred to as such moving forward.

1.1 BACKGROUND

Following the LGA Corporate Peer Challenge in 2019, work commenced to develop our over-arching vision and strategies to take us on our journey from a “good” council to an

“exemplar leader in place”. In the preceding months we saw the emerging signs of a global pandemic and in March 2020 saw our lives change overnight with a national lockdown announced.

- 1.2 As an organisation we took swift and necessary action to ensure access to our services were maintained and we were able to support our community through what we now know to be a long and difficult time for everyone.
- 1.3 The success of our response to the pandemic was evidenced in the Council’s Customer Survey 2021 with *68% residents stating they strongly agree/ agree that SDC has supported the community during the pandemic*.
- 1.4 As we emerge from the pandemic, we know we have a lot more to do to ensure we learn from our experiences during this time and invest in improving our services to the benefit of all our customers.
- 1.5 This is defined within our Council Plan where we commit to putting our communities at the heart of our decision making, how we design our services and listen and engage with our communities. This is reflected in the following objectives:
- 1.6 **(CW 3.1)** - Develop a Community Engagement Strategy, which incorporates the Council’s Hear by Right Commitment for young person’s involvement and ensures the voice of the community and key stakeholders is at the heart of council priorities.
- 1.7 **(CW 3.2)** - Improve customer service for residents by procuring a Digital Platform that provides for centralised first contact ensuring an easier access to services and that provides additional support for those with complex needs
- 1.8 Our Fit for the Future modernisation programme is leading on many of our improvement initiatives and progress is well underway. However, feedback from our communities and elected members pointed out some inconsistencies in the service received when contacting differing service areas across the organisation.
- 1.9 It was identified that we needed to develop a set of corporate standards that reflect what our communities should expect when they access our services, including response times.
- 1.10 The importance of publishing these standards is to ensure our communities are informed and we are working as One Council towards a clear set of standards that reflect our current contact channels.
- 1.11 As we move forward with the implementation of our modernisation programme, we will have an opportunity to reflect, review and improve on the standards in line with our Council Plan.

2. DEVELOPMENT OF STANDARDS

- 2.1 In November 2021 a cross party working group was formed with following objective: Develop and implement corporate standards that reflect our current contact channels, including what our customer should expect from us and response times and allow us to

develop these as we introduce new and improved contact channels for our community as part of our 'Fit for the Future' programme. The member group included:

- Cllr Gordon Craig
- Cllr Colin Fryer
- Cllr Norman Kaye
- Cllr Loraine Patrick
- Cllr Mattie Ross
- Cllr Ken Tucker

2.2 Working with the council officer project team a draft set of standards were developed and consultations were held with the following groups:

- Strategic Leadership Team
- Leadership & Management Team
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion working group
- Tenant representatives
- Alliance Leadership Team

2.3 A full member survey was launched on 20th May 2022 asking for feedback and comments on the final draft of the standards.

2.4 A full member briefing was held on 7th June 2022 to discuss feedback received during the consultation period and the additions and amendments made to the standards as a result:

The following feedback was received, and changes noted below:

General Comments:
<p>Very comprehensive Overall, I like the tone Nicely readable I very much like the look of the document Very happy with the content and layout. All the things I would like to see in the Standards has been captured but would recommend that the document is reviewed annually to ensure it stays fresh and fit for purpose.</p>

You said:	We will:
Corporate Care Standards – could be deemed jargon	Change to Our Service Standards
Some of the language could be deemed jargon/ difficult to read	Once adopted produce an “Easy read” version of Our Service Standards.
The response time is unacceptably long	Report to Audit & Standards on an annual basis. With the implementation of the digital platform, we will have more meaningful data to be able to report performance against these response times.

3 OUR SERVICE STANDARDS

3.1 The proposed service standards (**Appendix 1**) set out our commitment to our communities and outline what they should expect from their experience with us.

3.2 Our Service Standards will be adopted and embraced across the Council and will help us focus on providing an excellent and consistent customer experience for all. The standards include the following:

1) Customer care principals, these are:

- Helpful
- Fair and honest
- Friendly and understanding
- Accessible to all

2) Response times for all our contact channels, this informs our community what they can expect from us when they:

- Phone us
- Email us
- Send us a letter
- Make an enquiry online
- Contact us via social media
- Visit us or we visit them
- Give us feedback
- Submit a request for information

3.3 These standards provide all service areas with a framework to follow and ensure we are all working as one council when our communities contact us.

3.4 Response times for all contact channels provide a maximum timeframe. We will always endeavour to respond as soon as possible and keep these timeframes under review.

3.5 As with other published documents, Our Service Standards will be produced in English and can be translated to other languages on request.

4 CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

4.1 Once adopted by Full Council the standards will be rolled out to all existing staff and new staff as part of their induction programme. The future re-set of Customer Services as recommended in the recent LGA Corporate Peer Review feedback report will embed a culture of customer focus across all services and introduce a customer service training programme for all front-line staff.

4.2 In addition, we will utilise the feedback we receive from our communities, telephony data and the monitoring of complaints to ensure we are continually improving on the service we are providing.

- 4.3** It is an ambition of the Fit for the Future Programme with the implementation of the digital platform to improve access to our services by increasing channels and introducing automated acknowledgements, so customers know their requests have been received and are kept up to date with the status of their updates. The Digital Platform will enable us to have better visibility of the service requests received and the time it takes to resolve the enquiry.

The digital platform will allow us to implement a more robust reporting system to provide increased visibility, understanding and oversight into service performance to enable us to make improvements, support demand planning and resource management.

5 PERFORMANCE REPORTING

- 5.1** We will be developing performance reports for managers to ensure they are aware of how their teams are performing and if necessary, take action or provide explanation.
- 5.2** Performance data will be presented to Audit and Standards Committee and Community Services and Licensing Committee on an annual basis.

6 IMPLICATION

6.1 Financial Implications

There are no financial implications arising directly from the report.

Actions taken will be subject to proper financial evaluation and reported to Committee as appropriate.

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6.2 Legal Implications

There are no legal implications arising from the content of this report or its recommendations.

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6.3 Equality Implications

There are no equality implications arising from the report itself. The equality implications of actions taken will be considered by Committee as appropriate.

6.4 Environmental Implications

There are no environmental implications arising from the report itself.