



Overview and Scrutiny

Resident Experience

Date: 9 September 2021

Key decision: No

Class: Part 1

Ward(s) affected: All

Contributors: Assistant Chief Executive; Head of Insight, Transformation and Organisational Development; Director of IT and Digital Services; Head of Corporate Customer Relations

Outline and recommendations

This report sets out an introduction to the Resident Experience Programme that will improve the experiences of our residents in their interactions with the Council.

Overview and Scrutiny is recommended to:

- Note the contents of this report;
- Hear from, and ask questions of, Matt Huxley (31Ten Consulting);
- Provide any pre-scrutiny and insight at this early scoping stage, focusing on these key questions:
 - What do our residents want from us?
 - What areas of good practice do we have currently (that could be replicated across the council)?
 - What should the priority areas for improving the resident experience be?
- Consider the options for further member engagement in the programme outlined in section 8.

Timeline of engagement and decision-making

The intention to make a priority of resident experience was set out to Full Council in February 2020, though the programme of work was subsequently delayed by the pandemic.

This report to Overview and Scrutiny, and associated call for evidence, is the first formal engagement since.

1. Summary

- 1.1. This paper provides an introduction to the Resident Experience Programme that officers are currently scoping. This will be a cross-cutting programme of work relevant to all areas of the Council's business, and with substantial opportunity to improve outcomes and advance equality for the residents of Lewisham.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1. Overview and Scrutiny is recommended to:
 - Note the contents of this report;
 - Hear from, and ask questions of Matt Huxley and 31Ten Consulting;
 - Provide any pre-scrutiny and insight at this early scoping stage focusing on these key questions:
 - What do our residents want from us?
 - What areas of good practice do we have currently (that could be replicated across the council)?
 - What should the priority areas for improving the resident experience be?
 - Consider the options for further member engagement in the programme outlined in section 8.

3. Policy Context

- 3.1. This work will enable all priorities of the Corporate Strategy, most explicitly Open Lewisham, as well as the organisational priority from the Chief Executive's paper to Full Council February 2020 to improve our resident experience, and supports the work of our Future Lewisham ambition.
- 3.2. The Council's values shape interactions and behaviours across the organisational hierarchy, between officers, and members, between the council and partners and between the council and residents. In delivering our duties, we are guided by the Council's four core values:
 - We put service to the public first
 - We respect all people and all communities
 - We invest in employees
 - We are open, honest, and fair in all we do.

4. Background

- 4.1. At the Council, we use the term resident to refer to the people we serve in our borough. It is an informal use of the term resident as it includes the borough's homeless

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population, business owners, workers and school children who may or may not have a fixed, Lewisham, home address. It is our language of choice to distinguish the relationship we have with those who make use of our borough and its services from transactional 'customers', passive 'service-users', or other common terms applied.

- 4.2. Everything we do as an organisation is in service of our residents. Whether this is activity we are required to undertake by law (our statutory services), activity we choose to undertake based on historic practice, evidence of impact, and expertise (our discretionary services) or activity we undertake to enable the delivery of those statutory and discretionary services, or those of partners like schools (our corporate services).
- 4.3. In order to improve our ability to better understand and serve our residents, the Chief Executive's restructure in early 2020 created the new Assistant Chief Executive's division.
- 4.4. As part of this division, two new services have been established through a restructure of the division: the Programme Management Office established in September 2020 and the Insight, Transformation & Organisational Development service established in July 2021.
- 4.5. Since September 2020, the division has been introducing new practices that improve the outcomes delivered from projects and programmes, improve our ability to transform in a manner that improves outcomes for residents and take a more user-centred and insight-led approach to service delivery and change.
- 4.6. These changes have been introduced through a number of initiatives such as the PMO approach being used to manage the Medium Term Financial Strategy programme, Overview & Scrutiny Task & Finish groups and the delivery of various projects through the Change Network as part of the Together Lewisham programme.
- 4.7. The Resident Experience programme will build upon these to mainstream the new approach, focusing on delivering tangible outcomes for residents through user-centred and evidence-led delivery and encompass the culture change being led through the new Organisation Development strategy.
- 4.8. In February 2020, the Chief Executive outlined her key priorities for the organisation to Full Council. Amongst these was 'improving our residents' experience' which was articulated as follows:

"There is a need to improve the experiences of our residents, ensuring consistency and quality. We must focus on understanding residents' perspectives, shaping our services around their needs. We need to make better use of technology to improve our online self-serve options so people can access and use our services at times and places that suit them. We need to make the digital experience so good that residents make a choice to interact with us that way."
- 4.9. Our resident experience is essentially any interaction that residents have with the Council and its provision. It is closely aligned to the idea of customer experience, but with constraints and additional responsibilities not faced by the private sector and rooted in a closer two-way relationship with each other and the place. It is also important to recognise that while for some elements of our business we are operating side by side with the private sector, and therefore a good resident experience is likely to make us more competitive and where we can strive to be the organisation of choice, there are also elements of our work which only we provide, and it is these elements where residents do not have choice, but where the experience can make the difference in their outcomes, wellbeing and self-worth that it is especially important we get the experience right.
- 4.10. Our resident experience programme is also an opportunity to be explicit about our commitment to equalities and demonstrate the values and activity we have committed to through our Single Equality Framework. Improving our residents' experience is about

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moving towards best practice across the piece especially in relation to the experiences of residents with protected and other equalities characteristics and the specific barriers and challenges they may face, or which may disadvantage or marginalise them, in accessing our services. The programme will therefore be particularly focused on ensuring this is tackled, through inclusive design and coproduction with those with lived experiences.

5. Programme development

- 5.1. Since the meeting of Full Council where this was established as an organisational priority, the Covid-19 pandemic has expedited the use of digital channels and altered the resident/council/partner relationship. We have better insight through the Voices of Lewisham work of the impact of the pandemic on our residents and have felt the benefits of community action. There is an opportunity now to build on this and its momentum as part of delivering Future Lewisham.
- 5.2. This programme of work will also support the Medium Term Financial Strategy to continue to achieve cost savings and efficiencies through a sustainable operating model which also improves outcomes for our residents. This work is one of the strategic drivers for ensuring all change and transformation is delivered with the resident experience at its centre, and that everything we do as an organisation on a daily basis is to serve the needs of our residents with kindness and compassion and in the most effective and efficient way. All of this is key to enabling us to continue to meet the needs of our residents within the ever-reducing financial envelope.
- 5.3. We are already signatories of the local digital declaration, have an established staff-led improvement programme, and have restructured our corporate centre to support evidence-led service transformation. We are now in a position to use the opportunities this brings to redesign our services end-to-end, that are centred around meeting the needs of all our residents, tackling inequality through our service delivery and design, across organisational boundaries.
- 5.4. Now, officers in the newly formed Insight, Transformation & Organisational Development service are working with the Programme Management Office, IT & Digital services and Corporate Customer Relations to progress to scope and define 'Resident Experience' as a programme of work, alongside progressing some of the key enablers we already know we will need. This will involve:
 - Defining the scope of the programme and a business case for the discovery phase
 - Developing a service design process
 - Establishing a change and transformation framework
 - Undertaking customer access reviews
 - A comprehensive data review inclusive of our data management, platforms and active directory
 - Two pilots to engage with residents on our Customer Service Standards and Digital Strategy, drawing on similar work done by Hackney, Brighton, Croydon, Birmingham, Gloucestershire and Essex local authorities
- 5.5. Three key developing strategies relate closely to this programme of work – our Digital Strategy, Organisational Development Strategy and Customer Service Strategy – and will be amplified by it. We will use opportunities on the programme to improve these strategies and further their objectives, for example delivering two pilots for engaging with residents around our Customer Service Standards and Digital Strategy.
- 5.6. Whilst the scope of the programme will be established during the scoping and definition phase, it is proposed this will centre around the following workstreams:

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- **Culture: training** and skills, awareness, living the values, performance measures, service standards, continuous improvement
- **Service redesign:** process redesign, removing avoidable demand, organisational structure, blurring organisational boundaries, operating models
- **Enabling infrastructure:** IT and digital enabling technology, infrastructure performance, maintenance and support
- **Data and insight:** data cleansing, golden record, data management protocols, data sharing, user research, qualitative insight – understanding our residents
- **Comms and engagement:** behaviour change, channel shift, reframing the resident/council relationship, awareness, resident involvement
- **Programme management and collaboration:** governance, approach, resourcing, costs, risks, benefits management, funding opportunities, opportunities for collaborating with partners

6. Hearing from others

- 6.1. Matt Huxley and Rahul Rana from 31Ten Consulting have been invited to attend tonight's meeting to share their experience. They have been working with local authorities to develop and deliver improved resident experiences and facilitate discussions on a variety of topics such as an agile council. Their report "Service Transformation Savings Research" produced with London Councils is included at Appendix 2.
- 6.2. Lou Downe, the author of 'Good Services' is an expert in service design and how to ensure that services work well and are user focussed. Her work was recommended to us by the Local Government Association and Members may be interested in holding a session with Lou as part of taking the Council's resident experience work forward.

7. Next steps

- 7.1. The programme will be assured by the PMO and report into the Strategic Change Board. Programme governance will be set up as part of initiation. As one of the Chief Executive's priorities and a key organisational piece of work, the Chief Executive is the programme sponsor and strategic SRO, with the Director of Planning as operational SRO to delegate some activity to as required.
- 7.2. A call for evidence was sent to Overview & Scrutiny Members ahead of this meeting, the outcomes of which will be considered as part of the scoping and development of this programme. The feedback received is summarised in Appendix 1.
- 7.3. There will be an ongoing role for members to inform the evidence base for this work from their experiences working with and representing residents, as well as opportunities for resident engagement and coproduction, as part of our dual commitment to user-led design and improving equality through our work.
- 7.4. Members are especially well-placed to shape this work as it is about the relationship that the Council they oversee has with the residents they represent. Experiences and insights members have from casework, surgeries and wider resident engagement are critical to the evidence-led approach officers are taking.
- 7.5. Following this committee meeting, officers will complete the scoping activity and associated accelerators and pilots over the coming months with a view to having a fully scoped and defined programme in early 2022 to begin delivery in full.

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8. Options for further Member engagement

8.1. Overview and Scrutiny are requested to consider the following:

- Engaging Lou Downe for a session with Members and Senior Officers on designing good services for residents.
- Holding themed workshops, similar to those held in relation to the Medium Term Financial Strategy in late 2020, with Members to deep dive into various key topics of interest to help shape the scoping of this programme.

9. Financial implications

9.1. There are opportunities, in improving our processes and structures around resident experience, to achieve cost savings, in line with the Medium Term Financial Strategy programme. This programme of work should result in a sustainable operating model, enabling us to continue to meet the needs of our residents within an ever-reducing financial envelope. Should Members wish to engage Lou Downe for a session on designing good services for residents, any associated costs could be met from the scrutiny budget.

10. Legal implications

10.1. There are no direct legal implications arising from this report.

11. Equalities implications

11.1. Improving our resident experience is about raising our standards for all residents and making sure that all interactions with the Council are positive, supportive, enabled and empowering. We have a diverse borough and need to take into account and design for the range of experiences and characteristics of our residents, mitigating barriers they may experience and reducing marginalisation through intelligent, inclusive design. This programme will actively engage with “seldom heard” residents as outlined in the democracy review.

12. Climate change and environmental implications

12.1. There are opportunities, in improving our processes and structures around resident experience, to design with climate in mind and strive for reduced transport, printing and other high polluting and resource intensive approaches, delivering environmentally friendly alternatives wherever possible – e.g. through reduced need for paper contact and in-person appointments.

13. Crime and disorder implications

13.1. There are no specific crime and disorder implications arising from this report.

14. Health and wellbeing implications

14.1. There is an opportunity to improve the wellbeing of our residents through an improved experience engaging with the Council, particularly for those who have higher than average need to interact with the Council or who may have had negative experiences with bureaucracy in their engagement public sector agencies. This will be an active consideration of the programme.

15. Background papers

15.1. [Chief Executive's Paper on Organisational Priorities to Full Council February 2020](#)

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16. Report author and contact

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Appendix 1: Summary of Member Feedback via the Call for evidence

Examples of good practice/service already in the Council:

Various examples of good service were mentioned including practice in highways, parks management, elections, waste management/street cleansing; planning objections; councillor casework.

The priority areas for improving the resident experience:

A number of Members suggested that the 'digital by default' trend had resulted in residents sometimes finding it difficult to speak to a live individual when contacting the council, which might be a particular issue for the elderly or those with specific needs that make digital communication difficult. Some Members felt that the option to speak to a council officer should always be made available and that there should be more consistency and higher standards in staff answering phones, responding to voicemail messages; and emptying voicemail boxes when full. Others suggested that priority areas for improvement should be: information technology, including a more navigable and accessible website; creating a safer environment for residents; and ensuring *all* residents, including vulnerable adults; refugees and young people, had a good experience when contacting the council. Training in understanding residents' access issues, financial difficulties and so on, might assist.

Good practice from elsewhere that should be considered as part of the improvement programme:

Suggestions included notable practice at Hackney which has a multidisciplinary customer service team which aims to improve customer journeys, manage customer access channels effectively and reduce costs; and has improved the way it provides digital services by examining and improving how residents register, login and reset passwords for particular digital services. Dorset County Council was also mentioned, which launched a programme in 2020 aiming to transform how they deliver services by rethinking services using co-design with residents and partners; making all services accessible; improving integrated travel options; delivering services in the right place, by making best physical and financial use of their estate; becoming an employer of choice and modernising the council so it is leaner, and more digital in the way it delivers services. A specific programme at Haringey council was also mentioned. In terms of good practice from the commercial world, Amazon was cited as a being a leader in customer service, where user experience is key. Amazon constantly tries to simplify its processes to improve the customer experience and reduce the number of customer contacts and complaints.