

CUSTOMER SERVICE STRATEGY 2017/18 – 2020/21



EALING COUNCIL

Part 1: Introduction

This strategy applies to all services across the council who have direct contact with customers including residents, businesses, partners and suppliers. It outlines the council's approach to customer service and provides staff with a set of core principles which they should follow for all customer transactions.

The strategy has been developed in tandem with the council's first **Digital Strategy**, Connected Ealing, and while it can be read in isolation, it should be noted that there is a clear overlap with the Digital Strategy, specifically the Digital Customer work stream, which describes the council's overall approach to delivering digital services to customers.

Our journey so far...

2007 – 2012 – Just ten years ago the way our customers interacted with the council was very different from today. Our new and improved customer service centre had been open for two years and provided customers with a one stop shop, offering face to face access to all services. Visiting us was a popular option among residents with over 1,000 customers a day queuing to speak to an advisor. The council had recently introduced a handful of unintegrated online forms which enabled customers to report environmental issues. Every online request was then manually passed to our contractor by a customer services agent. The call centre was a heavily resourced function answering in excess of 4,000 calls a day. In the absence of any telephone automation, customers were required to wait, often for long periods to speak to an advisor.

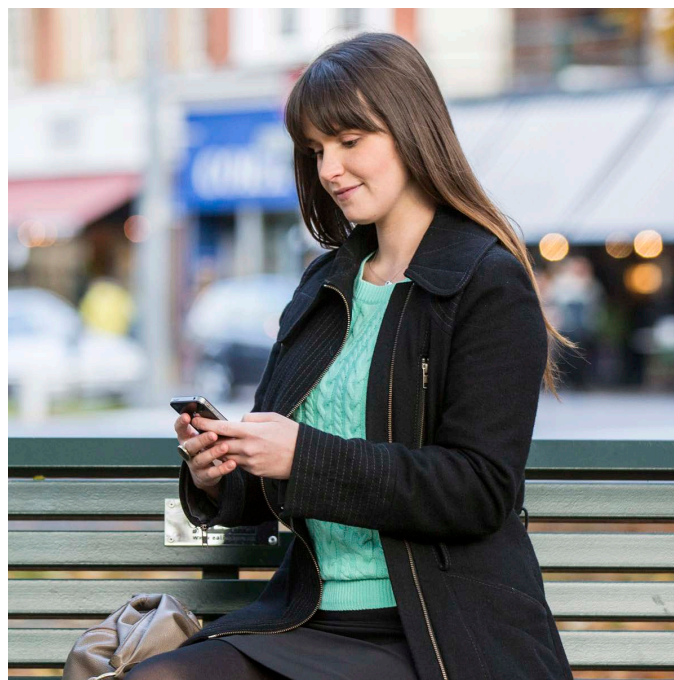
In the five years that followed, significant investment was made to introduce a wide variety of online services which not only enabled customers to access services independently at a time that suited them, but also saw services becoming more efficient. To respond to pressures in demand, focus was on high volume services, ensuring they could be integrated into back office systems which meant for the first time that customers could fulfil their requests without having to speak to an advisor. Automated telephony was introduced in parallel, providing customers with standard information and enabling simple service requests such as ordering replacement recycling containers to be made over the phone without speaking to an advisor.

A combination of these activities contributed to a drop in customers wanting or needing to speak to or see an advisor, freeing up time to deal with more complex customer enquiries.

2012 – Online take up was gradually increasing and recent experience confirmed that customers with simple service requests were happy to access online services. With a high number of online services now in place ranging from ordering parking permits to requesting and paying for bulky collections, the council developed its first Channel Shift Strategy, which outlined the approach to encouraging customers to access services via the most cost effective channels and set the scene for changing the way we interfaced with customers.

The council launched the ‘Do It Online’ campaign which featured on all printed materials and was referenced on auto telephony scripts in an effort to raise awareness of the online services available. At the same time, customers were provided with access to telephones and PCs within the customer service centre alongside floorwalkers who were on hand to provide support and training to customers who were not confident in using online services.

With these foundations in place, for the first time we were in a position to start shutting down inefficient and ineffective channels on a service by service basis. High volume, simple transactions such as environmental reporting were no longer available in the customer service centre and instead customers were signposted to online forms. Historic processes were challenged as part of service reviews which highlighted both inefficiencies and ways of improving the customer experience for example, asking for customers to provide evidence that we do not need or information that we already hold. This pattern continued until the customer service centre became an ‘appointment only’ environment focussing on complex services such as benefits assessments. As a result in 2015/16 an average of just 220 customers saw a customer service advisor per day, a dramatic 78% drop since 2012.



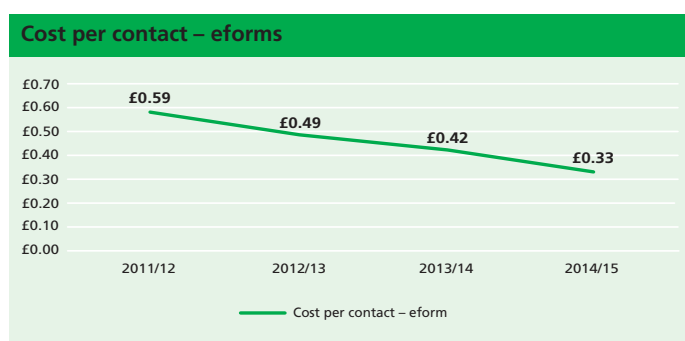
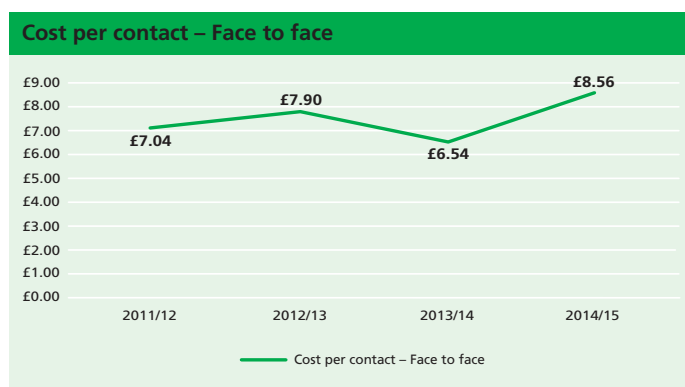
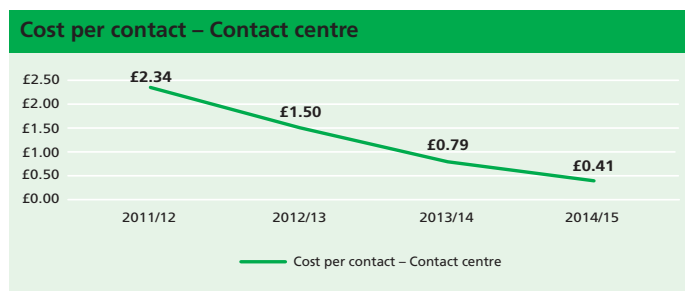
Similar activities were carried out in the council’s call centre which also resulted in an increase in online transactions.

2014 – Development continued behind the scenes to further improve integration and online access to services and in 2014 the council, partnered with Agilisys, launched its first online customer portal for both council tax and housing benefits which enabled customers to access their account information in real time, 24/7. After just one year, the MyAccount portal proved a success with almost 50,000 customers signing up for an account.

2017 – Recent figures suggest that 65% of all customer interactions provided by customer services are now via a ‘self serve’ method. Whether customers choose to access services online or via the auto telephony service, it is clear that the way they interact with us has changed significantly in the last decade.

The council’s cost per contact calculations tell an interesting story and illustrate the extent of the changes.

65% of all customer interactions provided by customer services are now via a ‘self serve’ method.



National figures from SOCITM suggest the following transaction costs by channel (Martin Greenwood, March 2016):

	Online	15p
	Telephone	£2.83
	Face to face	£8.62

Today – We know that 90% of our residents have access to the internet and with use of technology and customer’s expectations accelerating at a similar rate, it is essential we don’t fall behind. In an effort to keep up, digital development continues across the organisation with services independently investing in technology, using a variety of service providers. As a result we are left with a fragmented set of systems and processes which do not provide a consistent customer experience. This now requires reviewing as a whole in order to create consistent, quality services that provide value for money.

Following a recent review of all service lines in the organisation, we discovered that there were approximately 220 individual service lines or transactions which fall within **six core process categories; report it, request it, apply for it, book it, pay for it, and find it (information).**

The second layer of complexity comes when you consider the channels available for each service line. Even if we just take the top three; online, face to face and telephone, we have at least 660 processes of transactions available to customers. Currently, very few of these provide the customer experience we aspire to.

Therefore, moving forward, not only do we want to continue to develop our digital services. We need to refocus on providing a consistent, slick, customer experience, centred on the six core processes. Designing processes around our customers and providing them with access to the right technology supported by the training and skills they require to transact digitally, we can liberate residents to access services on their own. Not only will this reduce unnecessary demand on services it will ensure the council is easy to do business with. It is important that throughout this work we consider our customers who do not have or are not familiar with the internet and ensure we provide free and assisted access where required.

Looking to the future and to customer service trends in the private sector, another transformation in customer service is already underway. Moving away from the traditional call centre models and online transactions towards utilising new technologies such as artificial intelligence and the Internet of Things to interact with customers. Some local authorities are currently exploring how to deliver services via these technologies which are already readily available on the market.

90% of our residents have access to the internet.

Part 2: Using feedback to inform the strategy

This strategy has been formulated following comprehensive consultation with customers, staff, partners and external experts. A combination of customer focus groups and staff workshops were designed to listen to experiences, feedback and understand expectations.

In addition, knowledge and experience from external assessors for the Customer Service Excellence accreditation identified eight areas of best practice within customer service and acknowledged positive changes that have been made to key customer journeys in the past 12 months to improve customer experience.

Alongside reviewing customer complaints and surveying customers to provide feedback we have reached the following conclusions about the services we currently provide:

- Customers are happy to transact online for simple to access services and in particular younger customers only want to transact online and expect a seamless, interactive experience.
- On the whole, online services are well received and face to face services are considered 'a last resort' for the majority but 'essential' for the minority.
- Customers value the council's telephone call centre and would want this service to continue alongside more responsive back office telephone services.
- Email is considered an ineffective way of accessing services however social media is growing as a channel.
- Customers like the MyAccount Portal and value being able to access personalised information at a time convenient to them and would be keen to see more services added.
- The way customers access services can vary from one area of the council to another. For example there are different payment processes in place and the format of online forms is inconsistent.
- Customers expect to be able to speak to polite and helpful staff who take responsibility for dealing their enquiry and be able to contact them directly if they need to.
- Customers want their enquiries to be resolved as quickly as possible without being passed around from person to person or department to department.

- Customers expect the council to be clear about service levels and to stick to them to avoid service failure and repeat contact.
- Customers expect to be kept up to date with the progress of their transaction. For example, be notified when the fly tip they reported had been removed or be advised in a delay in delivering services.
- Online transactions need to be accessible on a variety of devices for example smart phone or tablet.
- Disjointed systems do not allow us to share information easily resulting in customers having to provide the same information over and over again, whether it be while completing an online form or evidence to support a benefit claim.
- Systems and processes are often designed with the service and back office processes in mind rather than the customer experience.

One thing was very clear throughout all of the feedback that was received. Customer service is not the responsibility of one department. Every member of staff in every service has a responsibility to provide quality customer service. Any customer contact that is handled directly by the back office needs to be directed through effective customer contact channels which adhere to the standards outlined in this strategy to ensure a positive experience is provided to customers.

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Part 3: Defining our customers

Our experience from the past decade and the knowledge we have drawn from customer and staff consultation enables us to segment our customers into one of seven key customer groups. Each group displays individual characteristics and therefore have particular preferences of how they want to interact with service providers. This segmentation enables us to ensure services are designed and targeted appropriately to ensure a positive customer experience across the board. At the same time it is important that our staff take a common sense approach to delivering services, enabling customers to use channels that are appropriate to their needs.

Customer group	Example service lines	Characteristics	Approach to service delivery	Channels
Those who receive generic, universal services but do not seek an active relationship with the council	Rubbish collection, street lighting, school admissions	Expect an efficient and reliable service but if things go wrong, want quick and simple processes requiring minimal effort to resolve. Likely to pay council tax by Direct Debit	Fast, efficient and easy to use integrated online services that allow customers to track progress through to completion. Assisted self-serve where appropriate	Online customer portal / integrated forms Auto telephony Web chat Social Media Artificial intelligence
Those who seek an active relationship with the council for example Community Champions, Community Leaders and Councillors	Street services, Parking, Planning	Expect an efficient and reliable service and want a clear escalation route if this go wrong or if dealing with complex, abnormal enquiries	Fast, efficient and easy to use integrated online services that allow progress to be tracked through to completion Clear lines of escalation and quick resolution should things go wrong	Online customer portal / integrated forms Auto telephony and responsive telephone service Web chat Social Media Artificial intelligence
Those who choose to receive optional, paid for services	Garden waste collection service, Gym memberships, CPZ permits, planning	As a consumer, would expect a high quality service with very few service failures which provides value for money	Slick, easy to use, integrated online processes which meet customer expectations, generate a positive customer experience which enables us to retain customers Clear lines of escalation and quick resolution should things go wrong Assisted self-serve where appropriate	Online customer portal / integrated forms Auto telephony with ability to speak to an advisor Web chat Social Media Artificial intelligence

Customer group	Example service lines	Characteristics	Approach to service delivery	Channels
Businesses operating within the borough	Business rates, commercial rates, Licencing, planning agents	Often require more than one person to access services / personalised information on behalf of the organisation Expect to be able to self serve using efficient online channels that provide an audit trail	Simple to use online processes linked to a 'business account' where transactions can be stored and tracked Clear lines of escalation and resolution should things go wrong, particularly for optional, paid for services Assisted self-serve where appropriate	Online Business Account Automated telephone service where appropriate Web chat
Individuals requiring essential services, the quality of which impacts significantly on their health and well being	Housing Benefit applications, Blue Badge applications, Day care services or support for older people, children, families and young people	Often considered vulnerable in some way and may require a more tailored approach. They rely on receiving a consistent level of service that requires fast intervention should something go wrong	Provide integrated online services where appropriate but ensure adequate support is provided via the telephone and face to face if required	Online customer portal / integrated forms Auto telephony with ability to speak to an advisor Appointments with a face to face advisor or specialist
Individuals requiring information or advice directly from the council or needing to be signposted to other services	Advice on adult social care or on debt management, Landlords	Want to be able to access easy to understand information quickly and easily	Up to date, relevant and easy to access web content including information on where to find / who to contact for further information Assisted self-serve where appropriate	Website Landlord portal
People or groups who may not wish to deal with the council, or may actively avoid doing so, but where we have a responsibility to intervene	Children's Services, Council tax recovery	Often from a vulnerable group and have multiple complex needs. Have a preference to for human contact either on the telephone or face to face	Explore personalised targeted communication via email / SMS Provide direct access to highly trained advisors who are empowered to resolve customer issues or who can refer directly to the appropriate officer without delay Assisted self-serve where appropriate	Responsive telephone service Appointments with a face to face advisor or specialist

Part 4: Approach to channels

Digital and online

The way we segment our key customer groups will define the organisations approach to providing services. Here we outline our general approach to the channels available to customers to access services.

Digital and online channels

Digital channels should:

- Provide succinct information that meets customer needs.
- Be provided for all transactional services.
- Be included within a personalised 'customer account' to enable a single view of transactions.
- Be built upon standard processes, eg. Payments, bookings, requests.
- Be easy to use and intuitive.
- Enable customers to highlight if they are making a repeat request or chase up a service that has already been promised.
- Be co-designed and tested alongside customers.
- Be reliable and provide a consistent customer experience.
- Cover all potential options a customer may require within a transaction.
- Be able to auto save transactions for customers who choose to return later.
- Provide up to date information which is regularly reviewed, capturing feedback from customers.
- Enable customers to carry out transactions online at a time to suit them without having to contact the council.
- Be accessible to customers that do not have personal internet access through providing assisted access to equipment and support.
- Be accessible to customers whose first language is not English through tools like 'google translate'
- Be accessible to customers with disabilities such as blindness, colour blindness, mobility, hearing impairment and cognitive / intellectual disabilities.
- Be accessible on all devices.
- Keep customers updated on the status of their request. Ensure council services and / or contractors use the digital tools available to do this.
- Be promoted as the first option to customers as the quickest and easiest way of getting enquiries dealt with.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

'Bots', taken from the term, 'robots' are increasingly entering our customer's homes and provide a new channel to access services. Examples of 'bots' include 'Siri' on the iPhone, 'Amazon Alexa' and the new 'Google Home.' These 'bots' centre around voice recognition technology and are now very affordable and are becoming an every day part of life in households.

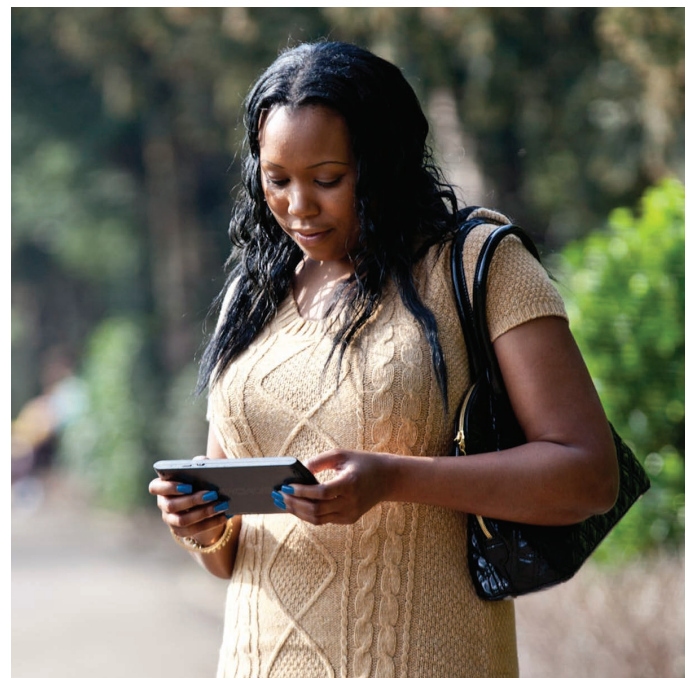
The 'bots' are programmed with key service information so that they build up a knowledge base. They can then refer to this information when asked key questions.

An example of how 'bots' can be used in a council setting could be to ask the following questions:

- What day is my rubbish collected?
- What can I recycle?
- What time does Hanwell Library open?

Artificial Intelligence should:

- Be available for customers looking for simple advice or factual information.
- Be easy to interact with, using natural language and avoiding jargon.
- Be able to signpost to an alternative channel if the answer can not be provided.
- Learn from experience and fill gaps in knowledge.
- Be provided in parallel to other channels and not in isolation.



Webchat

Webchat will be introduced in the council's call centre via a phased approach to support online customers to resolve simple enquiries. Trained customer service advisors can be capable of dealing with up to five simultaneous chats which has potential to divert demand away from traditional telephone channels creating a more efficient customer service offer.

In summary webchat should:

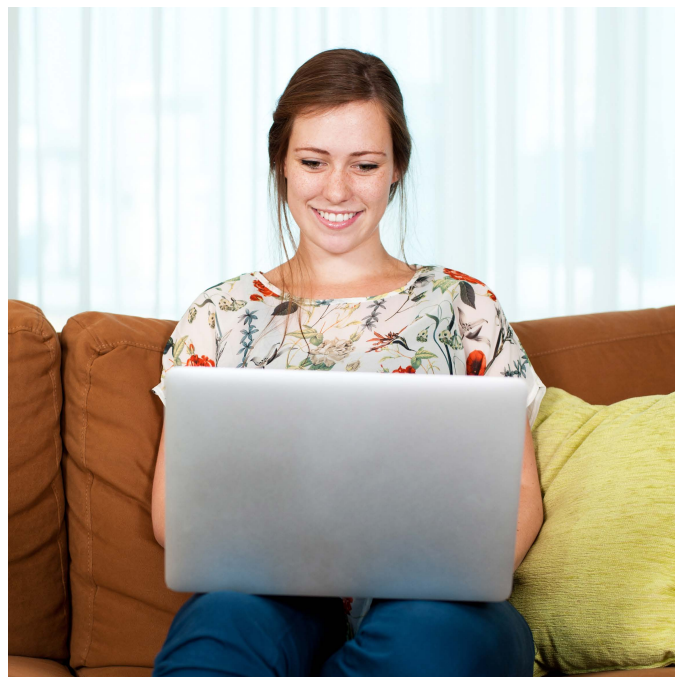
- Be available to customers who are looking for simple advice or information.
- Provide a user friendly, informal channel avoiding jargon.
- Allow customers to be prompted to undertake a chat if they appear to be 'stuck' on a page.
- Only be offered on appropriate web pages where this service would enhance the user experience.
- Enable advisors to signpost customers to online forms where appropriate.

Email

In many areas, service specific generic email accounts are used by customers to contact services and / or access services.

The following should be considered when using email as a customer contact channel.

- Is there an alternative more structured channel available that will support a more efficient transaction? (eg. A flat online form which ensures all required information is collected.)
- Emails should be monitored and responded to in a timely way.
- All emails should have an automatic bounce back outlining when the customer can expect to receive a response, for example 24 hours.
- Emails should be written in plain English and where appropriate signpost customers to information online or online transactions.



Social Media

Customers are increasingly turning to social media channels such as Facebook and Twitter as a way of interacting with organisations and accessing services. The council has both corporate accounts and service specific accounts, each of which require close and effective management to ensure customer requests are resolved quickly and to avoid negative public feedback. While social media is considered a 24/7 channel, to manage customer expectations, the council's accounts should clearly state the operational hours they will be monitored.

The following should be considered when using social media:

- Teams need to ensure there is a dedicated resource during office hours to manage and resolve incoming requests.
- Direct customers to appropriate online content or to complete online forms where available.
- Respond within 60 minutes (industry standard).
- Use social media as a channel where appropriate and within agreed guidelines to proactively communicate with residents in an effort to prevent incoming contact.



Telephone

The council receives approximately 11 million telephone contacts per year with the customer services call centre handling just one million. Telephone is still considered a key contact channel by customers and therefore all services across the council need to ensure they provide a responsive telephone service during the core opening hours.

The introduction of Skype for Business and a new call centre platform (Netcall) in autumn 2017 will provide an opportunity to review the telephone service we provide across the council.

Service areas that receive high level of customer contact via the telephone will be identified and transferred to the customer services function. Having a single first point of contact will not only create more accessible services but will ensure customers receive a consistent and positive customer experience.

All customer facing staff, regardless of where they sit in the organisation, need to have the skills, knowledge and training and be empowered to resolve customer enquiries to completion through effective case management.

Resolution Officers will work in customer services to ensure complex cases are resolved seamlessly and in a timely way, while delivering a positive customer experience.

The following needs to be considered when providing services over the telephone:

Organisation wide

- Be available during core working hours.
- Be polite, helpful and knowledgeable.
- Take ownership of every call and responsibility to resolve.
- Provide a clear escalation point within the service to resolve complex enquiries from start to finish on behalf of the customer.
- Carry out customer call backs in a timely way from a 'known' number.
- Ensure handovers from one service / department to another is seamless and effective.
- Managers should regularly review the performance of their team's telephone responsiveness and address areas for improvement.

Call centre specific

- Advise customers where they are in the queue and provide options for call back.
- Advisors to actively listen to customer's requests and issues and respond appropriately.
- Where appropriate, advise customers they can complete transaction online.
- Ensure auto telephony scripts are up to date, easy to understand and navigate and where appropriate provide an opportunity to speak to an advisor.
- Managers to utilise new call recording facility to provide feedback to advisors and improve customer experience.



Corporate telephone standards

- Calls should be answered in a timely way (within an average of 60 seconds) during office hours.
- Services to ensure that telephones are sufficiently resourced during office hours which may mean ensuring a rota is in place to answer calls and cover breaks within office hours.
- Voicemail use during office hours should be kept to a minimum.
- If you are away from your desk for a significant period, transfer your calls to a colleague in your team or to your mobile.
- Make sure your recorded message on your voicemail is up to date and gives information as to when requests for call backs will be fulfilled.
- Change your voicemail message to let callers know when you have gone on annual leave and when you will return to work.
- All messages should advise customers who they can contact in your absence or if the matter is urgent.

Face to face

The council will continue to only provide face to face services where there is a specific need identified, for example, a service is not available online or via the telephone. Customers visiting the centre should be supported to use the self service facilities to access services online. Moving forward all face to face transactions will be managed on an appointment only system.

The council's face to face services should:

- Be responsive to customer needs and treat customers politely, with dignity and respect.
- Provide a safe and secure environment for customers.
- Encourage and support customers to access services online where possible.
- Move to a more open model, introducing more floor walkers to assist customers rather than customer service advisors sitting behind desks.
- Be prepared to provide additional support to customers who really need it.
- Signpost customers effectively to organisations where appropriate and ensure a seamless handover.
- Encourage customers to ask a friend or family member to translate for them if required.

Letters and written correspondence

The number of letters and general correspondence sent to customers is fast reducing with the introduction of processes such as e-billing and this reduction is set to continue.

Letters should:

- Use standard templates incorporating the council's logo.
- Use plain English to ensure letters are easy to understand and do not result in the customer having to contact for clarification.
- Be signed by a named individual and provide a contact number where appropriate.
- Promote online services where appropriate.

Customers want their enquiries to be resolved as quickly as possible without being passed around from person to person or department to department.

Part 5: Digital and Customer Service Strategy summary

While the Customer Service Strategy has been aligned with the Council's Digital Strategy, there are additional principles and strategic objectives within the Customer Service Strategy which go beyond providing digital access to services. The table below provides a high level view of the two strategies side by side. Part 6 provides further detail on each area including commitments for each strategic objective.

	Digital Strategy	Customer Service Strategy
Shared vision	"Customers will be able to easily connect with Ealing Council at a time and place convenient for them. They will only need to tell us once and can be confident that Ealing will get it right first time."	
Aim	For all services to provide our customers with an outstanding customer experience.	
Guiding principles	We will put residents at the heart of designing and improving digital services.	We will treat our customers with respect.
	We will develop digital services to be better connected, accessible and convenient for residents.	We will keep our promise.
	We will use digital solutions to help us get things right first time.	We will make sure customers only need to 'tell us once'.
	We will design digital services that are easy to use so residents choose to use them.	We will help customers to make the most of every contact.
	We will provide support for those who need extra help.	We will provide face to face and telephone services for those who need them.
Strategic objectives	To create an exemplary customer services offer by creating accessible, better connected and easy to use digital services.	To take ownership to provide customer resolution.
	To ensure we influence and adapt to customer demand and achieve the right resolution.	To take a proactive approach to reduce unnecessary customer contact.
		To continuously challenge processes to deliver an ever improving customer experience.
		To develop and improve partnerships to provide joined up approach to service delivery.

Part 6: Strategy detail

Vision and principles

The council's Digital Strategy outlines

“Customers will be able to easily connect with Ealing Council at a time and place convenient for them. They will only need to tell us once and can be confident that Ealing will get it right first time.”

Ultimately our aim is for all services to provide our customers with an outstanding customer experience.

The approach – Fundamental organisational redesign

Achieving this vision requires all services to transform the way customers contact and interact with the council. A systematic, organisation wide, review of existing processes and customer journeys is required to enable the guiding principles to be realised.

The reviews will need to look at the following:

- Understand the reasons for contact and identify if digital solutions can support a reduction in contact volumes.
- Identify the channels available for customers and assess if they are appropriate, closing any unnecessary or inefficient channels.
- Consider whether the service would be more effectively delivered by the council's customer services function instead of within the service and move.
- Identify issues customers experience when contacting the service and resolve.
- Identify any inconsistencies to the six core process categories (report it, request it, apply for it, book it, pay for it and find it) and move them to the common processes where appropriate.
- Review all existing service standards and ensure they are aligned with the corporate standards and effectively manage customer expectations.

Guiding principles

The following principles are outlined in the digital customer work stream of the digital strategy:

- We will put residents at the heart of designing and improving digital services.
- We will develop digital services to be better connected, accessible and convenient for residents.
- We will use digital solutions to help us get things right first time.
- We will design digital services that are easy to use so residents choose to use them.
- We will provide support for those who need extra help.



EALING COUNCIL

In addition to the digital strategy principles. We also have a number of principles which encompass our approach to customers regardless of how they access services.

We will treat our customers with respect

All staff regardless of which service they represent have a responsibility to provide a high level of customer service and work to ensure all our customers are treated fairly and with the respect they deserve.

We will keep our promise

Be honest about what we are able to deliver and publish clear service standards which are realistic and can be amended depending on customer demand. All staff have a responsibility to ensure we deliver on the promises we make to customers and keep them updated on our progress. This may mean letting them know that their enquiry has been resolved or advising them there may be a delay in delivering a service.

We will make sure customers only need to 'tell us once'

Sharing information and promoting a 'one council' approach will ensure customers enquiries can be resolved effectively and customers only have to 'tell us once'. Only ask customers to provide information that is absolutely necessary to enable them to access services. Where validation is required, develop systems which will avoid customers having to provide information multiple times.



We will help customers to make the most of every contact.

Use every contact as an opportunity to add value to the customer whether it be asking them if there is anything else we can assist with, promoting another service that could benefit them or promoting public health messages to increase awareness.

We will provide face to face and telephone services for those who need them

Providing a flexible approach to service delivery to ensure there is an opportunity for everyone to access. While the majority of customers will be encouraged to access services online, it is also important that we provide alternative channels for those who need additional support. For customers who lack the confidence to transact online, one to one support will be offered to assist them, contributing to the council's aim of supporting people to become independent. Customers interested in expanding their digital skills will be signposted to the adult learning courses on offer.

Strategic objectives

The following objectives should be adopted by all council services and be considered when dealing with customers of any kind including residents, businesses, service delivery partners and suppliers.

The two Strategic objectives outlined in the digital customer work stream of the digital strategy are as follows:

<h1>1</h1>	To create an exemplary customer services offer by creating accessible, better connected and easy to use digital services.			
	<i>We will...</i>			
	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Adopt the Local Government Digital Service Standards to drive transformation of services.	➔			
Develop a business case for the investment needed for our ICT architecture and capacity to deliver our digital transformation.	➔			
Deliver a digital design model that delivers a positive customer experience.	➔			
Review how our customers interact with the council (the 'customer journey') prioritising those linked to Future Ealing outcomes.	➔	➔	➔	➔
Implement a programme of redesign of priority customer journeys and the back office processes that support them.		➔	➔	➔
Implement the ICT architecture (Customer Relationship Management) required to deliver the experience our customers expect.	➔	➔		
Continue to provide support to enable our customers to access services and transact online. eg by helping customers to self-serve.	➔	➔	➔	➔
Consistently review existing digital processes to identify further areas for improvement.	➔	➔	➔	➔
Promote digital channels to increase uptake.	➔	➔	➔	➔

<h1>2</h1> <p>To ensure we influence and adapt to customer demand and achieve the right resolution.</p> <p><i>We will...</i></p>	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	
	Rationalise and integrate our systems so that we have a single view of the customer.		→	→	→
	Use our customer insight to identify need, reduce customer demand, resolve failures and proactively deliver services.		→	→	→
	Continuously look for new products and suppliers to ensure technology does not become outdated.	→	→	→	→
	Maximise the use of the technology we already have and ensure staff are effectively trained on how to use it to its full capability.	→	→	→	→

In addition, this strategy identifies the following strategic objectives:

<h1>3</h1> <p>Take ownership to provide customer resolution. Quite simply customers want resolution to their requests as quickly as possible without having to make multiple contacts or be passed around from one person / place to another. Staff need to take ownership of customers and see their request through to completion, keeping customers informed throughout.</p> <p><i>We will...</i></p>	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	
	Provide appropriate staff with a single view of the customer and access to the systems they need to be able to deliver services without having to refer on to someone / somewhere else.		→		
	Train all customer facing staff to have the knowledge and skills required to provide a high level of customer service.		→		
	Develop clear and visible clear escalation routes to address complex, non-standard issues or for when things go wrong.	→			

4

Take a proactive approach to reduce unnecessary customer contact. Customers should not have to repeatedly contact us unnecessarily. If we get our processes right we can improve the customer experience while effectively managing customer demand.

We will...

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Ensure service standards are realistic, achievable and are actively communicated. Consider differing service levels depending on channel used. (For example customers expect a faster response to a social media enquiry).	→			
Rewrite all published key information to ensure it is up to date and easy to navigate. This will include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Web content • Key correspondence (information and letters) • Telephone messaging and scripting 	→	→		
Implement a sign off process to ensure that all communications are clear, easy to understand and navigate without the need for further clarification.	→	→		
Develop new telephone service standards in line with the introduction of Skype for business to ensure we provide a responsive telephone service.	→			
Proactively communicate with customers about known issues using effective messaging, outgoing correspondence, social media other available channels.	→	→	→	→
Develop systems and processes using digital tools to keep customers updated with progress and/or enable them to track the status of their request.	→	→		

5

Continuously challenge processes to deliver an ever improving customer experience.

Being open to change, forward thinking and learning about new technologies, systems and ways of doing things will ensure we do not get left behind and that our customers can continually receive the level of service they expect.

We will...

	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Ensure the most appropriate channels are used depending on enquiry and customer group.	→	→	→	→
Review incoming customer contacts across the organisation and move high volume customer contacts into the customer service function.	→	→	→	→
Look externally to identify ways to improve services, emerging technologies and best practice. (inc web chat, social media, artificial intelligence).	→	→	→	→
Benchmark performance against both public and private sector to support decisions regarding where to focus improvement.	→	→	→	→
Identify services for delivery of pilot programmes which will support our digital journey or improve customer experience.	→	→	→	→
Achieve annual Customer Service Excellence Standard.	→	→	→	→
Actively analyse complaints to identify how services can be improved.	→	→	→	→
Target specific customers to gain feedback on services to inform improvements and measure customer satisfaction across all services.	→	→	→	→

6

Develop and improve partnerships to provide joined up approach to service delivery.

Whether it be acting on a referral from a third party, signposting to a voluntary organisation, or passing a customer from one internal department to another, customers still expect to be able to access services easily and in a timely way.

We will...

Activity	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Provide staff with knowledge about services and service delivery partners, their core business and acceptance criteria.	→			
Review end to end processes that cross from one party to another with particular focus on the hand over process and consider how introducing digital tools could support this.	→	→		
Share data where appropriate to enable services to be targeted to those who need it or to simply speed up the process.	→	→		
Work towards creating one public service by continuing to identify partnership working opportunities.	→	→	→	→
Proactively share ideas and better ways of working through forums such as the Ealing Community Network and the Ealing Advice Forum.	→	→	→	→
Ensure third party online resources such as 'Care Place' are up to date and promoted to customers as a valuable resource.	→	→	→	→

Ealing Council
Perceval House
14/16 Uxbridge Road
Ealing W5 2HL

www.ealing.gov.uk