

Customer Care strategy



2020

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Introduction

Our Customer Care Strategy sets out how we plan to deliver our customer care and outlines the organisational commitments we will make to our customers.

Our action plan (at appendix 1) shows where we want to be, and explains how we will monitor and report our progress in achieving these pledges. As part of our commitment to customer care, we commit to delivering common customer care standards across the council.

We want to provide the best possible service to all of our customers, particularly in terms of resolving queries at the first point of contact. We recognise how important first impressions are, and how vital it is to get things right from the start.

Every time a customer contacts us, we must remember that the way they are treated, the standard of customer care they receive and the quality of the outcome all influence their opinion of us.

Given the changing nature of the way in which people interact with us, we sit within a constantly evolving environment. We must be able to respond to the transforming needs and circumstances of our customers, while recognising customers who wish to contact us using traditional methods.

We must be able to recognise and embrace any new opportunities for our customers and ourselves as they arise.

Who are our customers?

Everyone who lives, works, learns, visits and does business in Tewkesbury Borough is a potential customer of Tewkesbury Borough Council.

We know that, according to the Mid 2019 Population Estimates, our population of 95,019 is made up of people aged:

- 0 to 19 = 21,435
- 20 to 64 = 52,605
- 65 and over = 20,979
- 90 and over = 1,047

- 94 per cent of our population are white British/Scottish/Northern Irish/English (Census 2011).
- 16.5 per cent of population has a disability which limits day-to-day activity (Census 2011).
- Tewkesbury Borough is the fastest growing district outside of London (ONS 2019) and our population is projected to rise significantly in the next 25 years.
- There are more than 4290 companies with a registered address in Tewkesbury Borough.
- Tewkesbury Borough attracts more than 1.9m visitors each year – bringing in £64m spend.

We need to make sure that the council is able to support all our customers so that we can provide an excellent customer experience, whatever their needs.

What are our customers telling us?

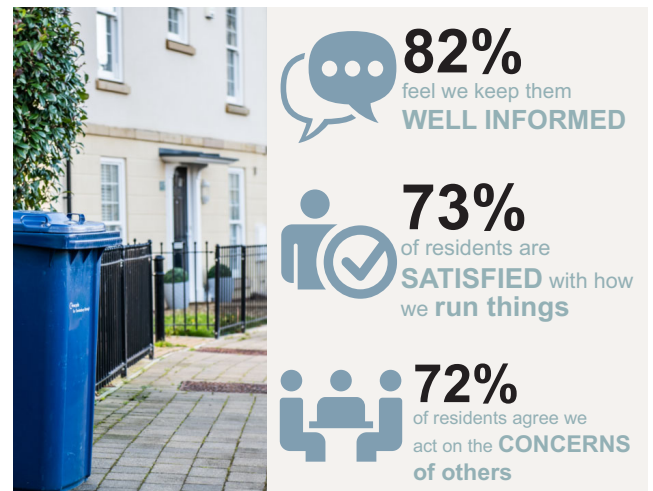
We want to provide the best possible service to all our customers. They are the best people to tell us:

- How we are doing.
- What we can do to improve a service.
- What problems they have experienced – this allows us, where appropriate, to apologise, put it right and stop it from happening again.

As a council we have a suite of policies and strategies that provide really vital foundations for our customer care approach – including our Council Plan and our digital communications strategies. But, in order for these strategies to be truly customer-focused, we need to establish a clear understanding of our customers – what do our customers want? How do they want to interact with us? What are their needs?

Reflecting this, our latest Peer Challenge 2020 recommends that we carry out a comprehensive and regular residents' survey to understand how we can ensure we are meeting our customers' needs.

In November 2019, we carried out a snapshot survey to find out what our residents think of us. This survey was published on our website, through social media and to our Citizens' Panel (a group of around 250 local residents who have signed up to our scheme, which is aimed at getting feedback on local issues, emerging policies and strategies, and service changes).



Low level of complaints

Our current complaints framework offers a digital end-to-end process to report and monitor our complaints. The framework is overseen by a designated officer within the Corporate Services team and an annual review of complaints received is undertaken by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

The number of complaints we receive compared to other local councils is well below average, which gives us an indication that residents are on the whole satisfied with how we run things. We recognise that it is important to have further evidence of customer satisfaction alongside the low level of complaints we receive and this is reflected within our action plan at appendix 1.

What do we need to do?

Our Council Plan highlights our value that we will always put our customers first. We make the promise that we will put the needs of our customers at the heart of what we do and listen

to what they say, treating people fairly and without bias. Supporting our values we also have an ethos that whatever we do will be 'better for customers, better for business'.

To ensure we achieve this, we need to adopt the following themes:

- Introduce a refreshed set of customer service standards.
- Make it easier, simpler and more convenient for customers to interact with us when requiring a service.
- Use feedback from residents to help shape future service delivery.
- Make sure our staff are equipped with the skills to deliver high quality customer service.
- Promote channel shift – providing services in a way that is more convenient for customers and less expensive to deliver for the council. By doing this we will free up capacity to support those customers who need the more traditional methods of communication.
- Work with our partners in the Public Services Centre to ensure our customers experience a seamless and worthwhile experience when visiting us.

The action plan, attached at appendix 1, reflects these overarching themes.

Customer experience

Everyone working for Tewkesbury Borough Council should be committed to making our customers' experience a good one. We want to treat all of our customers fairly and make our services accessible to all.

To help with this, we have developed a set of customer care standards that support the council's values to create satisfied customers, both internally and externally.

These standards cover all our contact approaches including online, email, telephone, letter, and face-to-face. Our standards will be made public, so that our customers are aware of the commitments we are making.

Separate digital and communications strategies detail our online approach to ensuring services are more convenient for customers and less expensive for us. Over time we expect this to significantly improve customer experience.

Customer services team

We also have a dedicated Customer Services team, consisting of one team leader and six advisors. The team operates primarily as our front of house – directing our customers to the correct point of contact. The team also provides customer service at our Advice and Information Centres across the borough, as well as being the main customer contact for Ubico.

As well as being champions for customer service, the team also provides information and advice for each council service and provides access for thousands of different contacts via telephone, online and face-to-facepoints.

Our year in numbers



Delivery of customer care

We want to build upon our achievements in delivering quality customer care, and make sure that we support our staff in providing the best possible experience for our customers.

Our commitment throughout this strategy is to have a 'can-do' attitude and support customers by going the extra mile for them. This will be achieved by providing the customer with an efficient service, delivered by welcoming, knowledgeable and professional staff.

To help us achieve this commitment, this strategy is supported by an annual action plan, which details how we will achieve our commitments to customer care. Progress on the action plan, and any new actions, will be reported each year to Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Our website

The website is our customers' gateway to the council – it is how most of our customers access us, and we take pride in making sure our site is ahead of the game in terms of how easy it is to access, navigate and interact with.

Reflecting its importance, a website review is an action within the council's Covid-19 recovery plan and this will bring a number of improvements to our site, including the search function, introducing a recruitment micro-site, and making sure our content and pages are in line with the government's accessibility standards.



Customer Care Strategy action plan 2021

| Customer Care action plan | |
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| Focus area | New actions for 2021 |
| Introduce a refreshed set of customer service standards. | <p>Develop a set of measurable customer services standards that reflect our commitment to customer care.</p> <p>Consult with customers to understand if they are satisfied with our standards.</p> <p>Monitor the performance of services in delivering the standards.</p> |
| Make it easier, simpler and more convenient for customers to interact with us when requiring a service. | <p>Carry out a full review of our Advice and Information Centres to ensure they are fit for purpose.</p> <p>Review the customer services team structure to ensure it delivers excellent customer care.</p> <p>Support the aim for increased first point of contact resolution in the planning admin team to reduce customer frustration and improve satisfaction levels.</p> |
| In line with the recommendation from the Peer Challenge, investigate the option of running a meaningful residents' satisfaction survey | <p>Involve customers in the development of services.</p> <p>Engage with our Citizens' Panel when developing new online services.</p> |
| Make sure our staff are equipped with the skills to deliver high quality customer service. | <p>Ensure annual customer services training is available to all staff.</p> <p>Ensure all CS advisors achieve NVQ level 3 in customer services.</p> |
| Promote channel shift and support those customers who need the more traditional methods of communication. | <p>Ensure the customer services team receive appropriate training on new digital systems.</p> <p>Support customers to sign up to paperless billing.</p> <p>Promote the online bulky waste service when customers phone us.</p> |

Customer Care Strategy action plan 2021

| Customer Care action plan | |
|---|---|
| Focus area | New actions for 2021 |
| Ensure our reception service meets the needs of partners in the Public Services Centre. | Ensure our front of house service meets the needs of all partners in the Public Services Centre. Engage with partners to understand if improvements can be made for customers visiting the Public Services Centre. |

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