



Telford & Wrekin  
Co-operative Council

Protect, care and invest  
to create a better borough

# Telford & Wrekin Council Customer Strategy



**Improving our Customer Experience**  
Our journey to excellence by 2025

Last updated September 2022



## Foreword

I am pleased to introduce this progress update on delivery of our Customer Strategy. At this mid-way point much work has already been delivered to improve and evolve the customer experience, with a significant number of our priority actions already being completed. We have also reflected and refreshed the actions that we should focus on delivering over the next 18 months.

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. For our customers who have the skills and technology to get online, we want our digital services to become their contact method of choice because we have designed them to be accessible, easy to use and reliable.

However, we want to ensure that all residents can easily access Council services by continuing to provide those who cannot get online with the means to speak to us in person.

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 Rae Evans** Cabinet Member for Finance, Governance and Customer Services.

## 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 181,322. <sup>1</sup>**

**17.6%**  
of residents are  
aged over 65. <sup>2</sup>

**18.6%**  
of residents are  
aged 15 or under. <sup>3</sup>

**10.5%**  
of residents are from  
a minority ethnic  
background. <sup>4</sup>

**18.6%** of residents  
have a long-term  
limiting illness or  
disability. <sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Office of National Statistics 2021 census initial findings

<sup>2</sup> Office of National Statistics 2021 census initial findings

<sup>3</sup> Office of National Statistics 2021 census initial findings

<sup>4</sup> Office of National Statistics 2011 census and Understanding Telford & Wrekin 2019 Report.

<sup>5</sup> Office of National Statistics 2011 census and Understanding Telford & Wrekin 2019 Report.

# 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 have developed a 4 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 lifetime of this strategy. This is underpinned by a longer-term action plan and we will report on progress on an annual basis.

This strategy highlights key actions that have been delivered in the first year of the strategy, and those which have been prioritised for delivery by March 2024.

## 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](http://www.telford.gov.uk/yourviewsmatter)

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**Telford & Wrekin Council  
Customer Contract**

Last updated: November 2020

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## Appendix A



### Our customer contacts 2021/22

We had 302,897 calls to all our customer contact centres (of which 239,837 were handled by our main Corporate Contact Centre).

The top 5 types of enquiries relate to:

- **Revenues Services** (Council Tax, Business Rates etc.) - 19.5% **(66,869 calls)**.
- **Neighbourhood Services** (Grounds, cleansing, waste, highways etc.) - 11.3% **(38,799 calls)**.
- **Housing & Homelessness** - (Housing advice, homelessness calls) - 7.5% **(25,649)**.
- **Family Connect** - Children (advice and guidance on children's services including emergency out of hours calls) - 7% **(24,119 calls)**.
- **Planning & Building Control** - 5% **(17,766 calls)**.

**61,800 emails were received by our Customer Contact Centre**

**There were 10,162 webchats with a customer advisor**

**There were 8,478 enquiries handled by the Ask Tom**

# Achievements over 2021/22

## CUSTOMER INSIGHT /COMPLAINTS

\*All increases/decreases compared to 2020/21

**21% increase**  
in positive feedback



Lowest number of Children's statutory and Adult's statutory social service complaints in 6 and 7 years respectively



UK Customer Satisfaction index score of **71.2 %**

(UK average for other Council's 64.4%)



## GOVDELIVERY/ SOCIAL MEDIA

Total of **123,445** residents signed up to GovDelivery



**74%** current engagement rate with GovDelivery emails



**44,246** contacts (connections) made via Social Media



GovDelivery is our web-based e-mail subscription service

Less than **1%** of our transactions result in a Complaint



Continued to respond to complaints within an average of **12** days



**99** completed Mystery Customer assignments



**81%** corporate complaints are responded to in

**15**

working days

Customer Effort score **4.2** (average for all UK organisations is 5.2. The lower the score the better)

**22** of our key front doors have been reviewed by Mystery Customers



## CUSTOMER CONTACT CENTRE

Achievements in 2021/22

**239,837**  
calls received

**30% reduction**  
in call volumes



**9.5% increase** in  
calls answered



**92%**  
customer  
satisfaction  
with call handling  
and webchat  
\*\*\*\*\*

**99.5% of calls**  
answered in



**40% increase** in  
customers using  
webchat to talk  
to an advisor



**21% increase**  
in online  
transactions  
using app and  
webforms

**8,478**  
enquires handled  
by the 'Ask Tom'  
automated digital  
assistant

**99.3%**  
satisfaction  
with the help given  
by 'Ask Tom'

## DIGITAL



**5,328,737** visits to the  
Councils' websites,  
equates to every adult in  
Telford and Wrekin visiting  
the website  
**51** times a year

**80,798** online forms  
completed, an increase  
of **12%** since the initial  
strategy

**72,733** MyTelford  
accounts, a **46.8%** increase  
since the initial strategy

**52.1%** of adult residents  
have a MyTelford account

We opened a new dedicated phone line for customers to claim their £150 energy rebate

Extended opening hours were put in place to respond to flooding and adverse weather

Over 30,000 phone calls and text messages were sent to residents to encourage them to get their Covid 19 job

# Appendix B

## Priority actions to enable us to deliver these aspirations:

Priority rating of LOW, MEDIUM and HIGH.

### Customer Service Standards

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

#### Actions delivered to date:

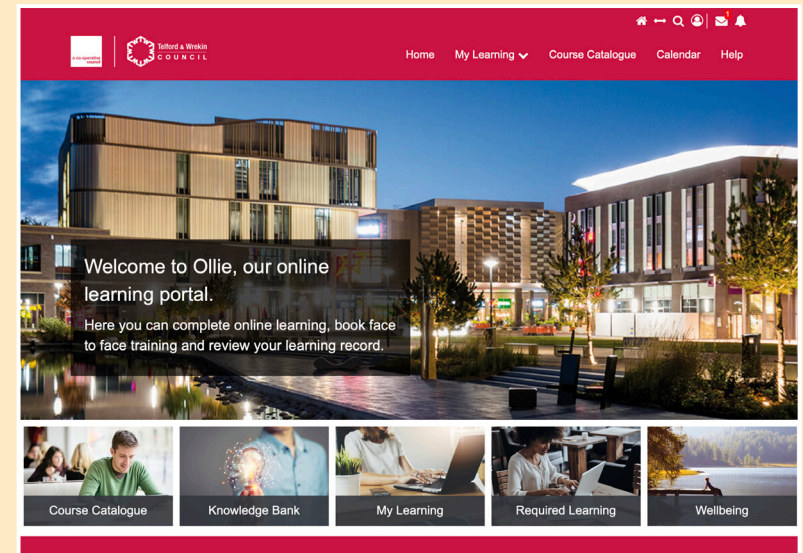
- Launch of a new Customer Contract which includes the new customer service standards for the whole Council.
- Produced a new guide for staff on what is expected from them to ensure a consistently excellent customer experience across the whole organisation.
- Underwent a peer review of our Customer & Digital services which resulted in positive feedback on the services we provide and recommended some improvements which has helped to strengthen our customer experience.
- Piloted a programme of back to the floor exercises for senior managers to observe our customers experience first-hand, which will be rolled out by the end of December 2022.
- Enhanced our recognition of employees who provide exceptional customer service, including the introduction of a customer care employee award and promoting the positive feedback and compliment process.

#### By April 2024, we will:

- Attain Customer Service Excellence accreditation from the Institute of Customer Services. HIGH.
- Introduce performance measures across all council services so that we can monitor compliance with the new service standards using Mystery Customers, accompanied with twice yearly performance dashboards and a sample of customer journeys which are reported to the Council Directors for review. LOW.

## 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.



#### Actions delivered to date:

- Launched new online “customer service essentials” training course for all staff, with an emphasis on “everything speaks”.
- Launch event for new My Telford App was run for Town and Parish Council’s, and a commitment to provide ongoing support included in the Town and Parish Council Partnership Agreement.

## By April 2024, we will:

- Develop new face-to-face customer services training course for all front line staff that meets the requirements to obtain Customer Excellence accreditation from the Institute of Customer Service (ICS). HIGH.
- Refresh and deliver the customer experience training courses to all front line staff and manager and leaders with an emphasis on further embedding “everything speaks” into the culture of the organisation. MEDIUM.
- Face-to-face Customer Service Awareness training will be provided to all new employee’s as part of the induction process, starting in November 2022. HIGH.

## 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.

### Actions delivered to date

- Completed our programme of snapshot reviews into the “front door” experience of using council services including an assessment of how confident customers feel visiting us post Covid.
- Expanded our customer insight programme which uses Mystery Customer volunteers to give real user experience feedback of using council services, including user-testing of new online services before they go live.
- Held our first annual Mystery Customer thank you event where we share the impact that their involvement has had on service delivery.
- Undertaken a customer services benchmarking survey in conjunction with the Institute of Customer Service which will enable us to compare customer experience with that of other private and public sector organisations.



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**Tell us about your experience  
of visiting our library today**

Use your mobile device to  
scan the square code to  
provide feedback



Or you can share your feedback by visiting the web address  
[www.telford.gov.uk/libraryservicesfeedback](http://www.telford.gov.uk/libraryservicesfeedback)

Thank you - your feedback helps us to improve our services

[customer.insight@telford.gov.uk](mailto:customer.insight@telford.gov.uk) or 01952 382006

- Carried out an employee survey in conjunction with the Institute of Customer Service to understand how well the customer strategy is understood across the organisation.
- Captured 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.
- We refreshed and relaunched the Community Panel in May 2021. Currently we have just over 350 panel members, each of which has identified 'areas of interest' to support us in carrying out targeted engagement moving forward. For example - 150 panel members are happy to be engaged with about 'customers and online services.
- Created a single "everything speaks" email address that Councillors can use to report issues of concern to the Senior Management Team.
- Introduced a new ward-member enquiry process with accompanying time scales for responses from officers.
- Undertook a residents survey to gain a better understanding on how we can improve our services to the public.
- Provided monthly summary and quarterly more detailed complaint and compliment information plus summary of responses to Directors to understand issues/review quality.
- Publicised examples of how customer feedback has led to service changes. "You said, We Did".
- Continued to encourage services to pro-actively engage with their customers to understand their experience and how this could be improved, including the use of service specific surveys.

#### By April 2024, we will:

- Provide complaint handling refresher training to managers, facilitated by the Local Government Ombudsman. MEDIUM.
- Continue the programme of producing detailed customer insight reports into key council services. MEDIUM

## Customer Contact Centre

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

#### Actions delivered to date:

- Increased the number of services that can be accessed through web-chat and move to a more prominent home-page location, which led to a 40% increase in customers using this service.
- Launched a new digital assistant "Ask-Tom" which is available 24/7 to respond to the most frequently asked customer questions. In the first year over 10,000 enquires were resolved by the assistant with a >99% customer success rate.
- Improved the signposting of enquiries to external organisations by providing contact information in our call centre queue messages.
- Migrated call handling for Registration Services and Housing into the corporate contact centre.
- Began a trial extension of the customer contact centre opening hours from 8am-7pm to gauge customer demand.

#### By April 2024, we will:

- Expand the knowledge base of Ask-Tom to handle more council services, starting with Leisure and Theatre enquiries. HIGH.
- Explore options for migrating more services into the corporate contact centre, focusing on those with high volumes but are under-performing. MEDIUM.

- Review the First Point Service being offered through our libraries to ensure they continue to meet the needs of residents given the significant increase in use of our online services. LOW.

- Allow customers to reopen a completed job in MyTelford if they are not satisfied with the work completed. LOW.

## 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.

### Actions delivered to date:

- Launch of new “My Telford” app to replace “Everyday Telford” with improved functionality and ease of use.
- Launch of “Ask-Tom” 24/7 digital assistant (see above).
- Launch of new digital Telford Loyalty Card, the MyTLC app.
- Added new digital directory to the Live Well Telford website to assist people to get online and develop their digital skills.
- Introduced a regular review program for web pages to ensure content is refreshed when needed.
- Launch of new Leisure website with improved self-service options and enhanced information.
- Benchmarked the online services we offer with those of other Local Authorities to identify any gaps.
- Began a review of the functionality and design of website and a reduction in the number of stand-alone Council operated websites.

### By April 2024, we will:

- 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. LOW.

## 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:

### Actions delivered to date:

- Developed a new branding, signage and style guide to be applied consistently across the organisation and by partner and grant-funded projects.

### By April 2024, we will:

- Review/audit council owned assets that can carry TWC branding and priority messaging. For instance, electronic signage, council vehicles, noticeboards and uniforms. MEDIUM.

## 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:

### Actions delivered to date:

- Ensured that our website complies with the new public sector accessibility standard.
- Produced a new equality, diversity and inclusion strategy and action plan which includes a section on 'serving our customers'.
- Updated our website to include information for customers regarding the accessibility facilities that are available in our buildings.

### By April 2024, we will:

- 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. This will be linked to the new Autism Strategy which is in development.
- Produce a checklist for managers to conduct peer-to-peer service reviews to assess accessibility and equality of services. MEDIUM.



## 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](http://www.telford.gov.uk/equality)





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