

Telford & Wrekin Council Customer Strategy



Improving our Customer Experience
Our journey to excellence by 2025



Foreword

Our Council programme to ‘Protect, Care and Invest to create a better borough’ sets out our ambitious priorities and plans over four years. We are proud of our borough and the impact that we, as a Council, are making. A combination of our thriving economy and housing market, a great choice of schools and a clean and green environment make Telford & Wrekin a fantastic place to live, work and play.

Our customers, who are made up of residents and stakeholders in the Borough, are at the heart of everything we do, and we want to make sure that the experience that our customers have is outstanding. To achieve this, we need to get the basics right, pay attention to detail, and make sure we uphold high standards of customer service across the entire organisation. These principles need to be part of the core DNA of every single contact we have with our customers and built into the future design of our services.

The range of ways that customers can access our services needs to continually evolve to reflect innovations in technology and changing customer expectations. We want our digital services to become the contact method of choice for our customers because they provide high quality, reliable, convenient and easy access to the Council.

This should be led by developing a deep understanding of our customer’s needs and behaviours. Every interaction between our customers and the council speaks and we need to make sure we listen and learn from what we hear. By using the data we gather as well as customer feedback we can mould our entire approach to the customer’s experience of our services. We will settle for nothing less than excellent customer service delivery, our key measure of this is when the customer tells us this themselves.

Our relationship with our customers will also support the delivery of all the Council’s priorities and help us deliver the outcomes we want for Telford & Wrekin, as articulated in the Council Plan.

This Customer Strategy describes what we want to achieve to realise this vision and how we will deliver it.



Cllr Richard Overton Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Enforcement, Community Safety and Customer Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a stylized 'R' and 'O' followed by a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Our journey to excellence

Few organisations provide such a wide and diverse range of services as Local Government, to an equally wide and diverse range of customers.

Some of our services are accessed by most residents and households in the borough, such as waste services, street lighting and council tax collection. Other services are more targeted based on the needs of specific individual customers at different points in their life. These include services such as support from social workers, registration of key life events, applying for school places or financial welfare assistance.

Many of these services can be accessed online, as well as through traditional access channels such as telephone. Customer behaviour suggests that customers are more likely to choose traditional contact methods when they are in a crisis or where they are dissatisfied with the service they have received.

2020 has clearly demonstrated how we have been able to quickly adapt and extend the services we deliver to residents to respond to unforeseen emergencies, such as the flooding in the Ironbridge Gorge and the COVID-19 pandemic, and we will need to continue to be just as responsive in the future.

The population of Telford & Wrekin is 179,854. ¹

17.3%
of residents are
aged over 65. ²

21.7%
of residents are
aged 16 or under. ³

10.5%
of residents are
Black and Minority
Ethnic. ⁴

18.6% of residents
have a long-term
limiting illness or
disability. ⁵

¹ Office of National Statistics UK Population estimates Mid-year 2019.

² Office of National Statistics UK Population estimates Mid-year 2019.

³ Office of National Statistics UK Population estimates Mid-year 2019.

⁴ Office of National Statistics 2011 census and Understanding Telford & Wrekin 2019 Report.

⁵ Office of National Statistics 2011 census and Understanding Telford & Wrekin 2019 Report.



Our customer contacts 2019/20

We had 342,620 calls to all our customer contact centres (of which 277,763 were handled by our main Corporate Contact Centre).

The top 5 types of enquiries relate to:

- **Revenues Services** (Council Tax, Business Rates etc.) - 19.3% **(66,229 calls)**.
- **Neighbourhood Services** (Grounds, cleansing, waste, highways etc.) - 18.2% **(62,380 calls)**.
- **Family Connect** - Children (advice and guidance on children's services including emergency out of hours calls) - 8% **(27,410 calls)**.
- **Benefits Services** (Housing Benefits, Council Tax Reductions etc.) - 7.7% **(26,462 calls)**.
- **Public Protection Services** (Environmental Health, Licensing, Trading Standards etc.) - 3.7% **(12,883 calls)**.

There were 203,634 online transactions.

There were 5,583,618 visits to our websites.

There were more than 2000 visitors to Southwater One.

We sent out 1,220,000 items of post at an approximate cost of £431,000.

Achievements over 2019/20

CUSTOMER INSIGHT / COMPLAINTS

*All increases/decreases compared to 2018/19

16% increase
in positive feedback



4% reduction
in corporate
complaints



In October 2019 a
new Customer Insight
Programme was
launched



Less than 1%
of our transactions
result in a
Complaint



Improvement on
complaint response
timescales across all
directorates



3 in depth Customer
Insight reviews have
been completed



81% corporate
complaints are
responded to in

15 working
days



Over 100 Volunteers
registered to be

**Mystery
Customers**

23 of our key front
doors have been
reviewed by
Mystery Customers



**GOVDELIVERY/
SOCIAL MEDIA**

Total of 104,758
residents signed up
to GovDelivery



87.3% current
engagement rate
with GovDelivery
emails



44,246 contacts
(connections) made
via Social Media



GovDelivery is our web-based
e-mail subscription service

CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE

277,763
calls received

5.9% increase in
call volumes



3.6% increase in
calls answered



90.4%
of calls met our
quality
standards

97.5% of calls
answered in



shorter waiting
10 min reduction
in longest wait time



95%* reduction
in face to face
appointments
within Southwater One

due to customers
doing more online

* when comparing 2016/17 with 2019/20



6,246
calls handled

on our Covid 19
Community
Support Helpline

March to July 2020

**Maintained strong
performance
while meeting the
demands of two civil
emergencies**

Flooding and Covid 19.

DIGITAL



5,583,618 visits to the
Councils' websites,
equates to every adult in
Telford and Wrekin visiting
the website

51 times a year

72,110 of online forms
completed, an increase
of **49.5%**

49,517 MyTelford
accounts, a **35.5%** increase
in the last 12 months

35.7% of Adults residents
have a MyTelford account

22.13% increase in
Online transactions

Our Covid 19 Community Support Helpline was open 7 days a week

Extended opening hours were put in place as part of our response to the flooding

We have contacted in excess of 28,000 shielding or potentially vulnerable residents since the start of the Covid 19 pandemic

What do we want to achieve for our customers?

In summary, our vision is to:

Work with our customers to develop quality services that are accessible to all and to make every contact count.

Our key aims are to:

- Own responsibility for every contact received anywhere in the organisation and if we can't help, connect you to other organisations that can
- Understand and care about your concerns; demonstrating through our actions that your issues matter to us
- Be helpful, polite, friendly and treat you fairly and with respect
- Be honest, only making promises we can deliver, and do what we say we will
- Meet our customer service standards when we respond to you and regularly monitor and publish how well we're doing this
- Provide clear and up to date information about our services
- Explain our decisions and the reasons for them
- Display the Council logo clearly on our information, signage, buildings and vehicles so you know which services we are responsible for
- Deal with your request correctly the first time you contact us and if we have to pass your enquiry on, give you the name of the person, team or organisation dealing with your enquiry and how to contact them
- If things go wrong, say sorry, do our best to put them right and learn from our mistakes
- Protect your confidentiality by handling your information sensitively and securely
- Make sure Council services are accessible to all and meet our co-operative values
- Provide help if you need assistance because of a disability or health condition with information available on our website and through our contact centres
- Enable customers to access more information and services online
- Invite, listen to and act on feedback from customers to improve our services, and communicate the improvements we have made

Modernising our approach

To deliver these aims, we need to develop and continually update how customers can interact with us to meet customers' expectations and preferences. Whilst more customers are benefiting from the convenience of the many online services we already provide, we recognise that this is not always the best option for everyone.

Our approach will be:

Digital – ensure the option to do business online exists for every service or enquiry type in the Council and those digital services should be easy to use and reliable so they become the customers preferred method for communicating with us. We will utilise social media to share information with our customers and embed it as a channel for receiving communication and feedback from our customers. We will support customers to gain access to the skills and technology that will help them use online services. We will make use of new technologies such as web-chat and artificial intelligence to respond to online enquiries as quickly and easily as possible.

Telephony – channel all initial telephone enquiries through to a customer contact centre, with as many enquires as possible being resolved at the first point of contact, making use of new technologies, such as intelligent voice recognition, to deal with enquiries as quickly and easily as possible. If we are unable to resolve the issue ourselves, we will signpost or refer the customers directly to the organisation that can assist.

Face-to-face – all our physical council locations which are visited by customers should be accessible to all customers and should be welcoming safe spaces. There will be clear and visible signage and branding, directing customers to and within buildings. Staff will be easily identified as representing TWC and will offer a warm welcome.



How will we achieve our aims?

Our achievements over the last year demonstrate there is a huge amount of good practice and positive activity taking place in the Council with many examples of a good customer experience being delivered.

However, we need to make sure that the same commitment to the customer experience is being delivered throughout the entire organisation to ensure there is a consistent approach no matter which part of the Council a customer contacts.

This means that everyone in the organisation has a role to play in ensuring that we deliver the aims of this strategy. This clear focus on the customer experience must be part of the culture within every tier of leadership within the Council. This is particularly important when reviewing or designing new Council Services.

Elected Members will be critical in delivering our vision. Often Members are the first point of contact for residents. They respond to queries, questions and complaints. Members gather customer insight and information which can help inform service delivery and improvements.

In their community leadership role, Members can also encourage customers who can, to self-serve; promoting and supporting customers to access our services online. They are well placed to explain to residents that by doing this they will enable the Council to be more efficient.

We also recognise we cannot achieve these outcomes in isolation. Working with partners and collaborating with others will be important. There may be opportunities to work together as well as support and learn from each other. For example, developing signposting and referral pathways with organisations to allow a handover of enquiries that are received by the wrong organisation. There are also opportunities to work with community-based organisations to improve access to technology and development of digital skills for residents.



We are developing a 3 year plan for how we intend to deliver the aims of the strategy, based on reviewing customer and member feedback and benchmarking with other organisations. This was further informed by consultation with employees, members and residents that was carried out during October 2020. However, this plan will be a live document and we will continue to develop it over the next 3 years+. This strategy is underpinned by a longer-term action plan and we will report on progress on an annual basis.

This strategy highlights proposed key actions and that we will prioritise until the end of March 2022, we have also highlighted those actions that will be completed by March 2021.

To enable us to deliver these aspirations we will need to focus on:

Customer Service Standards

to be clear about what customers can, and cannot expect and ensure consistent delivery across every part of the Council.

In the first year, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By end of March 2021, we will:

- Launch of a new Customer Contract which will include the new customer service standards for the whole Council.
- Issue new guidance for employees on what is expected from them to ensure a consistently excellent customer experience across the whole organisation.

By end of March 2022, we will:

- Introduce performance measures across all council services so that we can monitor compliance with the new service standards, accompanied with twice yearly performance dashboards and a sample of customer journeys which are reported to the Council Directors for review.
- Create an employee recognition mechanism for outstanding customer service within the new Workforce Strategy.
- Implement a programme of back to the floor exercises for senior managers to observe our customers experience first-hand, for example listening to calls on our corporate contact centre.

Training and development

to equip staff and elected members with the skills and knowledge needed to provide excellent customer service, no matter what their job. This will include the development of a brand-new customer services training programme for front-line staff, and training for leaders on managing the customer experience.

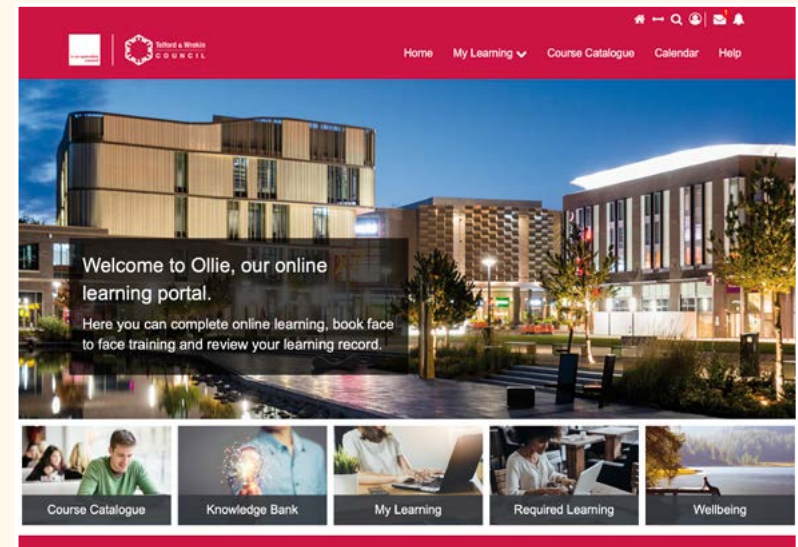
In the first year, to March 2022, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By March 2021, we will:

- Review and refresh the “Managing the Customer Experience” training course for leaders to reflect the aims of this strategy.
- Provide information drop-in sessions for Borough Councillors and Town & Parish Clerks on how to assist customers to engage with the Council.

By March 2022, we will:

- Provide customer service training to all staff that engage with customers. This training will also become part of induction training for new staff. Competency will be evaluated through the staff appraisal process.



Involve customers and employees in improving services

To involve customers in the design of services so that we better understand their needs and preferences. Ensure we have, and use feedback, including from employees delivering services, on their experience to inform improvements and to shape services in the future.

In the first year, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By March 2021, we will:

- Complete our programme of snapshot reviews into the “front door” experience of using council services. This will include physical council buildings, our website, and the telephone experience. We will re-run the snapshot reviews of key buildings that was started earlier in 2020 in order to include an assessment of how confident customers feel visiting us post Covid.
- Undertake a customer experience survey to seek views on contacting and engaging with council services for day to day business.
- Implement a programme of council services which will undergo an in-depth customer insight review, which will also include an element of service re-design to improve the customer experience and value for money. We will prioritise services which have a high volume of customer interaction, and/or where we want to improve customer satisfaction.
- Capture real-time feedback from customers by introducing satisfaction surveys at the end of phone calls and satisfaction surveys accessed in our physical locations by scanning QR codes on mobile devices.
- Establish a community panel and invite members of the panel to collaborate on specific projects that develop the customer experience.
- Create a single email address that Councillors can use to report issues of concern to the Senior Management Team.

By March 2022, we will:


- Expand the use of service improvement tools that involve employees across the Council. This will be linked to our Workforce Strategy.

Your Views Matter

Tell us what you think

Please help us to improve our services by providing us your feedback.

Use your mobile device to scan the square code below to provide feedback of your experience of our service today.



Alternatively, you can share your feedback by visiting the web address detailed below.

Share your feedback

We're listening

problem solving

Customer Contact Centre

To accelerate migration of enquiries for council services into our corporate customer contact centre and expand the available contact channels.

In the first year, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By March 2021, we will:

- Increase the number of services that can be contacted via web-chat and relocate the chat option to a more prominent homepage location.
- Improve the signposting of enquiries to external organisations by providing contact information in our call centre queue messages.
- Migrate call handling for Registration Services into the corporate contact centre.

By March 2022, we will:

- Launch a chatbot for frequently asked questions enabling automation of common customer queries.
- Explore arrangements with key partners to take enquiries on each other's behalf to improve customer experience.
- Migrate call handling for Leisure Services into the corporate contact centre.

Online Services

To continue the development of our online customer portal to enable it to become the single gateway into all council online services. We will work with partners and communities to provide the technology and the skills to help people move to using online services.

In the first year, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By March 2021, we will:

- Comprehensively map all online digital services available across the council to promote their usage to customers. As part of a campaign to increase take-up of our online services.

- Identify gaps in provision where new online services need to be developed.
- Develop the online app for mobile devices with improved location mapping and full user account access to the most used online services.
- Promote the Telford Online ICT drop-in sessions that are offered through libraries and extend the sessions to out-reach sessions in community hubs.
- Pilot the concept of “virtual hubs” in community buildings that will allow residents to connect to council services, partner organisations, and medical services via video link.

By March 2022, we will:

- Provide a single consistent brand for all online services from any device and platform.
- Improve the communication regarding completed jobs, by providing customers with a photograph of the completed works (e.g. a filled pothole) or details of the work carried out.
- Allow customers to reopen a completed job if they are not satisfied with the work completed.

Branding, signage and identity

We will ensure that it is clear which services are being provided or funded by the Council by improving the visibility of our branding, and ensuring that there is a consistency and clarity of signage to and from all physical council locations. In the first year, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By March 2021, we will:

- Develop a new branding, signage and style guide and ensure that this is applied consistently across the organisation and by partner and grant-funded projects.

By March 2022, we will:

- Audit Council signage & branding across all buildings, physical front doors and council facilities (including leisure and commercial facilities, online and digital).
- Review/audit council owned assets that can carry TWC branding and priority messaging. For instance, electronic signage, council vehicles, noticeboards and uniforms.

Accessibility

To undertake a fundamental review of our services to ensure that all barriers are removed and that our services are accessible for all.

In the first year, the key actions that will contribute to this aim will include:

By March 2021, we will:

- Ensure that our website complies with the new public sector accessibility standard.
- Update our website to include information for customers regarding the facilities that are available in our buildings.

By March 2022, we will:

- Ensure that our physical buildings and locations comply with legislative requirements and best practice.

- Reduce barriers to visiting our council facilities by ensuring they are autism and dementia friendly and our employees receive training to be able to support these customers.

Our approach to Equality

Providing fair and accessible services, available to all sections of our community is very important to us.



It helps us to meet our duties under the Equality Act 2010. Our commitment is demonstrated through our actions which are detailed in this strategy and other supporting strategies and policies.

You can find out more about our approach to Equality including our objectives and progress by visiting our website:

www.telford.gov.uk/equality

How will we know if we have succeeded?

We will monitor and report on performance against our key performance indicators (KPIs) each quarter, and measure performance against the service standards in the Customer Contract.

Our KPIs include:

- % increase in customers doing business online
- % of customers who contacted the council in the last 12 months who were satisfied with how their contact was handled
- % of customer insight reviews where services are rated at least 9/10
- % reduction in complaints
- % increase in compliments

We will be able to evidence changes and improvements that have been made to council services directly as a result of feedback from our customers.

We will publish online any improvements we have made as a direct result of customer feedback.

Customer Contract

In conjunction with this new strategy we have reviewed and refreshed our Customer Charter, which we have now renamed our Customer Contract.

This new contract sets out our key commitments and service standards for all customer interactions across the whole organisation. It also sets out our expectations for how we would like our customers to interact with us to allow us to serve them effectively.

YOU SAID...
That the Soft Play vending machine options were unhealthy and there was no water available in the Soft Play when Café Go was closed.

WE DID...
The vending machines are now stocked with fresh healthy options such as fruit bags and low sugar drinks and bottled water is also now available.

www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter

Protect Care and Invest to create a better borough

Telford & Wrekin COUNCIL

**Telford & Wrekin Council
Customer Contract**

Last updated: November 2020

Protect Care and Invest to create a better borough

Telford & Wrekin COUNCIL



Last updated January 2021

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Telford & Wrekin
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