

Overview and Scrutiny Committee (26.06.2025)

Digital Peer Review/360 exercise had also given valuable insights, in addition to the results of customer surveys carried out by NWA Research.

Both strategies were included as appendices to the report.

The Committee was invited to scrutinise and assess the two strategies and provide feedback and recommendations to Council at its meeting on 10th July.

Customer and Digital Strategy 2025-2028

The Committee referred to the statistics provided on page 6 of the Strategy, in relation to the customer engagement survey. Particular reference was made to the statement that only one in ten of all those surveyed used the website and webforms to contact the Council and that telephone was still the preferred option. Members felt that it was important to understand if the contact had been successful/the function intended had been completed.

It was noted that staff feedback had not been included in the Strategy. It was explained that the staff survey had sought information on how residents contacted the Council and a summary of the general themes could be included if requested.

Page 8 of the Strategy referred to staff skills and the use of new equipment and technologies. It was suggested that, at this point, reference should be made to the ICT Strategy.

It was recognised that improvements to the website were needed and that these would be addressed in the delivery plan for the Strategy.

ICT Strategy 2025-2028

The development of the ICT Strategy had been led by Liberata, working with the Council, and was shaped around the four Council Plan priorities: –

- Providing High Quality Services and Facilities
- Proud and Connected Communities and Places
- Good Growth
- Housing and Healthy Communities

The Committee recommended making explicit reference to the Council Plan and amending the fourth priority, shown on page 2, to include Housing, as this was a recent addition to the revised Council Plan.

The content of the report was discussed and answers received to questions around remote and agile working and resource allocation.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council be recommended to –

- (1) agree the Customer and Digital Strategy 2025-2028, subject to the inclusion of further detail on the findings of the customer engagement survey in relation to website use; headlines on staff findings; and recognition of the ICT Strategy 2025-2028 when referencing staff skills;

- (2) agree the ICT Strategy 2025-2028, subject to the inclusion of direct and accurate referencing to the Council Plan.

REASON

The Customer and Digital and ICT Strategies are key to Council policy development. They will help improve how we deliver services to customers and allow us to meet our customers' expectations to engage with us online. This means we can deliver better and more efficient services whilst making the best use of our resources. The strategies will help enhance public services, improve efficiency and ensure that the Council remains compliant with the latest UK data protection regulations.

4. SAFEGUARDING POLICY 2025-2028

The Head of Policy and Commissioning presented a report of the Chief Executive on the revised Safeguarding Policy for children, young people and vulnerable adults. The revised Policy consolidated the two previous policies ('Family Support and Safeguarding Children' and 'Promoting Welfare and Safeguarding Adults'). It also included Domestic Abuse and Prevent, recognising that radicalisation was a safeguarding issue.

The Safeguarding Policy, including information on the reporting process, was attached as an appendix to the report.

The Committee was invited to scrutinise and assess the Policy and provide feedback and recommendations to Council at its meeting on 10th July.

The Committee noted that implementation would be delivered through the staff and Elected Member Safeguarding refresh training programme, to commence in September 2025. As part of Pendle's Taxi Licensing Policy, taxi drivers were also required to undergo training. This raised a question about taxi drivers licensed outside of the Borough and the process at other authorities.

It was also noted that training was mandatory for staff and taxi drivers but was not the case for Elected Members.

The Committee fully supported a policy that helped safeguard children, young people and adults at risk. In doing so, it was suggested that all Elected Members should be required to undertake a basic Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. It was accepted that this was not a legal requirement and would therefore need to be a policy directive.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council be recommended to –

- (1) agree the revised Safeguarding Policy for Children, Young People and Adults;
- (2) agree the Policy implementation process, with a recommendation that all mandatory staff training also be made mandatory for Elected Members;
- (3) request that the introduction of compulsory basic DBS checks for Elected Members be explored;

- (4) seek clarification on whether all taxi drivers licensed outside of the Borough, but operating in Pendle, have undergone appropriate safeguarding training and DBS checks.

REASON

To ensure that Pendle Borough Council meets its statutory duty in the Children Act 2004 and Care Act 2014.

5. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY 2025-2028

The Head of Policy and Commissioning presented a report of the Director of Resources on the Council's Equality Policy 2025-2028.

The Policy was attached as an appendix to the report and set out the Council's vision and approach to ensuring equitable access to services, opportunities, and participation for all residents and partners.

It was explained that, although not a legal requirement, the Council had included an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process to assess the impact of its policies, practices and decision making in equality. A draft EIA template was included as an appendix to the policy. This was still under review.

The Committee was invited to scrutinise and assess the Policy and provide feedback and recommendations to Council.

The Committee commented on the scope of the policy which detailed who/what the policy applied to. It was agreed that it should not include employment, as this was covered by a separate policy. It was also suggested that the EIA template should explicitly reference if it was for a new policy, service, decision or project.

The level of data collection was also questioned.

In view of the work still required to the EIA template, and the suggested amendments, it was agreed that the Policy, with the recommendations of this Committee, be submitted to the September Council meeting.

RECOMMENDATION

- (1) That subject to appropriate amendments, as discussed, Council be recommended to approve Pendle Borough Council's Equality Policy 2025-2028.
- (2) That the implementation of the Policy's objectives is supported through relevant service planning and partnership working.

REASON

- (1) ***To ensure that the Council meets its statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010 and Public Sector Equality Duty.***
- (2) ***To promote fairness, remove barriers to opportunity, and foster inclusive, connected communities.***

6. WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

The Committee was invited to agree its work programme for the coming year following attendance at an earlier work planning workshop.

At the workshop, further to a decision at the March 2025 meeting of this Committee, Members had considered whether to carry out a review of homelessness, as requested by Council. After considering the decision of the Executive at its 20th March meeting it was agreed that action was being taken to address the issue, and therefore a scrutiny review was not necessary/appropriate at this time.

RESOLVED

That the Committee's work programme 2025/26, attached as appendix A to these minutes, be agreed.

CHAIR _____