

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet

Date: 19 September 2019

Subject: Customer Services Portfolio

Portfolio Holder: Councillor S Kane

Recommending:

That the report of the Customer Portfolio Holder be noted

1 The Digital Inclusion project undertaken with Citizens Online has reached fruition with the publication of a report which is due to be presented to the Stronger Communities Select Committee on 1st October 2019. The report enables the authority to produce a strategy that helps prioritise its resources to increase digital skills in our community. This work will be supported by a network of Digital Buddies within the Council and amongst partner organisations and volunteers.

2 Discussions are underway with the Essex Library Service to see how the digital inclusion work can also be integrated into the local library network. There are also discussions planned about other customer service opportunities in the future and I look forward to keeping Members updated as these progress.

3 The work of the Universal Credit Impact Working Group continues and there are plans to increase the number of Multi-Agency Centres (MACs) that operate within the District. These are traditionally organised by the DWP and are held in Loughton on the first Wednesday of each month. They exist as opportunities for Benefit claimants to meet with a number of agencies at the same time and include the DWP, EFDC, MIND, Peabody and Integration Support Services. The first extension to this service will be a MAC to be held in the future in Waltham Abbey. EFDC will take a lead with this MAC and will enable the services represented to have a greater EFDC reflection.

4. A new Customer Service Strategy is being developed and is due for a launch early next year. An outline presentation will be delivered to the Stronger Communities Select Committee on 1st October 2019 alongside a consultation process with customers and other stakeholders. The final document will be presented to a future Cabinet meeting.

5. Work is on-going to ensure that the digital solution offered to Members enables them to fulfil their duties as effectively as possible. Further improvements will be rolled out in the near future that will enable Members to receive EFDC e-mails on their personal devices whilst still complying with the audit report recommendation regarding Public Sector Network Compliance. A Digital Member Bulletin is planned to update Members on the coming changes. A further workshop session is also planned for Members on the 18th September 2019 for those who continue to need on-going training with the digital solution.

6. The implementation of a new Corporate Debtors system is progressing well and is on target for the planned implementation date of December 2019.