



Subject:	'Putting you first, Transforming customer experience' public consultations and equality screening decision
Date:	20 March 2020
Reporting Officer:	Ronan Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources and Deputy Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Rose Crozier, Customer Focus Programme Director

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Some time in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of report or summary of main Issues
1.1	The purpose of this report is to inform members of the <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Findings of the consultations on Council's 'Putting you First' customer vision • Outcome of the Equality Screening process.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	Members are asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To note the analysis of the public consultation via our website • To note the analysis of the public consultation at Belfast venues • To note the Equality Screening decision to screen out with mitigating actions (minor impacts).

3.0	Main report
3.1	<p>Members are reminded that at its meeting in November 2019. Council agreed to consult on our customer focus vision entitled ‘Putting You First, Transforming Customer Experience’. At that stage the Customer Focus Programme had undergone an initial screening and the recommendation was that we defer the final decision in relation to the outcome to allow for consultation feedback, including Section 75 groups. It was agreed that feedback from the consultation would be used, if applicable, to update the initial screening and then a view would be taken as to the best screening outcome decision. The vision, which is attached at Appendix 1, sets out how we plan to provide our customers with a quality and appropriate customer experience and service.</p>
3.2	<p>Understanding customers’ needs and expectations is an important part of our equality and customer research in order to help shape our customer experience. In keeping with the Council’s statutory obligations under equality and rural screening, two consultation methods have been used to date:</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">A -Public Consultation via council’s website using the Citizenspace platform B-Public Consultation at venues across Belfast</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A- Public Consultation (Citizenspace)</p>
3.3.	<p>The Citizenspace consultation commenced on the 11th November, 2019 and closed on 2nd February, 2020. It was promoted on our website, social media, and by email to approximately 180 stakeholder organisations and a number of presentations were made to equality groups. It was also widely promoted during the venue based consultations and to internal stakeholders on Intranet.</p>
3.3.1	<p>In total there were 39 responses to the Citizenspace survey of which 28% resided in North Belfast, 18% in South Belfast, 28% in East Belfast and 15% in West Belfast. 23% of respondents were male, 33% female (44% didn’t answer the question). Of the age groups that responded the biggest share was 35-44 year olds with 33%. Followed by 55-64 year olds at 13% (44% didn’t answer the question).</p> <p>The consultation’s questions included.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Customers’ opinions on the Programme’s Framework (14 Responses) 2. Customers’ opinions on the draft Customer Charter (8 responses) 3. Customers’ opinions on our customer experience principles (39 responses) 4. Customers were asked ‘<i>Are you aware of any equality, good relations or rural needs implications associated with our draft vision?</i>’ (36 responses)

5. Final comments or suggestions for improvement (11 responses)

3.3.2

Responses to Question 1-*Customers' opinions on the Programme's Framework*

There were 14 responses to this question. Responses were categorised as either, *A-Positive*, *B-Suggestions* or *C-Concerns*. In total there were five concerns raised. Two were relevant to the programme and are already being addressed as part of the programme's planning and implementation. Two were operational about our recycling service and street cleansing. Both of which will be raised with the relevant services as part of the 'you said, we did' approach.

3.3.3

Responses to Question 2 -*Customer's opinions on the draft Customer Charter*

There were 8 responses to this question, Again responses were categorised as either, *A-Positive*, *B-Suggestions* or *C-Concerns*. There was only one concern which was a wider statement around the customer focus programme's credibility and can be discounted as a general unsubstantiated comment.

3.3.4

Responses to Question 3- *Customers' opinions on our principles*

There were 39 responses to this question.

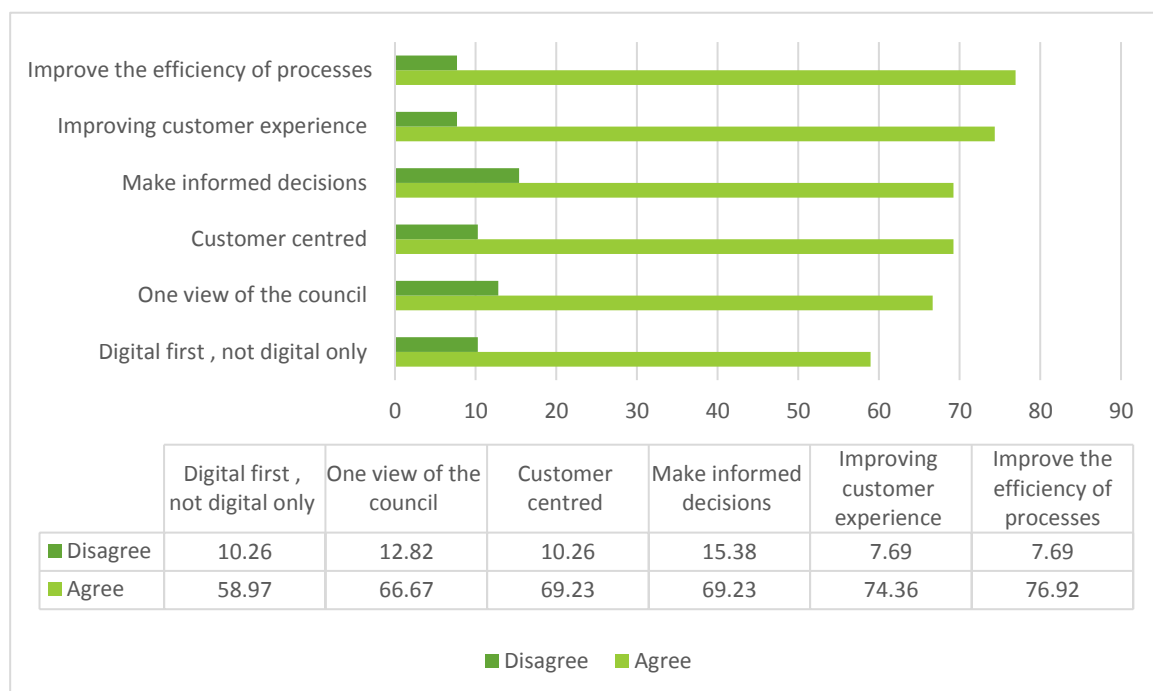
A key part of the Citizenspace questionnaire was to seek customers opinions on the customer focus programme's principles, as outlined in our vision as follows:

- **One view of the council**
Consistent joined-up approach underpinned by standards to get things right first time.
- **Customer Centred**
Customer centred to improve your customer experience so you receive a seamless joined up service, regardless of the issue.
- **Make informed decisions**
Provide greater insight and analysis to provide services that meet your needs, both now and in the future, by continuous review and improvement.
- **Digital first, not digital only**
Enable you to choose, making sure you have fair access to the services we provide, offering more self-serve opportunities and providing support if you need help to get online.
- **Improving customer experience**
Provide access to the right information at the right time and from anywhere. We will design our services around your needs.

- **Improve the efficiency of processes**

Give value for money and provide efficient services.

Fig 1- Customer Focus, Programme Principles, Agree or Disagree



3.3.5

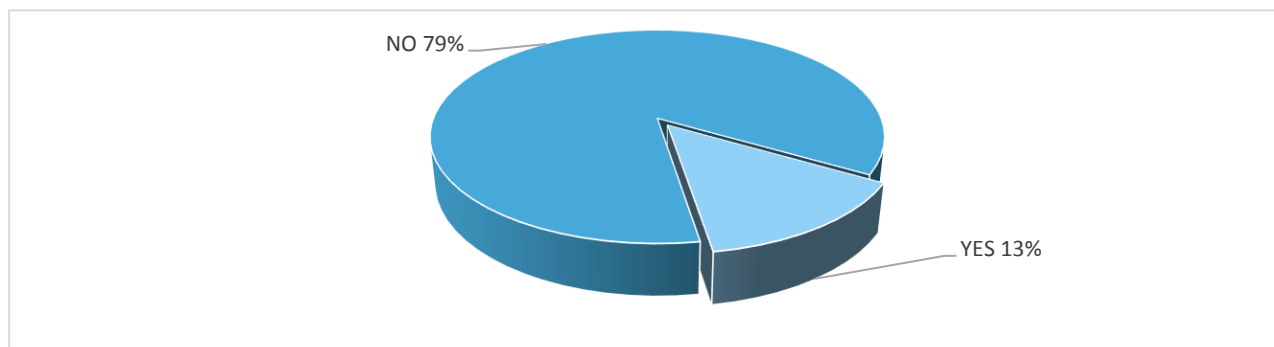
As can be seen from Fig 1 above, the vast majority of responses were in *favour* of *each* principle, and only a small percentage disagreed. The high levels of customer support for all six principles (identified as part of our outline business case and tested during the discovery and planning phases) strongly suggests customers have endorsed the principles as a sound basis for the customer focus programme going forward.

In particular, customers rated most highly *'improve efficiency of services'* followed closely by *'improving customer experience'* and *'make informed decisions'*. Given the importance of *digital first, not digital only* to the programme's long term success that this principle reached almost 60% agreement is both reassuring and significant.

As with previous questions additional comments provided by customers to Question 3 were categorised by—A *Positive*, B-*Suggestions* and C-*Concerns*. Six customers responded to this part of the question. One of the concerns raised (4 in total for Question 3) related directly to the vision and encouraged a multi-channel approach, otherwise they were general in nature and therefore, has not necessitated any amendments to the vision document. Any operational comments will be passed to services as appropriate as part of the 'you said, we did' approach.

3.3.6 Responses to Question 4 'Are you aware of any equality, good relations, or rural need implications associated with our draft customer vision?'

Fig 2- Customer Focus Programme, equality, good relations and rural needs implications



There were 36 responses to this question

Almost 80% of respondents did not identify any equality, good relations or rural implications. Additional comments were made by five customers, none of whom raised any concerns. However, there were four suggestions only two of which were relevant to the customer focus programme. One was highlighting digital exclusion being more prevalent in disadvantaged areas and secondly the need to engage with new and disadvantaged communities. The customer focus programme will provide for mitigating actions in both cases.

3.4 B-Public Consultation at Belfast venues

The venues based consultation took place in venues across the city from 13th to 24th January, 2020.

3.4.1 The locations chosen for the consultations were:

- Olympia Leisure Centre
- Grove Wellbeing Centre
- Kennedy Shopping Centre
- Girdwood Community Hub
- City Hall
- Connswater Shopping Centre

Sixteen staff in rota, drawn from the Customer Focus Delivery Board and Project Teams, facilitated the engagement at each venue. Marketing and research material was designed and printed including pop up stands, an explanatory/promotional leaflet and a postcard based questionnaire. It's a credit to all staff involved that a total of 425 members of the public were consulted over 11 sessions during the two week period. As a result further useful insights were gained in addition to

the Citizenspace consultation and the previous and comprehensive customer and stakeholder research already undertaken during the business case and discovery phases.

3.4.2

Our engagement with customers included explaining the merits of the customer focus programme and informing them of the full consultation available on-line while taking the opportunity to ask each customer three straightforward questions. Overall customers' attitude to the venues based consultation was overwhelmingly positive, friendly and willing to give of their time to answer the questions as best they could.

3.4.3

Two questions were quantitative and one was qualitative.

Question 1 was developed to inform our understanding of customers preferred contact channels while Question 2 was posed to get customer feedback on the key elements of the council's draft customer charter. Question 3 was designed to identify possible pain points and garner customers' ideas for improvement.

Question 1- *If you need to contact Belfast City Council what is your preferred way?*

- Telephone
- Face to Face
- Website
- Other

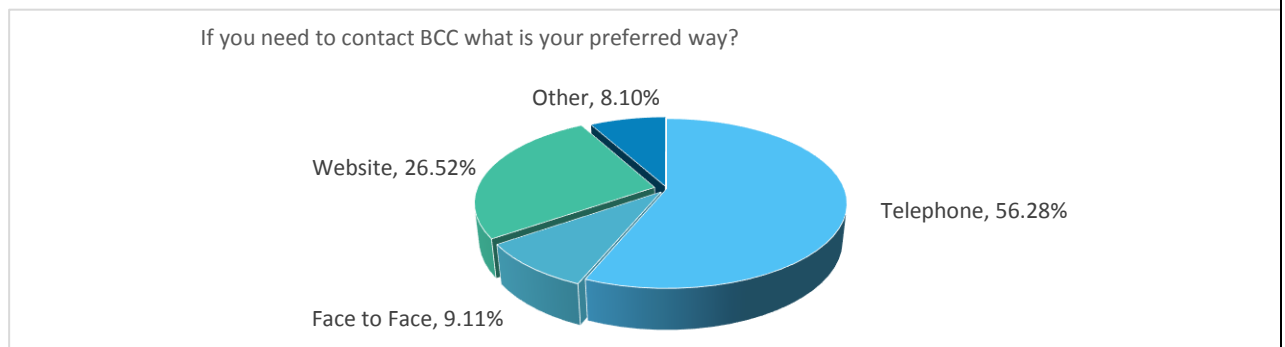
Question 2 - *What do you think should be the most important aspects of our customer service? Please rank 1-5 with 1 being the most important.*

- Value for Money
- Accessibility
- Knowledgeable Staff
- Speed of Response
- First Time Resolution

Question 3 - *Do you have any suggestions on how we can make your customer experience better?*

3.4.4

Fig 3- Venues Consultation Analysis -Question 1 Findings

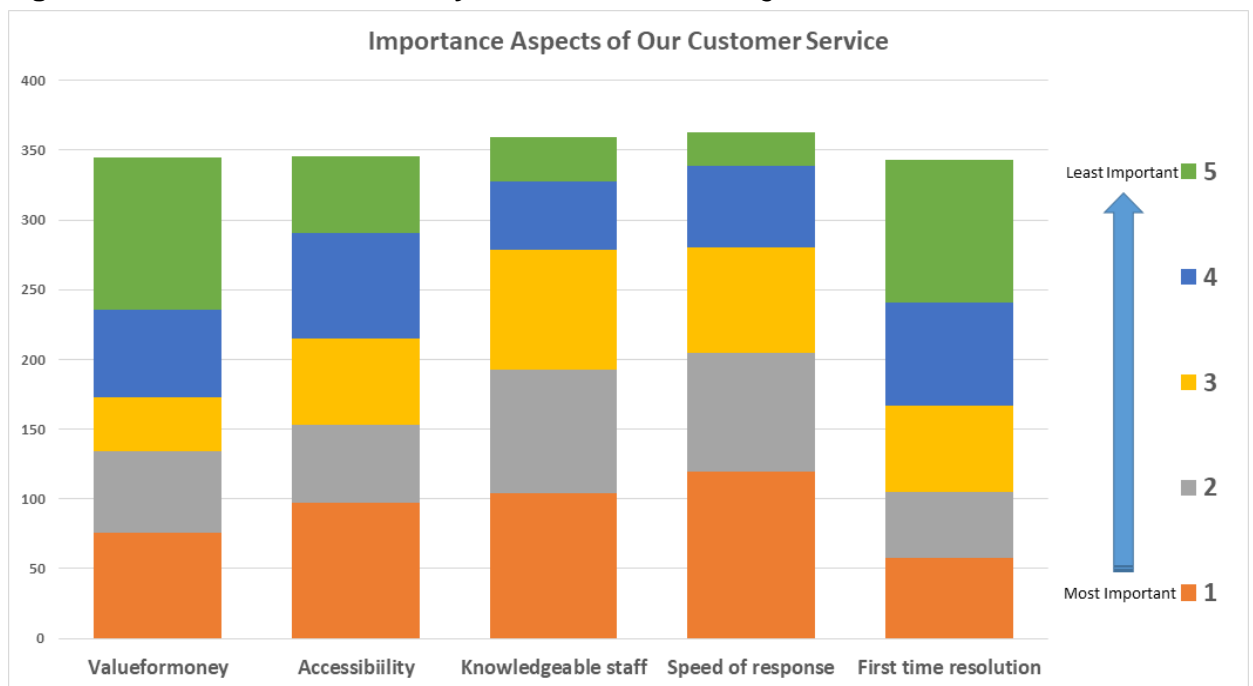


Question one demonstrated that by far the most preferred method to contact the Council is by telephone. It should be no surprise that almost 60% of respondents use or prefer this channel. 27% prefer on-line, followed by Face to Face with 9%. Other channels accounted for 8% and in the majority of cases email was their preferred choice.

This highlights and reinforces the customer focus programme's approach to provide customers with a well-designed and function-rich website which ensures Council's services are readily accessible and easy to use on-line. And, helps us focus on the challenge ahead in persuading customers to channel shift to on-line formats, from the more costly choices of telephone and face to face.

3.4.5

Fig 4 -Venues Consultation Analysis -Question 2 Findings



Overall the ranking produced a narrow deviation with only 6% separating the lowest and highest ranking choice. Importantly, accessibility was cited by 1 in 5 customers as important, again reinforcing the need for our web site to provide a wide range of services.

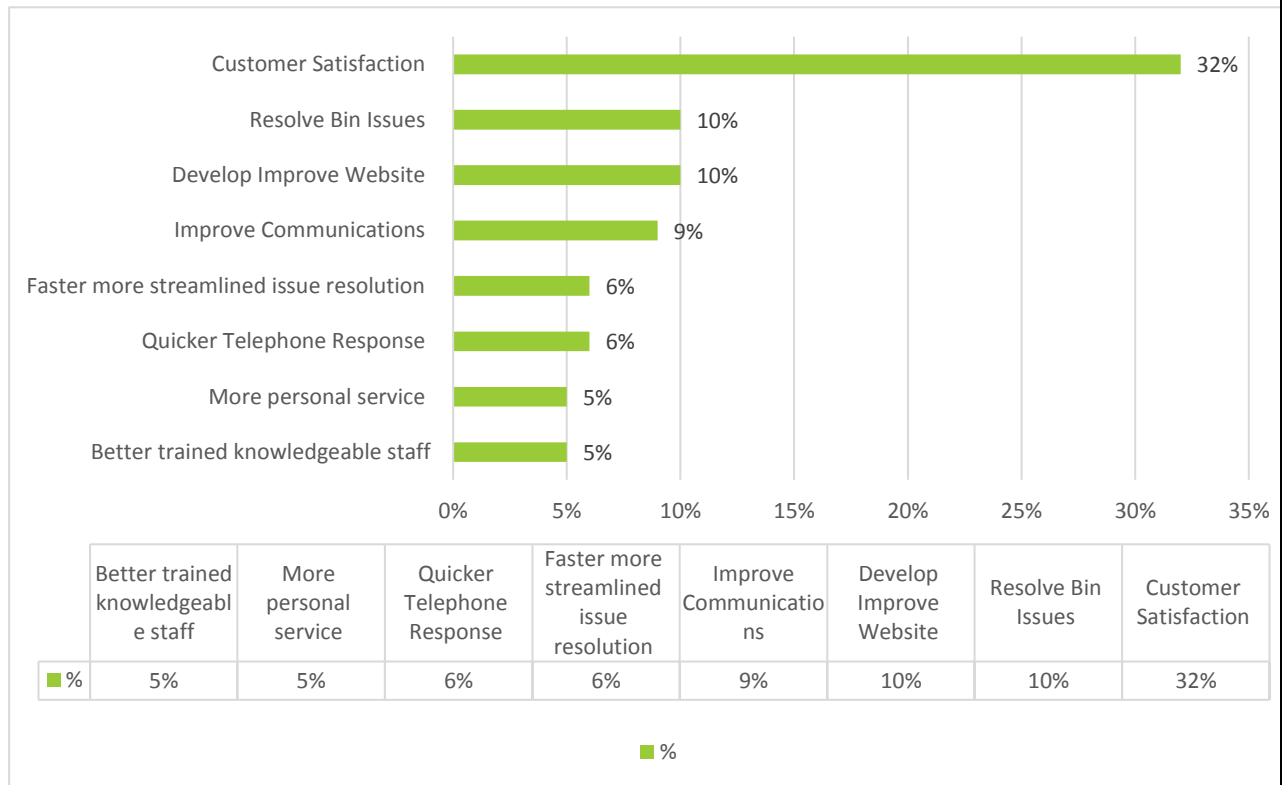
In order of preference (Ranking 1) the most important aspects of our service to respondents are;

- Speed of Response
- Knowledgeable Staff
- Accessibility
- Value for Money
- First Time Resolution.

By adding together *Speed of Response* and *First Time Resolution* demonstrates that 4 out of 10 customers value, above all else, their issues being resolved quickly and once and for all. Taking all five categories individually, Accessibility, Knowledgeable Staff and Speed of Response all had the highest percentages for Ranking 1, with 28%, 29% and 33% respectively. Value for Money and First Time Resolution had the highest percentage in Ranking 5 with 31% and 29% respectively.

3.4.6

Fig 5- Venues Consultation Analysis -Question 3 Findings



Following an in-depth review of the venues consultations' *qualitative* responses it is gratifying to report that the largest category was satisfied customers who were happy to put on record their satisfaction with a wide range of our services.

Figure 5 clearly sets out the areas of most importance to customers who were consulted. All of the categories listed above are an intrinsic part of the customer focus programme and when implemented will successfully address the issues recommended by customers.

3.5

Equality Screening

Our customer vision, '*Putting you first. Transforming Customer Experience*' sets out for customers how their customer experience will improve and develop and what level of service they can expect when engaging with us. It explains that Council is on a pathway of continuous improvement and that improving customer experience and service is a corporate priority and central to the successful

	<p>delivery of all our services. This is described in a number of <u>statements of intent</u> in our 'Putting you first. Transforming Customer Experience' vision and approved as a key principle from the customer programme business case undertaken by Deloitte Consulting in 2017.</p>
3.5.1	<p>The Putting You First consultation exercise should be considered an overall success providing useful insight into what customers' value in key aspects of customer experience and service. Equally, it shows first hand, that customers appreciate our seeking out their views and are more than willing to engage with Council in all aspects of the services we provide.</p> <p>Following the drafting of the equality screening in August 2019, it was agreed to defer the screening decision until public consultations were undertaken. As reported earlier the consultations took place from November 2019 to February 2020. A total of 464 customers were consulted directly and only minor impacts were identified or evidenced in the screening. Mitigating actions have already been identified and will remain under review for the duration of the programme. The document is sufficiently visionary not to warrant any amendments in light of the consultations, at this point.</p>
3.5.2	<p>Equality Screening Decision</p> <p>The screening decision, approved by the Equality & Diversity Officer, is <i>screened out with mitigating actions (minor impacts)</i>. The minor impacts relate to the racial (minor), religious belief (minor positive), age (minor positive), disability (minor positive) and dependents (minor positive), equality groups. In particular, this was highlighted as part of the consultation and engagement with the Migrant Forum. Mitigating actions will include use of language, accessibility improvements to the Council's on-line services, community based training and assistance and the more effective promotion and communication of all Council services and their impact on residents, amongst others.</p>
	Financial & Resource Implications
3.6	None at present
	Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment
3.7	Consultation is now complete and the recommendation is to screen out with mitigating actions.
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 Putting You First Vision document