



Broxtowe
Borough
COUNCIL

Customer Services Strategy

2023 -2026



We want to put all of our customers at the heart of everything we do



LOCAL / NATIONAL CONTEXT

OUR OBJECTIVES

ACTION PLAN

Customers will feel positive about the customer service they have received from the Council.

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Introduction

The way most people do business and communicate is changing rapidly.

We use cash less and pay by card more, we go to the shops less and order things online more, we write letters less and use email more. Many of us contact organisations through social media now, rather than give them a call, email or visit in person. Increasingly, we're doing all these things from just one device, be it a smartphone, laptop or tablet.

Broxtowe Borough Council, like other councils and central government, has made more and more of its services available over the Internet, and this move to online will continue. Most people find it more convenient to get information or to access services in this way. For those who find this difficult, we will provide help to support the online transition. Where this isn't possible, we will continue to provide a support to customers to make all of our services inclusive.

The new ways of doing business also save us money, which is now more important than ever. We have far less to spend than we had a few years ago. Broxtowe has been very successful in maintaining front-line services while Government funding has been falling. We need to keep striving to make the most of every pound we get. Every time you access Council services online you are helping us save the money we need to maintain the public services on which thousands of people rely and enjoy every day.

Broxtowe Borough Council, using this strategy, looks to develop new ways of supporting our communities and businesses in a post Covid-19 environment.

This Customer Services Strategy has been developed in conjunction with the Council's Communication and Digital Strategies and is designed to provide a clear expectation across all the Council's services, ensuring a better experience for all our customers. We will focus on ensuring our employees are fully trained, working smarter and develop our partnership working with other organisations, such as the Citizens Advice. Further consultation is highlighted on page 4.

Scope



We want to put all of our customers at the heart of everything we do, reflecting their feedback in the design and delivery of services, and to provide appropriate support to those who need it ensuring that customer experiences are easy, effective and convenient.



Alignment to the Corporate Plan, Vision and Values

The Customer Services Strategy supports the Council’s vision and Corporate Plan in assisting and developing services focused on

achieving the Council’s priorities and GREAT values, such as good quality housing, going the extra mile and valuing employees.

It’s GREAT values are:

- **G**oing the extra mile - a strong, caring focus on the needs of all communities
- **R**eady for change - innovation and readiness for change
- **E**mloyees - valuing employees and enabling the active involvement of everyone
- **A**lways improving - continuous improvement and delivering value for money
- **T**ransparent - integrity and professional competence

The Council’s vision is:

“Broxtowe...a greener, safer, healthier Borough, where everyone prospers.”

It’s priorities are:

- **Housing** - a good quality home for everyone
- **Business Growth** - Invest in our towns and our people
- **Environment** – Protect the environment for the future
- **Health** - Support people to live well.
- **Community Safety** - A safe place for everyone



Context

Local Context

Broxtowe has over 110,000 residents*

National Context

- Welfare Reforms including Universal Credit
- Post Covid-19 regeneration
- The impact of digital technology – customers now expect a 24/7 service.
- On average a UK Adult spent 3 hours 59 Minutes a day online*

- 21% aged 0 to 17*
- 57% aged 18 to 64*
- 22% aged 65 and over*
- Broxtowe Borough Council Digital Strategy
- Broxtowe Borough Council Communications and Engagement Strategy
- Supporting the most vulnerable in the community
- Use of Social Media as communication channel
- Alignment with other Council Services, such as the Digital and Communications Strategy
- Consultation with the Council's Chief Officers and Heads of Service
- Consultation with the Disability Forum
- Consultation with Elected Members through the Overview and Scrutiny Working Group



* The Customer Services Strategy has been informed by national research conducted by OFCOM Communications Market Report 2022 and the Office for National Statistics 2021 census data.

Where are we now?

In 2007 Broxtowe Borough Council introduced a Customer Services Section to ensure it met Customers needs whilst providing a high quality and consistent service.

The results of the latest Budget Consultation showed that 65% of customers were satisfied or very satisfied with the service they received from the Council.

The Council is responsible for providing a wide variety of services. These services are all public focused and range from Housing though to Public Parks. All of these services are managed with the Customer in mind and ensure the best service is provided at all times.

IN 2021/22

110,000+

phone calls were taken by the Customer Services Team.



- Council Offices open to the public during the pandemic.
- Access to the Citizen Advice (CAB) and Police teams within the Council Offices. Providing a hub of services in one place.

83,086 online and ATP payments **128% INCREASE** in the last 5 years

850,813 visits to the Council's website

7,084 Broxtowe Borough Council likes on Facebook

7,891 Broxtowe Borough Council twitter followers

447,936 online transactions a **77%** increase in the last five financial years

2021/22 was a challenging year for the Council's Customer Services Team with a range of factors contributing.

The Team has found their resources have been stretched during busy periods, such as when dealing with the Household Support Fund and Energy Rebate. However, this hasn't stopped the Council receiving a significant number of compliments during the year. Here are some of the compliments the Council has received during the last year

Environment Team providing chat benches in areas of the borough

Economic Development Team Securing £21 Million New Towns Fund for Stapleford

Housing Operations visiting to provide advice and support on the lifeline base unit and connections

Repairs Team going the extra mile in Toton to assist with a broken sewer pipe under a kitchen floor

Customer Services Team being clear, friendly, helpful and efficient

Environment Team save a house from flooding

Support Services and Customer Services going the extra mile to support a victim of Domestic Abuse

Environment Team making an excellent job of pruning and path edging

Grounds maintenance for the work in clearing pavements and parking spaces to make the area look clean and tidy

Our Objectives

One Organisation

Customers will receive a service that is seamless throughout the Council.

Positive customer experiences

Customers will feel positive about the customer service they have received from the Council.



Digital Inclusion

Digital is the first choice of most customers, with support available for those who are not online.



Investing in our team

Council employees understand what good customer service looks like and are focused on delivering excellence for our customers.





Customer Services Standards

What our customers can expect

- Clear greeting explaining the department they have called and who they are talking to.
- Calls returned within one working day.
- A telephone interpreting service for people with disabilities or those who speak other languages.



- Clear written communications which follows the 'Communications For All Principles'

Focused – clear, concise and jargon free.

Open – communications should be factual, accurate, reflect the position of the council and be approved by relevant Senior Managers.

Relevant – Communicated to the right people, at the right time, in the right way and be informative and useful.

Accessible – easy to access through appropriate channels and in a variety of formats suitable for those with disabilities and inclusion needs.

Listening – provides opportunities for feedback and two-way conversations wherever appropriate.

Linked up – internal stakeholders and partners should hear about changes or issues before they are reported by a third party or in the media.



What we can expect from our customers

- Our employees to be treated politely and with respect.
- To provide us with the details we need to help resolve your enquiry
- To provide constructive feedback so we can continue to improve.
- To consider the use of digital methods with our support.

- Accessible services.
- Waiting times are kept to a minimum.
- To be treated fairly and with respect.
- Requests resolved at the first point of contact in 80% of enquiries.



Positive Customer Experiences

Customers will feel positive about the customer service they have received from the Council.

The service will provide customers with confidence that they have been listened to, had their request dealt with and been communicated with appropriately. There will be times that the outcome is not always to the customer's satisfaction but they should still feel that they were listened to and any decisions should be communicated appropriately.



Actions

- 1 Ensure that all Council employees follow the Customer Service Standards. These will be communicated through the Council's Induction Training and ongoing reviews for existing employees.
- 2 Conduct meaningful consultation with customers to establish how we are performing.
- 3 Use performance data and the expertise of the Customer Services Team to develop customer profiles to establish the best ways to support them with their enquiries.
- 4 Develop a modern reception area, which allows customers to access the Council's services using different channels.
- 5 Continue our partnership working with CAB and Police in the Council Offices but also look at ways of even further partnership working to provide better customer services.
- 6 The Council will continue to evaluate the development of new technology and opportunities to improve services.
- 7 Continue to reduce the levels of abandonment rates when telephoning the Council.
- 8 Continue to provide Induction overview and develop ongoing Council Wide Customer Services training.
- 9 Develop standardised answerphone responses, whilst maintaining the corporate telephone answering greeting with associate monitoring for all Council Officers.
- 10 Regular reports to the Council's General Management Team and Elected Members detailing levels of performance.



Digital is the first choice of most customers, with support available for those who aren't online.

Digital Inclusion

Working in line with the Council's Digital Strategy, taking advantage of technological improvements and on-going customer and organisational needs; making digital our customer's access channel of choice. Where digital is not an option for customers, the Council will support them through the process or keep other channels such as telephone or face to face accessible.

Actions



1

Work with the Corporate Communications Team to review how social media enquiries are dealt with and how this can be improved in the future. The Council understands that Customers are using social media more frequently to interact with the Council.

2

Procure and implement a new Customer Services telephone system with appropriate reporting software.

3

Evaluate customer benefits and associated costs of additional software, such as instant messaging, customer portals and web chat to help make services more accessible. The aim is to make all services accessible digitally.

4

Promote digital first to customers and work with those who aren't online to ensure they are helped to do things digitally if they can and that their needs are still met if they can't.

5

We will provide support to those individuals that wish to use digital methods but do not have access by providing digital facilities at the Council Offices and trained employees to assist.

6

Ensure all Equalities Impact Assessments are completed, evaluated and relevant mitigation is implemented as part of any new digital developments.

Our Team

Council employees understand what good customer service looks like and are focused on delivering excellence for our customers.

Customer Services goes far beyond the output of the Customer Services Team and each phone call, email and face to face interaction with stakeholders has the ability to shape their perception of the Council and what it is trying to achieve. Employees are our biggest asset and creating clear, consistent and effective communications channels with them will have a positive impact on our external relationships and reputation.



1 Support team members gaining professional qualifications through organisations such as The Institute of Customer Services and The Institute of Revenues Rating and Valuation.



2 Continue to improve the performance framework to ensure the Customer Services Team have clear targets to work to and promote a positive and proactive service.



3 Evaluate the possibility of becoming a member of the Institute of Customer Services and using external benchmarking exercises, making sure we are using "good practice" when supporting customers

4 Evaluate and further develop our knowledge database providing detailed process maps and procedures and adapting these to include "good practice" where identified.

5 Provide a detailed Training Plan for all Customer Services Officers based upon the existing Training Framework.

6 Undertake monitoring of call handling and performance data, providing feedback through regular meetings with individuals in the team.

7 Evaluate contingency options to enable a consistent service is provided in the event of employee shortages.

8 Ensure the team are valued by identifying new approaches to motivation, reducing employees turnover and sickness.

9 Identify new areas in the Council that would benefit from the support of the Customer Services Team

10 Look to train and develop individuals in the Customer Services Team to communicate using British Sign Language.

Action Plan

| Action | Responsible | Customer Benefits | Target Date |
|--|--|--|--------------------|
| 1 Ensure Customer Services Standards are followed by all employees | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Customers will be able to identify who they are talking to immediately | Ongoing Review |
| 2 Conduct regular Customer Service satisfaction surveys | Customer Services Team Leaders | Allow the Council to identify areas for improvement | September Annually |
| 3 Implement new Microsoft Teams Telephony system | ICT & Business Transformation Officer | A more robust system for customers contacting the Council | March 2023 |
| 4 Ensure Standardised Telephone and Answerphone responses for all Council Officers | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Customers will be able to identify who they are talking to immediately | January 2023 |
| 5 Conduct 1-2-1's and regular Team Meetings with the Customer Services Team providing feedback on performance and identifying training needs | Customer Services Team Leaders | Provide a detailed Training Plan for all Customer Services Officers based upon the existing Training Framework | Monthly |
| 6 Develop a modern reception area | Head of Asset Management | Provide a welcoming reception area for visitors | April 2024 |
| 7 Explore the use of additional software, such as instant messaging, customer portals and web chat to help make services more accessible. | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Identify technology that will improve the customer experience | September 2023 |
| 8 Promote digital first to those able to use this service with support from Council employees | Customer Services Officers and Assistants | Providing services to customers 24/7 | Ongoing Review |
| 9 Support employees in gaining professional qualifications. | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Ensuring highly qualified employees to assist Customers | Ongoing Review |
| 10 Evaluate the possibility of becoming a member of the Institute of Customer Services and using external benchmarking exercises | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Ensure the Council is learning from Best Practice | August 2024 |
| 11 Take steps to ensure telephone abandonment rate throughout the Council is below 10% | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Providing a quicker and more efficient service | Ongoing Review |

Action Plan

| Action | Responsible | Customer Benefits | Target Date | |
|--------|---|--|---|----------------|
| 12 | Evaluate and further develop our knowledge database providing detailed process maps and procedures and adapting these to include "good practice" where identified | Customer Services Team Leaders | Ensuring highly skilled and well trained employees to support Customers | April Annually |
| 13 | Model existing peaks in demand and proactively ensure adequate resourcing | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Ensuring highly skilled and well trained employees to support Customers | April 2023 |
| 14 | Evaluate options to react in the event of staff shortages due to sickness or turnover | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Ensuring highly skilled and well trained employees to support Customers | April 2023 |
| 15 | Ensure the team are valued by identifying new approaches to motivation, reducing employees turnover and sickness | Customer Services Team Leaders | Highly motivated employees to provide excellent Customer Service | Ongoing Review |
| 16 | Identify new areas of the Council that would benefit from the support of the Customer Services Team | Head of Revenues, Benefits and Customer Services | Providing a quicker and more efficient service | June 2024 |
| 17 | Train and develop individuals in the Customer Services Team to communicate using British Sign Language | Customer Services Team Leaders | Ensuring enhancements in the accessibility of the Council's Services | December 2023 |

This document is available in large print upon request.

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